


MEMORANDUM

TO: Council, SSC and AP Members

FROM: Clarence G. Pautzke   
Executive Director

DATE: November 30, 1998

SUBJECT: Groundfish Amendment Issues

ESTIMATED TIME  
1 HOUR

**ACTION REQUIRED**

Final action on retention of demersal shelf rockfish in fixed gear fisheries.<sup>1/</sup>

**BACKGROUND**

The Alaska Department of Fish and Game submitted a groundfish proposal in the 1997 amendment cycle to require retention of demersal shelf rockfish (DSR) in fixed gear fisheries since total bycatch mortality of DSR in other fisheries is unknown. A high level of unreported mortality of DSR is believed to be occurring in the directed and bycatch fisheries. Currently, the DSR maximum retainable bycatch limits fishermen to 10 percent by weight of DSR against their halibut longline harvest. Any poundage in excess of the 10 percent limit is discarded at sea. Amending the regulations to require all DSR bycatch to be landed would enhance efforts to increase the accuracy of the accounting of total bycatch mortality of these fish and possibly lead to a change in the maximum retainable bycatch (MRB) for this assemblage. The proposed action would reduce waste and enhance estimates of total removals of demersal shelf rockfish species for stock assessment purposes.

The document was approved for public review at the October 1998 Council meeting and was mailed to you on November 25, 1998. The Executive Summary of the analysis is attached as Item D-1(a). The analysis was revised to include an option to Alternative 2 to require IFQ registered buyers to accept deliveries of rockfish and Pacific cod as a condition of their permit, and clarification of prices and markets for DSR species, as recommended by the Council. The alternatives in this analysis include:

Alternative 1: No action.

Alternative 2: Require full retention of DSR in the fixed gear fisheries in GOA Regulatory Area 650.

Option: Require IFQ registered buyers to accept deliveries of rockfish and Pacific cod as a condition of their permit.

<sup>1/</sup>NOTE: Experimental Fishing Permit report will be given to SSC only. It will be presented to the Council and AP in February 1999.

## EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

Total bycatch mortality of demersal shelf rockfish (DSR) in other fisheries is unknown. State and Federal fisheries managers believe a high level of unreported mortality of DSR is occurring in the directed and bycatch fisheries. Currently, the DSR MRB limits fishermen to 10 percent by weight of DSR against their halibut longline harvest. Any poundage in excess of the 10 percent limit is discarded at sea. Amending the regulations to require all DSR bycatch to be landed would enhance efforts to increase the accuracy of the accounting of total bycatch mortality of these fish.

The action proposed by the Alaska Department of Fish and Game would reduce waste and enhance estimates of total removals of demersal shelf rockfish species for stock assessment purposes: (1) without encouraging "topping off" with bycatch species and (2) decreasing waste of the resource. Additionally, the proposed action complies with four new requirements in the Sustainable Fisheries Act of 1996.

The alternatives included in this analysis are:

Alternative 1: No Action.

Alternative 2: Require full retention of DSR in the fixed gear fisheries in GOA Regulatory Area 650.

Option: Require IFQ registered buyers to accept deliveries of rockfish and Pacific cod as a condition of their permit.