

GROUND FISH MANAGEMENT TEAM REPORT ON MARINE SPATIAL PLANNING

The Groundfish Management Team (GMT) received an overview from Mr. Kerry Griffin of the Pacific Fishery Management Council (Council) staff and shares the following comments.

The GMT was heavily engaged with priority groundfish agenda items at this meeting and was unable to review the letters/proposals to the degree needed to provide a detailed analytical statement. Additionally, the Council has not indicated how this item should be prioritized in light of our groundfish work. Noting the importance of these proposals, the GMT requests Council direction as to whether future groundfish engagement is expected from the GMT directly or if this role/responsibility will be filled by the Ad Hoc Marine Planning Committee.

After the GMT's limited review of the various proposed projects, we note that recreational catch, effort, and/or location data do not appear to be included in the data streams/layers. The recreational groundfish fishery operates coastwide with varying season and depth structures, so this omission could substantially impact fishing opportunity assessments and/or project site locations. Groundfish specific essential fish habitat (EFH) areas and Habitat Areas of Particular Concern (HAPC) datasets are also not considered and could provide further context for potential impacts of these proposals.

Lastly, the Council's November 2021 meeting schedule currently includes an agenda item to choose a Range of Alternatives for the Non-Trawl Rockfish Conservation Area (NT-RCA) rule making. This agenda item will begin exploring potential coastwide NT-RCA boundary modifications, now that most of the shelf rockfish species (except yelloweye rockfish) are rebuilt. Additionally, this decision-making process will likely also take into account that stock assessments of several important nearshore rockfish species suggest current stock sizes below the minimum stock size threshold. Changes to the RCA may impact both potential fishing opportunities and areas identified as important to rockfish conservation. These alterations, similar to EFH and HAPC above, should be considered explicitly in marine spatial planning discussions.

PFMC
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