

GROUND FISH MANAGEMENT TEAM REPORT ON
THE SALMON ENDANGERED SPECIES ACT (MSA) RECONSULTATION UPDATE

The Groundfish Management Team (GMT) received a briefing from Mr. Frank Lockhart of the National Marine Fisheries Service (NMFS) West Coast Region regarding reconsultation of the interaction of the Pacific coast groundfish fishery with salmonids listed under the Endangered Species Act (ESA).

During the non-salmonid ESA consultation for the groundfish fishery in 2012, NMFS made draft risk assessments and biological opinions available for advisory body and Council comment during at least two Council meetings. The Council and its advisory bodies provided input on these documents, ranging from the description of the fishery to the types of triggers for mitigation measures. NMFS was very responsive to this collaborative process, and it has benefitted the analyses, the industry, and potentially the affected species. The GMT recommends that the Council and its advisory bodies continue to provide comments on draft consultation documents prior to finalization of the consultation. The goal is to ensure that a collaborative process continues and that draft opinions are available in time to inform Council action.

Relative to the approaches to fishery conservation measures, the GMT does not have specific recommendations regarding the reinitiation threshold structure, management action triggers, or reinitiation triggers at this time. However, the GMT would appreciate the opportunity to comment on these alternative approaches after review of a draft biological opinion (or other documentation with updated information regarding salmonid interactions since the start of the trawl rationalization program) of how the various sectors of the groundfish fishery interact with listed salmonids. We may have specific recommendations subsequent to that review.

The GMT would like to note that there could be efficiencies gained if the formal review of salmon catch occurred on a biennial timeframe, congruent with the biennial harvest specifications process outlined in the groundfish fishery management plan.