

GROUND FISH ADVISORY SUBPANEL REPORT ON GEAR SWITCHING

During the March Pacific Fishery Management Council (Council) meeting, the Groundfish Advisory Subpanel (GAP) discussed the existing gear-switching range of alternatives from November 2022. Council staff officers Dr. Jim Seger and Ms. Jessi Doerpinghaus worked with the GAP to identify areas of potential consensus and/or compromise ahead of the April meeting.

To that end, the GAP discussion centered around Alternatives 2 and 3 and identifying more efficient paths forward. GAP members agreed that as a whole the alternatives are overly complex and have been added to, subtracted from, and changed over time. In an effort to decrease the complexity, the GAP asked whether consensus could be achieved by removing one of the alternatives.

Representatives from the trawl and fixed gear sectors discussed several options, especially with respect to Alternative 2. As described in [Informational Report 1, March 2023](#), Alternative 2 had no issues that needed further refinement or decisions. In short, it is the simplest, most easy to implement alternative. Aspects of Alternatives 1 and 3 would require more refinement as they moved forward during the Council process.

The GAP, through consensus, agreed that Alternative 3 could potentially be eliminated from the package if a few provisions are added to Alternative 2. Alternatively, if Alternative 3 cannot be eliminated, it might remain in the package, but no further work done on its development. This would eliminate the need to address remaining Alternative 3 issues related to the handling of overages and development of a limit of some type with respect to the number of gear-switching endorsed permits an individual could control.

It would also substantially simplify the package, reduce workload for both analysts and the Council family, and consequently allow for more focused and well-considered deliberations relative to the remaining two alternatives, both of which are based on gear-specific quota shares (QS)/quota pounds.

The GAP consensus on setting Alternative 3 aside is contingent on including two options from Alternative 3 in Alternative 2:

1. Qualification option: The first of these would be a qualification option identical to Alternative 3 Qualification Option 2 (requiring ownership of a qualifying permit, QS, and a vessel with gear-switching history).
2. Expiration/conversion option: The second provides for the expiration of gear-switching endorsements with certain changes in ownership. In the context of Alternative 2, rather than expiration, any-gear QS would be converted from any-gear to trawl-only QS, with certain changes in ownership.

Additionally, the GAP consensus included adding an option to Alternative 2 that would issue up to 29 percent of the QS as any-gear. How that QS would be issued to qualified and non-qualified participants is undetermined at this time.