

SPECIFICATIONS PROCESS FOR 2017-2018 FISHERIES

The Council is scheduled to adopt a detailed process and schedule governing the development of harvest specifications and related management measures for 2017-2018 groundfish fisheries (Agenda Item D.5, Attachment 1). The process accommodates several important sequential decision-making steps, including scientific peer review of data and analyses used for management decision-making; preparation of an appropriate analytical document as required by applicable law, including the National Environmental Policy Act; the opportunity for constituent meetings sponsored by state agencies to solicit public input on preferred management alternatives; and full notice and comment rulemaking to implement new biennial regulations. All of these steps need to be timed so that the new regulations can be implemented on January 1, 2017.

The process to establish the 2017-2018 specifications is expected to be streamlined compared to past cycles, given Amendment 24 to the Groundfish Fishery Management Plan has been implemented. Amendment 24 established default harvest control rules that will be used to determine harvest specifications, unless modified by the Council. Amendment 24, coupled with the long-term impact analysis (referred to as the Tier analysis), was designed to streamline the analytical process, substantially reduce future workload, and increase the probability that future harvest specifications are implemented January 1.

There are two noteworthy additions to the 2017-2018 schedule compared to past cycles. In 2012, the National Marine Fisheries Service published a non-salmonid biological opinion, pursuant to the Endangered Species Act (ESA), which resulted in the formation of the Groundfish Endangered Species Workgroup (ESWG). The ESWG is scheduled to meet at least biennially and develop recommendations on listed species' take, monitoring, and mitigation; and the need to reinitiate consultation under Section 7 of the ESA. The timing of the ESWG meetings was designed such that any recommendations for management measures would be considered by the Council during the upcoming biennial process. The schedule in Agenda Item D.5, Attachment 1 proposes that any management measures recommended by the ESWG to the Council would be considered for implementation through the existing management measures decision-making schedule (i.e., range of alternatives in November, preliminary preferred alternative in April 2016, and final preferred alternative in June 2016).

Second, in April 2015, the Council decided to reconsider the ecosystem component species designation for big skate or embark on a broader consideration for all skates (e.g., explore structuring a skate complex) during the development of the 2017-2018 regulations. The proposed schedule calls for a preliminary preferred decision in September 2015 and a final preferred decision in November 2015. This schedule is intended to provide sufficient time for the Groundfish Management Team to design any necessary management measures over the winter to allow the Council to adopt preliminary preferred measures in April 2016.

Two Council Operating Procedures (COPs) guide the schedule for developing 2017-2018 harvest specifications and management measures. COP 9 details the overarching milestones by month (Agenda Item D.5, Attachment 2) and COP 25 details the procedures for the review and Council

approval of groundfish impact analyses and methodologies that inform stock assessments (Agenda Item D.5, Attachment 3). The Council should consider the overarching processes outlined in the COPs when adopting the detailed schedule provided in Attachment 1.

Council Action:

Adopt a Schedule for the Development of 2017-2018 Harvest Specifications and Management Measures.

Reference Materials:

1. Agenda Item D.5, Attachment 1: Proposed Schedule for Developing the 2017-2018 Groundfish Harvest Specifications and Management Measures.
2. Agenda Item D.5, Attachment 2: Council Operating Procedure 9.
3. Agenda Item D.5, Attachment 3: Council Operating Procedure 25.

Agenda Order:

- D.5 Specifications Process for 2017-2018 Fisheries Kelly Ames and Kit Dahl
- a. Reports and Comments of Advisory Bodies and Management Entities
 - b. Public Comment
 - c. **Council Action:** Adopt a Process for Specifications and Management Measures for 2017- 2018 Fisheries

PFMC
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