

GROUND FISH ADVISORY SUBPANEL REPORT ON INSEASON ADJUSTMENTS – FINAL ACTION

The Groundfish Advisory Subpanel (GAP) met with the Oregon Department of Fish and Wildlife (ODFW) and California Department of Fish and Wildlife (CDFW) representatives of the Groundfish Management Team (GMT) to discuss progress of this year's fishery and possible inseason adjustments. The discussion was led by Mr. Patrick Mirick and Ms. Melissa Mandrup. The GAP offers the following recommendations on the ODFW and CDFW proposed inseason adjustments to ongoing groundfish fisheries.

COVID-19 Impacts to 2020 Commercial Fisheries

The COVID-19 pandemic has led to the abrupt loss of both overseas and domestic seafood markets for our west coast fishermen. Due to shelter in place orders, many local seafood markets and restaurants have had to either close their doors or resort to other options such as pick-up or delivery service. This has resulted in drastic declines in business for those fishermen and processors of whom supply their seafood. Larger fishing vessel operations are being especially hard hit. There is opportunity available for smaller operations that partake in direct delivery to home based customers and to those that participate in farmers market type dockside fish sales. In fact, it appears those type operations are finding it difficult to catch enough fish to satisfy the consumer demand for fresh protein. Groundfish fishermen coastwide are seeking regulatory relief to access more fertile waters in the form of relaxed rockfish conservation areas (RCA's) as well as the opportunity to access larger trip limits to meet the customer demand.

With that in mind, the GAP recommends the Council move forward the ODFW and CDFW reports for inseason adoption, with the GAP noting it's support for all of the Option 2's in the document.

Mothership COVID-19 Emergency Rule

The GAP supports the request that MTC and UCB submitted to NMFS to develop an emergency rule to address an unexpected issue in the mothership whiting sector, and we ask that the Council support this request as well. The rule would temporarily allow an at-sea Pacific whiting processing platform to operate as both a mothership and a catcher processor in the same calendar year during the 2020 Pacific whiting season. This is needed because one of the six mothership platforms that had planned to process in 2020 will no longer be using their vessel as a mothership. The three catcher vessels that planned to deliver roughly 24% of the MS sector allocation to them, worth about \$5 million in ex-vessel revenue, no longer have a market. At this late date, the other mothership processors are not able to take on additional deliveries from these vessels, because they have already committed to other vessels. In addition, with the uncertainty surrounding the COVID-19 pandemic, other catcher vessels may have limited market opportunity if other MS processors cannot operate. The only vessels likely to serve as replacement motherships or catcher processors are the existing motherships and catcher processors. In order to give potential processors the greatest flexibility and in order to provide opportunity for these three catcher vessels that have been displaced due to COVID-19 pandemic, the GAP supports the request to temporarily change the MS/CP transfer rules for 2020.