

GROUND FISH ADVISORY SUBPANEL REPORT ON THE
NEW METHODOLOGY INFORMING SIGMA VALUES – FINAL ADOPTION

The Groundfish Advisory Subpanel (GAP) received a report from Mr. John DeVore, Pacific Fishery Management Council staff officer, regarding the new sigma values proposed by the Scientific and Statistical Committee (SSC).

After considering the available information, the GAP suggests more time is needed to discuss and consider the best way to implement the new sigma value approach. The GAP agrees with the last paragraph of the Groundfish Management Team (GMT) statement (that is, the “Moving Forward” section) under this agenda item. The GAP recommends the Council consider a phased implementation of the new sigma value approach, which would facilitate Council adoption of the approach at this meeting and provide time to complete the additional work detailed in the GMT report.

These new sigma values also will have a direct effect on workload. The GAP remains concerned this change will encourage more stock assessments at a time when there are fewer stock assessment authors and staff.

The GAP and GMT – and thus, the Council – had a much shorter timeframe to consider these new sigmas. These recommendations could represent a significant change to consideration of our stock assessments, management measures and biennial harvest specifications. The Federal shutdown delayed workshops and meetings related to this issue that would have allowed advisory bodies to provide more robust information to the Council.

The new sigma method stands to protect against potential overfishing but fails to protect against lost potential economic and community opportunities. Under the Magnuson-Stevens Act, the Councils and managers are tasked to reduce negative conservation, community and economic impacts. The new sigma values account only for the conservation component. We recommend the council ask for further analysis from the SSC that accounts for the best state of nature in conjunction with the low state of nature.

The GAP recognizes that as uncertainty is better captured at the modeling level in the sigma value, less allowance for uncertainty may be required at other levels – for example, at P* selection and the degree to which the annual catch limit is set lower than the acceptable biological catch. The GMT appears prepared to address this issue, and the GAP requests the Council allow more time to phase in the new sigma value approach.