

GROUND FISH ADVISORY SUBPANEL REPORT ON CONSIDERATION OF GEAR REGULATIONS FOR TRAWL CATCH SHARES

The Groundfish Advisory Subpanel (GAP) received reports from Ms. Jamie Goen, National Marine Fisheries Service, and Mr. Jim Seger, Council staff, on proposed gear changes in the trawl catch shares program.

The GAP discussed the alternatives listed in H.2.a, Attachment 1, and offers the following comments.

In general, the GAP considers the ranges adequate for analysis and offers some additional options for inclusion. The GAP prefers Alternative 3 as the preferred alternative for all options as the most reasonable because they do provide the greatest flexibility. And in the case of the catch shares program, flexibility translates to greater efficiency, which was one of the goals when the program was established. For the last five years, the trawl fleet has been managed to archaic regulations from a non-rationalized fishery. As we have discussed in several prior statements, the fishery is 100 percent monitored and the fleets use their own quota to account for both target harvest and bycatch. There is no reason to use outdated regulations.

The GAP recognizes several of the items on the Council's agenda are interrelated, such as the Rockfish Conservation Area (RCA) and essential fish habitat (EFH) actions, electronic monitoring and this gear action. Many of these actions may require ongoing coordination as they move through the Council process.

The GAP suggests the following changes:

1. Under "Trawl gear configuration, minimum mesh size for bottom trawl," we suggest including no minimum mesh size as Alternative 3. There is no more need for including a minimum mesh size, as the fleet is monitored and accountable. Moreover, it would provide more flexibility to fishermen as they experiment with excluders and other net configurations. Sometimes a mesh size will be smaller where an excluder is attached to the net or the excluder itself may be composed of smaller mesh. Elimination of this regulation will provide continued opportunity for gear innovation.
2. Under "Gear use, multiple gears onboard," we suggest a hybrid of Alternatives 2 and 3: Allow multiple trawl gears onboard at the same time *and* allow the use of those gears. Alternative 2 says multiple gears could be onboard but only a single gear could be used on that trip. The GAP recommends allowing legal multiple trawl gears on the same trip *and* the use of those gears on that trip. Sub-options A and B in Alternative 3, separating or comingling catch according to gear type, could be retained for analysis.

With vessel monitoring systems (VMS), it should not be difficult to simply declare into another fishery. Allowing the use of multiple gears will gain efficiencies.

The GAP discussed the concern of how data from fish that are comingled would be considered when they are incorporated into stock assessments. This may need further discussion, but it may be determined that this be included as additional data for use in stock assessments.

The GAP suggests adding the additional items for analysis as long as we stay on track for a Jan. 1, 2017, implementation. The GAP believes most of these are technical language and clean-up fixes.

1. Use of midwater trawl gear inside the RCA south of 40° 10' N. latitude: GAP recommends including this issue. The regulations for fishing inside the RCA north of 40 10' have already gone through the deeming process. This complies with, and will contribute to attainment of, the goal of the catch shares program to provide flexibility to the fleet. Allowing the use of midwater gear inside the RCA both north and south of 40° 10' N. latitude would make the regulations more clear and eliminate a management line while allowing fishermen access to healthy stocks.

We've included our recommendations in the following table. Proposed additions are **highlighted**; proposed deletions are in ~~strikethrough~~:

The GAP believes all the items in this additional table fit within the purpose and need in Attachment 1, including fishing in multiple management areas, because that is the manner in which the gear would be used.

	Alternative 1 (No Action)	Alternative 2 (TRREC/Gear Workshop)	Alternative 3 (maximum flexibility)
Trawl Gear Configuration			
<i>Minimum mesh size for bottom trawl</i>	4.5"	4"	No minimum mesh size
<i>Selective flatfish trawl (SFFT) gear, a type of small footrope trawl</i>	SFFT is a 2-seamed net with no more than 2 riblines, excluding codend. Breastline no longer than 3 ft in length. No floats along center third of headrope or attached to top panel except on riblines. Footrope less than 105 ft in length. Headrope must be not less than 30% longer than footrope.	Eliminate the SFFT requirement shoreward of the RCA and replace with small footrope (like south of 40°10'). Sub-option, retain SFFT but change the SFFT definition to allow 2-seam or 4-seam net	Eliminate SFFT requirement, and allow small or large footrope shoreward of the RCA.
<i>Chafing Gear</i>	Last 50 meshes, 50% circumference, attachment method, consistent with minimum mesh size, attached outside straps	Consider bottom trawl chafing gear restrictions mirroring recent midwater changes (see 660.130(b)(4)(i) – bottom of page 3 in Agenda Item H.2, Attachment 2).	Eliminate chafing gear restrictions for bottom trawl and midwater
Gear Use			
<i>Multiple Gears Onboard</i>	One type of trawl gear onboard per trip. Multiple fixed gear allowed onboard per trip. Can't have trawl and fixed gear onboard on the same trip. Can only use one gear per trip.	Allow multiple trawl gear types onboard and midwater on the same trip. Can't have trawl and fixed gear onboard on the same trip. Can only use one gear per trip. HYBRID OPTION: Allow any legal trawl groundfish gear; allow the use of any or all trawl gear on one trip. Retain Sub-options A and B from Alternative 3.	Allow any legal IFQ groundfish gear onboard on the same trip. Allow use of multiple gears per trip.* Sub-option A – must separate catch by gear type Sub-option B – catch by gear type can be co-mingled
GAP suggestions to be added			
<i>Mesh size measure 660.11 General definitions - Mesh Size.</i>	Status Quo	Industry proposal wording: Mesh size means the opening between opposing knots or corners in knotless webbing. Minimum mesh size means the smallest distance allowed between the inside of one knot or corner to the inside of the opposing knot or corner, regardless of twine size.	No need delete Minimum Mesh Size
<i>Fishing in multiple management areas: Subpart D, 660.112 Trawl fishery— prohibitions, (b)(1)(xii)</i>	Status Quo	TRREC report	allow
<i>Allow whiting fishing with any trawl gear: Subpart D, 660.112 Trawl fishery— prohibitions, (b)(1)(xiii)</i>	Status Quo	allow	allow - delete section

<i>Allow tow before previous catch is stowed: Subpart D, 660.112 Trawl fishery— prohibitions, (b)(1)(xi)</i>	Status Quo	allow - strike section	allow - strike section
<i>Trawl gear requirements and restrictions: Subpart D, 660.130(b) and (c)</i>	Status Quo		Review and revise sections 660.130 (b) and (c).

* If allow multiple gear types to be used on a single trip, must consider how that affects data used for stock assessments, how it would work with the type of monitoring (EM vs. observer), and how it would be tracked on fish tickets (currently the system only allows one gear type per trip/ticket).

PFMC
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