



Pacific Fishery Management Council

7700 NE Ambassador Place, Suite 101 Portland, OR 97220-1384
Phone 503-820-2280 | Toll free 866-806-7204 | Fax 503-820-2299 | www.pcouncil.org
Brad Pettinger, Chair | Merrick J. Burden, Executive Director

MEMORANDUM

DATE: August 18, 2023

TO: Groundfish Advisory Subpanel, Groundfish Management Team, and Groundfish Interested Persons

FROM: Mr. Todd Phillips, Groundfish Staff Officer

SUBJECT: September 2023 Council Meeting Materials

The Pacific Fishery Management Council (Council) and its advisory bodies will meet in person [September 7-14, 2023](#) at the DoubleTree by Hilton, 322 N. Spokane Falls Court, Spokane WA 99201. The Groundfish Management Team (GMT) and the Groundfish Advisory Subpanel (GAP) will convene their sessions starting Friday, September 8, 2023, at 8:00 a.m. in Suite B and Suite A, respectively. Their meetings will adjourn on Tuesday, September 13, 2023.

All meetings are open to the public and at least one opportunity for public comment has been scheduled for each meeting day. Other Ancillary meetings will be conducted via a combination of online and in-person formats as noted in the Schedule of Ancillary Meetings in the Detailed Agenda (A.3). Instructions for joining online meetings will be posted to the https://www.pcouncil.org/council_meeting/september-2023-council-meeting/. Please see the Council website (www.pcouncil.org) for more information.

The Council will consider several important groundfish agenda items and related matters of interest at this meeting. The briefing book materials attached to this memorandum provide detailed information for these items on the Council's September 2023 agenda. The following agenda items summarized below may be of particular interest to the GMT and GAP.

D.1 Preliminary Catch Sharing Plan and Regulations for Implementation in 2024 or Later

Under this agenda item, the Council will consider revisions to Pacific Halibut Catch Sharing Plan (CSP) and regulations for the 2024 season. Final action for establishing the 2024 Pacific halibut fisheries is scheduled for the November 2023 Council meeting. In June 2023, the Council [identified items](#) based on the June [scoping document](#) for further development. Staff will provide an analysis of these items for Council review. The Council could adopt potential changes to the CSP for public review at this meeting; however, for items that cannot be resolved or fully addressed by November 2023, work will continue over the winter and spring with the goal of revisiting the remaining topics in June 2024, and implementation when practical.

F.1 Initiative 4: Ecosystem and Climate Information - Progress Report

The Ad Hoc Ecosystem Workgroup (EWG) will update the Council on Initiative 4. Initiative 4 is the process to develop onramps for integrating ecosystem and climate information into Council fishery management plan decision making, with a focus on harvest specifications processes. The EWG plans to provide a report on the work completed to date including a draft set of conclusions about ecosystem effects that could be considered when setting harvest specifications for petrale sole and sablefish. The GMT and GAP should review the report, focusing on potential integration into the biennial harvest specification and management measure process.

G.2 Adopt Stock Assessments

At this meeting, the Scientific and Statistical Committee (SSC) will review the assessments and Stock Assessment Review panel reports as part of their September 7th & 8th, 2023 session. The SSC is expected to make recommendations to the Council regarding these assessments and other groundfish harvest specifications for the 2025-2026 biennial management cycle, as appropriate. Based on the SSC's recommendations, the Council will consider adopting the assessments or, if appropriate, recommend an assessment(s) go to the mop-up panel for further analysis.

G.4 Fixed Gear Marking and Entanglement Risk Reduction; Limited Entry Follow On Actions

In June, the Council prioritized a series of management measures for two packages: fixed gear marking and entanglement risk reduction and limited entry fixed gear follow-on actions. At this meeting, the Council and its advisory bodies should consider the proposed purpose and need statements and range of alternatives presented in Attachment 1 and provide any feedback or comments.

G.5 Cordell Bank Conservation Area Revisions- Scoping

In March 2023, under workload and new management measures, the Council prioritized a management measure that would consider changes to the Cordell Bank Groundfish Conservation Area (GCA) and other regulatory changes. Under this item, the Council and the advisory bodies will receive a report from the California Department of Fish and Wildlife about the history of the Cordell Bank GCA, the proposed action, and should give guidance on moving the item forward for a range of alternatives at a future meeting.

G.6 Initial Harvest Specifications and Management Measures Actions for 2025-2026

In June, the Council adopted a process and schedule for the 2025-2026 groundfish fisheries harvest specifications and management measures (see [Agenda Item H.7, Attachment 1, June 2023](#)). The Council will begin assessing groundfish harvest specifications and providing input on new management measures at this meeting. Specifically, the Council's tasks include adopting overfishing limits, a range of acceptable biological catches, a preliminary range of annual catch limits, and a preliminary range of new management measures for 2025-2026 groundfish fisheries.

G.7 Final Trawl Cost Project Phase 1 Report and Next Steps for the Trawl Catch Share and Allocation Reviews

A first draft of the trawl cost share project was presented at the April 2023 meeting. Working from the comments and guidance provided at that meeting, a final draft will be presented in September. National Marine Fisheries Service (NMFS) has provided funding for a second year of the cost

project (Phase 2). In addition to reviewing the final Phase 1 report, in September the Council will be asked to provide guidance on what should be undertaken in Phase 2 of this project. The cost project is expected to inform and support the catch share review. Under this agenda item the Council will also provide guidance on the next steps in the process for the trawl catch share and intersector allocation review.

G.8 Harvest Specifications Technical Corrections and Inseason Adjustments – Final Action

The Council will consider several issues under this agenda item. As usual, the Council will consider progress to date of the groundfish fisheries and recommend routine inseason adjustments to the 2023 fisheries, as appropriate, to achieve fishery objectives. Additionally, in June 2023, the Council requested reports from the at-sea whiting sector regarding their fishing plans this fall, which are expected at this meeting (Attachments 2-4). The GMT and GAP should consider the reports and make any recommendations.

Technical corrections to the 2023-2024 harvest specifications for yelloweye, canary, darkblotched, and squarespot rockfishes and sablefish will be considered under this agenda item. Council staff was informed by the Northwest Fishery Science Center (NWFSC) that the 2023-2024 harvest specifications for these species were incorrectly calculated. The SSC, GMT, and GAP should closely review Agenda Item G.8, Attachment 1 for full understanding of the issue. The SSC will need to review and recommend the revised specifications, and potentially others, for Council consideration.

H.1 Chumash Heritage National Marine Sanctuary Designation

The Chumash Heritage National Marine Sanctuary (Chumash NMS) draft designation documents and regulations are expected to be released in late summer or fall of 2023. The Council was given the opportunity in 2022 to prepare draft fishing regulations that the Council “may deem necessary to implement the proposed designation.” The Council considered this opportunity at its November 2022 meeting and determined that additional fishing regulations were not warranted (See December 2022 [correspondence](#)) and the NMS Program has not indicated that any fishing regulations are proposed for the Chumash NMS. If the regulations are completed in time for the Council meeting, the Council and ABs should consider potential effects of these regulations.

H.2 Greater Farallones and Monterey Bay National Marine Sanctuaries Coral Restoration and Research Plan - Scoping

The Office of National Marine Sanctuaries is proposing that the Council consider closing select areas of the Greater Farallones and Monterey Bay National Marine Sanctuaries to protect coral restoration and research sites. Council and ONMS staff are hosting a [webinar](#) on August 24th from 2-4 pm to give an overview of the item for interested Council participants. At the September Council meeting, the Council and its advisory bodies should consider the ONMS scoping document (H.2.a ONMS Report 1) and other agenda item materials, provide guidance on the proposed coral research and restoration areas, and consider which fisheries these closures should apply.

H.3 Marine Planning Update

The Council’s Ad Hoc Marine Planning Committee (MPC) met online July 27, 2023, to hear updates on offshore wind energy activities on the West Coast. MPC Report 1 includes updates from the states, NMFS, the West Coast Ocean Alliance, and a Tribal update. This report is largely

informational and includes upcoming events and other information. The five offshore wind lease holders are developing Fishery Communication Plans (FCPs), which are due by September 29. However, it is not clear whether those FCPs will be available for review and comment prior to the September Council meeting.

H.5 National Marine Fisheries Service Geographic Strategic Plan and Regional Equity and Environmental Justice Implementation Plan

NMFS has completed its national level [Strategic Plan for 2022-2025](#) and [Equity and Environmental Justice Strategy](#) and has begun work on regional versions of those policy documents: the geographic strategic plan and Regional Equity and Environmental Justice (EEJ) implementation plans. The West Coast Geographic Strategic Plan for 2023-2026 is expected to be in the advance briefing book, but there will not yet be any documents on the regional EEJ implementation plan available for the September Council meeting. The NMFS strategic plans are a high-level planning document that covers substantially more than environmental justice issues.

H.6 National Standards 4, 8, 9 Considerations and National Standard 1 Technical Guidance

Under this agenda item, the Council will consider commenting on advance notice of potential rulemaking ([ANPR](#)) to revisions to the National Standard (NS) guidelines for NS 4 (allocation); NS 8 (communities); and NS 9 (minimization of bycatch). Recent fishery management challenges related to climate change and equity and environmental justice have led NMFS to issue an advanced notice of proposed rulemaking, seeking comment on how these guidelines might be changed. The SSC reviewed the [NS 1 Technical Memorandum](#) in June 2023, which recommended improvements to status determination reference points and their proxies.

Other Items

The following are additional pre-Council meeting briefings that may be of interest:

- The GAP will host its pre-September Council meeting [webinar](#) to discuss items on the Council's September agenda on September 1, 2023 8:30 a.m. to 12:30 p.m. Pacific Time
- The GMT will host its pre-September Council meeting [webinar](#) to discuss items on the Council's September agenda on September 1, 2023 12:30 p.m. to 4:30 p.m. Pacific Time
- The EWG will host a [webinar](#) on September 5, 2023, 9:00 a.m. to 2:00 p.m. Pacific Time to discuss Fishery Ecosystem Plan Initiative 4 (Ecosystem and Climate Information for Species, Fisheries, and Fishery Management Plans)
- The Council and ONMS staff will host a [webinar](#) briefing on August 24, 2023 from 2:00 p.m. to 4:00 p.m. Pacific Time to give an overview of the item for all interested parties on agenda items H.1 Chumash Heritage National Marine Sanctuary Designation and H.2 Greater Farallones and Monterey Bay National Marine Sanctuaries Coral Restoration and Research Plan
- The Groundfish Subcommittee of the SSC will hold two online meetings to review the 2023 stock assessments. The first meeting will review the assessments for copper rockfish off California, rex sole, shortspine thornyhead, and black rockfish [August 14 and 15](#). The second meeting will review the assessments for canary rockfish, petrale sole, the catch-only projection for widow rockfish, the limited assessment update for sablefish, and a catch report for yelloweye rockfish on [August 28 and 29](#)

This mailing includes the enclosures listed below. Please review these briefing materials in advance to facilitate an efficient meeting week. Please note that the Council will continue to encourage participants to obtain briefing book materials via our website. Printed materials are not available at the meeting, unless requested.

Thank you for your commitment to the Council process and management of Pacific groundfish fisheries.

TMP:rdd

Enclosures include:

1. Agenda Item A. – Council Meeting Agenda and Executive Director’s Report
2. Agenda Item B.1 – Open Public Comment
3. Agenda Item D – Pacific Halibut Administrative
4. Agenda Item F – Ecosystem
5. Agenda Item G – Groundfish Management
6. Agenda Item H – Administrative
7. Enforcement Consultants Agenda
8. GAP Agenda
9. GMT Agenda
10. Scientific and Statistical Committee Agenda and Draft Minutes
11. Informational Reports
12. General Information and Council Roster

PFMC

08/11/23