

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 September ([Agenda Item C.5, Attachment 2, June 2020](#)) and the preliminary year-at-a-glance (YAAG: [Agenda Item C.5, Attachment 1, June 2020](#)) from the advanced briefing book. We offer general comments on our experience during the April and June meetings, and more specific comments on the September agenda and YAAG.

September Council Meeting

Due to the uncertainty caused by the COVID-19 global pandemic, currently required social distancing measures, and ongoing travel restrictions in Federal and state agencies, the GMT is preparing for our September Council meeting occurring over webinar.

With that in mind, the GMT recommends the following for the Council's consideration:

- **Prioritize essential groundfish items:**
 - Inseason
 - Impact Assessment Methodology Review, Preliminary Topics, which was discussed by the SSC groundfish sub-committee in May. This topic needs to be taken up by the Council in September 2020 to formally adopt new data-moderate approaches that use time series of catch and length composition data (and fishery-independent indices when available). These new methods are intended for use in the 2021 assessment cycle to assess brown, squarespot, and copper rockfishes.
- Schedule the GMT agenda as half-days starting the week prior to the Council meeting and continue to not schedule meetings over the weekend, as done in June
- Do not overlap any of the GMT's work time with groundfish agenda items on the Council's schedule.

General Comments

Upcoming Reviews

The Council has a number of interrelated reviews on the horizon.

- Strategic Plan Review (shaded for September)
- Limited Entry Fixed Gear Catch Share Review (2021)
- Limited Entry Trawl Catch Share Review (2022)

Prior to revising the strategic plan, the Council should conduct a review of progress towards the plan's goals. For efficiency, this could be combined with the regularly scheduled reviews of the Limited Entry Fixed Gear and Trawl Catch Share Reviews, scheduled for the next two years. A comprehensive groundfish fishery review, with sections detailing catch share program performance as required by the Fishery Management Plan (FMP) and the National Marine Fisheries Service (NMFS), may be the most appropriate platform through which to revise the strategic plan. The Council could also consider how to best integrate the ongoing Northwest

Fishery Science Center (NWFSC) sablefish management strategy evaluation into this fishery performance review effort. These reviews would also be useful to the development of the new National Environmental Policy Act (NEPA) analytical document needed to support the 2023-24 biennial harvest specifications and management measures, as we have been informed by NMFS that this is the last biennium that can be tiered off the 2015-16 Environmental Impact Statement.

Workload Prioritization

The Council also faces difficult workload prioritization decisions about items discussed by the public and advisory bodies, which the Council has indicated are priorities, but has yet to take action. These include:

- Gear Switching & Sablefish Area Management,
- Non-Trawl Area Management & Salmon Troll Incidental Landing Limits,
- Mothership Sector Utilization,
- Emley/Platt Exempted Fishing Permit into Regulation, and
- Amendment 21 Trawl/Non-Trawl Allocations.

The GMT notes frustration from the public at continued delays of these agenda items. The lack of progress on these items, beyond the limited floor time in the remote April and June meetings, is largely attributable to lack of analyst time to develop materials to support Council decision-making. The loss of two of our three lead commercial analysts who would have supported these actions, along with state hiring freezes, and potential agency furloughs will continue to constrain the GMT's ability to produce the analysis that is needed to support these actions moving forward. Additionally, the shifting agency and organization priorities associated with the ongoing COVID-19 pandemic is likely to constrain existing GMT member capacity.

Years-at-a-glance

The GMT has reviewed thousands of pages of analytical reports and hundreds of hours of thoughtful presentations of complex material and recognizes the many accomplishments, hard work, and indefatigable spirit of our departing colleague, Mr. Patrick Mirick (Patrick), and notes that he will be greatly missed. **The GMT recommends that Patrick keep in touch.**

Attached: GMT recommendations on Groundfish Items for YAAG

GMT Recommendations on Groundfish Items for YAAG

Item	Status	GMT Recommendation (e.g., critical for September, postpone if not in-person, postpone, cancel)
NMFS Report (1 hr)	Scheduled for Sept.	Submit as an informational report
Workload and New Management Measures (1 hr)	Scheduled for Sept.	May be helpful to prioritize emerging COVID-19 fishery issues, the President's Executive Order 13921 , and backlogged standalone agenda items
Impact Assessment/Analysis Methodology Review, Prelim. Topics (1 hr)	Scheduled for Sept.	Critical for September 2020 to address issues with data moderate approaches for brown, squarespot, and copper rockfishes and move work forward on those assessments.
Gear Switching & Sablefish Area Management; Purpose & Need and ROA (5 hr)	Shaded for Sept.	Prioritize during the September Workload Planning Discussion ; consider staff limitations
Strategic Plan Review--Scoping (1 hr)	Shaded for Sept.	Postpone if possible
Electronic Monitoring –Reg. Changes /Implementation & EFP Extension - Final (3 hr)	Scheduled for Sept.	Postpone if possible
Humpback Whale Incidental Take Statement (2 hr)	Shaded for Sept.	Cancel, if not required
Limited Entry Fixed Gear Catch Share Review - Scoping (2 hr)	Shaded for Sept.	Postpone if possible
Inseason Adjustments (2 hr)	Scheduled for Sept.	Critical for September
Non-Trawl Area Mgmt. & Salmon Troll Incidental Landing Limits – Scoping (2 hr)	Not Scheduled	Prioritize during the September Workload Planning Discussion ; consider staff limitations
Mothership Sector Utilization – Scoping (2 hr)	Not Scheduled	Prioritize during the September Workload Planning Discussion ; consider staff limitations
Emley/Platt Exempted Fishing Permit into Regulation – Scoping (2 hr)	Not Scheduled	Prioritize during the September Workload Planning Discussion ; consider staff limitations
Amendment 21 Trawl/Non-Trawl Allocations – Scoping (2 hr)	Not Scheduled	Prioritize during the September Workload Planning Discussion ; consider staff limitations
Sablefish Management Strategy Evaluation (2 hr)	Not Scheduled	Schedule November 2021

PFMC
06/18/20