

Email from Rod Fujita, Ph.D.

Hi all – as you may recall, Chris Kubiak from Morro Bay and I submitted a proposal to the Allocation Committee and to the Council as a whole to allow trawlers holding federal permits to convert their catch history to fixed gear and become eligible for fixed gear permits. This would facilitate a transition from a high volume trawl fishery with relatively high discard rates to a more selective and less damaging fishery which could increase the overall value of the groundfishery. The groundfish strategic plan calls for such a transition, because it is in the best interests of all stakeholders and of the resources that you manage.

As we have been traveling up and down the coast interviewing fishermen and holding meetings in ports, we have found that several trawl fishermen are interested in switching to fixed gear. In addition, The Nature Conservancy and Environmental Defense would like to find a way to lease the trawl permits that we have purchased back to fishermen who would fish them in sustainable ways (e.g., vertical hook and line or Scottish Seine or traps). Several fishermen have submitted EFP applications to allow them to test new ways of fishing that might reduce discards and habitat damage, and I am preparing a similar EFP that would test such methods as well as video monitoring methods. Finally, some fishermen have expressed interest in converting their trawl history into fixed gear history at a steep discount rate; in other words, X million pounds of trawl history would translate into half or even one-tenth of that in fixed gear history, allowing the Council to re-allocate those fish or conserve them.

I know that this issue is important to a lot of people, but seems to have fallen through the cracks over the years. Please consider putting it on the September agenda for a fuller discussion and to position it for action.

Many thanks  
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