

**GROUND FISH MANAGEMENT TEAM REPORT ON
 EXEMPTED FISHING PERMITS (EFPs) FOR 2008 FISHERIES**

The Groundfish Management Team (GMT) reviewed the applications relative to evaluation criteria in the Council’s Operating Procedure (COP) on EFPs. EFPs are designed to promote increased utilization of underutilized species, realize the expansion potential of the domestic groundfish fishery, and increase the harvest efficiency of the fishery consistent with the Magnuson-Stevens Fishery Conservation and Management Act and the management goals of the Fishery Management Plan. EFPs are also commonly used to explore ways to reduce effort on depressed stocks, encourage innovation and efficiency in the fisheries, provide access to constrained target stocks while directly measuring the bycatch associated with those fishing strategies, and to evaluate current and proposed management measures.

The GMT only reviewed the technical merits of the EFPs and notes that the Council will likely need to make their decision based on the availability of overfished species in the November scorecard, which will contain the most up to date projection for the 2008 fisheries. If the Council adopts the EFPs, relatively more restrictive management measures may be necessary to stay within the canary and yelloweye optimum yields. To help illustrate the magnitude of restriction necessary to accommodate the EFPs, the GMT compiled estimated impacts of overfished species by EFP. These numbers are shown below.

Table 1. GMT Recommended Proposed Caps in EFP Applications

EFP	Bocaccio	Canary	Cowcod	Darkblotched	Widow	Yelloweye
Churchman	3.2 mt	<0.1 mt (50 lb)	<0.1 mt (50 lb)	0 mt	3.2 mt	<0.1 mt (50 lb)
Fosmark	3.3 mt	<0.1 mt (50 lb)	<0.1 mt (50 lb)	0.4 mt	0.7 mt	<0.1 mt (50 lb)
TNC	5.0 mt	0.1 mt (200 lb)*	0.1 mt (300 lb)	0.5 mt	2.0 mt	<0.1 mt (100 lb)*
RFA	2.7 mt*	0.1 mt (300 lb)*	<0.1 mt (50 lb)*	0.1 mt (150 lb)*	0.7 mt*	<0.1 mt (50 lb)*
Total	14.2 mt	0.3 mt	0.2 mt	1.0 mt	6.6 mt	0.1 mt

* GMT recommended bycatch limits

Churchman (Agenda Item D.2.a, Attachment 1)

This application proposes to target chilipepper, widow, and bocaccio rockfish using vertical non-bottom contact gear outside the non-trawl Rockfish Conservation Area in central California (40°10’ to 36° N. lat). The EFP proposes to use two vessels and limit the number of hooks to 100 per set. This experiment will explore whether discard can be virtually eliminated by using a rod and reel method, thereby reducing bycatch.

The GMT is unable to evaluate how the success of the EFP will be evaluated because infrastructure necessary to achieve and measure the objectives have not been identified.

The GMT recommends that the following additions or clarifications be made:

- Include additional areas which would provide the opportunity to investigate gear versus area effects.
- Provide more specifics on infrastructure for observer logistics.
- Provide specifics on the types of data collected, the party responsible for data analysis, and the party responsible for final report preparation.

Fosmark (Agenda Item D.2.a, Attachment 2)

This application proposes to target chilipepper rockfish using an epipelagic longline gear in central California (36° to 37°30' N. lat), with the long-term objective of evaluating the effectiveness of a species-specific longline technique for its potential of providing future economic opportunities. This EFP proposes to use up to three vessels and open access troll fly and vertical hook and line gear that is set and fished in a manner such that the hooks sink near to, but not on, the bottom.

The GMT felt that this proposal was well thought out, well detailed, and met the criteria required by the COPs. However, the GMT recommends that the applicants provide more information on infrastructure for observer logistics.

Nature Conservancy and Environmental Defense (Agenda Item D.2.a, Attachment 3)

The GMT reviewed the EFP application from The Nature Conservancy (TNC) and Environmental Defense, which proposes the initiation of a slope groundfish fishery by vessels with trawl permits that use non-trawl gear in a cooperative fashion on the central California coast. TNC designed this EFP to provide information on the economic efficacy of pooling catch limits into a harvesting cooperative that utilizes longline and traps. The EFP is intended to provide information on the socioeconomic effects of gear-switching and dedicated access in addition to informing the cost-effectiveness of managing a regional fishing association within the framework of the Council system

The GMT felt that the revised proposal was well thought out and complete. The GMT supports the technical merits of this proposal because it can provide useful information on economic efficiency, gear switching, behavior modification, and transference to co-ops as well as help inform future management decisions on a coast wide basis. This EFP will provide information towards evaluating management measures, specifically as it applies to the trawl rationalization program.

The GMT notes that, in order to prosecute this EFP, the open access sablefish fishery may have to be restricted in the Conception Area to prevent an exceedance of the OY. For several years prior to this 2007, the Conception-area sablefish OY was under-utilized. Beginning in the late summer of 2007, substantial increases in effort in the open access portion of the fishery led to a dramatic increase in the rate of sablefish catch occurring in that area. This effort appears to have come from vessels that have moved from areas north of 36 degrees latitude, where limits in the DTL fishery were reduced. Because of reductions in the northern areas, the opportunities for vessels operating in the Conception area became relatively much greater in 2007 and this appears to have been responsible – in large part – for the shift in effort to the south.

The GMT discussed this increase in catch and effort in relation to 2008 fishery opportunities if the TNC EFP goes forward and if the TNC EFP does not go forward. The GMT believes that the increase in sablefish catch that began in late summer of 2007 is likely to continue into 2008 if fishing opportunities in the Conception area remain unchanged. This higher catch rate would likely mean that the OY would be exceeded, and therefore the GMT believes that fishing opportunities in the Conception area will need to be decreased in 2008 regardless of whether the TNC EFP goes forward. If the TNC EFP goes forward, the GMT recommends that the southern and northern open access sablefish limits be aligned. The GMT does not yet have a recommendation for southern open access limits if the EFP does not go forward.

The GMT also notes that this EFP will be prosecuted seaward of 150 fm, where canary impacts are decreased. The Council will also need to weigh the value of knowledge gained from the EFP against the potential constraints to the directed fishery.

Recreational Fishing Alliance (Agenda Item D.2.a, Attachment 4)

This EFP proposes to investigate recreational hook and line fishing of chilipepper in north-central California (Pigeon Point to 40°10' N. lat) seaward of the RCA. The goal of this EFP is to investigate whether a recreational fishery can still occur on the slope without impacts to overfished species. If successful, this might open a new market for charter fleets during months when inshore rockfish seasons are closed.

The GMT is unable to evaluate how the success of the EFP will be evaluated because infrastructure necessary to achieve and measure the objectives have not been identified The GMT has discussed the merits of using depth contours versus management lines to delineate the fishing area for this EFP. Depth contours may provide more research information, however if the EFP were transferred into regulation the 150 fm line may be more appropriate. The GMT would recommend the following additions or clarifications made:

- Provide more information on infrastructure necessary for data analysis and report preparation.
- Provide more specifics on coordination of recreational samplers.

Comments on all proposals:

The GMT recommends that all EFPs be full retention to account for all rockfish caught under EFP bycatch limits and to allow biological sampling. The GMT also recommends that all EFPs be exempt from federal trip limits so that all EFP participants can sell target species catches in excess of trip limits and therefore provide a better measure of bycatch performance and provide greater incentives. The GMT notes that there may be concerns with allowing EFP holders to sell overfished species in excess of trip limits and the Council should consider whether or not this should be allowed under any of the proposed EFPs.

The COPs state that EFP proposals must identify whether infrastructure is in place to monitor, process data, and administer the EFP. The GMT recommends that the Churchman and RFA applicants provide more details relative to the infrastructure for observing fishing, processing and reporting data collected under the EFP. If the Council chooses to adopt the EFPs, it is the GMT's understanding that the applicant would have to work with NMFS to ensure that all the terms of the EFPs are met.

The GMT notes that all of these EFPs may be able to provide valuable information for future management.

Recommendations:

1. If the Council adopts the EFPs, the GMT recommends amendment of the EFPs as outlined above.

PFMC
11/06/07