

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

The Groundfish Management Team (GMT) reviewed the draft agenda ([Agenda Item D.10, Attachment 2](#)) for the September Pacific Fishery Management Council (Council) meeting and draft year-at-a-glance ([Agenda Item D.10, Attachment 1](#)) contained in the advanced briefing book, and offer the following comments.

September Council Meeting

As noted in the SaMTAAC Progress Report to the Council ([Informational Report 2](#)), the Gear Switching & Sablefish Area Management Update item can be removed from the September Agenda.

Currently, the Endangered Species Act (ESA) salmon mitigation measures preliminary preferred alternative (PPA), year-round midwater trawl exempted fishing permit (EFP), and science improvements and methodology report items are listed in the candidate agenda item box. **The GMT recommends that the ESA salmon item be moved to the Council's agenda based on the Council's recommendation in April. We also recommend that the year-round midwater trawl EFP be included under inseason, as in previous years. The GMT recommends the science improvement and methodology items be moved on the year-at-a-glance to reflect that the reports will not be ready until March or April of 2020.**

Concerns about fisheries being constrained by both shortbelly rockfish and cowcod were raised at this meeting. As discussed during the inseason agenda item, a higher shortbelly rockfish annual catch limit (ACL) would reduce fishery constraints, and would not cause a conservation risk to shortbelly rockfish as the allowable biological catch is ~10 times greater than the ACL. Additionally, raising or eliminating the cowcod annual catch target (ACT) could provide the fastest means, with potentially the lowest workload, to raise annual vessel caps in the individual fishing quota fishery that are constraining individual vessels ([Agenda Item B.1.b, Public Comments](#)). Therefore, **the GMT recommends the Council schedule an agenda item in both September and November that would jointly consider a new ACL for shortbelly rockfish in 2020 and would raise or eliminate the ACT for cowcod in 2020.**

Packaging the shortbelly rockfish and cowcod items together would be beneficial, as they could be completed in a single rulemaking. Members of the Groundfish Advisory Subpanel (GAP) were concerned that including cowcod could delay or hinder the ability to raise the shortbelly rockfish ACL; however, the GMT does not believe this would be the case. Minimal changes to regulations would be needed to raise or eliminate the cowcod ACT. Cowcod is currently managed with a 6 mt ACT, which is set below the 10 mt ACL based on the rebuilding plan and the spawning potential ratio of 82.7 percent. The Council should be able to consider raising or eliminating the cowcod ACT relatively easily, while taking into account off-the-top deductions (e.g., 2 mt set-aside for research). Both options are expected to provide considerable relief to annual vessel caps. The GMT notes that any potential actions on cowcod should be contingent on the results of the upcoming 2019 stock assessment and updated research catches, but the Council needs to schedule consideration of changes to the cowcod ACT at this meeting in order for changes to be effective in early 2020. The GMT notes that any potential actions on cowcod should be contingent on the

results of the upcoming 2019 stock assessment, but the Council needs to schedule cowcod ACTs at this meeting in order to consider changes that could be effective early in 2020.

As mentioned in our GMT report on harvest specifications ([Agenda Item I.6.a, Supplemental GMT Report 1, June 2019](#)), and Council action under Agenda Item D.5, the GMT, with assistance from Council and National Marine Fisheries Services staff, will scope the alternative approaches, criteria, frequency, additional process steps, and potential species (e.g., Oregon black rockfish) for consideration by the Council in September. Additionally, the GMT has had preliminary discussions on increasing P*s within the current available range for shortspine and longspine thornyheads and sablefish (e.g., P* from 0.4 to 0.45) and will provide further information in September.

GMT October Work Session

In October, GMT members will be attending meetings in Portland, OR: the next SaMTAAC meeting is scheduled for October 9-10, and the PacFIN meeting is scheduled for October 23-24. Additionally, the RecFIN meeting is scheduled for October 9-10 in San Diego, CA.

The GMT will also need to have our initial biennial harvest specifications and management measures work session prior to the November Council meeting. The Team is currently recommending the meeting be held at the Council office from October 7-11. This is not ideal given the other co-occurring meetings that week, however the week prior is the mop-up stock assessment panel (if necessary), and the week after would be too late as it is the week of the briefing book deadline.

November Council Meeting:

The SaMTAAC Progress Report to the Council also noted that there will be another progress report in November, so the Gear Switching & Sablefish Area Management Range of Alternatives item can be removed from the November agenda, or changed to an update item.

Year-at-a-Glance

The GMT recommends adding the non-trawl RCA agenda item in March 2020 (#6 [Agenda Item I.2.a, Supp GMT Report 2, June 2019](#)) instead of June 2020, as discussed under Agenda Item I.6 at this meeting, in order for the final rule to occur more in line with the start of 2021.

Additionally, based on the current year-at-a-glance, the Council could consider scheduling one of the other three groundfish priorities (mothership sector utilization, Emley-Platt EFP, or Amendment 21 Trawl/Non-Trawl allocation) for June 2020.

The GMT also notes the groundfish workload prioritization item is scheduled for all meetings except March 2020 on the year-at-a-glance. In [Agenda Item G.4.a, GMT Report 2, March 2019](#), the GMT emphasized that the March meeting is the best time to assess and re-prioritize the workload, as the GMT can report on overwinter analysis and plan for the year. Further, as described in [Agenda Item G.4.a, Supplemental GMT Report 3](#), this would be an optimal meeting to re-visit and adjust this new practice. Given this and the short time between the March and April Council meetings, **the GMT recommends that March meetings include a workload prioritization item, but April meetings do not.**

GMT Participation in Other Meetings/Processes

- Update STAR panel--Aug 20-21, Karen Palmigiano
- Sablefish STAR--July 8-13, Patrick Mirick
- Cowcod/gopher/black-and-yellow STAR--July 22-26, Mel Mandrup
- Mop-Up STAR panel (if needed)--Sept 30-Oct 4, TBD
- RecFIN--Oct 9-10, Heather Hall
- SaMTAAC--Oct 9-10, Patrick Mirick
- PacFIN--Oct 23-24, Kayleigh Somers
- Stock assessment “post mortem”-- Dec 2019, TBD
- Biennial Harvest Specifications database -- Lynn Mattes
- State sponsored stakeholder meetings to gather input for changes to the 2020 Pacific Halibut Catch Sharing Plan (August and October, 2019) including potential changes to the directed fishery--State Representatives

PFMC

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