

GROUND FISH ADVISORY SUBPANEL REPORT ON
FUTURE COUNCIL MEETING AGENDA AND WORKLOAD PLANNING

The Groundfish Advisory Subpanel (GAP) reviewed the briefing book documents under this agenda item and offers the following comments.

In-person meetings

When it is safe to do so, the GAP recommends the Council, including advisory bodies and management teams, return to in-person meetings. The GAP would like to express our gratitude to Council staff for their excellent work to host meetings remotely during the COVID-19 pandemic. While remote meetings have been the most effective option during this period, members of the GAP look forward to returning to in-person meetings when the time is right, for several reasons.

First, the issues in front of the Council are complex and interconnected, and the sharing of ideas and cross-pollination that occurs in Council hallways, over lunch, and at happy hour contributes to the foundational strength and problem-solving of this Council. Online we are siloed off, but in-person we have the ability to interact with people who aren't in our advisory panel, pop into rooms we might not by webinar, ask questions in the hallway, and brainstorm ideas that we might not otherwise.

Second, we have a responsibility to encourage new participation in our fisheries and management process. Members of the GAP have observed that the ability to “be part of the process” happens much more naturally in-person, where new participants can easily introduce themselves at a meeting or in a hallway and have a chance to get the interpersonal lay-of-the-land and interact more informally than they could online.

Third, many of us who serve on the GAP or other advisory bodies have businesses and full-time jobs outside of the Council process and volunteer our time here. When we work from home, other issues crop up that we get pulled into and our attention is sometimes divided between the immediate business needs and longer-term needs at the Council. Immediate needs often win out when we're online, whereas dedicating time to be in person at the Council creates a separation that sometimes allows for greater focus on the Council issues at hand.

Lastly, the location of Council meetings is important to our fisheries and often provides opportunities to show off our ports, boats, or local seafood after-hours, and/or allows for more hands-on experiences with the Council family. For example, the evening at the Southwest Fisheries Science Center a few years ago was enormously impactful for many of us on the GAP in terms of getting to see the science first-hand and interact in such a special place with local seafood highlighted; there was something for everyone, and people representing different interests across all fishery management plans in the Council process interacted in a meaningful way. In short, there is so much to learn from each other, and something remarkable happens when we're all together in one place with one focus – the Council meeting.

Electronic monitoring

Given the Council direction under the Electronic Monitoring Update ([Agenda Item G.3](#)) at this meeting and feedback from National Marine Fisheries Service (NMFS) to the GAP about availability of recoverable costs under the 3 percent cap, the GAP believes it is a good time to resume discussions about potential cost savings that we have been discussing for some time, specifically within the Economics & Social Science Research (ESSR) category. While the GAP and Council were previously directed to wait to begin these discussions about cost savings until the next five-year review of the trawl program, we see nothing in the current regulations that would need to be changed in order to streamline the Economic Data Collection (EDC) to only meet minimum regulatory requirements under [660.114](#).

§660.114 Trawl fishery—economic data collection program.

(a) *General.* The economic data collection (EDC) program collects mandatory economic data from participants in the trawl rationalization program. NMFS requires submission of EDC forms to gather ongoing, annual economic data, including, but not limited to the following categories of information related to participation in the trawl rationalization program:

(1) Annual data related to QS permit owner activity and characteristics of participation in the fishery, costs and earnings from quota trades, and quota leasing.

(2) Annual data related to costs, earnings, value, labor, operations, physical characteristics, ownership and leasing information for vessels, first receiver sites, or shorebased processors.

Cost recovery reports show ESSR costs averaging \$374,750 annually over the last four years with the lowest amount in any year of \$318,460. The [April 2021 Cost Recovery Report](#) shows starting on page 19 that tasks are primarily EDC driven. The required regulatory EDC information shown above seems limited in scope, and the GAP suggest exploring significant savings if ESSR activity is streamlined for the minimal EDC regulatory requirements. EDC data entry is already significantly completed online by fishery participants.

The GAP believes addressing ESSR / EDC costs in the near-term would be better than waiting for it to be part of a program review where it can be difficult to be addressed with focus and in a timely manner. A small number of members of the GAP and / or industry would be willing to meet with NMFS personnel over the summer in advance of the September Council meeting to better understand the details of ESSR / EDC costs and work together on streamlining the process. It could also be helpful to set a target (ex: \$100,000 or less base annual ESSR recoverable costs) and see if a collaborative effort to streamline could get us there. Such cost savings under cost recovery could increase the likelihood that monies would be available for electronic monitoring (EM) video review by Pacific States as discussed under the EM agenda items during this Council meeting.

The GAP recommends the Council request NMFS provide a brief report under September NMFS Report agenda item to detail what are potential costs savings under recoverable Economics &

Social Science Research if Economic Data Collection were streamlined to only meet minimum regulatory requirements under 660.114.

NMFS briefings to the GAP

The GAP reiterates our appreciation for representatives from the NMFS West Coast Region and Northwest and Southwest Fisheries Science Centers providing briefings to the GAP. As we mentioned earlier at this meeting, we encourage Council staff to coordinate these GAP briefings at each Council meeting.

Groundfish workload

The GAP suggests the groundfish workload and new management measures agenda item should be scheduled for the March meeting each year and shaded for subsequent meetings that year. This agenda item could be unshaded for future meetings should the need arise.

Stock assessments/mop-up

The GAP recommends, given the Council discussion on stock assessments earlier at this meeting, that the spiny dogfish assessment and the data-moderate assessments for quillback rockfish and copper rockfish in California go to the stock assessment mop-up panel. This approach ensures that enough time will be available for the thorough review required and as noted by the GMT in its [G.5 statement](#), “reviews conducted through the SSC GFSC do not provide explicit roles for members of other advisory bodies to participate in.”

Moreover, the mop-up Stock Assessment Review Panel will provide expanded opportunity for public engagement, which will be important both in providing input to these important reviews and facilitating buy-in from fishery participants about the results. Therefore, the GAP strongly recommends the dogfish assessment and the data-moderate assessments for quillback rockfish and copper rockfish in California go to the mop-up panel.

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No recommended changes.

Preliminary Year-at-a-Glance

Referencing the [preliminary Year-at-a-Glance \(YAG\) calendar](#) under this agenda item, the GAP recommends the following:

1. Keep the non-trawl Rockfish Conservation Area/area management issue range of alternatives on the November 2021 agenda and add the selection of a preliminary preferred alternative to the April 2022 agenda. The GAP and Council staff have worked hard to scope this issue and substantial public commenters have indicated this is an important issue for the non-trawl fleet.
2. Move the Whiting Treaty Implementation agenda item to the April agenda item, in order

to allow joint U.S.-Canada treaty talks to take place in March as they traditionally do. Additionally, this agenda should be unshaded in April.

3. Schedule the limited entry fixed gear program review: The GAP notes this was not scheduled on the YAG, so the Panel is hoping to see some advance notice of this two-meeting schedule for future meetings so the GAP can be prepared. The GAP notes the timing of the two-meeting review may be difficult to accommodate if proposed season changes, such as an extended season, are included as part of the action. This could make it difficult to implement prior to Oct. 31, 2023.

PFMC
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