

GROUND FISH ADVISORY SUBPANEL REPORT ON
AMENDMENT 15: PARTICIPATION
LIMITATION IN THE PACIFIC WHITING FISHERY

The Groundfish Advisory Subpanel (GAP) discussed at-length the alternatives for limiting entry to the whiting fishery under Amendment 15. A consensus of the GAP recommends that the Council adopt Alternative 2A as a preferred alternative to implement Amendment 15 for the 2008 whiting season. The GAP generally agrees that a chaotic derby fishery with detrimental effects on current participants may occur in 2008 with or without this action and some GAP members have concerns about aspects of Amendment 15 in its current form.

Qualifying vessels versus permits

Some members of the GAP believe strongly that the license limitation program should be based on permits and permit history not vessels. The GAP realizes that basing the program on vessels was appropriate when the goal of Amendment 15 was to prevent American Fisheries Act (AFA)-qualified vessels without prior participation in the whiting fishery from entering. However, continuing to use vessels has many adverse affects. For example, one permit could have qualified several vessels, some of the vessels that qualify are no longer involved with West Coast fisheries, qualifying vessels may have sunk or been scrapped, and permit holders who sold vessels, but retained the permits with whiting history would be excluded. Lastly, using vessels to identify participants is inconsistent with the trawl rationalization program.

Expansion of program to include all vessels in lieu of AFA-qualified vessels without prior participation

Some members of the GAP believe that expanding the program beyond AFA is a mistake. While the GAP hesitantly agreed to limit all vessels for the emergency rule, there is more consternation over the expansion with regards to an interim program. In particular, some of the options allow the AFA catcher vessels that should have been prevented from participating in the fishery to be included, while long-time West Coast trawl vessels are excluded.

Alternatives do not prevent increase in capacity

All alternatives still allow the potential of a significant numbers of catcher vessels to enter the 2008 fishery and some members of the GAP believe that the intent of the action is not being met.

Other potential impacts

The GAP has heard from one small trawl vessel using new and innovative techniques to increase revenue from the whiting they harvest. Amendment 15 could potentially adversely affect these fishermen because their harvesting process includes heading, gutting and tailing their catch. Current definitions classify this operation as processing. These fishermen believe their concerns could be addressed by National Marine Fisheries Service expanding the definition of H & G product. The GAP suggests that NMFS should review this situation and consider revising the H & G definition to address potential impacts to this one vessel.

Interim Measure

The GAP believes the EA language describing the action as an interim measure should be expanded to include verbiage that makes clear that inclusion in the interim measure does not guarantee future participation and/or inclusion in the trawl rationalization program.

PFMC

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