

GROUND FISH MANAGEMENT TEAM REPORT ON FUTURE WORKLOAD PLANNING

The Groundfish Management Team (GMT) reviewed the draft April Council meeting agenda ([Agenda Item I.5.a. Attachment 2](#)) and has concerns over the number of groundfish agenda items (9) and non-groundfish agenda items (4-5) that the GMT could comment on. Some of these agenda items are complex and may require extensive analysis and discussion.

The GMT strives to discuss and provide input on all agenda items that are associated with management of the groundfish fisheries; however, there is a limit to what can be accomplished with quality input to the Council. The number of items the Team can thoroughly analyze and discuss, and provide useful input to the Council is limited, and varies with complexity. Any additional agenda items beyond this limit or threshold would require the Team to meet for additional days. As an example, in order to provide informative statements on just the items the team has identified as highest priority (see below); we anticipate needing a half day GMT webinar or conference call prior to the April Council and GMT meeting. This is in addition to work done at our February work session.

The GMT sees the following agenda items as the **highest priority** for the team **to discuss and comment on** (listed in Agenda Item order, not priority order):

E.4. Finalize Methodology Review COP: This is the finalization of the GMT model review methodology that the Scientific and Statistical Committee (SSC) and GMT have been working on. While this item was identified as a high priority, since it directly relates to GMT projection models, it is anticipated to be a relatively light workload.

E.5. Salmon Endangered Species Act (ESA) Reconsultation Update: We anticipate reviewing the draft biological opinion, including fishery descriptions, methodologies for calculating incidental take thresholds, and the draft RPMs. Our main focus will be evaluating the RPMs with regard to the data available for inseason tracking and fishery operations.

E.6. Groundfish Essential Fish Habitat (EFH) Amendment Scoping including RCA and Area Adjustments: These actions and subject areas fall into two general categories: actions relating to the EFH review that was initiated in December 2010, and omnibus management measure changes related to fishing area closures. Specifically, omnibus management measures include fishing area modifications for vessels participating in the shore-based individual fishing quota (IFQ) program and a Rockfish Conservation Area (RCA) closure on the US/Mexico border intended to reduce cowcod mortality (Omnibus item numbers 47 and 66, respectively, in [Agenda Item J.1.a, Attachment 1, September 2014](#)). The GMT anticipates this to be one of the more complicated groundfish items in April, which is reflected in the number of hours reserved in the Council's Proposed Meeting Agenda (9 hours).

E.7. Widow Rockfish Reallocation and Divestiture Issues: The GMT sees this agenda item as being fairly complicated considering final action is anticipated to occur at this meeting.

E.8. Blackgill and Slope Rockfish South Reallocation PPA: The GMT anticipates reviewing the analysis and products provided by Mr. Ed Waters. We foresee a number of sub-issues that will need to be covered as part of this agenda item. Additionally, we anticipate receiving input from the GAP. The preliminary preferred alternative(s) will be identified, with final action anticipated in June. In September 2014, the Council set an implementation goal for blackgill and slope rockfish reallocation of 2017. The GMT believes that completing analysis of the allocations alternatives prior to embarking on the biennial specifications analysis will improve the likelihood of the specifications, management measures, and allocations being implemented on January 1.

E.9. Consider Inseason Adjustments, Surplus Carryover, and Regulatory Amendment for Managing Set-Asides (PPA): The team will provide updates, including to the overfished species scorecard, based on the latest Groundfish Mortality Report produced by the West Coast Groundfish Observer Program (WCGOP). The issue of carry-over will also be addressed under this agenda item. The GMT requests Council input on how flexible management of set-asides fits within the Council's larger omnibus priorities. We may be able to provide some background information for the briefing book.

F.2. National Standards 1, 3, & 7 Guidelines Comments: Based on some initial feedback from Council staff, the GMT anticipates the Council will want input from us on this agenda item.

If time allows and/or depending on what is in the briefing book, the GMT **may comment** on, depending on the material for the meeting:

E.1. NMFS Report

F.5. Future Council Meeting Agenda & Workload Planning

The GMT is **not planning to comment** on the following agenda items:

E.2. Pacific Whiting: The GMT does not anticipate commenting on this. In the past we have provided some information on the off-the-top deductions, however in 2014 Council and NMFS staff were able to provide that information and we anticipate the same for 2015.

E.3. Cost Recovery: It is our understanding that this agenda item will be a National Marine Fisheries Service (NMFS) informational report on how cost recovery for the 2015 fishery was calculated. It may also offer a chance for industry to give comment on the methods for 2016. Therefore, the GMT does not see a need to comment at this time.

F.1. Seabird Protection Update: The GMT understands that under this agenda item, Mr. Ed Melvin will be reporting on Washington Sea Grant research and outreach. Given that Council action is discussion and not action at this meeting, the GMT is not planning on commenting on this item.

I.1. Regulations for Vessel Movement Monitoring: The GMT understands the primary focus of this agenda item relates to movement of gear, new technologies for tracking vessel movement, and enforceability. Given that the proposed actions are not related to catch accounting and management, the GMT is not planning to comment. At the April meeting, the Council is scheduled to choose a preliminary preferred alternative, with the final alternative adopted in September. Therefore, if specific questions arise that the Council would like the GMT's input, we could provide answers in time for the final action at the September meeting.

The Council ultimately assigns the GMT's workload and priorities. Therefore, if the Council wishes the GMT to focus efforts differently than described above, we request specific guidance on which items should be prioritized and which items the Council does not expect the GMT to comment on.