

CONSIDER STOCK COMPLEX AGGREGATIONS

The 2006 reauthorization of the Magnuson-Stevens Act (MSA) included a mandate to end overfishing. The revised National Standard 1 (NS1) guidelines of 2009 recommended a framework for accomplishing the MSA mandate, including criteria for managing stocks in a complex to reduce the risk of overfishing. Stock complex means a group of stocks that are sufficiently similar in geographic distribution, life history, and vulnerabilities to the fishery such that the impact of management actions on the stocks is similar. The framework recommended in the revised NS1 guidelines was incorporated in the groundfish fishery management plan (FMP) under Amendment 23, which was implemented in 2011.

The Council considered strawman stock complex alternatives for six species groups (nearshore rockfish, shelf rockfish, slope rockfish, flatfish, cartilaginous fish, and roundfish) at the June 2013 meeting. The Council decided to replace these alternatives with those provided by the Groundfish Management Team (GMT), and tasked the GMT to develop additional alternatives using the criteria they provided in their supplemental June report. Further, the Council prioritized analysis of the alternatives for slope rockfish, shelf rockfish, cartilaginous fishes, and roundfish species groups. Alternatives for restructuring the Other Flatfish complex were given a lower priority, and alternatives for the nearshore rockfish complexes were considered but eliminated from further detailed analysis.

The alternatives and analyses developed by the GMT are presented in Agenda Item G.8.b, GMT Reports 1-3 and in Supplemental GMT Report 4. These analyses consider the question of stocks in the groundfish fishery and tradeoffs of alternatives designed to meet the objectives outlined in the FMP and NS1 guidelines. These tradeoffs concern the efficacy of retaining status quo complexes versus establishing additional complexes versus a restructuring of complexes that would necessitate reallocating harvestable yields of some of these species to fishing sectors (i.e., revisiting some Amendment 21 allocations).

The Council task at this meeting is to adopt preliminary preferred alternatives for each species group for public review, so as to enable a decision on final preferred alternatives for stock complexes at the November meeting. It will be critically important to decide final preferred alternatives for stock complexes in November to facilitate a more focused analysis of harvest specifications for 2015 and beyond. If the Council is unable to reach a final decision on stock complexes in November, it will be far less disruptive to the Council groundfish management decision-making process to defer decisions until the 2017-2018 specifications process than to defer a final decision to next year.

The Council should consider the GMT reports, Scientific and Statistical Committee advice on the analyses presented in these reports, as well as the recommendations of the Groundfish Advisory Subpanel and public before taking action on this item.

Council Action:

Adopt preliminary preferred alternatives for restructuring stock complexes for public review.

Reference Materials:

1. Agenda Item G.8.b, GMT Report 1: Groundfish Management Team Report on Additional Methods that May Be Used to Evaluate Alternatives for Stock Complex Reorganization.
2. Agenda Item G.8.b, GMT Report 2: Groundfish Management Team Report on the Classification of Stocks in the Groundfish Fishery Management Plan.
3. Agenda Item G.8.b, GMT Report 3: Groundfish Management Team Report on Port Sampling Surveys.
4. Agenda Item G.8.b, Supplemental GMT Report 4: Groundfish Management Team Report on Considerations for Restructuring West Coast Groundfish Stock Complexes: Analyses and Recommendations for Slope Rockfish, Shelf Rockfish, Other Flatfish, and Other Fish Complexes.

Agenda Order:

- a. Agenda Item Overview John DeVore
- b. Reports and Comments of Advisory Bodies and Management Entities
- c. Public Comment
- d. **Council Action:** Consider Analysis of Stock Complex Aggregations Alternatives

PFMC
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