

GROUND FISH MANAGEMENT TEAM REPORT ON FUTURE COUNCIL MEETING AGENDA AND WORKLOAD PLANNING

The Groundfish Management Team (GMT) reviewed the [Groundfish Workload Priorities](#), draft agenda for September 2015 ([Agenda Item F.5, Attachment 2](#)), and Year-at-a-glance ([Agenda Item F.5, Attachment 1](#)) documents included in the briefing book under this agenda item and offers the following thoughts and considerations.

Groundfish Priorities

The GMT reminds the Council that any items that are intended to be included in the 2017-2018 biennial harvest specifications and management measures analysis, such as re-evaluating big skates, or skates in general, as ecosystem component species, should be finalized by the November 2015 Council meeting. Any new items that come after that time have the potential to complicate and/or delay the process and timing.

September 2015 Schedule

The draft proposed September Council meeting agenda ([Agenda Item F.5, Attachment 2](#)), contained in the briefing book, includes 13 groundfish agenda items. The GMT anticipates providing comment on 11 - 12 of those agenda items. Additionally, there are enforcement and non-groundfish items that some members of the team will also need to be involved in (i.e., Vessel Movement Monitoring and Pacific Halibut Catch Sharing Plan).

The GMT notes that both initial actions for the 2017-18 biennial harvest specifications and Essential Fish Habitat (EFH) are included in the September agenda. The GMT has concerns about this as both have the potential to be complex, high workload, and time intensive agenda items. The GMT discussed the possibility of the EFH agenda item being moved to March 2016, which is currently a light groundfish meeting. However, if it's important to adopt the Purpose and Need and range of alternatives to allow for the analysis to occur over winter, the GMT wonders if there are other agenda items that could be postponed until another meeting. The GMT highlighted the flow scale regulations deeming, or the rebuilding revision rules agenda items, where we thought the timing of Council consideration might be more flexible.

The GMT requests beginning our September meeting at 8 a.m. on Thursday, September 10, 2015. We believe an earlier start is necessary to give the GMT time to discuss and provide input on the large number of items scheduled for September. Additionally, the GMT may need to have a conference call prior to that meeting similar to April and June in order to begin discussions on some agenda items. We note that while conference calls are not nearly as productive as the in person meetings, these conference calls have become increasingly important so that we can get started on our discussions and work on agenda items as opposed to sacrificing commenting on some items, due to time and workload constraints at the meeting. On our June call, the GMT had our only scheduled discussion times for two agenda items; there was no time scheduled at the June meeting for those items. We foresee something like that occurring at this pre-September conference call.

Between now and the September Council meeting, not only will there be team meetings or conference calls, team members will be working on a variety of tasks in preparation for the September meeting, including finalizing harvest projection models. In addition, the GMT will meet for a week in October to kick off discussions on the 2017-2018 specifications process.

Year-at-a-glance Schedule ([Agenda Item F.5, Attachment 1](#))

November 2015

There are 11 groundfish agenda items preliminarily identified for November, including 2015-2016 biennial harvest specification and management measures. This item also includes exempted fishing permits, which tend to be time and effort intensive.

March 2016

The current Year-at-a-glance document ([Agenda Item F.5, Attachment 1](#)) has an update on the 2017-2018 biennial harvest specifications and management measures. The GMT thinks there is value in having this briefing, as anticipated in Council Operating Procedure (COP) 9, to get some initial input, or identify any problems in the progress of the biennial groundfish process.

The GMT understands that the inseason agenda item tentatively scheduled for March could be intended to be informational, with updates to the nearshore and non-nearshore model being available or room for action if a conservation issue is identified. We could also consider carryover at the March meeting, understanding that the data would be preliminary and finalization of any carryover would have to occur in April.

There is also an electronic monitoring non-whiting final preferred alternative verification agenda item scheduled. The team is unclear what that agenda item might entail; however, any agenda items that could be taken up in March to help provide relief at another meeting may be beneficial to the Council and its advisory bodies. Additionally, this may be a meeting where EFH could be included, as it would then not compete with other high workload agenda items such as the 2017-2018 specifications and management measure agenda item in April. **The GMT recommends the Council consider the feasibility of moving the EFH Amendment preliminary preferred alternatives including RCA Adjustments agenda item from the April Council meeting to March.**

April 2016

The current Year-at-a-glance document ([Agenda Item F.5, Attachment 1](#)) again has both 2017-2018 biennial harvest specifications and management measures and EFH. As in September 2015, the team has concerns about the complexity, workload, and time required for both of these issues.

Summary

The GMT requests Council guidance on our anticipated upcoming workload, particularly September Council meeting agenda items. If the Council could identify those items of the highest priority for GMT input, that would be helpful. Additionally, if there are any items that the Council does not anticipate needing GMT input on, identifying those would be helpful as well.

PFMC
06/16/15