

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

The Groundfish Management Team (GMT) reviewed the draft November Pacific Fishery Management Council (Council) meeting agenda ([Agenda Item F.7, Attachment 2](#)) and the draft year at a glance ([Agenda Item E.7., Attachment 1](#)) contained in the advanced briefing book and offer the following comments.

November

The GMT will be short-handed in November. In addition to the two current vacancies, our Vice Chair will not be in attendance. The California Department of Fish and Wildlife (CDFW) and the Tribes both intend to provide alternatives for November. However, that will still limit the GMT's capacity compared to when we have a full team of permanent members.

The GMT has reviewed the proposed November meeting agenda, and notes the agenda has five groundfish items currently scheduled, with an additional six shaded items for consideration. With the shaded groundfish items accounting for 14 hours of agenda time of an available 8.25, and an additional shaded 7 hours of non-groundfish items, some groundfish items will need to be dropped. The GMT understands from NMFS that both Endangered Species Act Mitigation Measures for Seabirds and Salmon will need to be included to the November agenda to ensure 2019 compliance with Incidental Take Statement requirements. **The GMT recommends the Council postpone groundfish prioritization (omnibus) until the March meeting, and the Cowcod Conservation Area revisions until after the March workload prioritization discussion.**

The GMT notes that the Annual Banquet is currently scheduled for the evening of Friday, November 2. However, the GMT and Groundfish Advisory Subpanel (GAP) are not scheduled to start until Sunday, November 4. This schedule will exclude members of the groundfish advisory bodies from the participating in the banquet. Having the GMT begin on Saturday, November 3 would allow the team to attend the banquet, and, more importantly, give us more time for discussions, analysis, and writing of reports on the tightly scheduled November agenda items. With the compressed schedule currently shown for the GMT (4 days) and being shorthanded, it makes it extremely difficult for the GMT to have detailed discussions as a team, provide analysis, and complete thorough statements on complex agenda items scheduled over two solid days of groundfish on the Council floor, as some team members are needed in the Council room for certain agenda items. Adding an additional day in the beginning of the meeting and spreading out the groundfish items would allow the GMT a better opportunity provide meaningful input.

For the Methodology Review agenda item, the GMT is not proposing to change to any of our impact models that would need to be reviewed by the Scientific and Statistical Committee (SSC) during this process. The only changes being considered will be minor, such as updates to the years of data inputs and updating average weights, and will not require SSC review.

Reminder that the inseason agenda item in November includes setting up fisheries for the beginning of 2019. In addition to the whiting yield set-asides, trips limits, bag limits, etc. may need to be adjusted for the beginning of 2019. Additionally, if the National Marine Fisheries Service (NMFS) indicates that implementation of the 2019-2020 biennial harvest specifications and management measures final rule will not be published by January 1, 2018, a contingency plan may need to be put in place, for the time period until the final rule (new annual catch limits (ACLs), etc.) is put into place.

In anticipation of the November Council meeting, the GMT recommends that a webinar be scheduled on October 30th and publicly noticed by the Council to allow us to get a start on our November workload. The GMT chair, vice chair and Council staff will be identifying items to be discussed during that webinar.

March

If the Council selects the GMT recommendation, groundfish workload prioritization should be scheduled for the March Council meeting. **The GMT recommends rescheduling “Flexibility in Annual Catch Limit Management” until after the groundfish workload prioritization discussion at the March meeting.**

Scientific and Statistical Committee Workshops and Webinars

The SSC statement ([Agenda Item F.7.a, Supplemental SSC Report 1, September 2018](#)) recommends having a one day catch reconstruction workshop focusing on skates in January 2019 in Seattle. Additionally, the SSC is recommending a one day meeting on Accepted Practices Guidelines for Groundfish Stock Assessments at the same time. Finally, the SSC is recommending the California and Oregon nearshore remotely operated vehicle (ROV) survey methodology review be scheduled on February 12-14, 2019, in Santa Cruz, California; these fishery independent surveys could be highly influential to the assessment of nearshore stocks as a means to help better anchor biomass scale, and provide unbiased trends in relative abundance and length composition changes. The GMT requests to have an official representative at each of these workshops/meetings. The SSC also has several webinars scheduled that have groundfish implications which members of the GMT intend on participating in.

PFMC
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