

GROUND FISH MANAGEMENT TEAM REPORT ON THE CLIMATE AND COMMUNITIES INITIATIVE

The Groundfish Management Team (GMT) read the briefing book materials for Agenda Item E.2. and some members of the team participated in the meetings on May 9, 2019 and August 8, 2019 regarding the Fishery Ecosystem Plan (FEP) Climate and Communities Initiative. The GMT believes that focusing scenario planning on shifting stock availability will help inform ecosystem-based management under a changing climate.

The GMT suggests the Ecosystem Workgroup (EWG) consider exploring current issues in their scenario planning efforts. Shortbelly rockfish (*Sebastes jordani*) bycatch in the whiting fishery off Oregon and Washington in 2018 and 2019 was some of the highest rates ever recorded. Additionally, while the range of this species does extend into Washington, the center of abundance has historically been central California. Because shortbelly rockfish bycatch has generally been low in the Pacific Northwest, the annual catch limit (ACL) was set at a very low level compared to the overfishing level. The ACL was set at a level intended to be high enough to allow for fisheries bycatch but not so high as to promote targeting. In 2019 the ACL was exceeded very early in the fishing season, and the Council and the National Marine Fisheries Service had to consider closure of sectors with high bycatch rates. As oceans continue to warm, northern shifts in species distribution and/or range expansions could cause similar issues. The EWG could use this type of issue to make scenario planning even more relevant to current fisheries management and provide real world examples of how to address these issues.

The GMT requests to have a representative attend the scheduled January 2020 workshop on this topic.

PFMC
09/13/19