

GROUND FISH ADVISORY SUBPANEL REPORT ON
PROPOSED CHANGES TO THE CATCH SHARING PLAN AND 2007 ANNUAL
REGULATIONS

The Groundfish Advisory Subpanel (GAP) considered proposed changes to the Pacific halibut catch sharing plan and 2007 regulations affecting commercial and recreational sectors of the halibut fishery.

Commercial

The GAP heard from Leesa Cobb of the Port Orford Ocean Resource Team (POORT) regarding a proposal for a halibut bycatch allowance in the sablefish longline fishery.

Recreational

The GAP considered Agenda Item G.1.b, Supplemental WDFW Report 2, and proposed regulations for the Washington North Coast and South Coast areas. The Washington Department of Fish and Wildlife proposal for the recreational halibut fishery in the North Coast area affects depths and seasons open to Pacific halibut fishing and the proposal for the South Coast area sets aside 5% of the South Coast quota to provide for a later-season nearshore fishery.

GAP Recommendations:

1. Commercial

The GAP recommends the Council move forward with POORT's proposal for public comment, and provide guidance for review and decision-making at the November 2006 Council meeting. The GAP believes that this proposal is a justified approach to remedy regulatory constraints experienced by the vessels involved in the Port Orford halibut/sablefish fishery.

2. Recreational

WDFW North Coast 1.

The GAP does not support this proposal. The GAP believes this proposal will move the recreational fishery into the Straits of Juan de Fuca where increased contact with yelloweye rockfish can occur. In addition, yelloweye caught in this area are outside of federal jurisdiction and therefore are not accounted in the Council's bycatch scorecard. The GAP believes any risk of increased contact with species of concern cannot be justified.

WDFW South Coast 2.

The GAP supports this proposal. The GAP finds this to be a beneficial application of quota to supplement existing fisheries.