

GROUND FISH ADVISORY SUBPANEL REPORT ON FMP AMENDMENT 15
(AMERICAN FISHERIES ACT PROVISIONS)

The Groundfish Advisory Subpanel (GAP) discussed the recommendation from several shoreside whiting vessels and processors to continue with the implementation of Amendment 15 to the Pacific Coast Groundfish Fishery Management Plan. There is consensus among GAP members that moving forward with Amendment 15 is both critical and a high priority.

GAP members heard testimony for and against moving forward with implementation of sidebars mandated by the American Fisheries Act to “protect fisheries under its jurisdiction and the participants in those fisheries from adverse impacts caused by this Act.”

Participants in the shoreside fishery testified to the shortened season, lost income, and the additional pressure on groundfish stocks as the impetus for reviving Amendment 15 through the Council process.

GAP members believe that additional pressure on non-whiting groundfish stocks can have adverse impacts on the conservation of species of concern. Specifically, as the whiting season becomes shorter, vessels who would traditionally be fishing whiting are now switching over to non-whiting groundfish earlier in the year. Fishing opportunities on healthy stocks are already severely restricted due to species of concern. Additional pressure on these fisheries exacerbates these problems and potentially jeopardizes meeting management objectives.

The GAP believes that the law is clear directing the Council to protect the whiting fishery - and that has not changed. While the GAP appreciates the large workload on the Council’s agenda, we continue to believe that reviving Amendment 15 and moving forward is critical to protecting the traditional whiting fishery. As more and more participants enter the fishery unfettered (and they will), the season length will continue to decline creating an extremely unsafe derby style fishery.

Staff from Oregon Department of Fish and Wildlife joined our discussion and indicated that they would be able to invest staff time to help expedite this process.

The GAP would further recommend that the Council identify the clear direction and a timeline for completion and implementation of Amendment 15 for the 2008 season.