

GROUND FISH MANAGEMENT TEAM REPORT ON
PACIFIC WHITING UTILIZATION - FINAL ACTION

The Groundfish Management Team (GMT) reviewed the materials in the advanced briefing book, including the updated Analytical Document ([Agenda Item E.2, Attachment 1, March 2022](#)), and received a briefing from Ms. Jessi Doerpinghaus and Mr. Brett Wiedoff of Pacific Fishery Management Council (Council) staff. The GMT commented on the issue of Pacific whiting, and specifically Mothership (MS), utilization during the September 2020, March 2021, and September 2021 Council meetings ([Agenda Item D.2.a, Supplemental GMT Report 3, September 2020](#); [Agenda Item G.3.a, Supplemental GMT Report 1, March 2021](#); [Agenda Item C.3.a, Supplemental GMT Report 1, September 2021](#)). At the September 2021 meeting, the Council selected the following items as Preliminary Preferred Alternatives (PPA):

1. Whiting Season Start Date: Alternative 1 - May 1, annual cooperative applications and Salmon Mitigation Plans due 45 days prior to the season start date.
2. Mothership Processor Obligation: Alternative 1 - Remove mothership processor obligation from regulation.
3. Mothership Processor Cap: Alternative 3 - Remove mothership processor cap from regulation.
4. Mothership Processor & Catcher-Processor Permit Transfer: Alternative 1 - A vessel can be registered to a mothership permit and a catcher-processor permit in the same calendar year.
 1. Sub-option C - Unlimited transfers.

The GMT discussed each item in detail at the September 2021 Council meeting ([Agenda Item C.3.a, Supplemental GMT Report 1, September 2021](#)) and concludes that the analysis to date supports selecting the PPA as Final Preferred Alternative (FPA) for all four of the items listed above; therefore, the GMT recommends doing so. The GMT is supportive of any alternatives that provide flexibility to the fleet to fully attain their allocation according to the Purpose and Need of this item.

Regarding the Mothership Processor Cap, the analysis indicates that the guidance under National Standard 4 to avoid excessive shares does not apply in this case given that the alternative to remove the processor cap would not alter the opportunity to participate in the fishery or to harvest Pacific whiting. The GMT agrees with this conclusion and that the analysis supports selecting the PPA as FPA. Further, if the Council chooses to diverge from the chosen PPA, the Council should provide strong rationale for needing to maintain a processor cap in regulation.