

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

The Groundfish Advisory Subpanel (GAP) strongly urges the Council to act to prevent conservation and socio-economic harm in the Pacific whiting fishery. This action is an interim measure, which would sunset upon implementation of a rationalization program for the whiting fishery. Because potential harm stems from new entry into the whiting fishery, the GAP recommends broadening the scope of Amendment 15 to apply to American Fisheries Act (AFA) and non-AFA-qualified vessels. The GAP urges the Council, state, and federal agencies to marshal the staff and resources necessary to complete this action in time for the 2008 whiting fishery (specifically, implementation no later than May 15, 2008).

Under the authority of the Magnuson-Stevens Act, the purpose and need for this action is:

To prevent an accelerated race-for-fish, which would likely cause serious conservation and socio-economic harm, including excessive bycatch of overfished rockfish, excessive catch of endangered and threatened salmon, excessive catch of undersize and unmarketable whiting, and severe disruption of other groundfish fishery sectors. This action will help maintain stability in the whiting fishery and other groundfish fishing sectors while the Council completes its fishery management plan amendment to rationalize the groundfish and whiting fisheries for the long term.

Due to the urgent need to implement protective measures in time for the 2008 fishery, the GAP recommends a narrow range of alternatives. The alternatives provide an efficient mechanism by which participation in the whiting fishery could be restricted. Again, these restrictions are an interim measure to prevent conservation and socio-economic harm in the whiting fishery.

The GAP recommends the following alternatives, which would apply to AFA-qualified and non-AFA-qualified vessels participating in the shorebased, mothership, and catcher-processor sectors of the Pacific whiting fishery:

A vessel shall not fish for or land whiting, or process whiting at sea, while participating in a specific sector with a vessel that has no history of participation within that specific sector of the whiting fishery in the period after December 31, 1993 and prior to January 1, 2006.

A vessel shall not fish for or land whiting, or process whiting at sea, while participating in a specific sector with a vessel that has no history of participation within that specific sector of the whiting fishery in the period after December 31, 1996 and prior to January 1, 2006.

A vessel shall not fish for or land whiting, or process whiting at sea, while participating in a specific sector with a vessel that has no history of participation within that specific sector of the whiting fishery in the period after December 31, 1993 and prior to January 1, 2007.

A vessel shall not fish for or land whiting, or process whiting at sea, while participating in a specific sector with a vessel that has no history of participation within that specific sector of the whiting fishery in the period after December 31, 1996 and prior to January 1, 2007.