

GROUND FISH ADVISORY SUBPANEL REPORT ON EXEMPTED FISHING PERMIT
APPROVAL FOR 2017-2018

The Groundfish Advisory Subpanel (GAP) received an update about the Emley/Platt Commercial Jig and The Nature Conservancy (TNC) Pot Gear exempted fishing permits (EFP), and offers the following comments and recommendations.

Regarding the TNC Pot Gear EFP, while the GAP does not formally support or oppose the application, many on the GAP do not understand why the applicants need access to the Rockfish Conservation Area (RCA) to test the concept. TNC will be using its own quota, and lingcod exist in abundance both inside and outside the RCA. It seems a viable test could be conducted without an EFP. In addition, many on the GAP are concerned that if the pot gear for lingcod is successful, it could increase lease prices, create gear conflict, and open the door to a constraining species situation in the trawl IFQ fishery similar to the constraint created by significant fixed gear catch of sablefish. High lease costs for sablefish, driven in large part by higher ex-vessel prices for sablefish and larger average size caught by gear switched IFQ vessels, has created a situation where many trawlers cannot access enough sablefish to catch other target species like dover and thornyhead, and when they can acquire sablefish, the lease cost is nearly as high as the ex-vessel price, making it a losing proposition. The GAP does not want to see a similar situation for lingcod. While lingcod have been an underutilized fishery in the trawl sector, the rebuilding of canary rockfish could create some additional access to lingcod. If this EFP goes forward, the GAP urges the Council to think about potential impacts to the trawl sector stemming from widespread use of the gear. In contrast to the trawl sector, lingcod utilization in the sport fishery has increased dramatically in recent years. While the GAP is not opposed to the TNC Pot Gear EFP, the Council should consider the potential for increased gear conflict if commercial utilization of lingcod is expanded.

The GAP supports renewal of the Emley/Platt Commercial Jig EFP including extension of the southern boundary to Point Conception, adding up to three additional participants, and analyzing alternative monitoring scenarios. The GAP notes that extending the EFP south to take advantage of abundant chilipepper rockfish may require additional bocaccio. With regard to monitoring, the applicants spoke to a new concept in which the EFP would have observers 30 percent of the time and the fishermen would serve as the observers the remaining 70 percent. The fishermen's data could then be compared to the observer data to determine whether that method is acceptable or whether 100 percent observer coverage is needed. The GAP supports creative approaches to reducing monitoring costs as long as we can be confident in the information provided. The GAP continues to support electronic monitoring as a supplement to a lower observer coverage rate.