

GROUND FISH MANAGEMENT TEAM REPORT ON NATIONAL MARINE FISHERIES
SERVICE GEOGRAPHIC STRATEGIC PLAN AND REGIONAL EQUITY AND
ENVIRONMENTAL JUSTICE IMPLEMENTATION PLAN

The Groundfish Management Team (GMT) notes that the Geographic Strategic Plan Goal 3, Key Strategies 1-9 could serve as an opportunity for the National Marine Fisheries Service (NMFS) agency to prioritize the development of increased internal capacity. Some of the consistent issues facing agency staff relative to the Pacific Fishery Management Council (Council) process are having the resources necessary to process incoming data, execute surveys, conduct stock assessments, and promulgate regulations in the limited time frames available to those processes. This seems a particularly timely focus with the potential for increased agency burden related to offshore wind and aquaculture development. For example, new surveys may be developed in light of changes to ongoing surveys due to offshore development. In addition, effectively implementing the NMFS Equity and Environmental Justice Strategy (EEJ) requires input from social scientists and other experts, but capacity in this area is currently low. Efforts in effectively implementing EEJ at the Council level would also benefit from increased staffing, as outlined in [Agenda Item C. 3.a, Supplemental GMT Report 1](#) from September 2022.

The GMT further notes that efforts under Goal 1, Key Strategy 3 (mitigate and adapt to climate driven changes in fisheries habitat) include the leveraging of Inflation Reduction Act (IRA) and the Bipartisan Infrastructure Law (BIL) funds to enhance resilience of underserved communities, amongst other priorities. The Council's [Final 2018 Research and Data Needs document](#) identifies research and data needs that, if funded, would improve fisheries management. A non-exhaustive list of additional potential ideas proposed by the GMT, in no particular order, can be found below:

1. Provide funding to significantly expand existing surveys which provide information on nearshore rocky reef habitat (e.g., the Northwest Fisheries Science Center Hook and Line Survey, state specific surveys: California Collaborative Fisheries Research Program, Remotely Operated Vehicle, Acoustic Visual).
2. Fund research into novel gear types within communities facing restricted access to stable, valuable species.
3. Fund research into gear modifications and other strategies to facilitate bycatch avoidance.
4. Fund additional collection of biological structures (e.g., otoliths, fin rays, etc.) in recreational and commercial fisheries sampling programs which would provide beneficial information to inform future stock assessments as identified in the Council's [Final 2018 Research and Data Needs document](#). Additional biological structures, especially from the recreational sector would significantly improve stock assessments.
5. Fund additional capacity to age biological structures on the United States West Coast, through expanded staff/resources in existing ageing labs or through the development of new ageing methodologies.
6. Develop infrastructure that may help improve community access to fishing resources
 - a. Create new publicly accessible fishing piers, revitalize existing fishing piers, jetties or repurpose existing structures (derelict piers, former bridges, or pylons) which could be converted to fishing piers to allow additional public access to fisheries resources.

- b. Improve or create new infrastructure which increases logistical capabilities of fishing communities such as ice machines, launch ramps, fuel docks, public hoists, tidal dry docks (also known as tidal grids), and waste pump out stations which increase fishing community capacity.
- 7. Fund development of local markets for abundant species, such as sablefish.
- 8. Improve aging port infrastructure.
- 9. Fund economic and social science research to identify and understand underserved communities and their needs.
 - a. Given the low and/or declining groundfish market infrastructure across West Coast ports, the Council could benefit from better understanding the driving factors and how fisheries managed by the Council are impacted from market infrastructure constraints.

PFMC
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