

GROUND FISH ADVISORY SUBPANEL REPORT ON INSEASON ADJUSTMENTS

The Groundfish Advisory Subpanel (GAP) has the following comments and recommendations for the Council to consider for inseason adjustments to groundfish fisheries.

Commercial Fishery

1. The GAP supports extending the current catch limits for open access sablefish south of 36°.
2. The GAP recommends extending the 3,000/per 2 month cumulative limit for limited entry short spine south of 34° 27'.
3. The GAP supports increasing the open access DTL fishery north of 36 degrees and south of 40/10 which is operating in 300 fathoms
4. The majority of the GAP also supports reopening the whiting fishery beginning October 1st. In order to accomplish this, the GAP recommends increasing the hard cap of widow rockfish to 275 mt.

The full GAP and Groundfish Management Team (GMT) did not have time to discuss the uncertainty of discard estimates in the whiting fishery, and what this may mean for the size of buffer from widow and canary optimum yield and the potential need for additional measures in the shore based fleet. Therefore, a minority recommends the Council consider these uncertainties in their discussion of increasing the bycatch caps for the whiting fishery, and the potential need for 100% observer coverage and real time monitoring.

Recreational Fishery

In light of the information presented the GAP supports closing the central and northern recreational fishery on October 1st, 2007. GAP members question the validity of the data especially concerning the geographic area impacted. If the data is accurate, the GAP is disappointed in the overages and associated impacts of depleted species by the California recreational fishery. The GAP believes that the state of California should be managing to their prescribed harvest guidelines as Oregon and Washington must. An overage of such a substantial amount on species of high concern such as yelloweye is extremely troublesome. Some members of the GAP would like to remind California that in 2008 they should be managing to the harvest guideline that was established for 2007 and 2008, not to the current catches that have occurred.

Lastly, the GAP is disappointed over the delay in the catch accounting for the California recreational fishery (and other sectors as well) and the subsequent delay in providing an up-to-date scorecard at the beginning of the week. The GAP understands that the GMT was waiting for data from the California recreational fishery, the tribal fishery, and the research catch – all of which was being provided by outside sources. The GAP believes that the process is failing: the states have harvest guidelines that they must manage to and all three states can and should take action to close fisheries which are projected to exceed catch limits. Recreational data is supposed to be reported monthly. The data to inform the scorecard is supposed to be provided the week prior to the Council meeting. When the systems fail, the deliberation process of the advisors (GAP and GMT) is delayed.

Other inseason adjustments being considered by the GMT will be addressed in the second inseason agenda item. PFMC – 09/12/07