

GROUND FISH ADVISORY SUBPANEL REPORT ON
CONSIDERATION OF INSEASON ADJUSTMENTS FOR 2011 AND 2012 FISHERIES

The Groundfish Advisory Subpanel (GAP) and the Groundfish Management Team (GMT) engaged in a joint discussion regarding potential inseason actions for the remainder of 2011 and beginning of 2012. Following this initial inseason discussion the GAP wishes to recommend the following:

2011 INSEASON ACTIONS

Fixed-gear Sablefish fisheries

Limited Entry Daily-Trip-Limit and Open Access, North of 36 N Latitude

The GAP recommends no closure at this time, since the earliest a regulatory change could be made is December 1. A closure at this point would have very little effect because many fishermen will be gearing up for crab season and the weather is often bad. Furthermore, just mentioning a closure would likely have the opposite effect of trying to limit landings. Instead, it would exacerbate efforts, as fishermen would attain their bimonthly limits in the first month of the period (November), prior to the closure, especially since the market value of sablefish is so high right now. Fishermen will rush to catch sablefish as soon as possible so they can take advantage of the higher ex-vessel prices.

At the same time, the GAP wishes to reiterate the fact that a buffer may still exist and the fishery may not exceed its annual catch limit (ACL) north of 36 degrees N. Latitude. So far, the GMT has hard data only through July and possibly some in August. The data this year has been chaotic, leading to frequent inseason adjustments. This is no fault of the GMT; we have confidence that Dr. Sean Matson and the GMT have identified and fixed all the data problems to date.

2012 INSEASON ACTIONS

Trawl rockfish conservation area (RCA) lines

The GAP requests the following changes:

45°46' – 48°10': Move seaward line from 200 fm to 150 fm. For periods 1 through 6, include the modified petrale lines to the extent it is shallower than 150 fm.

Seaward of the RCA: Adjusting these lines will allow access to petrale in periods 2 and 6. The changes in periods 3 and 5 will allow fishermen to follow the fish as they move onto and off of the shelf. These revisions will provide opportunity for the trawl fleet to operate more efficiently under the rationalized system. The arguments for the old rules for retaining the seaward RCA lines at 200 no longer apply under rationalization.

These changes will help demonstrate how the trawl individual quota (TIQ) program is working and how trawlers are accountable for their own actions. Each vessel brings its own quota to the table and each fisherman knows where, whether and when he can fish.

The Council previously adopted changes to the RCA lines and fishermen have proven they can fish cleanly and efficiently, without exceeding any overall limits. This adaptation demonstrates the efficacy of the TIQ program.

Washington recreational:

The GAP discussed the emergency action taken by Washington Dept. of Fish and Wildlife (WDFW) to reduce recreational impacts on yelloweye off the southern Washington coast.

The GAP recommends the lingcod restricted area proposed by WDFW in Attachment 1 of Agenda Item E.8.b be adopted in the Federal regulations for 2012 and beyond.

Sablefish fixed-gear coastwide:

The GAP referred to the GMT’s attachment under this item, Table 5, and suggests adopting Alternative 1. This option would result in:

Area	Fishery	HG	Alt. 1 mt	Atl. 1 %
N. of 36° N. lat. (US/Canada border to 36° N. lat.)	Limited Entry (LE) north	265	242	91%
	Open Access (OA) north	419	385	92%
South of 36° N. lat.	LE south	380	353	93%
	OA south	309	280	91%

This option would result in the following trip limits, as listed in GMT's Table 6:

Area	Fishery	Jan-Feb	Mar-Apr	May-June	July-Aug	Sept-Oct	Nov-Dec
N. of 36° N. lat. (US/Canada border to 36° N. lat.)	LE north	1,300 lbs. per week, not to exceed 5,000 lbs. per 2 mo.					
	OA north	300 lbs. per day, or 1 landing per week of up to 950 lbs., not to exceed 1,900 lbs. per 2 mo.					
South of 36° N. lat.	LE south	1,800 lbs. per week					
	OA south	300 lbs. per day, or 1 landing per week of up to 1,350 lbs., not to exceed 2,700 lbs. per 2 mo.					

Since these changes would be effective at the when the primary fishery starts, we have the opportunity to adjust the trip limits up or down during the year. We should have two periods of data by the June meeting and can respond to problems or potential opportunity as the need arises. There is less risk starting out at this level and it also should ensure more stability throughout the year.

While the GAP realizes that Alternative 1 projects more than 90 percent attainment in all fixed-gear sectors, members felt this is preferable because the sablefish ACL is dropping next year and fishermen should be afforded as much opportunity as possible.

Again, the data is an issue in the fixed-gear sablefish fishery. The GMT has fixed the problems with the data that occurred during 2011.

The GAP requests that further refinement of the data take place, as suggested by the GMT. Currently, the software can't sufficiently parse the landings data between the DTL and primary sablefish fishery. One solution to this would be to record landings data down to the specific groundfish permit number on the fish tickets. The infrastructure already is in place in the PacFIN database; there may be an issue with state systems.

This would eliminate potential data errors, provide real-time data for the scientists and economists and fishermen would benefit as well because it would increase stability in the fishery throughout the year.