

GROUND FISH MANAGEMENT TEAM REPORT ON FUTURE COUNCIL MEETING  
PLANNING, APRIL 2008 COUNCIL MEETING AGENDA, AND WORKLOAD  
PRIORITIES

The Groundfish Management Team (GMT) reviewed the Preliminary Proposed Council Meeting Agendas for the remainder of the year (Agenda Items B.1.a Attachments 3-6) and offers the following comments.

The April agenda item is fully prescribed with inseason, management measures for 2009-2010, intersector allocation, and the trawl rationalization analytical results briefing. The GMT recommends that our priority for the meeting be to adopt biennial groundfish specifications and management measures for 2009-2010 and inseason. Comments on other agenda items can only be provided as time permits.

The June agenda is also particularly full given the need to adopt biennial groundfish specifications and management measures for 2009-2010, adopt a stock assessment schedule for 2009, and begin the five-year review of essential fish habitat. These items are in addition to the often lengthy suite of inseason management measure considerations that arise in June each year and the scheduled adoption of trawl rationalization alternatives for the preliminary draft Environmental Impact Statement. The Council has scheduled the GMT and other advisory bodies to start on Friday, June 6 at 8:00 a.m. in an attempt to accommodate the schedule, with the Council convening on Friday, June 13. The GMT notes that our priority for the meeting will be to adopt biennial groundfish specifications and management measures for 2009-2010 and inseason. Comments on other agenda items will be provided only as time permits. This extended schedule will be particularly demanding, especially considering that after the Council meeting the team will need to reconvene in Portland to finalize the management measures for 2009-2010.

The GMT appreciates the magnitude of the workload before the Council and the timing necessary to discuss several important long-term initiatives (e.g. intersector allocation, trawl rationalization, and Open Access limitation) this year. However, a balance between important initiatives and workload is imperative to a successful process. Given that increasingly complex inseason action is necessary for west coast fisheries, sufficient time must be provided. The GMT and Groundfish Advisory Subpanel (GAP) work well together, however increasingly, the GMT lacks the necessary time to fully engage with the GAP on alternative inseason management proposals. This iterative process is crucial to balance conservation objectives with consideration of the needs of industry and communities. Additionally, as evidenced at the last two Council meetings, as workloads increase it has become increasingly difficult for the team to produce the quality products that the Council has come to expect from the team. Furthermore, as the team is forced to prioritize comments on agenda items, the Council sacrifices the opportunity to receive advisory body input.