

GROUND FISH ADVISORY SUBPANEL REPORT ON ENDANGERED
SPECIES ACT MITIGATION MEASURES FOR SEABIRDS –
PRELIMINARY ACTION

The Groundfish Advisory Subpanel (GAP) reviewed the documents under this agenda item and received an issue overview from Dr. Kit Dahl, staff officer with the Pacific Fishery Management Council, and Ms. Keeley Kent of the National Marine Fisheries Service (NMFS).

Much of the GAP discussion centered around the costs for adapting to new regulations and/or gear and the risks associated with some of the mitigation measures. At the same time, the GAP understands the necessity of minimizing the risk of seabird interactions. Because the use of streamer lines would be much easier and less costly for the fleet and also minimize the risks to seabirds, the GAP recommends the following options within **Alternative 1**:

Option A: Exempt vessels 26 feet and longer south of 36° N. latitude from the requirement to deploy streamer lines or night sets because short-tailed albatross are extremely rare in this area.

Option B: The GAP recommends using the 3-mile state/Federal waters line for the exemption, as it is readily enforceable. In essence, this retains the status quo operations for small vessels.

Alternatively, the GAP discussed other fathom lines for an exemption and suggested the 100-fathom line since it is already in regulation. In some parts of the coast, albatross are seen shoreward of 250 fathoms, as close to shore as 100 fathoms, despite the shelf break at 250 fathoms. The GAP also discussed a shoreward boundary of 75 fathoms, to minimize seabird interaction. This may be preferable if the Council wants to consider another alternative.

Option C: The GAP strongly recommends the Council not include option C as part of the Preliminary Preferred Alternative. Longline fishermen on the GAP prefer the option to fish during the day using floating longline gear and this gear is integral to the longline sablefish fishery. The GAP discussed the option and believes a better option would be to retain daytime fishing but to lengthen the streamer lines to extend *beyond* the point at which the floating longline sinks below the depth that albatross can reach. This would enable fishermen to continue using floating longline gear, while minimizing the risk to seabirds.

Option D: A weather safety exemption different than the one currently established for vessels 55 feet and longer would be established for vessels 26-55 feet. The exemption for smaller vessels would be: allow a weather safety exemption when a small craft advisory for wind has been issued. The GAP noted the small craft advisory would be specifically for *wind*, not seas.