

WASHINGTON DEPARTMENT OF FISH AND WILDLIFE REPORT ON
AMENDMENT 22: OPEN ACCESS LICENSE LIMITATION

The Washington Department of Fish and Wildlife (WDFW) held a public meeting on January 9, 2008, to review and solicit input on the Pacific Fishery Management Council's consideration for limiting participation in the open access groundfish fishery. Seventeen people attended the meeting. The meeting agenda included: a brief explanation of the Council process; the proposed timeline for rulemaking, including future opportunity to comment; an overview of the draft alternatives; and a comment and discussion period. The overview included a description of the purpose and need, a brief history of the Washington open access fishery and fleet profile, the proposed system of B and C permits, and the preliminary range of alternatives.

In general, the group favored a moratorium-type approach that would allow anyone who had fished in the 2004-06 period to attain a federal B permit. Specific questions and comments focused on: recognition of the reductions already made in the Washington nearshore fishery (e.g., there used to be 25 vessels fishing out of Neah Bay, and now there are only a few); how individual catch histories would be considered for qualifying (i.e., individual vs. vessel catch history); whether state-specific goals and management could be considered; and vessel monitoring system requirements for participation in the open access fishery.

There was also a general consensus among the group that increased open access effort was not desirable; however, the group also wanted to ensure that participants retained the opportunity to participate in the future. A large proportion of Washington open access fishers participate in other fisheries (e.g., salmon troll, Dungeness crab, albacore troll), and the fishing opportunity in those fisheries is variable from year to year. Therefore, having a narrowly defined recent participation requirement (e.g., 2006 only) to qualify and having an annual minimum landing requirement to renew permits in the future would not accommodate the typical fishing practices of the Washington open access fleet.

WDFW plans to hold another public meeting this summer to present and discuss the refined range of alternatives developed at this Council meeting. We will provide a summary of those discussions to the Council.