

FINAL GROUND FISH ALLOCATION COMMITTEE REPORT FROM JANUARY 2009
REGARDING OPEN ACCESS: AMENDMENT 22.

The Groundfish Allocation Committee (GAC) met in Portland, Oregon on January 29, 2009 to discuss Amendment 22 - Open Access Limitation. The following written GAC recommendations to the Council were vetted by the committee members at the GAC meeting and via email. The rationale was compiled from staff notes.

- The GAC recommends the following be added to the Amendment 22 purpose and need statement: Allowing unlimited open access to continue creates problems for tracking and monitoring the fishery and creates the potential for expansion of additional target fisheries. Closing the open access nature of the groundfish fishery and preventing additional entrants is an important step in managing fishery capacity.
- The GAC recommends a refinement of Option A-6, which is the preliminary preferred alternative. Refinement includes using >500 lb for sablefish and >100 lb for lingcod to qualify for the species endorsements; A and B permits can be used with single vessels in the same year; B permits are transferrable after the first year, and no C permit requirement.
- The GAC recommends a new alternative be analyzed that would set a fleet size of 713 vessels and maintain the current proportions of vessels by target species (sablefish, lingcod, slope rockfish, shelf rockfish, sharks, other species and non-target fleets). For the purposes of this analysis, “current” was defined as 2004-2006.
- The GAC recommends the Groundfish Management Team provide the trip limit differences for sablefish resulting from a fleet size of 445, as compared to status quo and the new alternative.

Rationale

Public comment at the GAC meeting included several statements asking for “meaningful action” to limit the open access fishery. The majority of the GAC responded by going forward with refinement of the purpose and need statement and the preliminary preferred alternative and asking for additional analysis. One of the objectives of limiting the open access fishery is to contain any impact on other sectors.

The assumption that fewer permits would lead to higher trip limits was examined by the group. Furthermore, the GAC discussed how limited the number of permits would have to be before there would be a meaningful amount of fish for redistribution among the remaining harvesters. Staff replied that the number of permits would need to be less than the number of currently active participants. The Federal GAC representative indicated that allowing endorsements to be severed from permits was not desirable, because more tracking and accounting of transfers would be required of National Marine Fisheries Service (NMFS). A statement addressing that point will be provided by NMFS for the open access document.

PFMC
2/23/09