

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

The Groundfish Management Team (GMT) discussed the proposed [March](#) and [April](#) agendas and the [year-at-a-glance](#) contained in the advanced briefing book, as well as the information provided in the National Marine Fisheries Service (NMFS) Report ([Agenda Item F.1.a. NMFS Report 2](#)) and provides the following recommendations for Council consideration.

Overwinter Work

The GMT discussed the number of instances this week where the Council and Advisory Bodies considered groundfish issues which were complicated by the delay of the salmon Biological Opinion (BiOp) process, and gear regulations rulemaking. Due to the noted NMFS staffing shortages and challenges within the rulemaking process, the GMT discussed adjusting the use of our time and workload priorities. There might be more benefit to fisheries as a whole from re-prioritizing our time and work to aid in the salmon BiOp and the gear modifications packages that have been delayed. **Therefore, the GMT recommends the Council consider re-prioritizing the model review and updates and directing the GMT to assist NMFS with completing the analyses needed to finalize the salmon BiOp and gear modifications EIS.**

Specifically, the GMT would like to move forward addressing those priority items that would provide the greatest benefits while addressing finer resolution modifications at a later date. As these models have been previously reviewed by the Scientific and Statistical Committee (SSC), improvements would be within the scope of earlier recommendations (e.g., improve nearshore model inputs) and would not require additional review.

The yelloweye rockfish risk analysis will better inform the Council to consider alternative management approaches to reduce individual sector constraints but still maintain conservation objectives within the Annual Catch Limits (ACLs) established in the rebuilding plan to rebuild as quickly as possible while considering social and economic objectives. Updating discard mortality rates to better conform with the best available science is important to ensure removals are properly accounted, which is important for accomplishing biological and economic objectives.

Therefore, the GMT recommends that the Council task the GMT with updating the nearshore discard mortality rates and exploring the yelloweye rockfish share probability analysis as our first workload priority. We would continue to work on other model improvements as time allows and will notify the Council when these updates will be available for SSC review.

The GMT would still provide the Council with an update on the application of sablefish and lingcod discard mortality rates for the individual fishing quota (IFQ) program as scheduled.

January 9-13 GMT Work Session

The GMT is proposing to meet January 9th through 13th in Portland or Seattle in order to prepare for the upcoming Council meetings and SSC reviews. Issues we anticipate working on, unless the Council re-prioritizes our workload as described above include: (1) methodology review topics (nearshore discard mortality rates, and sablefish and lingcod discard rates for future application in the shorebased IFQ program); (2) updated National Standards Guidelines and how it relates to carryover for the individual fishing quota (IFQ) fishery if feedback from NMFS is available in time for the meeting; (3) the mid-biennium adjustment policy framework (depending on Council action on Agenda Item F.7); (4) possibly receive a briefing on the March ecosystem agenda items; and (5) possibly complete our review of Appendix E of the trawl review program. In addition, if the Council approves our above recommendation to re-prioritize our workload over winter to assist in the BiOp and gear modifications package, we will add this to our discussion. The GMT asks that the Council provide guidance on additional issues that they would like the GMT to discuss.

March Agenda

As shown on [Agenda Item C.6, Supplemental Attachment 2](#), there is currently only one groundfish item on the March Agenda (Historical Reconstruction/B_{msy} workshop) with three groundfish items to be potentially scheduled. The SSC recommended that the review of the GMT's nearshore and non-nearshore models be slated as a regular agenda item. However, the GMT and SSC are currently not scheduled to overlap at this time. It would be beneficial for the groundfish agenda items (and associated GMT schedule) to be moved so that the SSC and GMT overlap.

Additionally, the GMT has the following recommendations:

1. Inseason: As under Agenda Item F.3., **we recommended confirming the inseason agenda item to provide recommendations on carryover for the shorebased IFQ fishery and any additional updates for 2017 fisheries.**
2. Salmon BiOp: The Salmon Endangered Species Act (ESA) consultation is currently shaded and set for final action in April. **The GMT recommends keeping the BiOp update in March** and consider moving final action to June, as the turnaround time between March and April may be too short. However, we defer to the Analyst on the appropriate timeline.
3. EFH/RCA: **The GMT recommends receiving an update on the progress of the DEIS in March under future workload planning (not as a standalone agenda item), and moving final action to September.**
4. EM EFP: **The GMT recommends receiving an update as proposed in [Agenda Item C.6.a, Supplemental Attachment 6](#).**

Finally, the Review of Fishery Ecosystem Plans and Focal Topics are scheduled on the Council agenda prior to the start of the GMT meeting. In March of 2014, the GMT was not present at the Council meeting and missed the opportunity to comment on the ecosystem items at that time, which lead to a mismatch in the GMT's comments and Council action later in the year. Another option to potentially alleviate this issue could be to have the GMT receive a briefing on these items at our January work session.

April Agenda

The GMT notes the importance of the Endangered Species Workgroup agenda item. This timing is so that if mitigation measures are needed, and are "small enough" to fit in the biennial harvest

specifications and management measures process, it can be done. The schedule is adopted in June 2017, and new management measures required will need to be identified by the September 2017 Council meeting.

Year at a Glance

The GMT listened to the NMFS report (Agenda Item F.1.) at this meeting, which contained the rulemaking plan for 2016-2017 that consists of at least eight rules ([Agenda Item F.1. NMFS Report 2](#)). NMFS also commented on the agency's limited abilities with current staff shortages. **Given these issues, the GMT believes there is a need for the Council to take a hard look at, and prioritize, the existing rulemaking workload and reconsider the timing of the omnibus items on the Year at a Glance.** When the Council gets too far ahead of NMFS issues tend to arise that cause additional workload and further delays (i.e., trailing amendments). We therefore offer the following suggestions:

June:

1. Trawl quota pound (QP) trading: **The GMT recommends that this item be moved to September when the 5-year review range of alternatives is being considered.**

September:

1. LE Fixed Gear Sablefish: **The GMT supports the GAP recommendation to move this item to 2018.**

PFMC
11/20/16