

GROUND FISH ADVISORY SUBPANEL REPORT ON
PRELIMINARY EXEMPTED FISHING PERMIT APPROVAL

The Groundfish Advisory Subpanel (GAP) received presentations from the sponsors of the four submitted exempted fishing permit (EFP) applications. The GAP recommends the Council support moving the four EFP proposals forward conditionally. The GAP suggests that no work begin on any of these EFPs until the current National Marine Fisheries Service and/or Council staff workload on groundfish actions is such that they have available time and resources available to work on the EFP proposals.

Regarding the proposals, the GAP believes that some additional adjustments to species caps are necessary but wants to get the proposals out for public review.

Regarding staff workload, the GAP has heard from Agency and Council staff over the past couple of Council meetings that there is limited availability of staff time to work on additional measures until actions previously approved by the Council that require analytical work, regulation writing, and rule making is completed. The Groundfish Management Team reported to the GAP that they believe the workload associated with each of the four proposed EFPs is substantial.

The GAP recommends that allocation of staff time to these new EFP proposals be given a lower priority relative to the currently tasked projects such as, but not necessarily limited to, specifications, Widow rockfish allocation, "Gear Regulations," and EFH and Rockfish Conservation Area changes.

Regarding the current ongoing electronic monitoring (EM) EFPs, The GAP recognizes that the Fixed Gear EM EFP has been moving forward expeditiously, with successful interaction between National Marine Fisheries Service (NMFS), Archipelago, Office of Law Enforcement, Pacific States Marine Fisheries Commission and West Coast Groundfish Observer Program and the participating vessels. Given this forward progress, the GAP recommends that to the extent NMFS has the ability to begin drafting regulations for implementation of a formal fixed gear EM program, that the Council encourages NMFS to do so.

The GAP supports the Groundfish Electronic Monitoring Program Advisory Committee's recommendation to extend and expand the current Electronic Monitoring EFPs.