

SUPPLEMENTAL GROUND FISH ADVISORY SUBPANEL REPORT ON ESSENTIAL  
FISH HABITAT AND ROCKFISH CONSERVATION AREAS

The Groundfish Advisory Subpanel (GAP) heard an update from representatives of the Essential Fish Habitat Collaborative group (Collaborative). The GAP appreciates the effort that has gone into the collaborative process so far, and believes it holds significant promise to fulfill the vision of improving both habitat protection and opportunity for the fleet.

Going forward, the GAP understands the collaborative will share coordinates for roughly thirty proposed closures and a dozen proposed re-openings with the fleet by mid-June. After receiving input from the fleet and nongovernmental organization (NGO) partners, the collaborative will undertake a final series of port meetings in July to develop a complete coastwide package in advance of the briefing book deadline in mid-August. The GAP appreciates the thorough way that the collaborative is seeking input from interested parties, and underscores the importance of the collaborative submitting the package by the briefing book deadline.

The GAP discussed the analytical process and supports the collaborative recommendation that their package be analyzed as a standalone alternative. We will comment further on that in September.

Finally, with respect to the area off of the Washington coast north of Grays Harbor, we understand that it is essential to coordinate with the treaty tribes relative to establishing area closures for the non-treaty trawl fleet, and we recommend that the collaborative seek opportunities to coordinate with the tribes. We acknowledge and respect the tribes' treaty rights and recognize that their usual and accustomed fishing areas are finite and, as a result, area closures within those areas can be problematic for the tribes to fully exercise their treaty rights. To be clear, the GAP notes that the collaborative has no intention of restricting tribal fishing in the usual and accustomed areas. We urge NOAA to continue its efforts to coordinate with the tribes and, if they are amenable, seek their concurrence with the revisions that are ultimately adopted by the council and implemented by NOAA.

PFMC  
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