

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

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

Overarching comments

The GAP appreciates the ability to use the hybrid approach – that is, both in-person and virtual – at this meeting and we thank Mr. Brett Wiedoff, Mr. Kris Kleinschmidt and Mr. Craig Hess for their dedication to making the technology work. The process went as smoothly as possible and afforded good GAP participation.

However, no process is perfect. Covid-19 has forced the Pacific Fishery Management Council (Council) and the public to re-think the way we interact. For example, at this meeting, a number of GAP members would not have been able to attend were it not for the virtual option. Similarly, other members of the GAP find negotiating an online presence and fully participating in GAP discussion difficult.

Similar to our thoughts laid out in our [Supplemental GAP Report 1 in April](#), the GAP would prefer to meet in person but recognizes that sometimes, absences cannot be avoided and alternates may be unavailable, especially with a group that has 21 members. We discussed the possibility of holding some GAP meetings completely virtual, March, for example, when the groundfish workload is particularly low, enabling the Council's other advisory bodies to take advantage of a hybrid option. It may be worthwhile to consider this rotating hybrid approach to advisory body meetings as the Council considers C.2, Future Council Operations, in September.

September draft agenda

Regarding the [September draft agenda](#), the GAP suggests the following:

1. Unshade G.5, Non-Trawl Area Management (NT-RCA) ROA/PPA. The GAP understands the analysis on this agenda item will be completed and ready for discussion in September. Given this item's high level of importance to the non-trawl fleet, especially in California, the GAP supports scheduling this in September. Further, we suggest a pre-Council work session (discussed below).
2. Stock definitions/stock assessments: Given the Council's floor discussion on these items earlier this week, the GAP supports adding these items on the agenda for September.
3. Unshade the G.6, Electronic Monitoring Update. The GAP supports scheduling this in September, as the next step in the process is likely to revolve around how to best implement electronic monitoring.
4. Unshade G.4, Trawl Catch Share Program and Intersector Allocation. This could be a short agenda item, with simple updates from Council staff and GAP input on the best process to move forward. Delaying this until the November meeting may result in a high workload for Council staff, since it might overlap with the Sablefish Gear Switching agenda item.

5. September Meeting Descending Device Mortality Rates. A subgroup of the Groundfish Management Team (GMT) has been working on developing mortality rates for additional rockfish species when descending devices are used by anglers. The GMT believes that work will be ready for review by the Scientific and Statistical Committee (SSC) in September 2022. Therefore, we request the Council add review of this work to the SSC's September agenda. The GMT can also provide an update on that work to the Council as an informational report under the inseason agenda item in September.

Draft Year-at-a-Glance

Referencing the [Draft Year-at-a-Glance agenda](#), the GAP suggests scheduling the Non-Trawl Area Management item for FPA in March or April 2023, for the reasons stated above.

Additionally, the GAP agrees with the supplemental Marine Planning Committee (MPC) [report](#) that a marine planning agenda item be scheduled at every Council meeting. Frequently, the deadlines for comment letters and other responses are out of sync with Council meetings and the Council has had to rely on the quick response system to approve letters to agencies typically unrelated to the Council management process. This has worked in the past but in the interest of full transparency, it would be best for the Council to review as many of these letters and comments as possible in full public view.

The sheer volume of new issues, primarily from other state and federal agencies, that could affect Council-managed fisheries is almost overwhelming. Allowing the MPC to vet these issues and meetings, summarize them, draft the necessary communications and bring forward the most important ones for Council consideration will serve the Council, fisheries stakeholders and the public.

Non-Council agenda workshops and work sessions

The GAP supports the SSC's recommendation to schedule various workshops, as identified in the [SSC report](#) and supported in [Agenda Item F.3.a, Supplemental GAP Report 1](#). The proposed webinar in August, exploring approaches to model the effect of large, closed areas and other regulation changes in stock assessments, seems particularly beneficial in light of expected NMFS and Council staffing changes.

We also reiterate our support for an Ad Hoc Workgroup on Groundfish Stock Definitions – and GAP representation on that workgroup as noted in our [Agenda Item F.4.a, Supplemental GAP Report 1](#).

The GAP also notes it would be beneficial for the GAP to convene an online work session in late August or early September, before the September Council meeting, solely focused on the Non-Trawl Area Management agenda item. Council staff noted this issue will heavily rely on a lot of charts and layers of data and will feature online mapping capability. An online work session would allow a greater number of fishermen and other stakeholders to view the data and communicate with their GAP representatives so GAP members can move forward in September with the best information available.

PFMC
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