

GROUND FISH ADVISORY SUBPANEL REPORT ON
CONSIDERATION OF INSEASON ADJUSTMENTS – PART 1

The Groundfish Advisory Subpanel (GAP) met with the Groundfish Management Team (GMT) to discuss inseason adjustments and has the following comments and recommendations.

Limited Entry Sablefish Daily-Trip-Limit Fishery North of 36° N. Latitude

Landings for the limited entry (LE) sablefish daily-trip-limit (DTL) fishery are traditionally tracked using PacFIN data and reports. Mr. Dan Erickson and Dr. Sean Matson of the GMT explained to the GAP that due to programming issues within the PacFIN system, reported catches in the LE sablefish DTL fishery from PacFIN have been much lower than the actual catches. The GMT's catch projection model was developed using this PacFIN data and landings for any given trip limit may therefore be higher than estimated by the model. The Pacific States Marine Fisheries Commission has been made aware of the PacFIN problem and is attempting to fix the catch reporting program. However, corrected catch numbers are not currently available and may not be available until June. The GMT estimates that catches may have been under-reported by a minimum of 33 percent and possibly 50 percent of the final total mortalities reported by National Marine Fisheries Service in annual total mortality reports.

The GMT has provided alternative DTL limits for Council consideration that provide for the fishery while not exceeding the 282 mt LE sablefish DTL allocation. The GAP discussed these options and recommends the following:

**Option 2: 7,000 lbs/2 months in periods 1-3;
 6,500 lbs/2 months in periods 4-6;
 Maintain the 2,000 lb weekly limit.**

The GAP prefers these precautionary DTL limits for a couple of reasons. We note that the sablefish market is very strong and LE DTL effort is at a maximum. Option 2 should allow time to gather updated catch information that can be considered at the June Council meeting. If the corrected catch information in PacFIN confirms that DTL catch has been underestimated, DTL limits can be increased in June for later in the season.

Modifying the Trawl Rockfish Conservation Area North of 40°10' N. Latitude

The GAP discussed modifying the seaward and shoreward boundaries of the trawl Rockfish Conservation Area (RCA) under rationalization. The GAP is concerned that the current RCA configuration is too restrictive for many fishermen north of 40°10' N. latitude to effectively prosecute their intended fishing strategies. The GAP understands the concern that a few disaster tows, if large enough, could risk exceeding a sector allocation for a limited species. However, the GAP believes the behavior of individual trawl fishermen under rationalization will ensure risk-averse fishing since no fishermen wants to risk exceeding their individual quota for any individual fishing quota species. Trawl fishermen know the areas where they can fish sustainably and those areas where fishing risks too high a bycatch of species of concern.

With these considerations in mind the GAP recommends modifying the trawl RCA boundaries north of 40°10' N. latitude as follows:

Adopt the modified 200 fm seaward boundary in the north in period 2.
Adopt the 100 fm shoreward boundary in the north for the rest of the year.

PFMC
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