

Omnibus Update

At the September Council meeting, under the agenda items for omnibus and future Council meeting planning (Agenda Items J.1 and I.6, respectively), NMFS said that it would coordinate with the Council staff and come back at the November Council meeting with further input on potential packaging for groundfish actions. This document provides that further input and reflects some coordination with Council staff.

At the September Council meeting, NMFS stated its belief that it could address in the near-term two of the items on the “omnibus” list. NMFS and Council staff worked together at that meeting to prioritize over 2015/2016 a list of up to 11 actions (see Agenda Item I.6.a., Supplemental Joint NMFS/Council staff report, September 2014 (joint report)).¹ NMFS wants to keep the Council well informed about the timeframes within which these joint priorities can be addressed, particularly those to be addressed in the near-term.

In October, NMFS was proud to partner with the Council in its rapid and responsive action to address inseason issues that arose in the whiting fishery, activity which included an emergency meeting of the Council. NMFS believes, if not assumes, that the Council recognizes that the in-season action (and unanticipated impacts of the whiting fishery on ESA-listed Chinook salmon), has affected NMFS’ near-term workload distribution and timeframes for action items. Work on the reinitiated salmon biological opinion is a NMFS priority that has potential consequences for any upcoming groundfish action pending completion of the consultation. As a result, NMFS anticipates further coordination with Council staff over the coming months to ensure that the priorities established in September are considered as workload changes, and that expected timeframes associated with the priorities are jointly supported.

NMFS notes that it maintains attention to routine actions (*e.g.* groundfish specifications & inseason actions, whiting specifications, halibut regulations) and several actions already at various stages of implementation (*e.g.*, electronic monitoring, whiting clean-up, whiting season date change, ecosystem/Am 25, sablefish, and Essential Fish Habitat phase 3/regulations). In the near-term, NMFS will also focus on widow QS reallocation and divestiture as a priority.

NMFS will continue to work with Council staff on the priorities over the coming months. NMFS will also provide updates at Council meetings throughout the year on the progress of rulemakings and encourages the Council to consider these when planning for future Council meetings.

¹ NMFS notes that its commitment to address 2 items in the near-term is consistent with the joint report to prioritize 11 items during the scheduling horizon.