

GROUND FISH ADVISORY SUBPANEL REPORT ON
FUTURE COUNCIL MEETING AGENDA AND WORKLOAD PLANNING

The Groundfish Advisory Subpanel (GAP) discussed the future workload agenda items and suggests the following:

Midwater sport fishery: The GAP recommends keeping this on the agenda for June and September 2015. This has been a long time in development in the Council process – at least eight years, longer than it took for the trawl individual fishing quota program to be developed. It entailed three years of an exempted fishing permit fishing and five years in the Council process. A midwater sport fishery will allow relief from any nearshore constraints by allowing some effort shift offshore.

Highlight the 60-mile bank: The GAP recognizes there is an urgent conservation and enforcement need to fix the coordinates of the 60-mile bank to protect cowcod in southern California. This was brought up during the essential fish habitat (EFH) discussions, but then left out of future EFH workload. The 60-mile bank is closed to recreational fleets since recreational groundfish fishing is closed seaward of the coastal 60 fathom line as defined by lat./long. coordinates. Currently, there are no lat./long. coordinates for a 60-mile bank rockfish conservation area (RCA) and there is concern this loophole may result in excessive cowcod (and possibly bocaccio) catch and mortality. The GAP also noted that observer coverage and the resulting data has been lacking from this area. Solutions ranging from including the area into a new defined Cowcod Conservation Area (CCA) to solely defining the lat./long. coordinates for the 60 fathom and 150 fathom lines for an RCA. Perhaps the 2017-18 harvest specifications process would be an avenue for this. The GAP requests the Council consider this as soon as possible.

Keep groundfish at March meeting: The GAP is concerned that not including groundfish during the March 16 meeting may lead to excessive groundfish workload at the April meeting. Therefore, we request spreading out groundfish issues between the March and April meetings if at all possible.

November meeting dates: After discussion, the GAP requests the Council move the November meeting date to the first week so those who fish Dungeness crab in Central California can attend the meeting. The crab season opens on Nov. 15, so some fishermen on the GAP would be unable to attend due to conflicts with travel to the crab grounds and setting crab gear a day or two before Nov. 15. We realize the date was changed so as not to interfere with Halloween, but hope the first week will work for all members of the GAP.

Omnibus: The GAP requests a check-in on the Omnibus list in June to see whether previous priorities are still applicable. Specific to the whiting fleet are the priorities of 1) eliminating the prohibition of at-sea processing south of 42 degrees, as it seems no longer practical considering the ongoing salmon consultation; and 2) consideration given to switching the priority to the concept of transferring limited amounts of choke species between the shoreside and at-sea mothership sector to allow for flexibility and reduce the chances of having to tap into set-asides

or closing the fishery. This concept is in the omnibus now and we would like to see it incorporated into future rulemaking process.

Blackgill: Looking at the proposed June meeting schedule, the GAP feels the final preferred alternative on blackgill reallocation may now be September, pending Council discussion on Wednesday, April 15, 2015.

PFMC
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