

GROUND FISH ADVISORY SUBPANEL REPORT ON
AMENDMENT 15: AMERICAN FISHERIES ACT

Recommendations

The Groundfish Advisory Subpanel (GAP) recommends adopting for preliminary analysis the three alternatives described in Agenda Item E.3.b, the Oregon Department of Fish & Wildlife Report, with the addition of a starting date of 1994 for Option 2. The GAP also recommends that this issue be on the June agenda in order to accommodate a final decision on a preferred alternative in September 2007.

The GAP had a detailed discussion regarding the current status of Amendment 15 and the proposed schedule for completion and implementation of the amendment. The GAP also discussed the task before the Council at this meeting: to adopt a range of preliminary alternatives for analysis. The GAP provides comments on both the schedule for completion and a range of alternatives for analysis.

Background

The GAP believes it is important to reiterate the reasons Amendment 15 was initially undertaken. The PFMC newsletter from spring 2000 states:

“Under the American Fisheries Act (AFA) of 1998, only certain vessels and processors are eligible to participate in the Bering Sea Pollock fishery. This eligibility provides greater flexibility in when and how these vessels and processors participate in the Pollock fishery. Because these AFA vessels and processors are better able to arrange their schedules, they could potentially maximize participation in other fisheries, including West Coast groundfish fisheries. The concern is that AFA vessels and processors will use benefits gained by the AFA to move into West Coast groundfish fisheries, increase effort, and cause harm to current participants. To prevent this harm, the AFA provides the Council the opportunity to recommend management measures to protect fisheries under its jurisdiction and participants in those fisheries.”

Control dates of September 16, 1999 and June 29, 2000 were published to notify AFA beneficiaries that future Council action could prevent their participation in the fishery.

Current Status

The GAP recognizes that increased participation in the whiting fishery during recent years by AFA qualified vessels has occurred. In addition, if the emergency rule recommended to the National Marine Fisheries Service in March of 2007 is not implemented, an increase in participants during the 2007 fishery is also expected. Of particular concern is any increased impact on depleted groundfish stocks. In order to meet the AFA mandate and provide increased stability to all sectors of the whiting fishery, the GAP believes that the Council should move forward with Amendment 15 expeditiously. There is an urgent need for Amendment 15 to be implemented prior to the 2008 whiting fishery.