

GROUND FISH MANAGEMENT TEAM REPORT ON THE FISHERY ECOSYSTEM PLAN INITIATIVE 4 – PROGRESS REVIEW

The Groundfish Management Team (GMT) supports the work done by the Ecosystem Workgroup (EWG) to identify pathways that would integrate changes in environmental conditions into the biennial stock assessment and management process. Members of the GMT who attended the joint session with the EWG and Groundfish Advisory Subpanel (GAP) found the in-person session beneficial and informative, and would encourage further in-person meetings in the future.

The GMT recommends that the Pacific Fishery Management Council (Council) direct the EWG to move forward with additional analysis of pathways (management on-ramps) 1 through 3 for how and when risk tables could be used by the Council in setting harvest levels for groundfish, as identified in [H.2.a, Supplemental REVISED EWG Report 1](#). The GMT understands that the EWG has identified pathways 1 and 3 as having the least administrative burden for integration into the existing biennial process and agrees with moving forward with these first, however, the interplay of scientific uncertainty (σ) and management risk tolerance (P^*) is an important consideration that merits inclusion of pathway 2 in subsequent additional analysis. The Scientific and Statistical Committee's (SSC) Ecosystem-Based Management Subcommittee & Groundfish Subcommittee joint report from September 21st, 2023 ([SSC EBM-GFSC Report, September 2023](#)) flagged the present lack of clarity regarding which factors are considered when selecting P^* . Work under pathway 2 could address this as well as incorporate risk tables into setting a P^* value.

The GMT understands that the EWG would like to see analysis of these pathways reviewed by the SSC in August, with a presentation of that review and analysis to the Council in September. The GMT is supportive of this effort, as the ability of the existing biennial stock assessment and management process to respond to rapidly changing environmental conditions is a concern shared by members of the GMT.

Additionally, the GMT recommends that the Council task the EWG to develop examples of the integration of retrospective risk assessment tables for petrale sole and sablefish, such that the GMT and GAP might better understand how harvest specifications for the 2025-26 biennium may have varied with the integration of ecosystem risk tables into the process. The GMT also encourages the development of mock risk assessment table examples for a range of situations, such that the GMT and GAP could better understand the impacts that these risk tables may have under a range of environmental conditions.