

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

The Groundfish Management Team (GMT) reviewed the draft proposed Pacific Fishery Management Council (Council) meeting agenda for June ([Agenda Item I.4, Attachment 2](#)) and the preliminary year-at-a-glance (YAG: [Agenda Item I.4, Attachment 1](#)) from the advanced briefing book. We offer general comments on our experience during the April meeting and more specific comments on the June agenda and YAG.

General Comments

Due to the uncertainty caused by the COVID-19 global pandemic and the current required social distancing measures, the GMT would like to prepare for the possibility of the June Council meeting occurring over webinar and provide the following thoughts on potential future remote meetings.

Translating this meeting to a remote platform on short notice has been logistically smooth, and may provide a starting point for future increases in remote participation, which could allow further involvement from stakeholders and subject experts, reduce costs to agencies and industry, and decrease the carbon footprint of the Council Process. The GMT also notes the lessons learned from this experience to improve future meetings. Specifically, the GMT has recognized a number of unique communication and technical challenges added to an already demanding meeting. The Council should also consider that Council and Advisory Body members are operating in a high-stress external environment while attempting to balance competing, additional work and life responsibilities when working from home compared to the typical environment. **The GMT recommends the following potential solutions for the Council's consideration: (1) only schedule essential groundfish items (EFPs, 2021-2022 Management Measures FPA, and inseason) (2) schedule the GMT as half days starting Thursday June 11, and (3) do not overlap any of the GMT's work time with groundfish agenda items on the Council's schedule.** These solutions would allow the GMT to have more focused time to develop statements, provide reports further in advance of Council discussion, and increase opportunities to speak with constituents, each other, and Council members, to answer questions and address concerns.

June Council Meeting

The Council currently has ten groundfish items on their draft June agenda ([Agenda Item I.4, Attachment 2](#)), as well as five additional shaded items ([Agenda Item I.4, Attachment 3](#)) and 1 item postponed from this meeting for consideration. Several of these are substantial items that require considerable GMT work and input. The GMT does not believe that this schedule will produce a successful GMT meeting, whether in person or remote. **Instead, the GMT recommends the Council focus groundfish time on finalizing their preferred 2021-2022 management measures at the June meeting, including discussion of off-the-top deductions for exempted fishing permits related to the harvest specifications, in addition to taking up inseason adjustments and stock assessment plan and Terms of Reference final action.**

While inseason adjustments are not traditionally burdensome at the June Council meeting, we also believe fishing communities are going to need relief from COVID-19 impacts. We should focus on providing this relief in the immediate future rather than important but more long-term items.

The GMT suggests the Council split the inseason item over two days, first at the beginning of the meeting to provide updates and guidance, which the GMT would be able to support with additional analysis and recommendations for the second day of inseason toward the end of the meeting.

Including the stock assessment plan agenda finalization item in June is necessary to give the age readers and stock assessors time to complete their work in time for the 2021 assessments. Waiting until September means they lose approximately three months of work time. Additionally, at this point in the process, the workload should be minimal for the GMT.

The GMT does not believe we will have time to devote to furthering any of the other potential or scheduled groundfish items on the June agenda, including providing any written comments on those items. However, the Council may wish to consider scheduling Workload and New Management measures as an opportunity to hear and prioritize urgent concerns from groundfish stakeholders in light of the reduced April schedule and emergent crisis. This could also help ensure that issues not related to COVID-19 and social distancing receive appropriate attention.

The GMT provides recommendations for the June Agenda below.

GMT Recommendations on Groundfish Items for June

Item	Status	GMT Recommendation (critical for June, postpone if not in-person, postpone, cancel)
NMFS Report (1 hr)	Scheduled for June	Submit as an informational report
Workload and New Management Measures (1 hr)	Scheduled for June	May be helpful to prioritize emerging COVID fishery issues in June
Exempted Fishing Permits - Final (1 hr)	Scheduled for June	Critical to have final amounts for June, having changes to EFPs due at advanced briefing book deadline would ease in-meeting workload
Adopt Final 2021- 2022 Management Measures (5 hr)	Scheduled for June	Critical for June
Stock Assessment Plan and Terms of Reference – Final (2 hr)	Scheduled for June	Critical for June
Methodology Review Report (1 hr)	Scheduled for June	Postpone to November 2021
Gear Switching & Sablefish Area Management; Purpose & Need and ROA (5 hr)	Scheduled for June	Prioritize in September Workload Planning Discussion
Sablefish Management Strategy Evaluation (2 hr)	Scheduled for June	Postpone to November 2021
Electronic Monitoring –Reg. Changes /Implementation & EFP Extension - Final (3 hr)	Scheduled for June	Postpone if possible
Inseason Adjustments (2 hr)	Scheduled for June	Critical for June
Non-Trawl Area Mgmt. & Salmon Troll Incidental Landing Limits – Scoping (2 hr)	Shaded for June	Prioritize in September Workload Planning Discussion
Mothership Sector Utilization – Scoping (2 hr)	Shaded for June	Prioritize in September Workload Planning Discussion
Emley/Platt Exempted Fishing Permit into Regulation – Scoping (2 hr)	Shaded for June	Prioritize in September Workload Planning Discussion
Amendment 21 Trawl/Non-Trawl Allocations – Scoping (2 hr)	Shaded for June	Combine with catch share program reviews in 2022

Humpback Whale Incidental Take Statement (2 hr)	Shaded for June	Cancel if not required
Cost Recovery Report and Preliminary Regulation Changes (1 hr)	Postponed from April	Submit as an informational report

PFMC
04/09/20