

## GROUND FISH ADVISORY SUBPANEL REPORT ON NMFS REPORT

The Groundfish Advisory Subpanel (GAP) received an overview from Dr. Kevin Werner, Mr. Craig Russell, Dr. Melissa Haltuch from the Northwest Fisheries Science Center, and Mr. Brian Hooper of National Marine Fisheries Service (NMFS) West Coast Region and offers the following comments.

### Groundfish Surveys

The GAP noted in our September statement ([Agenda Item C.1.a, Supplemental GAP Report 1, September 2020](#)) and November statement ([Agenda Item G.2.c, Supplemental GAP Report 1, November 2020](#)) that completion of all planned 2021 groundfish surveys is critical, particularly given cancelled 2020 surveys and incomplete 2019 groundfish surveys. 2021 is also very critical for the Pacific whiting acoustic survey since it is scheduled only in odd years and has the additional complexity of being coordinated between two government agencies.

The September GAP statement requested a plan to be presented at the November Council meeting detailing how 2021 surveys would be completed in full and on time. The September GAP statement also included eight specific questions related to this request. The November GAP statement noted disappointment there was not a written report from NMFS in November with some responses to our questions. The November GAP statement recommended the Council request a detailed plan and status update made public by NMFS in January and then a written update in report form in the supplemental briefing book for the March Council meeting. The GAP expresses disappointment that there are again no written responses to these questions, and verbal responses are very general in nature.

The GAP recommends the Council request a detailed update on status of survey plans from NMFS during April Council meetings. The GAP suggests that Council expectations be discussed in concrete terms during these March Council meetings so that the GAP, the Council, and NMFS all have an idea of what to expect to be presented by NMFS at the April Council meetings.

In addition to the eight questions from the September report, it would be helpful to have included in the requested plan for the April Council meeting of what the expectations are for COVID-19 vaccines being offered to personnel involved in survey work. The GAP understands vaccines are being administered at the state and not the Federal level, but that does not preclude NMFS from communicating with states and both requesting information and advocating for action. Some Oregon industry members have already been contacted with information that essential frontline workers will become eligible for COVID-19 vaccinations starting March 29th, so there are communications and planning already taking place, and hopefully NMFS can get plugged into that loop.

The GAP would also like to know where the cost savings from cancelled 2020 surveys (like the payments made to survey vessels) are being applied and if they are being rolled over into 2021

survey budgets. The GAP notes that fishery participants across various sectors are open to help provide context to fishery data to help fill in data gaps from missing 2019 & 2020 survey data.

PFMC  
3/05/21