

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

The Groundfish Management Team (GMT) reviewed the draft agenda ([Agenda Item C.10, Attachment 2](#)) for the September Pacific Fishery Management Council (Council) meeting and draft Year-at-a-Glance (YAG; [Agenda Item C.10, Attachment 1](#)) contained in the advanced briefing book, and offer the following comments.

September Council Meeting

The GMT discussed the potential for a “hybrid” approach to the September meeting, in which the Council meets in person and individuals on advisory bodies have the option to attend the meeting in person but work “remotely” from their hotel room and no team meeting room would be available. As noted in [Agenda Item C.10, Attachment 3](#), most National Marine Fisheries Service (NMFS) staff will not receive travel authorization in September, which inhibits four of the GMT’s members from attending in person. Consistency (in-person or virtual) for team members benefits the team’s productivity by minimizing the amount of discussions in which some members are not able to participate. Additionally, the team sees certain benefits to conducting virtual meetings, as mentioned at the April 2020 Council meeting ([Supplemental GMT Report 1, Agenda Item I.4.a, April 2020](#)), and has adapted to this format well since then. To maintain the best possible consistency and efficiency, **the GMT prefers to maintain a fully virtual format for GMT meetings until all team members are able to participate in person.**

Given that the whole GMT will not be able to meet in person at the September meeting, **the team reiterates our request to not schedule groundfish agenda items on the Council floor or GMT meeting time over the weekend**, due to challenges associated with balancing personal obligations (e.g., child care, life maintenance chores, etc.) with Council workload under a virtual format ([Agenda Item C.5.a, Supplemental GMT Report 1, June 2020](#)).

Additionally, the GMT was informed that the initial structure of the September agenda was predicated on the assumption that advisory bodies would attend the meeting in person; that assumption no longer applies to the GMT (based on [Attachment 3](#)). Currently, the draft agenda shows significant overlap between groundfish agenda items that require heavy lifts by the entire team. For example, statements for Sablefish Gear Switching – Range of Alternatives (ROA) Part 1 will be due on the afternoon that At-Sea Whiting Utilization ROA/preliminary preferred alternative (PPA) is on the Council floor. The following day includes 2023-24 Preliminary Harvest Specifications and Management Measures and more Sablefish Gear Switching ROA floor time. Again, given that the whole GMT will not be attending the September meeting in person and that the back-to-back scheduling was based on assumed in-person attendance, **the team requests that the following three groundfish items be spaced out on the Council’s agenda** to ensure that the full team can attend statement-developing discussions on these important agenda items, two of which will be led by the same GMT members:

- At-Sea Whiting Utilization ROA/PPA (H.4)
- Sablefish Gear Switching –ROA (H.6)
- 2023-24 Preliminary Harvest Specifications and Management Measures (H.8)

November Council Meeting

The GMT requests that if an agenda item is needed for November to approve stock assessments due to any delays in approval earlier in the year, that the agenda item to approve assessments occurs as early as possible on the Council's agenda, such as immediately following the NMFS groundfish report. Additionally, the GMT requests that there is as much time as possible, at least 24 hours, between completion of that item and the scheduled beginning of the harvest specifications agenda item on the Council's agenda. This will allow the time necessary to incorporate the results of the stock assessments into the harvest specifications. The GMT suggests the harvest specifications agenda item could be either the last groundfish item for the meeting, or the second to last, immediately preceding inseason.

Year-at-a-Glance

The GMT is discussing a way to increase efficiency by considering a YAG that distributes agenda items in a manner that better meets the GMT's workload capacity and would be most likely to facilitate high quality deliverables. The team will further discuss these ideas with Council staff and in agenda planning statements at future Council meetings. Currently, the Limited Entry Fixed Gear Review ROA/PPA/final preferred alternative (FPA), Sablefish Gear Switching PPA/FPA, and the Non-trawl RCA PPA/FPA are not scheduled on the YAG, and the GMT is willing to help the Council strategically schedule those items in such a manner as well.

Other Workload Considerations

The GMT suggests that the Council could create an efficiency if they outline a process of when to address emergency rules, preferably earlier in the meeting than under the Groundfish NMFS Report so that the GMT can manage expectations and workload associated with the emergency rule and all other agenda items ([Agenda Item C.6.a, Supplemental GMT Report 1, March 2021](#)).

PFMC

06/29/21