

GROUND FISH ADVISORY SUBPANEL REPORT ON COUNCIL OPERATIONS AND PRIORITIES

Summary of Groundfish Advisory Subpanel (GAP) Recommendations

- **Virtual meetings**
 - In-person GAP meetings preferred; webinars used strategically; and
 - Eliminate groundfish in April of odd years (even years, if possible as well)
 - **Comments, public involvement**
 - The GAP agrees with [Agenda Item C.2, Attachment 1](#), Item A.3.2 - aligning the group and individual comments to five minutes;
 - Advisory body (AB) reports can include a summary, followed by detailed rationale;
 - Exempted fishing permit (EFP) renewals (Item A.3.3) could go directly to National Marine Fisheries Service (NMFS);
 - Include informational reports *without* presentation to the Pacific Fishery Management Council (Council), subject to Council leadership discretion (Item A.3.3); and
 - Create an advance webinar on cross-fishery management plans (FMP) items for advisory bodies instead of creating another working group (Item A.3.1)
 - **Meeting location**
 - Retain September meeting in-person since it is most cost-efficient but possibly completely virtual would work in even years.
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GAP discussion

The GAP reviewed the documents under this agenda item and agree with the range of ideas proposed for improving Council operations to accommodate the budget, acknowledging this will come up again at the November Council meeting.

Virtual meetings

While the GAP is not opposed to occasional webinars/virtual meetings, we continue to find value in meeting in person for agenda items that are comprehensive and complex – for example, harvest specifications, trawl catch share reviews, etc. The GAP finds value in webinars held in advance of Council meetings to take care of items that are relatively simple, sector-specific or don't require joint meetings with the Groundfish Management Team (GMT).

History has demonstrated that eliminating groundfish from either the March or April meeting agenda has not worked well. However, better planning for eliminating groundfish from the April agenda, especially in odd years (non-harvest specifications years), seems feasible and the GAP supports this proposal. This would also provide groundfish staff time to complete work on groundfish items. As mentioned above, the GAP could meet virtually for any cross-FMP or administrative items that may be of interest to the GAP.

For example, it would be very helpful to recreational fishermen on the GAP to receive California Department of Fish and Wildlife's prior year's recreational seasons report in March vs. April. It is important that these summaries of the previous season's catch be available to managers prior to the start of California's recreational groundfish season.

Comments, timing, reports and public involvement

The GAP sees value in public involvement in this process and agrees that aligning five minutes for public comment, for both individuals and groups, is sufficient ([Agenda Item C.2, Attachment 1](#), Item A.3.2). We recognize this may save some time on the Council floor, but it might be most helpful when used in combination with other changes.

Limiting the number of pages for advisory body documents seems unnecessarily restrictive. However, after listening to the Committee of the Whole discussion, the GAP has been working to provide a summary table or comments in our statements, with detailed rationale following. This seems to work well for long statements when they are posted to the Briefing Book the day before the agenda item is on the Council floor. Continuing this effort will allow Council members to review the statements ahead of the agenda item and ask questions of the GAP member reading the statement – or reading just the summary – into the record. The full written advisory body statement, including the supporting rationale, will be retained as part of the official council record for future access.

Regarding Item A.3.3, EFP renewals, the GAP agrees that renewals of established EFPs could go directly to NMFS without taking up Council and advisory body time. The GAP recognizes it would be beneficial to discuss new EFP proposals, as already aligned with our harvest specifications schedule,

The GAP also supports inclusion of written informational reports to the Briefing Book without taking up Council floor time for presentations of the same information (Item A.3.3). The GAP notes that some reports are of value across the range of Council entities but is comfortable with Council leadership deciding which items should be solely informational or also presented to the Council. One agenda item could cover multiple informational reports, with respective agency staff available virtually to answer questions from Council members.

Regarding creation of a cross-FMP advisory body, the GAP agrees with the Highly Migratory Special Management Team ([Report 1](#)) that a Council-hosted webinar for broad advisory body input regarding cross-FMP agenda items in lieu of a working group would be beneficial. Again, creating another advisory body seems counterproductive when the Council is trying to cut costs.

Meeting location

The GAP agrees with the Council meeting in areas outside of those that are most expensive. We note that Spokane, Tacoma, and Vancouver appear to be the least expensive regions to attend as noted in [Agenda Item C.2, Attachment 1](#). The suggestion of eliminating the in-person September meeting (recommendation B.2) in favor of meeting virtually seems counterproductive. The September meeting includes some significant groundfish items, especially in the odd years (e.g., stock assessments). However, it might be worth considering holding a September meeting virtually in the even years, as there are fewer comprehensive groundfish items at that time.

PFMC
06/10/24