



Pacific Fishery Management Council

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

MEMORANDUM

DATE: March 22, 2024

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

FROM: Jessi Doerpinghaus, Groundfish Staff Officer

SUBJECT: April 2024 Council Meeting Materials

The Pacific Fishery Management Council (Council) will meet April 6-11 in Seattle, Washington. The Groundfish Management Team (GMT) and the Groundfish Advisory Subpanel (GAP) will convene meetings starting Friday, April 5, 2024, at 1 p.m. and adjourn on Tuesday, April 9, 2024. All meetings are open to the public and at least one opportunity for public comment has been scheduled for each meeting day.

The briefing book materials attached to this memorandum provide detailed information for items on the Council's April 2024 agenda. The following agenda items may be of particular interest to the GMT, the GAP, and other groundfish-interested stakeholders.

Groundfish

F.1 National Marine Fisheries Service (NMFS) Report Including a Take Reduction Team (TRT) Overview

The Council is scheduled to receive updates from the NMFS West Coast Region and the Northwest Science Fishery Center (NWFSC). Additionally, the NMFS Office of Protected Resources will provide an overview of the TRT process. The GAP and GMT will be briefed in a joint session.

F.2 Biennial Harvest Specifications for 2025-26 Fisheries -Final Preferred Alternatives

In November 2023, the Council adopted 2025-26 harvest specifications for groundfish stocks and stock complexes under default harvest control rules. The Council adopted a range of alternative harvest control rules for shortspine thornyhead, rex sole, and Dover sole for detailed analysis over-the-winter. The Council is scheduled to adopt final preferred alternatives (FPA) at this meeting. Additionally, the Council is expected to adopt their preliminary preferred alternative (PPA) harvest specifications for the California stock of quillback rockfish under this agenda item. The GMT and GAP should read the analytical document for this item as presented in briefing book and consider commenting on their preferred options, as appropriate.

F.3 Inseason Management – Final Action

This agenda item will consider progress to date of the groundfish fisheries as well as routine inseason adjustments to the 2024 fisheries, as necessary, to achieve conservation objectives. This agenda item is the opportunity for the GAP and public to request inseason adjustments. Requests

should be brought to the GMT by no later than noon on the 6th of April. The Pacific whiting cooperatives have been invited to share their progress on developing an intersector agreement with the Council at this meeting.

F.4 Sablefish Gear Switching – Final Action and Fishery Management Plan (FMP) Amendment

Council discussions on limiting the use of non-trawl gear to target sablefish in the trawl individual fishing quota (IFQ) fishery (gear switching) began as part of its review of the Trawl Catch Share Program, finalized in 2017. As a result of the review, the Council adopted a gear switching control date (September 15, 2017). Subsequently it began a process that started with work by the Sablefish Allocation Management and Trawl Allocation Attainment Committee and led to further work on a range of alternatives across several Council meetings starting in September 2021. Most recently, at the November 2023 meeting, the Council selected its PPA which would implement gear-specific quota pounds except in years where a trigger is met. Over the winter, NMFS determined that it would require a Fishery Management Plan (FMP) amendment for this action. At this meeting, the Council is scheduled to select its FPA and adopt FMP amendment language.

F.5 Preliminary Preferred Management Measure Alternatives for 2025-26 Fisheries

The Council is scheduled to select their preliminary preferred alternatives (PPA) for the 2025-26 biennial groundfish management measures. The GMT has developed an analytical document (Agenda Item F.5, Attachment 2, April 2024) that provides detailed analyses for both routine management measure, such as changes to trip limits adjustments, allocations, etc. and new management measures. The GMT and GAP should review all reports associated with this item and provide recommendations to the Council to aid their decision-making process in selecting PPAs.

Cross FMP Items

H.1 Office of National Marine Sanctuaries Report

The Office of National Marine Sanctuaries (ONMS) will present information to the Council to keep the Council informed of ONMS activities and programs and to maintain communication and coordination between ONMS and the Council. The Coordination Report (Agenda Item H.1.a, ONMS Report 1) contains an update of activities and programs recently implemented and a preview of upcoming actions of mutual interest, such as condition reports and management plan reviews.

Administrative Items

G.2. Council Operations and Priorities

The Council's Committee of the Whole (COTW) met in January 2024 to consider ways to discuss finances and workload. One recommendation from the COTW is that the Council's Executive Director develop recommendations regarding restructuring and reorganizing the Council process to address concerns related to finances, workload, and effective decision making. If the Council concurs with the COTW recommendation, Council staff would plan to create a two-meeting process to consider the Executive Director recommendations, with initial consideration in June and final decisions in September or November. In the event the Council considers changes to the composition of term-limited Advisory Body positions (Scientific and Statistical Committee at-large positions; Habitat Committee tribal, industry, conservation, and at-large positions; and all Advisory Subpanel positions), such changes would be coordinated with the scheduled review for the 2025-2027 term (see [Council Operating Procedure 9, Schedule 6](#)) which begins in June 2024. The proposed timeline and process is recommended to facilitate focused review and comment on proposals by the Council, Advisory Bodies, and the public.

The GMT and GAP should attend a [briefing](#) on this subject on March 29, 3 p.m. (or watch the recording), consider the initial COTW report, and make recommendations to the Council, as appropriate. Otherwise, this can be considered an informational item with more concrete proposals forwarded for consideration at the June Council meeting.

Other Items

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

- The Council will host a [webinar](#) to give an online briefing on the outcomes of the January 18-19, 2024 meeting of the Committee of the Whole on March 29, 2024 at 3 p.m.
- The GMT will host a [webinar](#) meeting to discuss items on the Council's April Agenda on March 26, 2024 from 9 a.m. to 12 p.m.

This mailing includes the enclosures listed below. Please review these briefing materials in advance to facilitate an efficient meeting week. Briefing materials for this meeting can be accessed from the [April 2024 Meeting briefing book webpage](#).

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

JKD:ael

Enclosures include:

1. Agenda Item A.3 – Council Meeting Agenda
2. Agenda Item B.1 – Open Comment Items
3. Agenda Item F – Groundfish Management
4. Agenda Item G – Administrative Matters
5. Agenda Item H – Cross FMP
6. Enforcement Consultants Agenda
7. GAP Agenda
8. GMT Agenda
9. SSC Agenda and Draft Minutes
10. Informational Reports
11. General and Hotel Information and Council Roster

PFMC
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