

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

The Groundfish Management Team (GMT) reviewed the draft April Pacific Fishery Management Council (Council) meeting agenda ([Agenda Item C.5, Attachment 2](#)) and the draft Year at a Glance ([Agenda Item C.5, Attachment 1](#)) in the advanced briefing book, and offers the following comments.

April Council Meeting

The GMT suggests that the Endangered Species Act Salmon Mitigation Measures item in April should be to adopt a Range of Alternatives (ROA), rather than a Preliminary Preferred Alternative (PPA). Due to the partial government shutdown, the GMT did not have the opportunity at our January meeting to discuss this item with National Marine Fisheries Service (NMFS) staff. By changing the scope of the April item, the GMT will have more time to consider and analyze alternatives, and identify the best ways to address salmon bycatch issues. Additionally, industry and Council members will have more time to review and understand the issues and provide any comments. The GMT has discussed this with NMFS staff, and do not believe this will cause any scheduling issues with regard to the timing requirements of the Salmon Incidental Take Statement. Therefore, **the GMT recommends that the Council change the PPA for salmon mitigation measures in April to ROA.**

The Scientific and Statistical Committee (SSC) will provide the Council more input on their plans for applying new sigma values in the 2021-22 harvest specifications. Dr. Owen Hamel, Northwest Fisheries Science Center, indicated that graduate students may be able to conduct additional catch-only projections in 2019 as a means to more accurately reflect stock status, and provide some short-term mitigation to the higher overfishing limit (OFL) deductions associated with the new, and higher, sigma values. The GMT will consult with Dr. Hamel during the upcoming month in regard to which would be our highest priority stocks for additional catch-only projections.

June Council Meeting

The current Year-at-a-Glance document has four unshaded groundfish items, and 11 shaded groundfish items. The GMT believes having all of those items on the agenda in June is untenable. **The GMT recommends the Midwater Trawl EFP Final Action item could be moved to September.** The GMT has been informed by NMFS staff that this would not preclude NMFS from issuing permits by January 1, 2020.

The GMT notes that the “Flexibility in ACL Management” items remains on the schedule. The GMT believes that, under Council discussion in November 2018, this item was recommended for removal, which the GMT supports. Instead, the GMT suggests using that time slot to discuss how to respond to the sigma value changes adopted at this meeting, which could include P* and the new 3-year allowable biological catch phase-in that could be added to the groundfish fishery management plan. This would be a scoping item to determine what potential process, or processes, the GMT might move forward and their potential workload.

The GMT suggests that the Year-at-a-Glance be updated to reflect that the SaMTAAC will report on progress in June, but that the Council is not expected to select an ROA until a later Council meeting.

As stated in [Agenda Item, G.4.a Supplemental GMT Report 4](#), work on Gear Switching & Sablefish Area Management will preclude the GMT's ability to contribute to analysis or consideration of an additional items from the workload prioritization process; so **the GMT recommends the Council give careful consideration to selecting between the items adopted for prioritization by the Council for June.**

PFMC
03/10/19*