



Pacific Fishery Management Council

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Brad Pettinger, Chair | Merrick J. Burden, Executive Director

MEMORANDUM

DATE: October 13, 2023

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

FROM: Mr. Todd Phillips, Groundfish Staff Officer

SUBJECT: November 2023 Council Meeting Materials

The Pacific Fishery Management Council (Council) and its advisory bodies will meet in person [November 1-8, 2023](#) at the Hyatt Regency Orange County, 11999 Harbor Blvd., Garden Grove, CA 92840. The Groundfish Advisory Subpanel (GAP) and the Groundfish Management Team (GMT) will convene their sessions starting Thursday, November 2, 2023, at 8:00 a.m. in Royal A and B, respectively. Their meetings will adjourn on Tuesday, November 7, 2023 when business for the day is completed.

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 Council website's [November meeting page](#).

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 November 2023 agenda. The following agenda items summarized below may be of particular interest to the GMT and GAP.

G.1 2024 Catch Sharing Plan and Regulations – Final

The Council will adopt the 2024 season structures for the non-tribal directed commercial fishery and recreational fishery. In addition to these more traditional items, the Council may take action on options regarding catch sharing plan and regulation changes adopted for public review at the September Council meeting. The [Decision Summary Document](#) for September covers most items under consideration, which include changes to the fixed sport allocation assigned to each state, expanding inseason flexibility for sharing sport quota between states when possible, commercial regulations, and proposals from the California Department of Fish and Wildlife (CDFW) [report](#) to create a new California sport subarea and authorize use of the groundfish rockfish conservation

area lines, as defined in Federal Regulations (50 CFR Part 660), in the California recreational Pacific halibut fishery off California to limit catch of groundfish species of concern.

E.2 Adopt Quillback Rebuilding Analyses, Catch-Only Projections, and Revised Projections

At this meeting, the Scientific and Statistical Committee (SSC) will review catch-only projections for chilipepper rockfish, yellowtail rockfish North of 40° 10' N. lat., vermilion rockfish South of 42° N. lat. [*anticipated by the supplemental briefing book deadline*], and revisions to Dover sole and black rockfish in Oregon projections as requested by the Council in September 2023. The 2021 stock assessment of quillback rockfish in California waters estimated that the population was below the overfished threshold level. Thus, a draft rebuilding analysis has been developed per the [Terms of Reference for the Groundfish Rebuilding Analysis for 2023-2024](#), to examine a range of alternative rebuilding strategies and inform harvest specification decision-making.

The SSC will make recommendations relative to the standards of 1) the best scientific information available, and 2) soundness for use in groundfish fishery management decision-making by the Council. The Council is scheduled to then adopt projections and any rebuilding analyses used to set groundfish harvest specifications for the following biennial management period.

E.3/ E.9 Final Inseason Adjustments for 2023 and 2024, Including 2024 Whiting Set-Asides

The Council will consider progress to date of the groundfish fisheries as well as routine inseason adjustments to the 2023 fisheries, as necessary, to achieve conservation objectives under this agenda item. The Council is scheduled to adopt the Pacific whiting set-asides for the 2024 research and pink shrimp fisheries. Stakeholders should propose their inseason requests as soon as possible to the GMT for analysis as E.3 is scheduled for the second day of the Council meeting.

Agenda Item E.9 is Part II of the Inseason Adjustments action item. Part II is scheduled in the event the Council needs to revisit inseason adjustments for reasons such as incomplete analyses to support decision-making under E.3, new information prompts the Council to recommend the GMT analysis of the issue, etc. If, however, all inseason business is completed under E.3, E.9 will be canceled.

E.4 Sablefish Gear Switching – Preliminary Preferred Alternative

In June, the Council adopted dual initial preliminary preferred alternatives - No Action and a gear-specific QP alternative (Alternative 2) for sablefish gear switching. The Council is scheduled to adopt a preliminary preferred alternative (PPA) at this meeting. If the Council were to select No Action as the PPA, it could either send that out for public comment before determination of the PPA, or decide that there would be no further work or discussion at this time (i.e., this would be the last meeting). If Alternative 1 or 2 are selected as PPAs, PPA options within the alternative should also be selected. Also, if an action alternative is selected as a PPA, there are some additional questions to be addressed that are identified in Attachment 2 in the discussion sections for each alternative. The GMT and GAP should review the briefing book materials and provide comments to assist the Council in this effort. Final action is currently scheduled for March 2024.

E.5/E.7 Harvest Specifications and Management Measures for 2025-2026

Under E.5, the Council is scheduled to adopt final harvest specifications for overfishing limits, sigma values, stock categories, and acceptable biological catches. Additionally, it will adopt

preliminary preferred annual catch limits for stocks with alternative harvest control rules under consideration. Those stocks are canary rockfish, rex sole, sablefish, and shortspine thornyhead biennium. It is expected the Council will adopt a range of alternatives for a quillback rebuilding plan under E.5.

Under E.7, the Council will consider 2025-26 management measures and any remaining harvest specifications remaining from E.5. Under this agenda item, the Council will adopt harvest specifications for analysis, such as off-the-top deductions, set-asides for the at-sea whiting fishery, and annual catch targets. The Council will also discuss preliminary two-year allocations for analysis and give guidance on routine management measures, as necessary, to implement the harvest specifications for the next biennium. Additionally, the Council will adopt a range of new management measures for analysis by the GMT. The GMT and GAP should closely review the proposed new management measures, as shown in Agenda Item E.7, Attachment 1, and consider prioritizing them based on their relevance to this process.

E.6 Preliminary Exempted Fishing Permits for 2025-2026

At this meeting, the Council is scheduled to identify exempted fishing permit proposals for additional consideration and public review. Under this agenda item, applicants are expected to present their preliminary proposals to the Council for consideration in the 2025-2026 biennium. The Council will adopt preliminary set-asides for EFPs under this item.

E.8 Phase 2 Stock Definitions – Planning

The Council is scheduled to adopt a schedule and process for Phase II of the stock definitions process. Phase II will address the remaining definitions for managed groundfish species, consider state or federal management authority of those stocks, and consider revising groundfish stock complexes. The GMT, GAP, and SSC should review the proposed schedule and make recommendations as appropriate.

Other Items

The following are additional pre-Council meeting briefings that may be of interest (as shown on the [Council's online calendar](#)):

- The GAP will host its pre-November Council meeting [webinar](#) to discuss items on the Council's November agenda on October 23, 2023 from 12:00 p.m. to 4 p.m. Pacific Time
- The GMT will host a [week-long work session](#) via webinar from October 16 to October 20.
- The GMT will host its pre- November Council meeting [webinar](#) to discuss items on the Council's November agenda on October 20, 2023 from 8:30 p.m. to 12:30 p.m. Pacific Time

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.

JKD:kma

Enclosures include:

1. Agenda Item A. – Council Meeting Agenda and Executive Director’s Report
2. Agenda Item B.1 – Open Comment (***Electronic Only via the [e-portal](#)***)
3. Agenda Item C – Administrative Matters
4. Agenda Item E – Groundfish Management
5. Agenda Item G – Pacific Halibut Management
6. Enforcement Consultants Agenda
7. GAP Agenda
8. GMT Agenda
9. Scientific and Statistical Committee Agenda and Draft Minutes
10. Informational Reports
11. General Information and Council Roster

PFMC

10/12/23