

GROUND FISH ADVISORY SUBPANEL REPORT ON ENDANGERED SPECIES ACT  
(ESA) SALMON MITIGATION MEASURES- SCOPING

The Groundfish Advisory Subpanel (GAP) received a briefing from the Groundfish Management Team (GMT) about several Terms and Conditions in the 2017 Salmon Incidental Take Statement that are to be addressed at this meeting, which include inseason management measures to prevent the salmon thresholds from being exceeded and use of the “reserve.”

The GAP reviewed the potential mitigation measures initially developed by the GMT. In general, the GAP considers the measures identified by the GMT as a sufficiently broad range of management alternatives that could be used by the Council and National Marine Fisheries Service. However, the GAP strongly believes that the first line of defense to prevent exceeding salmon thresholds are voluntary industry efforts in all sectors of the groundfish fishery because they are typically timelier and more efficient. Command and control management measures should only be used if it is clear that industry efforts are insufficient.

The GAP discussed measures already in place and used by the whiting fishery sectors – near-real time data and communication across the fleets provide the ability for the whiting sectors to develop pre-season plans for avoiding salmon as well as pre-determined inseason responses to address salmon bycatch as it occurs. These efforts will continue and are likely to be refined and improved over time. For the non-whiting trawl fishery, the GAP discussed developing industry outreach efforts to get information out to members of the trawl industry that highlights the importance of, and requirements to, minimize salmon impacts in their fishery. The GAP encourages this industry effort. In addition, whiting fishery data is readily available to industry participants on PacFIN, which furthers fishery transparency. The GAP thinks it would be useful to the non-whiting trawl fishery to have similar access to salmon bycatch data, which would allow this sector to more closely track and self-manage their salmon impacts.

While the GAP continues to be concerned about carving out specific portions of the salmon thresholds for particular sectors, the GAP understands the desire to hold harmless, to the extent practicable, sectors of the groundfish fishery that are shown to have minimal salmon bycatch. Therefore, the GAP supports the Salmon Advisory Subpanel recommendation that “if the reserve is accessed, that 500 fish be set aside for non-trawl groundfish bycatch of salmon” because this “would allow the Council to leave the recreational and fixed gear seasons open.”