

## GROUND FISH MANAGEMENT TEAM REPORT ON NMFS REGIONAL EQUITY AND ENVIRONMENTAL JUSTICE (EEJ) PLAN & EEJ COMMITTEE UPDATE

As public servants and stewards of marine resources, it is vital for the Pacific Fishery Management Council (Council) process to meaningfully incorporate equity and environmental justice (EEJ) into its work. Not only is this a mandate under the Magnuson-Stevens Fishery Conservation and Management Act (MSA), but something that will improve our ability to effectively and fairly serve our diverse constituents in a challenging and changing world.

The Groundfish Management Team (GMT) appreciates the work that the National Marine Fisheries Service (NMFS) and Equity and Environmental Justice Committee (EEJC) have been doing to further EEJ work at the Council. However, we are concerned that the GMT, and the Council as a whole, do not currently have sufficient time, resources, or expertise to effectively incorporate EEJ as a fundamental part of our process. The GMT is particularly concerned about remedying the gap in capacity over the long-term, given suggested revisions to meeting structures and workload prioritization discussed in [Agenda Item C.2, Attachment 1](#). We agree that EEJ deserves to be a Council priority and should be addressed with investments of time, resources, and expertise that are in addition to existing resources allocated to core advisory body (AB) responsibilities. The National Academies of Science, Engineering, and Medicine report ([Agenda Item H.2, Attachment 1, June 2024](#)) notes that, “If NMFS is to meet the legislative mandate for equity within MSA and recent executive orders, work on equity must transition to operational data collection and assessment programs, supported and analyzed by... increased social science capacity” and we believe this also applies to the Council. We further note that, to date, work on this effort has largely been siloed across ABs, the EEJC, and other affiliated groups. The GMT agrees that collaboration is essential for the Council to integrate EEJ in our processes. The GMT suggests the Council consider the following actions:

1. Document the capital needed to fulfill the EEJ mandate, recognizing that many Council ABs currently lack the expertise, time, and/or resources to effectively implement EEJ in our work.
2. Bring in experts and practitioners in the field of EEJ, as well as a diverse suite of fishermen, community members, Tribes, and other relevant and interested parties. Strive to bring in experts and practitioners that can serve as long-term resources to the Council in lieu of, or in addition to, short-term contracted support.
3. Convene a workshop or series of workshops that bring together other agencies’ EEJ staff, non-governmental organizations (NGOs) that are currently doing this work, ABs, Tribes, constituents, and other relevant parties to develop an actionable plan to move this work forward.
4. Develop an action plan for change specifically within the Council process that complements the NMFS Regional Action Plan.