

GROUND FISH MANAGEMENT TEAM REPORT ON
COUNCIL THREE-MEETING OUTLOOK, NOVEMBER 2007 COUNCIL
MEETING AGENDA AND WORKLOAD PRIORITIES

The Groundfish Management Team (GMT) reviewed the preliminary three meeting outlook (Agenda Item B.1.a, Attachment 1) as well as the preliminary draft agenda for November (Attachment 2) and discussed workload and timing priorities for the issues listed. Given that the draft agenda as currently outlined is estimated to use 146% of standard floor time, we are concerned that there are too many issues for us to address all of them adequately. After considering mandatory tasks such as 2009-2010 specifications and management measures and inseason adjustments, the GMT discussed and prioritized the other preliminarily scheduled groundfish items. As such we offer the following comments on issues that may be considered lower priority (in decreasing order) or require less input from the GMT.

Whiting Management

The GMT discussed options for better management of the bycatch limits for the 2008 whiting fishery to prevent problems such as a race for fish via a race for bycatch. Such concepts included a pre-specified staggered release of bycatch throughout the season and strategic adjustments to bycatch limits that may occur through inseason actions. Based on conversations with NOAA General Counsel, it appears that a scheduled and staggered release of bycatch may not be possible because it does not appear to be a routine inseason adjustment. However, changing bycatch limits is considered to be a routine inseason adjustment so the Council could choose to implement a relatively small bycatch limit for early in the season, and then readjust the bycatch limit later based on the performance of the fishery during the first several weeks of the season. The GMT will plan to further evaluate approaches for better management of bycatch in the whiting fishery and report back to the Council in November and March.

Trawl Rationalization

The GMT recognizes the importance of analyzing the various issues surrounding rationalization of the trawl fleet and the tight timelines that need to be met. However, given the considerable number of options requiring input, the GMT is requesting guidance on which specific analyses the Council would like the GMT to focus on at the November meeting.

Intersector Allocation

At this time there is inadequate data compiled to fully analyze the implications of some issues (e.g., reallocating overfished species once they are rebuilt). Likewise there are other difficult allocation issues that have yet to be addressed and will likely require extensive discussion. We note that most of these issues are policy decisions, but would like Council guidance on any particular technical aspects that require our attention.

Exempted Fishing Permit (EFP) for 2008

The GMT will review the proposed EFPs to verify that all of the required technical aspects have been adequately addressed. This item is not expected to utilize much GMT time in cases where we have had opportunity to advise the applicants prior to the November meeting. Should any EFP applications require greater attention, the GMT recommends that they be given lower priority in our workload given the above considerations.

Open Access Limitation

The GMT is concerned that they have not had time to discuss this issue and will not have an opportunity prior to November. We are likewise concerned that available data is not adequate to fully analyze all aspects of this issue. Different levels of description and analyses for various segments of the fleet have been developed, and there is concern that not all stakeholders have been fully engaged in the process. Likewise not all states have the same priorities or issues to be addressed in limiting their respective Open Access fleets. Given the importance of this issue, the GMT is concerned that they will not have the time or resources to adequately address the issue and suggest that it be delayed until after the November meeting.

PFMC

09/14/07