

GROUND FISH ADVISORY SUBPANEL REPORT ON COASTWIDE NON-WHITING  
MIDWATER AND GEAR MODIFICATION EXEMPTED FISHING PERMIT PROGRESS  
REPORT

The Groundfish Advisory Subpanel (GAP) received an overview of the agenda item from Mr. Jim Seger, and a progress report of the current gear modification exempted fishing permit (EFP), as well as an overview of the proposed year-round pelagic rockfish EFP for 2018 from Ms. Lori Steele. The GAP offers the following comments and recommendations.

The GAP was pleased to learn that nearly 1.6 million pounds of pelagic rockfish had been landed under the EFP with only four Chinook salmon and no other salmonids, green sturgeon, or eulachon caught. This clearly demonstrates that the trawl fleet can effectively increase rockfish attainment with minimal salmon impacts. Unfortunately, the EFP was not implemented until late February so the full opportunity of the EFP was not realized, and vital data on potential salmon interactions earlier in the season was not gathered.

The GAP strongly supports approval of the proposed pelagic rockfish EFP (year-round non-whiting midwater and bottom trawl gear modification) to maintain the opportunity for the fleet. This is critical since the gear package is not projected to be implemented until 2019. The EFP will also help us gather important information about salmon bycatch in the rockfish conservation area (RCA) and throughout the range of any potential future fisheries. The GAP notes that one of the goals of the proposed EFP is to test all of the items in the March 2016 gear package in order to provide the agency with the best possible information about potential salmon impacts. The GAP strongly endorses inclusion of all of the March 2016 gear package measures.

Regarding specific provisions of the proposed EFP, the GAP believes it is important to allow fishermen to use bottom trawl and midwater trawl gear on the same trip. That will facilitate delivery of an optimal mix of species to processors. We discussed the concept with Mr. Dayna Matthews of the Office of Law Enforcement, and while fishing with multiple gears on the same trip may require new declaration protocols, it does not appear there are any insurmountable barriers. Relatedly, the GAP believes it is imperative to not limit the geographic scope of the EFP. If we fail to gather information about impacts in the Klamath Management Zone there will not be an opportunity for renewed pelagic rockfish fishing in the area.

PFMC  
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