

GROUND FISH ADVISORY SUBPANEL REPORT ON
FISHERY ECOSYSTEM PLAN FIVE-YEAR REVIEW

The Groundfish Advisory Subpanel (GAP) reviewed briefing book materials related to this agenda item and discussed the current Fishery Ecosystem Plan (FEP) draft. Members of the GAP also attended the September 2nd meeting of the Ecosystem Workgroup (EWG).

Overall, the GAP is impressed by the breadth of information in the current FEP. The FEP is well-written, relatively easy to understand, and an important distillation of several factors that influence management of Pacific Fishery Management Council (Council) fisheries, including environmental characteristics of the California Current Ecosystem (CCE), CCE marine species and their habitats, and Council-managed fisheries and fishing-dependent communities. The FEP is an important document, and the GAP compliments the EWG for their high quality work.

The GAP does note two specific recommended edits. First, on page 50 of the FEP, relative to Pacific whiting, the FEP states: “The fishery mainly occurs off of Washington and Oregon; **it is prohibited south of 40°10’N latitude to minimize bycatch of more vulnerable salmon stocks**” (emphasis added). The GAP is unfamiliar with this prohibition. The GAP thinks it could be in reference to the at-sea processing prohibition south of 42°N. latitude in regulations at 660.131(e). The GAP recommends the EWG review this reference to ensure its accuracy.

Second, on page 76, in the section describing Bycatch Mitigation Measures in the Groundfish Fishery Management Plan (FMP), the GAP notes the absence of recently-adopted groundfish fishery seabird mitigation measures. The GAP recommends that text similar to that under the Highly Migratory Species FMP Bycatch Mitigation Measures section be incorporated into the groundfish section and points to the [Pacific Coast Groundfish Fishery Seabird Bycatch Minimization Measures Compliance Guide](#) as a possible source of information, notably: “[NMFS] has issued regulations that require commercial groundfish bottom longline vessels 26 feet length overall (LOA) and longer managed under the Pacific Coast Groundfish Fishery Management Plan to deploy streamer lines while setting gear or to set gear at night when fishing in Federal waters north of 36° North latitude. The purpose of the rule is to reduce interactions between seabirds and groundfish bottom longline gear.”

Finally, the GAP strongly recommends work continue on the new stand-alone document – *PFMC Guidance on Agency Activities in the California Current Ecosystem* – and references our comments from [March 2021](#) in suggesting Council guidance to the EWG:

“The information provided about non-fishing activities and their potential impacts and harm to Council-managed fish stocks, and the habitats they depend upon, is important and appears accurate. The GAP highlights that disruption and/or displacement of existing commercial and recreational fisheries from offshore development and other non-fishing activities is not emphasized sufficiently in the current draft. There is brief mention about communities, specifically the need for viable ports and infrastructure, which is important and true. However, existing fisheries also need space on the ocean to conduct their

operations. Any guidance document developed to provide Council perspective on non-fishing activities (including offshore development) needs to emphasize clearly that siting of a non-fishing activity should not displace fisheries from their fishing grounds [including transit to and from]. Therefore, the GAP recommends that the Council provide guidance to the EWG that [the stand-alone document] should more fully recognize the potential for spatial conflicts between new and current ocean uses and emphasize the need to support and sustain current fisheries by ensuring they are not displaced from their fishing grounds.”

PFMC
9/10/21