

GROUND FISH MANAGEMENT TEAM REPORT ON THE
SHORE-BASED PACIFIC WHITING MONITORING PROGRAM

The Groundfish Management Team (GMT) urges the Council to adopt an alternative to transform the current shore-based Pacific whiting monitoring program into a federally coordinated program. The goal of Amendment 10 is to establish a regulatory standardized reporting methodology for the collection and verification of accurate and timely catch data for the Pacific whiting shoreside fishery in support of the Endangered Species Act requirements for salmon and overfished species bycatch reporting. There have been many advantages of the current exempted fishing permit (EFP) program; however these permits are not intended for long term use and the shoreside whiting fishery has been operating under an EFP for 16 years.

The GMT reviewed the alternatives presented in the draft environmental assessment (Agenda Item E.3.b, Attachment 3) and concurs with the following elements of the NMFS preferred Alternative 4:

1. NMFS coordinates and oversees the entire shore-based Pacific whiting monitoring program.
2. Federal regulations would be promulgated to support a maximized retention fishery.
3. Vessels would be required to hold a limited entry permit with a trawl endorsement.
4. Vessels would be issued a whiting endorsement that declares the intent to fish.
5. Whiting processors (“first receivers”) are required to submit daily electronic fish tickets.
6. NMFS retains current authority to place West Coast Groundfish Observer Program observers aboard the shore-based catcher vessels.
7. Monitoring shore-based catcher vessels (4B)
 - a. 100% EMS used to monitor maximized retention at sea
 - b. Vessels fund and procure EMS service from permitted provider
 - c. NMFS funds EMS analysis
8. Monitoring Shoreside Processors(4B)
 - a. Data Quality Monitors, as defined on page 2-13 in Agenda Item E.3.b, Attachment 3.
9. Disposition of Overage Fish (4A)
 - a. Overages reported on state fish tickets
 - b. Overage fish abandoned to state
 - c. Prohibited species donated
 - d. State enforcement tracks compliance

The GMT also briefly discussed the need to monitor shore-based catcher vessels that choose to sort at sea. Current regulations allow vessels to target whiting inside the rockfish conservation area (RCA) during the primary season without an EFP and an electronic monitoring system if those vessels sort their catch at sea. The creation of this fishing opportunity was an unintended oversight and the ability to prosecute whiting inside the RCA unmonitored should be eliminated. Currently, this activity is a very small portion of the fishery (< 1%); however if this fishery grows, the Council will need to consider how to incorporate monitoring this segment of the fishery.

Recommendations

1. The GMT recommends adoption of the NMFS preferred alternative, as addressed above in items 1-9.
2. The GMT recommends eliminating the ability to prosecute whiting inside the RCA without proper monitoring.

PFMC
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