

GROUND FISH MANAGEMENT TEAM REPORT ON NON SALMON ESA REPORT

The Groundfish Management Team (GMT) reviewed the items in the briefing book under this agenda item and received a briefing from Ms. Sarah Williams of the National Marine Fisheries Service (NMFS) West Coast Region (WCR) and has the following comments.

Given that the GMT had very little time to review and discuss the Groundfish Endangered Species Workgroup (Workgroup) Report ([Agenda Item D.4.a., Supplemental ESA Workgroup Report](#)) our comments and recommendations are focused on the two instances where incidental takes exceeded the amounts specified in the Incidental Take Statement (ITS), general recommendations, and other key points that we identified as most important. We understand that there will be the opportunity to provide additional input at future meetings, as the consultation process continues.

Overarching Issues

The GMT supports consideration of the use of some federally mandated logbooks to improve estimates of bycatch of protected species, and agrees with the Workgroup that logbooks for the fixed gear fishery may also improve estimates for all groundfish species. Given that development and implementation of a federal logbook program has proven to be time consuming and complicated, the GMT suggests that maximum benefit could be achieved if logbooks were considered initially for non-individual fishing quota (IFQ) fisheries where observer coverage rates are lower, as opposed to the IFQ fishery which currently has 100 percent observer coverage, as well as state logbooks. In addition, there are complexities to a logbook program such as who would manage the data and how the data would be used that haven't been fully evaluated. **If the Council chooses to consider federal logbooks, the GMT recommends that electronic technologies are considered to improve efficiencies with data collection. Such an exploration should occur in a process separate from the 2017-2018 specifications process.**

The GMT also supports the Workgroup recommendation to engage the Scientific and Statistical Committee (SSC) in a review of the methods used to estimate rare events such as those for protected species.

Eulachon

Given the increase in the eulachon population since being listed as threatened in 2010, the GMT understands that NMFS is considering whether an adjustment to the ITS amount is an acceptable alternative to initiating a re-consultation, and that a decision on this would likely be made by September of this year. **The GMT supports the Workgroup recommendation to consider an ITS amount that addresses the fluctuation in the eulachon population, whether that be done through a re-consultation or an update.**

Short-tailed Albatross

Similar to eulachon, the GMT supports building some adaptability into the incidental take amount for short-tailed albatross that addresses variability in the population size. Additionally, the GMT spent some time discussing the use of black-footed albatross as a proxy for short-tailed albatross, given the rarity of encounters. Anecdotal information indicates that black-footed albatross may be more aggressive at attacking the gear during setting, whereas short-tailed albatross tend to be less aggressive. It would be worthwhile to investigate these anecdotal observations using available data sources (e.g., Sea Grant data). The GMT understands that in Alaska there is sufficient bycatch information to inform the short-tailed albatross ITS amount. An analysis could be completed to see how a black-footed albatross proxy in Alaska compares to the actual short-tailed albatross limit in Alaska. Such an analysis might inform any caveats with using black-footed as a proxy on the West Coast. **In sum, the GMT supports re-evaluation of the black-footed albatross proxy during the risk assessment.**

Night Setting Analysis/Streamer Lines

The GMT supports the Workgroup recommendation that the final rule be implemented per the past Council recommendation, which is to require streamer lines during night setting operations. The GMT also supports the Workgroup recommendation to compare the effectiveness of reducing seabird bycatch between streamer lines and night setting to inform potential future action. The GMT has not had time to review the analysis in great detail and thus may not understand all the data leading NMFS to consider removing the nighttime exemption. As such, we see merit in bringing this issue back for further review and consideration. A brief review of the Sea Grant PowerPoint from [April 2015](#) indicates that northern fulmar bycatch is three times higher at night based on data from Alaska. While northern fulmars are not a listed species, there may be interest in retaining the requirement to reduce overall seabird bycatch.

The GMT also recommends further evaluation of how the use of floating gear reduces the effective zone of the streamer lines as well as consideration for expanding the streamer line requirement to the smaller vessels, which make up the majority of the fleet ([Agenda Item H.4.b, Supplemental GMT Report, September, 2012](#)). If these evaluations lead to changes in management measures, the GMT recommends such considerations occur outside of the harvest specifications and management measures process to ensure biennial regulations are implemented on January 1.

Analysis of Management Measures and Regulatory Process

While we support the schedule that was developed to allow for Workgroup recommendations to be analyzed through the harvest specifications process, when appropriate, we don't want to delay the implementation of the 2017-2018 rules. **Given the complexity of the management measures discussed here, the GMT recommends that they be considered through a process separate from the 2017-108 specifications process.**

GMT Recommendations:

- 1. The GMT supports the Workgroup recommendations specifically mentioned in the above statement.**
- 2. If the Council chooses to consider federal logbooks, the GMT recommends that electronic technologies be considered to improve efficiencies with data collection. Such an exploration should occur in a process separate from the 2017-2018 specifications process.**
- 3. The GMT recommends further evaluation of how the use of floating gear reduces the effective zone of the streamer lines as well as consideration for expanding the streamer line requirement to the smaller vessels.**
- 4. The GMT recommends that further exploration of management measures to reduce encounters with seabirds be considered through a process separate from the 2017-2018 specifications process.**

PFMC
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