

GROUND FISH ADVISORY SUBPANEL REPORT ON BYCATCH STRATEGY AND  
BYCATCH REDUCTION PLANS

The Groundfish Advisory Subpanel (GAP) received a presentation from Dr. Kit Dahl about the Draft National Bycatch Reduction Strategy and the proposed rule on Standardized Bycatch Reporting Methodologies (SBRMs).

With regard to both of these items, the GAP believes that existing bycatch monitoring that has been established by Amendment 18 is sufficient and accounted for in all management decisions. For example, the trawl fishery now is 100 percent monitored with very little delay in final bycatch data availability. Bycatch in fixed-gear fisheries, sport fisheries and research needs also are accounted for during the Council process. The Council and states can react to bycatch events using in-season adjustments if necessary. We have sufficient safeguards in place to account for bycatch.

The GAP also suggests the Council avoid establishing standards that duplicate or may require revision of existing strategies that have proven effective. The Pacific Council and NMFS West Coast Region have been leaders in establishing bycatch monitoring and taking proactive action to reduce or eliminate bycatch. The fishing industry also has been a leader in gear innovation for selectivity and avoidance in both recreational and commercial fisheries.

GAP members also discussed the need for a national bycatch strategy now and the concern that spending time on this – when the Pacific Council already is doing so well in bycatch avoidance and monitoring – will take time away from Council and West Coast Region staff who are working on projects much more integral to improving access to our fisheries for sport and commercial fishermen.