

GROUND FISH ADVISORY SUBPANEL REPORT ON CONSIDERATION OF INSEASON ADJUSTMENTS

The Groundfish Advisory Subpanel (GAP) discussed inseason adjustments for commercial and recreational fisheries. The GAP understands that only adjustments to limited entry trawl fisheries and Washington recreational fisheries will be presented by the Groundfish Management Team (GMT) at this meeting and thus has the following unanimous comments and recommendations.

The GAP is skeptical that 2007 fisheries will mirror the performance of 2005 fisheries and questions the use of the 2005 fisheries observer data to force additional cuts to an already struggling trawl fleet. The GAP believes that the observer data is outdated and in some cases incorrect. Furthermore, the GAP is disappointed that in order to liberalize fishing regulations it is necessary for several years of data or a time series to prove a trend. In the case of the observer data which is much less than 100% actually observed, we are relying on 1 year and 4 months of data – hardly a time series.

The GAP is also aware that the law requires the Council to stay within certain limits for fisheries and that we are working with miniscule amounts of canary rockfish.

Limited Entry Trawl Non-Whiting

The GAP reluctantly supports the GMT recommendations for the limited entry non-whiting trawl sector beginning April 1st.

The GAP also recommends a process be developed for opening “cold” spots within the Rockfish Conservation Zones. This process should begin immediately, not with the next specifications process. Additional “hot” spots outside of the Rockfish Conservation Area (RCA) continue to be proposed to assist in reduction of interaction with depleted species. The GAP recommends a process be developed that uses all available data including the survey data to identify areas within the RCA where low interactions with species of concern have occurred. Now that all limited entry trawl vessels are using Vessel Monitoring Systems, this should allow enforcement and monitoring for this type of action and afford the trawl fleet some economic opportunity to make up some of what they have lost in recent years.

Washington Recreational Fishery

The GAP supports the Washington State proposal articulated in Agenda Item E.5.c.

Whiting Fishery

Bycatch Caps Primary Season

The GAP supports setting the following bycatch caps in the whiting fishery for 2007 with the intent to revisit the issue on an as needed basis throughout the year.

1. Canary rockfish: 4.7 mt
2. Darkblotch rockfish: 25 mt
3. Widow rockfish: 220 mt

Whiting Trip Limits for Non-primary Season

The GAP recommends no change to current trip limits prior to and following the primary whiting season. The GAP was briefed by Brian Culver on the GMT rationale for proposing a reduction in trip limits for this fishery. The GAP finds the rationale currently unjustified and recognizes the following:

- Current levels of participation in this fishery are very low
- This fishery operates outside of the RCA
- This fishery operates with legal bottom trawl gear and thus bycatch rates are known
- This is a target fishery for a direct niche market
- Clarification over how and where this fishery is currently prosecuted would likely end speculation and unjustified fears surrounding the fishery
- Implementation of a trawl IQ program will eliminate these types of management issues

PFMC

03/08/07