

GROUND FISH ADVISORY SUBPANEL REPORT ON  
MONTEREY BAY NATIONAL MARINE SANCTUARY MARINE PROTECTED AREA  
PROCESS

The Groundfish Advisory Subpanel (GAP) reviewed the documents involved with this agenda item. The GAP believes that there are many criteria that should be considered when considering permanent closures of any area to any fishing activity. The first and foremost is the fact that National Marine Fisheries Service (NMFS) through the Magnuson-Stevens Act (MSA) is the sole authority to regulate fishing activity within the area in question.

The GAP wishes to address the process that is being employed by the Sanctuary staff and advisory groups for this determination of a need. First of all an implied final decision that Marine Protected Areas (MPAs) are necessary is premature. Since fishing is the only activity being constrained or eliminated then it is a fishery management action. If a desire to alter current fishery management regulatory measures is desired then it must be done under the authority of the Council and NMFS.

The GAP believes that the following criteria must be followed in the priority order as listed:

1. The Council authority and involvement is crucial to this process. Fishing regulations are developed by the Council. It is mandated by the MSA. This Council is also where fishery expertise resides. If a truly collaborative, transparent and objective approach is desired, then the Council must be involved in every step of the process when fishing issues are involved.
2. Baseline socio-economic and ecosystem studies must be completed prior to any determinations. This must be done to determine if further economic constraints can be tolerated without losing any fishing economic value, and more importantly, capital infrastructure.
3. A statement of desired status of any select sanctuary site must be made. A scientific and social analysis must occur in order to justify this preferred outcome. An MPA is only a tool to achieve a change in status. Many other tools exist which may be able to provide an acceptable and or identical result. All options need to be considered. As an example, any development of an MPA must include: an analysis of effects on incidental non-targeted bycatch and catch per unit of effort on targeted species completed, a determination of the impacts resulting from area-specific effort shift conducted, and all relative socio-economic costs to harvesting listed.
4. To determine the need for MPA's, a thorough transparent public process needs to be implemented similar in scope to the Council process. Open public meetings involving impacted stakeholders are paramount in importance.

In summary, the GAP feels the Sanctuary could consider a vibrant, profitable, and sustainable fishery as a valuable sanctuary asset. This could be an asset that deserves protection. A fishery such as this would have a very high intrinsic value, as well as provide cultural value for future generations.

PFMC  
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