

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

The Groundfish Management Team (GMT) reviewed the draft proposed Year-at-a-Glance ([Agenda Item C.6, Attachment 1](#)) and April agenda ([Agenda Item C.6, Attachment 2](#)) contained in the advanced briefing book, reviewed our upcoming tasks and commitments, and provides the following thoughts for consideration. As the Pacific Fishery Management Council (Council) considers the GMT's workload and priorities, the GMT reminds the Council that we remain shorthanded.

### **Adding Groundfish Agenda Items During a Council Meeting**

For the third time in the last five meetings (April 2020, September 2020, and March 2021) the Council has added a groundfish emergency rule agenda item during the meeting. In April 2020, the new item was added to the Council agenda at 6 p.m., with GMT being asked to reconvene and address the issue after 9 p.m. that day. This was well after the GMT had adjourned for the meeting at 5 p.m., so only a portion of the team was available to discuss, conduct analysis, and write the report. In September 2020, the email tasking the GMT to work on the emergency rule agenda item was sent at 7 p.m., with a request to submit the report by mid-afternoon the following day. Again at this meeting, the emergency rule agenda item was added to the Council's agenda at 3 p.m., with plans to have it in front of the Council around midday the following day. The GMT recommends allowing at least 12 work hours (assuming a standard workday of 8 a.m. to 5 p.m.) between the agenda item being added and its discussion on the Council floor.

As we stated in September ([Agenda Item C.7.a, Supplemental GMT Report 1, September 2020](#)), the team understands that unexpected issues arise and need to be addressed. The team also recognizes that emergency rules might happen more frequently given the uncertainty with the global climate and the current COVID-19 pandemic, and having a process defined for this would prevent undue stress to those involved. That being said, adding groundfish agenda items part-way through a Council meeting, and then giving the GMT very limited time (less than 24 total hours) to have discussion, do analysis, and write reports requires late nights and/or early mornings for team members and does not allow us to do our best work. The earlier in the meeting that the Council can identify any additional analysis needed by the GMT, the more likely we will be able to provide a comprehensive and accurate document. This also provides additional time for the GMT to coordinate and collaborate with other advisory bodies. Finally, this would eliminate several days of limbo for the team, and others, and reduce the need to simultaneously consider workload and scheduling for both the original plan and a revised plan including an emergency action.

The GMT sees two potential pathways for the Council to improve procedural resiliency should similar situations arise in the future. The Council has previously received requests for emergency action on non-agenda items under the Open Public Comment agenda item. The first pathway could be to include potential Council action to amend the agenda under the Open Public Comment agenda item as a matter of procedure, and to give notice. The Council would then have the ability to modify the agenda when the proposals for emergency rules have first been identified, allowing the public, industry, and advisory bodies more advance notice of the Council's intent to consider

possible emergency action. The second pathway could schedule the Groundfish Workload Prioritization Agenda Item on the first day of the meeting and take up any emergency actions under this agenda item. Emerging groundfish issues often arise under this item, so this earlier time slot would allow the Council to frontload the identification of and discussion on potential emergency actions. **The GMT recommends that the Council consider a more strategic approach to gain efficiencies in the Council process, should emergency requests be received in the future.**

## **April Agenda**

The GMT notes the advanced briefing book deadline for the April meeting is approximately one week after the conclusion of this March Council meeting, giving little time for any analyses or report creation. **Given the large number of groundfish items and high workload currently scheduled for the April meeting, the GMT recommends we start on Wednesday, April 6th.** Two scheduled items (Non-trawl Rockfish Conservation Area, etc.-scoping and Gear switching-identify a maximum fixed gear attainment level) are likely to have high workload, while the Inseason and Cost Recovery agenda items are expected to have lighter GMT workloads. There is the possibility, however, that inseason requests could arise between now and the April Council meeting that require additional analysis beyond the typical Inseason workload. The GMT is unclear on the expected workload and products associated with a number of other scheduled agenda items, including the Humpback Whale Endangered Species Act Consultation, Habitat issues (i.e. spatial planning), and the Research and Data Needs. Council direction on these items would be beneficial to the team and would support a successful and productive meeting.

## **Year-at-a-Glance**

The GMT notes that Mothership Utilization does not appear on the draft Year-at-a-Glance ([Agenda Item C.6, Attachment 1, March 2021](#)). Considering that the Council adopted a Purpose and Need and Range of Alternatives under Agenda Item G.3 at this meeting, the next step(s) will need to be agendized.

The sablefish update assessment and data moderate assessments for copper, quillback, and squarespot rockfish review panel is scheduled for June 21-22, overlapping with the currently scheduled start of the June Council meeting. Many GMT members will be participating in that review panel. **Therefore, the GMT recommends that the Council select only one shaded item currently on the draft Year-at-a-Glance during June, to ensure the team can provide the best analyses and reports possible.** If both Sablefish gear switching/Range of Alternatives and Standardized Bycatch Report scoping are scheduled for June, the GMT requests the Council provide guidance on the level of GMT engagement and priority between these items.

The GMT is unclear on when the Council needs to start the Strategic Plan Review, how many meetings it will need, and how that may interplay or overlap with the 2023-24 biennial harvest specifications and management measures process and meetings, on which the GMT has discussed getting a head start as early as possible, potentially in the summer of 2021, given the amount of new team members this year.

On the topic of 2023-2024 biennial process, the GMT reminds the Council that in June 2021 the Council will be adopting the schedule and calendar for the 2023-2024 biennial process. Key

benchmarks on that calendar will be: adopting preliminary harvest specifications in September 2021 and preliminary management measures in November 2021.

### **Over the Spring and Summer**

Over the summer months (between the April and September Council meetings) members of the GMT will be involved in:

- RecFIN Technical Committee meeting (4/21)
- Sablefish management strategy evaluation workshop (4/27-29)
- Groundfish Endangered Species Workgroup meeting (4/26-28)
- Pre-assessment Workshops, Stock assessments, and review panels
- Ongoing PacFIN working group projects, including improvements to the inseason groundfish scorecard, salmon bycatch report, and the harvest specifications database

### **The GMT recommends the Council:**

- 1) **Consider a more strategic approach to gain efficiencies in the Council process, should emergency requests be received in the future.**
- 2) **Have the GMT start on Wednesday, April 6<sup>th</sup>, given the large number of groundfish items and high workload currently scheduled for the April meeting.**
- 3) **Select only one shaded item currently on the draft Year-at-a-Glance during June, to ensure the team can provide the best analyses and reports possible.**

PFMC  
03/09/21