

GROUND FISH MANAGEMENT TEAM REPORT ON MARINE PLANNING UPDATE

The Groundfish Management Team (GMT) received an overview from Mr. Kerry Griffin, Pacific Fishery Management Council (Council) staff, during our 17 February webinar, and some team members listened to the 24 February Habitat Committee (HC) webinar. We had limited time to discuss this item; however, the GMT reviewed the HC report under this agenda item ([Agenda Item C.2.c, Supplemental HC Report 1](#)) and shares many of the same concerns regarding fisheries data usage (or lack thereof). Below we provide some additional thoughts and considerations on the two mapping projects presented, in no particular order. We may be able to provide further comments in the future, if directed by the Council.

1. Members of the fishing industry can be very helpful with these projects and should be consulted early and often. While meetings with the public did occur, fishing industry stakeholders' participation and feedback should be a higher priority. Including these briefings as informational parts of the Council process earlier could help ensure that the right people are at the table. Industry can help with:
 - a. Shaping realistic assumptions about fishing activities and on-the-water behaviors, such as trawl speed or shrimp vessels drifting at night.
 - b. Providing additional contacts who may be able to inform the project.
2. The GMT recognized some overlap between the action agencies permitting for aquaculture and wind energy, and notes that to whatever extent public outreach and engagement can be coordinated would benefit stakeholders and industry members to make their engagement more effective and efficient.
3. The GMT also suggests that non-industry stakeholders and agencies should be included earlier in data collection and analysis. The Council process provides one avenue for identifying and engaging with contacts across state, tribal, and other Federal agencies as multiple uses for the ocean are explored and potential conflicts are minimized. This would also help ensure that both appropriate datasets (including observer, logbook, shoreside sampling, and other potential sources) are identified, and that the correct permissions and guidelines are followed in accessing and analyzing the data.
4. In addition to identifying fishing locations, **the GMT recommends that “travel through” areas also be considered in site selection.** Closure of areas used to access fishing grounds could result in detours that cost industry time, fuel, and money. The Council and the Bureau of Ocean Energy Management should also take into consideration areas important to protected species that vessels may not be traveling through within current routes.
5. The GMT discussed concerns with the data informing the analysis, that it may not reflect the current fishery and the direction in which the fishery is headed in the future. Snapshots of a single year, such as some [ORowindmap](#) data streams, are unlikely to capture the full extent of areas accessed by fishing fleets or the dynamic nature of the fishery as it responds to stock movement, changing weather, markets and other factors. The years of data analyzed in this process will directly impact estimates of the fishery's footprint, as shown by the time periods below. Additionally, the analysis should consider the appropriate length of time for datasets. The groundfish fishery (especially the trawl fishery) has changed greatly from the early 2000's to the present, with some key time periods to consider:

- a. 2000 -- fishery declared a disaster
 - b. 2003 -- buyback of Federal trawl permits to reduce capacity
 - c. 2004-2011 -- various stocks declared overfished; rockfish conservation areas (RCAs) and essential fishing habitat conservation areas established, altering fishing areas to support rebuilding
 - d. 2011-- trawl individual fishing quota program implemented
 - e. 2019 and beyond-- most rockfish species have been declared rebuilt, allowing the midwater rockfish trawl fishery to resume and RCAs to be reduced in size.
6. The GMT has concerns about the lack of recreational fisheries data and information used in these analyses. Some recreational fisheries, such as offshore rockfish, deepwater lingcod, Pacific halibut, and albacore tuna, extend past state waters. Recreational fisheries can be just as important as commercial fisheries to some ports and local economies and should not be omitted from these analyses. **The GMT recommends including recreational fisheries data in usage mapping and analysis to identify both potential aquaculture and wind energy sites.**
- a. The GMT does note that vessel monitoring systems are not required for recreational fisheries, so different data sources would be needed. State agency sampling programs should be able to help identify available spatial information.

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