

GROUND FISH MANAGEMENT TEAM REPORT ON OMNIBUS GROUND FISH WORKLOAD PLANNING

The Groundfish Management Team (GMT) reviewed the briefing book materials under this agenda item and offers the following for Council consideration. While the GMT does not offer specific prioritization of all items on the omnibus list, we feel the following items warrant Council consideration for inclusion in the Council's workload planning. The GMT recognizes that some of the items on the current omnibus list are of varying importance to the different sectors. However, given current workload and staffing, the GMT thought it was important to select a narrow scope of items to include in the workload plan. To be most efficient, the GMT focused our discussion on measures we felt would be beneficial to multiple sectors, or could address issues that have been requiring a lot of Council time and workload on temporary fixes. Except for the new item identified by the GMT, detailed descriptions of existing Omnibus items can be found in [Agenda Item G.6, Attachment 2](#).

Priority Items

The GMT has identified the following items for further consideration of being added to the Council's workload planning, in no particular order.

Analysis of a Multi-Year Catch Policy (#47)

This management measure could provide stability to industry and reduce workload by utilizing an approach where management performance and the need to adjust management measures would be evaluated by comparing multi-year average catch against an average annual catch limit (ACL). The GMT believes this measure would allow for flexibility in management; therefore, **the GMT recommends this item (#47) be considered for inclusion in the Council's workload planning.**

Package #54 and #55 to allow transfers among the trawl sectors

Underutilization of target stocks due to bycatch constraints (not just limited to overfished species) has been an issue for the individual fishing quota (IFQ) fisheries and at-sea whiting sectors, both mothership (MS) and catcher-processor (CP). Over the last couple of years the Council and its advisory bodies have spent a considerable amount of time and effort putting "band aids" on this issue. If the Council chooses to prioritize these items to deal with the larger overarching issues, and finding a long-term solution, it could free up Council and advisory body time and workload to address other issues in the future.

Item # 55 would allow voluntary transfers of IFQ quota from mothership-endorsed catcher vessels associated with the buyback loan to the MS co-op. Industry and the Council have repeatedly supported this option as it could mutually benefit both parties (i.e., MS and MS-endorsed catcher vessels). The MS sector would benefit because the additional quota gained via voluntary transfers could increase their ability to obtain their whiting allocations in a more efficient manner (i.e., reduce bycatch avoidance costs). The catcher vessels would also benefit by transferring their IFQ quota to the MS sector because it would help the MS remain open. However, considerations would have to be given to the effects on the IFQ participants that do not have mothership endorsement,

as transfers of IFQ to the MS could reduce quota availability on the open market and thus increase price.

Item #54 would be more expansive than #55, as it would allow back and forth transfers among all trawl sectors, not just MS and MS-endorsed IFQ catcher vessels as in item #55. As such, the CP and IFQ vessels without MS endorsement could stand to benefit via inter-sector trades.

The GMT recommends the Council consider packaging items # 54 and #55. The GMT also recommends that inter-sector trades be expanded to include all allocated species (i.e. no set aside species) and these items be considered for inclusion in the workload plan.

Packaged updates to discard mortality rates (#63, #66, #69)

The GMT recommends combining and adding to the workload plan the following items: Discard Survival Credit for Lingcod and Sablefish (#63), Discard Mortality Rates for Commercial Nearshore Fisheries (#66), Discard Mortality Rates for Recreational Fisheries (#69). The current discard mortality rates being applied to the recreational and commercial nearshore fisheries may be able to be updated based on research conducted since those rates were implemented. The GMT feels that these items could be packaged together for regulatory, as well as analytical, efficiency, since similar data are likely to be used to inform these analyses. Further, these management measures could be beneficial to multiple sectors, and may provide long-term benefits in future management decisions. Updates could be done in a single Council meeting following review by the SSC. They could then be adopted mid-biennium as they reflect improvements to catch accounting practices, and are not new management measures. As a result, implementation of the updated discard mortality rates, once the rates are developed and approved, is expected to be relatively simple. However, there will be associated GMT workload and Scientific and Statistical Committee review.

As an example, reductions of total mortality in the commercial nearshore fishery in Oregon and California could be considerable for yelloweye rockfish; the GMT ran model sensitivities using the existing commercial discard mortality rates compared to the recently-updated surface mortality rates of the recreational fisheries (not descended), and found that projected mortality would be reduced from 1.83 mt to 1.21 mt (a reduction of approximately a third). If commercial discard mortality rates were changed to those of the recreational fisheries, the reductions in actual total mortality of yelloweye rockfish would be of similar magnitude (i.e., reduced by approximately a third). The associated increase in harvest potential for target stocks could be substantial for the nearshore fishery if such savings in yelloweye rockfish bycatch were to occur.

Table 1. Comparison of predicted yelloweye rockfish total mortality (mt) for the Oregon/California nearshore fishery using existing commercial discard mortality rates and the updated recreational surface discard mortality rates that were updated in the process to establish rates for use of descending devices.

Discard mortality rate type	Projected nearshore total mortality of yelloweye rockfish (mt)			
	OR	CA-N	CA-S	Total
Current commercial	1.17	0.53	0.13	1.83
Recreational surface release	0.79	0.34	0.08	1.21

The GMT recommends these discard mortality-related items be consolidated regardless of Council prioritization of these items. Further, the GMT recommends that the Council task the GMT with initiating scoping of this package of management measures as time allows; the GMT can report back to the Council with a progress report and recommendation on the next steps when a sufficient amount of information has been compiled.

New Item: “Green Light” (#71)

This management measure would establish a process that would allow the ACL to be adjusted upward mid-biennium if an overfished species were declared rebuilt by NMFS. This new process would allow for flexible management and be beneficial to all sectors. For example, the GMT notes that the latest cowcod stock status indicated the stock is rebuilding faster than anticipated and is now expected to be rebuilt in 2020. However, under the current process, it would not be possible to adjust the ACL mid-biennium based upon updated understanding of stock status.

This item has been considered before, most recently in the preliminary range of management measures considered for analysis in the 2017-2018 harvest specifications and management measures process ([Agenda Item I.9, November 2015](#)). The Council did not include the “green light” policy in the range of management measures for more detailed analysis because they prioritized routine management measures and completion of the 2017-2018 biennial rulemaking by January 1, 2017.

The GMT believes that potential benefits of this item could be quite substantial for multiple sectors, as was highlighted in the latest stock assessment cycle for canary rockfish. In 2015, canary rockfish was declared rebuilt; however, the Council was unable to raise the ACL mid-biennium (providing both additional opportunity and relief to fisheries) due to the lack of a “green light” policy framework in the Groundfish Fishery Management Plan. **Therefore, the GMT recommends that the Council consider adding the “green light” process as item #71, and consider including in the workload plan.**

Recommendations

The GMT recommends the following:

- **analysis of Multi-Year Average Catch Policy (item #47) be considered for inclusion in the Council’s workload planning,**

- **the Council consider packaging Between Sector Transfer of Unneeded Overfished Species (item # 54) and Between Sector Transfer of Rockfish from IFQ to MS (item #55). The GMT also recommends that inter-sector trades be expanded to include all allocated species (i.e. no set aside species) and these items be considered for inclusion in the workload plan,**
- **combining and adding to the workload plan the following items: Discard Survival Credit for Lingcod and Sablefish (item #63), Discard Mortality Rates for Commercial Nearshore Fisheries (item #66), Discard Mortality Rates for Recreational Fisheries (item #69),**
- **the GMT recommends that the Council task the GMT with initiating scoping of the package of discard mortality management measures (above) as time allows; the GMT can report-back to the Council with a progress report and recommendation on next steps when a sufficient amount information has been compiled, and**
- **the Council consider adding the “green light” process as item #71, and consider including in the workload.**

PFMC
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