

GROUND FISH BYCATCH WORK PLAN

The Council took final action to approve Fishery Management Plan (FMP) Amendment 18 at the November 2005 Council meeting based on the preferred alternative in the Pacific Coast Groundfish Fishery Management Plan Bycatch Mitigation Program Final Environmental Impact Statement (Bycatch Program FEIS). Amendment 18 was submitted to NMFS for review and approval on June 5, 2006. A follow-up task has been to prepare a work plan, which is intended to help the Council plan future bycatch mitigation activities and inform the public about the Council's intentions.

Originally, a draft work plan was initiated by the Council at the March 2005 meeting, based on input from the Groundfish Allocation Committee. At the September 2005 meeting, the Council reviewed the draft work plan. In their report at the September meeting, the Groundfish Management Team (GMT) did not recommend implementing the elements of the work plan proposing sector total catch limits as part of the 2007-2008 groundfish harvest specifications and management measures process. One of the reasons the GMT did not recommend sector total catch limits at that time was because they believed current monitoring programs are not sufficient to monitor harvest against sector total catch limits, and the necessary program enhancements will not occur for the 2007-2008 cycle. At the November 2005 meeting, the Council provided direction to include in the draft work plan a discussion of (1) a permitting system for the open access fishery in order to document the number of vessels and track the landings by permit number and (2) how the frequency of observer data reporting could be increased. Currently observer data is reported on an annual basis, which limits its use in implementing the types of bycatch reduction measures described in Amendment 18, such as sector total catch limits.

The draft work plan was under review and could not be included in the briefing book. The document will be made available as a supplemental item. The Council task is to provide further direction on the document content prior to it being made available for public review. At a future meeting the Council could take action to adopt it in its final form.

Agenda Item C.2.a, Attachment 1 is a letter from the Washington Department of Fish and Wildlife (WDFW) with a comment on the proposed rule implementing Amendment 18. The WDFW recommends allowing the designation of scientific sorting categories in order to facilitate total catch accounting and future stock assessments.

Council Task:

1. Adopt Proposed Groundfish Bycatch Work Plan for Public Review.

Reference Materials:

1. Agenda Item C.2.a, Attachment 1: Letter from Mr. Philip Anderson, Assistant Director, Intergovernmental Resource Management, Washington Department of Fish and Wildlife to Mr. Robert Lohn, Regional Administrator, Northwest Region, National Marine Fisheries Service.

Agenda Order:

- a. Agenda Item Overview
- b. NMFS Report
- c. Reports and Comments of Advisory Bodies
- d. Public Comment
- e. **Council Action:** Adopt Proposed Groundfish Bycatch Work Plan for Public Review.

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