

## 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 agendas for March 2021 ([Agenda Item C.8, Attachment 2](#)) and April 2021 ([Agenda Item C.8, Attachment 3](#)) and the preliminary year-at-a-glance ([Agenda Item C.8, Attachment 1](#)) from the advanced briefing book.

The GMT notes that both the March and April 2021 Council meetings are scheduled to be conducted virtually. The GMT requests that our agenda be scheduled similarly to those of September and November, with the GMT starting several days prior to the Council taking up any agenda items upon which the GMT is expected to comment. This scheduling provides more time for discussion, analysis, and writing, as well as more flexibility in dealing with the complications of remote work. This additional time should also allow the GMT to better meet the new statement submission deadline of the day prior to the Council taking up that agenda item.

When considering workload and agenda planning in general, the GMT looks to the National Marine Fisheries Service (NMFS) to advise the Council on their ability to staff ongoing and new agenda items, including the mothership utilization issue. The GMT notes that early engagement with NMFS improves efficiency in discussions, recommendations, supporting analyses, and implementation ([Agenda Item C.2.b, Supplemental NMFS Presentation 1](#), November 2020).

### **March 2021**

The Council and the GMT spent significant effort developing a process for groundfish-related workload prioritization, which was adopted in March of 2019 ([Agenda Item G.3.a, GMT Report 2, March 2019](#)). If implemented as designed, in March (or April) of each year, the Council, the public, and advisory bodies have the opportunity to consider moving groundfish issues to the Council's year-at-a-glance. Under this process, the March meeting will start the annual prioritization process. In addition to the annual prioritization process, a stand-alone agenda item was established to provide the public with a clear place to submit new and/or emerging groundfish issues at each meeting. In order for this process to work as intended, Council staff will need to identify which items are most appropriately addressed under the new workload prioritization process, within existing agenda items, or as emergency agenda items. Therefore, **the GMT recommends retaining the groundfish-related workload prioritization agenda item on the March agenda.**

### **April 2021**

The GMT notes that, as usual, there will be little time to assemble information between the March meeting's end and the advanced briefing book deadline for the April meeting (the week of March 15th). The GMT again looks to NMFS to provide information to the Council about its ability to engage in developing groundfish items currently scheduled for April.

## **Winter Work Session (tentatively scheduled January 11-15, 2021)**

The GMT typically convenes a winter session to initiate work on items scheduled for the new year and other tasks the Council charges the Team to investigate. In most years, this meeting has occurred at the Council office in Portland, Oregon. However, due to the ongoing COVID-19 pandemic, the GMT recommends an online, webinar-style meeting, consistent with the current practice of all Council meetings. The meeting has not been scheduled, but typically occurs in mid-January to early February to avoid conflicting with the International Pacific Halibut Commission annual meeting (January 25-29, 2021).

Items under consideration for this meeting include:

- Routine officer elections and other administrative matters
- Stock Assessment and Review (STAR) panel planning (**GMT recommended priority**)
  - Introduction to stock assessments
  - GMT role in STAR panels
- Review of community income/employment impact estimation (IO/PAC)
- 2021-2022 harvest specifications and management measure debriefing (**GMT recommended priority**)
- Planning for the 2023-2024 biennial process, which the GMT understands will include a new National Environmental Policy Act (NEPA) document that will not be tiered off the 2015-16 biennial Environmental Impact Statement. (**GMT recommended priority**)
  - Introduction to biennial harvest specifications and management measures process
  - GMT roles/responsibilities
  - Take-homes on new Center for Environmental Quality regulations;
  - Frontloading NEPA for future biennial cycles

As stated above, the following actions would benefit from early engagement with NMFS staff. Therefore, the GMT does not plan on spending time on these previously prioritized issues at our January work session, unless specifically directed to do so by the Council:

- mothership utilization scoping
- sablefish gear switching
- Emley/Platt exempted fishing permit into regulation scoping
- non-trawl area management changes
- sablefish primary fishery limited access privilege program review

PFMC  
11/17/20