

GROUND FISH MANAGEMENT TEAM (GMT) REPORT ON DEVELOPMENT OF A COUNCIL FISHERY ECOSYSTEM PLAN

The Groundfish Management Team (GMT) reviewed the Ecosystem plan Development Team (EPDT) Report ([Agenda Item H.1.a, Attachment 1](#)) and has the following comments and suggestions.

Schedule

As the Council contemplates adopting a reporting schedule for the fishery ecosystem plan (FEP), the GMT recommends aligning that report with development of biennial specifications and management measures alternatives. Right now there is a placeholder of September in odd years in the EPDT report. Given that the Council is considering a fishery management plan (FMP) amendment to revise the biennial specifications and management measures process, and that FMP amendment could include alterations to the schedule for developing those, the GMT recommends that the ecosystem hot sheet for groundfish schedule retain a placeholder until that FMP amendment is finalized.

Content

As we pointed out in our June report ([Agenda Item H.1.b, Supplemental GMT Report, June 2011](#)) and repeat here, the groundfish management process and development of National Environment Policy Act (NEPA) analyses would benefit from ecosystem considerations for a number of issues of such as: spatial management; species designated as Ecosystem Component (EC) species under National Standard 1 (NS1); protected species; and better characterization of the human environment and cumulative impacts. We would like to see these included in both the annual reports and the considerations reported in the groundfish hot sheet and appreciate the EPDT including those in the draft report.

As mentioned above, the Council is considering an FMP amendment to revise the biennial specification and management process. NEPA analyses are a central component of that biennial process. Given that impacts to the human environment and cumulative impacts are the focus of NEPA and are a major point of focus of the FEP, the GMT recommends that the development and use of the reports under the FEP is coordinated with the development of the FMP amendment and the subsequent biennial process.

Also, in Chapter 3, the draft report states, “the Council also does not believe that designating the Exclusive Economic Zone (EEZ) as the FEP’s geographic range in any way prevents it from receiving or considering information on areas of the California Current Ecosystem or other ecosystems beyond the EEZ.” The GMT would like to see more explicit reference to including international trans-boundary stock information wherever possible. The majority of groundfish FMP management unit stocks are part of larger biological stocks with ranges and fisheries interactions that cross international boundaries. This issue is frequently reference in the research and data needs for groundfish stock assessments and should be included in ecosystem considerations for those species.

The GMT would also point out that spatial management includes smaller scales as well. Many rockfishes are sedentary as adults and may exhibit considerable stock structure that should be included in ecosystem considerations that could be used in management decisions.

PFMC
11/06/11