

GROUND FISH ALLOCATION COMMITTEE REPORT FROM JANUARY 2009
REGARDING INTERSECTOR ALLOCATION: AMENDMENT 21

The Groundfish Allocation Committee (GAC) met in Portland, Oregon on January 27-29, 2009 to discuss Amendment 21 - Intersector Allocation, and other issues. The following GAC recommendations with accompanying rationale for considering intersector allocations are presented to the Council.

1. The GAC recommends the Council adopt a new alternative that proportionally increases the non-trawl percentage under intersector allocation (ISA) Alternative 1 by 10% for the following species: lingcod (coastwide), Pacific cod, sablefish (north and south), widow rockfish, chilipepper rockfish, yellowtail rockfish, shortspine thornyhead (north and south), minor slope rockfish (north and south), and starry flounder.
2. The GAC recommends the Council adopt the original GAC-recommended trawl/non-trawl allocations, except all trawl allocations $\geq 95\%$ would be set at 95%.
3. The GAC recommends the Council dismiss ISA alternatives concerning Pacific halibut bycatch limits since this was decided in November 2008 under the trawl rationalization decision.
4. The GAC recommends the Council decide buffers for management uncertainty in the FMP amendment process concerning new National Standard 1 guidelines.
5. For within-trawl allocations, the GAC recommends the Council set the at-sea sectors' set-asides large enough to not constrain these fisheries given the interannual variation in sector catches. The GAC recommends the Council establish a 5 mt minimum set-aside for any incidentally-caught species in the at-sea fisheries and all set-asides should be rounded up to the nearest 5 mt.
6. The GAC recommends removing spiny dogfish from the list of ISA species.
7. The GAC recommends the Council select within-trawl subsector allocation schemes for the shoreside trawl sector in April pending further analysis and discussion.

Rationale

GAC Recommendation 1:

The rationale for analyzing a new ISA alternative that proportionally increases the non-trawl allocation percentages for some ISA species was presented by NMFS in a hand-out as follows. The alternatives in the ISA analysis are based on historical catch percentages by sector. However, it was suggested by the NMFS representative to the GAC that there could be other ways to approach sector allocations. The current fishery is the result of years of declining catches, including declaration of a fishery disaster in 2001. In addition, the presence of overfished species has forced restructuring of the fishery to avoid harvesting these species, resulting in further changes to fishing patterns. The Amendment 21 ISA action is an attempt to

allocate the groundfish stocks among the various sectors to reduce the risk that the activities of one sector will affect or be affected by the others. The initial strategy under discussion by the Council has been to look at recent harvest splits among the sectors and then lock in these harvest percentages, with some alteration of strict historical patterns on a case-by-case basis. However, the current harvest percentages are the result of several years of perturbations and, if the ISA were to have been done in the 1980s, an allocation based strictly on historical catches would likely have been different. If we were to do nothing, the fishery would be free to rearrange itself among the sectors as overfished species rebuild themselves and communities recover. In addition, the Council has received public testimony stating that that an allocation directed more toward fixed gear could be more “environmentally friendly” and could help support more fishing communities. However, the impact of allocating quota to sectors based on other than historical methods has not been fully analyzed. In particular, an analysis could explore the impacts of allocating more than a historical proportion of quota to a sector on habitat, bycatch, overfished species, fishing communities, and endangered species.

GAC Recommendation 2:

In evaluating the historical catch by sector to determine the trawl and non-trawl allocations, knowing the OY for each of the species for each of the years would be required to know whether that sector was constrained or not. Another consideration for this decision is accommodating the potential for new emergent fisheries. Specifying a maximum trawl allocation of 95 percent for the most trawl-dominant species and leaving a 5 percent allocation for non-trawl fisheries allows expansion of non-trawl fisheries and/or developing fisheries that could take these species with non-trawl gear. Standardizing this allocation limit allows comparison with alternatives with higher trawl allocations or alternatives that specify a buffer to achieve the same goal.

GAC Recommendation 3:

The GAC recommended dismissing further analysis of Pacific halibut total catch limits in the rationalized trawl fishery since a 10 percent limit relative to the total Area 2A CEY was decided as part of the Council’s November 2008 trawl rationalization decision. [Staff note: since the January GAC meeting, the Council has decided to analyze a new preliminary preferred alternative for a Pacific halibut total catch limit. Given this decision and Council direction at the March 2009 meeting, all halibut total catch limit alternatives will be analyzed and presented under the ISA agenda item in April.]

GAC Recommendation 4:

Given the mandates in the re-authorized MSA and the new National Standard 1 guidelines, the GAC recommends a consideration of buffers to address management uncertainty in a separate amendment process. This amendment process is contemplated for all species in the FMP and not just the ISA species and is therefore a more logical process for considering buffers. [Staff note: this was recommended to the GAC by staff. The preliminary DEIS that will support the

Council's ISA decisions in April will consign buffer management options of 0-25 percent to the "eliminated from further detailed analysis" category given this more reasoned amendment process for such considerations.]

GAC Recommendation 5:

The set-aside recommendation to accommodate bycatch by the at-sea whiting sectors addresses the interannual variability of bycatch amounts observed in the fishery and the lack of precision in projecting these amounts. The GAC also recognized the value of the whiting fishery comes from attaining whiting quotas and not in the bycatch. If bycatch limits are specified as caps rather than set-asides, which are less flexibly managed than set-asides, future whiting fisheries are more likely to be constrained, which reduces the overall benefit to the fishery and the nation.

GAC Recommendation 6:

Spiny dogfish was initially on the list of species subject to intersector allocation. However, in September 2008, the Council decided not to do a stock assessment of spiny dogfish. Therefore, without a species-specific annual catch limit for spiny dogfish that would be derived from an assessment, there is no basis for allocating harvest shares in the trawl rationalization program. The issue is further complicated in that spiny dogfish are currently managed in the Other Fish complex and there is no historical catch basis for understanding the stock's contribution to the complex. It is therefore recommended that Other Fish allocations remain short term as decided in the biennial specifications and management measures process.

GAC Recommendation 7:

In order to allocate among the trawl sectors, there must first be a one-time reconciliation between the shoreside whiting and shoreside non-whiting initial sector allocations. To calculate an individual's allocation, one would have to determine the bycatch quota share (QS) allocation in the shoreside whiting fishery and the QS allocation in non-whiting trawl efforts. To bring the two QS allocations together under one harvester and to manage a single shoreside trawl sector under an IFQ system, the two QS allocations need to be weighted relative to each other. Equal weighting would not appropriately match the species mix to the vessel's fishing strategy, and therefore, for the analysis to move forward, staff would need to know which years to use for the weighting in each shoreside sector. The split between shoreside whiting and shoreside non-whiting would serve as the weighting percentage. Shoreside sectors would be treated as two different sectors in order to make the initial allocation, and thereafter there would be no distinction between QS issued for shoreside whiting and non-whiting.