

GROUND FISH ADVISORY SUBPANEL (GAP) REPORT ON
CONSIDERATION OF INSEASON ADJUSTMENTS

The GAP reviewed several requests for inseason adjustments to current groundfish cumulative limits. The GAP has presented these requests to the GMT for further consideration.

Limited Entry Trawl

Chilipepper South of 40°10' N. Latitude

At the April Council meeting a request for consideration of an increase in the chilipepper cumulative limit was made at the GAP. Because of uncertainties and lack of current landing information the GMT recommended, and the GAP concurred that it would be better to wait until the June Council meeting.

As presented at the April meeting, the trawl fleet is consistently encountering increasing numbers of chilipepper while targeting other species, in particular flatfish shoreward of the RCA. The current limit of 5,000 lbs cumulative is forcing vessels to discard an equal amount. The small footrope requirement shoreward of the RCA has kept vessels off of hard bottom where bocaccio and canary are more commonly found.

That and the use of the select trawl have reduced the bocaccio and canary incidental catch. The bulk of the chilipepper are found while fishing for flatfish over mud bottom. Chilipepper is still encountered seaward of the RCA though not in the same degree.

The GAP supports the GMT's comments on chilipepper and would suggest a 12,000 lb cumulative two month limit both shoreward and seaward of the RCA. This change would afford management to see to what extent, if any, fishing behavior would change at these higher limits.

Petrале

The Gap recommends the council take action to prevent petrale sole from becoming overfished if an assessment indicating that status is approved. It is also recommended to spread reductions over as many periods as possible, recognizing that a two meeting process is required to reduce limits due to assumed lower OY's in future years.

Trip Limits

The GAP supports option #2 contained in the GMT statement.

The GAP also supports a request to increase dover sole limits north of 40° 10' N Lat. and shoreward of the RCA from 45,000 to 60,000 lb/ 2 months. This has not been analyzed by the GMT as it is a late request.

Limited entry fixed gear

Sablefish DTL Limits North of 36°N. Lat.

The GAP would encourage the Council to move the line from 125 to 100 fm. The GAP was informed that the Limited Entry DTL fishery has only been realizing about 50% of its assigned OY based on numbers recorded in the Federal Register.

The GMT informed the GAP that the score card for the yelloweye take from this fishery assumes a 100 percent harvest of this sablefish allocation. Therefore the GAP would like consideration of higher trip limits both weekly and bimonthly so the L.E. DTL fishery can harvest their assigned OY. Currently the bimonthly limit is 5500.

California Scorpionfish Limits South of 40°10' N Lat.

The GAP supports the GMT recommendation to consider increasing the California scorpionfish (sculpin) trip limits to at least 1,200 lb/ 2 months.

Open Access Fishery

Sablefish North of 36° N Lat.

An increase in the daily-trip limit (DTL) limits for the open access sablefish fishery north of 36° N. latitude was requested at the April council meeting given a lack of projected landings at that time. The Council increased the cumulative limit from 2,100 to 2,400 lbs per two month period. However, current tracking still projects the fishery falling short of the 587 mt sablefish quota for the year. The GMT is currently projecting a 93 mt shortfall for the year under the current DTL limits.

There is nothing to suggest that the DTL effort will increase any more than it did in 2008. Vessels not fishing salmon and choosing to fish in the DTL sablefish fishery have already made the financial commitment and participated in the 2008 season. Also there will be some commercial salmon activity in Oregon and Washington this year, thereby reducing some DTL effort in those areas. Further anecdotal comments have indicated the lack of available sablefish so far.

The GAP therefore recommends a further modest increase of the cumulative limit from 2,400 lbs to 2,750 lbs per two months beginning on July 1, 2009 through the end of the year. The GMT projects the open access DTL fishery would still under-harvest their sablefish allocation by about 74mt.

Black rockfish limits between 42° N Lat. 40° 10' N. Lat.

The Gap supports an increase of black rockfish limits in the open access fishery from 6000 lb/2 months to 7000 lb/2 months of which no more than 1200 lb may be species other than black rockfish.