



Pacific Fishery Management Council

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

MEMORANDUM

DATE: August 30, 2024

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

FROM: Jessi Doerpinghaus, Groundfish Staff Officer

SUBJECT: September 2024 Council Meeting Materials

The Pacific Fishery Management Council (Council) will meet September 17-23, 2024 in Spokane, Washington. The Groundfish Management Team (GMT) and the Groundfish Advisory Subpanel (GAP) will convene meetings starting Wednesday, September 18, 2024, at 8 a.m. The GAP and GMT will adjourn on Saturday, September 21, 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 September 2024 agenda. The following agenda items may be of particular interest to the GMT, the GAP, and other groundfish-interested stakeholders.

Groundfish Management

I.1 National Marine Fisheries Service (NMFS) Report—Including Sablefish Management Strategy Evaluation Update

The Council is scheduled to receive updates from the NMFS West Coast Region and the Northwest Science Fishery Center (NWFSC). The NWFSC is expected to give an update on the sablefish management strategy evaluation (MSE) process and provide a response to the Council's questions regarding discard mortality. The GAP and GMT will be briefed on these topics in a joint session.

I.2 Methodology Review: Preliminary Fishery Impact Model Topics

The GMT or other entities may bring forward proposals for new impact projection models or other models to inform future management decisions, proposals for a review of models currently used in order to identify potential improvements, etc. as described in Council Operating Procedure 25. The GMT and GAP should suggest a tentative list of topics for the Council to consider.

I.3 Final Trawl Cost Project Report

The Council is scheduled to receive the final Phase 2 trawl cost project at its September meeting which builds off of Phase 1 and is intended to focus on the policy decisions and tradeoffs that would be required to reduce program costs. Additionally, it was recommended that it focus on other ways to improve fishery performance and economic benefits under the program. The GAP and GMT should provide any feedback on the final report and provide any guidance if there are

any issues that should be included as a part of the catch share review or subsequent follow on actions (I.7).

I.4. 2025 and 2027 Stock Assessment Plan and Schedule

In coordinating ageing capacity and developing the 2025 stock assessment preliminary schedule, concerns were raised in regard to the capacity to conduct adequate ageing to support the complete list of species scheduled for assessment in 2025 (Agenda Item I.4, NMFS NWFSC/SWFSC Report 1). The GAP and GMT should consider the proposed revision to remove redbanded rockfish from the list of species to be assessed in 2025 and make recommendations as appropriate.

I.5. Stock Definitions for Species Assessed in 2025 and 2027- Preliminary Preferred Alternative (PPA)

The Council is scheduled to adopt its PPA for definitions of species to be assessed in 2025 and 2027. Under Agenda Item I.4, the Council may reconsider the species to be assessed in 2025. If changes are adopted in I.4, the list of species for this action are likely to reflect that change. The GMT and GAP should give initial consideration regarding the management implications that should be considered based on the proposed stock definitions and provide statements to the Council, as appropriate.

I.6 Inseason Adjustments for 2024 and Technical Corrections for 2025-2026 —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. Council staff and/or the GMT will provide technical corrections to the 2025-2026 harvest specifications and management measures for the Council to adopt in the event they are needed. 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, Friday, September 20 to ensure adequate analysis.

I.7 Trawl Catch Share Program and Intersector Allocation Reviews- Scoping

Catch share programs must be reviewed at least once every seven years after the first review is completed. The Council specified a six-year cycle for future reviews, with reviews to start on even-numbered years. The Council began discussing the second catch share review in September 2022 but work was put on hold due to gear switching deliberations. A proposed annotated outline of the trawl catch share program review can be found in Attachment 1, and a draft of the intersector allocation review can be found in Attachment 2. The GMT and GAP should consider these attachments and provide any guidance for development of the documents.

Additionally, the advisory bodies should consider the proposed hearing locations outlined in Attachment 3 and the proposed Council Operating Procedure (COP) 27 edits in Attachment 4 to reflect the current management of allocated stocks. Council staff is proposing to bring drafts of the catch share and intersector allocation program reviews for adoption in June or September 2025. This would allow for incorporation of any feedback from the hearings slated for early spring 2025.

I.8 Phase 2 Stock Definitions- Scoping

At this meeting, Council is scheduled to adopt the scope for this action. Phase 2 will involve several interrelated steps: (a) identifying and defining stocks for approximately 76 groundfish species in need of conservation and management, (b) potential redesignation of select species as Ecosystem Component species (ECS), (c) identifying species that could be removed from the FMP, (d) revising groundfish stock complexes, and e) consideration of delegating specific management tasks to the states.

To support discussion amongst the Council and advisory bodies, an Attachment 1 summarizes the proposed process. Attachment 2 is a revised process plan for consideration in developing the timing of the action (Attachment 2). The GMT and GAP should attachments and provide comments to the Council to assist in setting the scope for the action. Further, the literature review for all remaining species has been completed (Attachment 3). The SSC should carefully review this information for completeness. The SSC should also review both NMFS reports regarding the methodologies to determine predominance of commercial (NMFS Report 1) and recreational (NMFS Report 2) catch in Federal waters. The Council should expect statements from advisory bodies to guide them in their discussion to set the scope of the action

Cross-FMP Items

C.1. Marine Planning

The Council's Marine Planning Committee met on August 12, 2024, and considered several issues related to offshore wind (OSW) energy planning. These topics included region-wide transmission planning for OSW energy, the Migratory Bird Treaty Act and OSW energy development, a discussion of cumulative coastwide impacts and data gaps, as well as updates from the states, NMFS, the Bureau of Ocean and Energy Management, and a tribal update. The meeting was recorded and available for viewing on the meeting [webpage](#). The MPC Report 1 is included in advanced September Briefing Book materials (Agenda Item C.1.a, MPC Report 1). Other Advisory Bodies typically only develop supplemental reports if MPC Report 1 is lacking certain information, or if the report warrants additional explanation.

C.2. Equity and Environmental Justice (EEJ) Gap Analysis Framework and Regional Implementation Plan

Under this agenda item, the Council will review and discuss the final West Coast Equity and Environmental Justice (EEJ) Regional Implementation Plan (RP) (Agenda Item C.2., Attachment 1), which was released in August 2024. The plan serves as a roadmap for applying the National EEJ Strategy's goals and actions in the context of West Coast needs (National EEJ Strategy: September 2023 Council Meeting, [Agenda Item H.5, Attachment 3](#)).

The Council will also review a draft Gap Analysis Workplan, which was developed in coordination with the Equity and Environmental Justice Committee (EEJC) and outlines Council processes and products that may benefit from improvements to better address EEJ considerations. The Council will provide feedback on the draft outline and is expected to adopt the workplan. The Gap Analysis will consider the actions included in the NMFS RP and is anticipated to be completed in mid-to-late 2025.

Advisory Bodies (ABs) will be provided with informational briefings on the above items but are not expected to submit any statements. Input from ABs will be solicited when the Gap Analysis is available for review and any potential work outcomes or next steps are presented.

C.3. Inflation Reduction Act Projects- Check In

In May/June 2024, the Council was notified that its proposed Inflation Reduction Act (IRA) projects had been approved. During this agenda item, the Council will receive an update from Council staff on work plans and timelines for further developing and implementing the three projects, each of which focuses on an aspect of climate resilience and related Council management and decision-making processes. Draft project work plans provided in the Advanced Briefing Book will highlight Council-specific milestones and products. Advisory Bodies are encouraged to review the draft plans and, if desired, provide any feedback or input to Council staff.

Pacific Halibut Management

F.1 2025 Catch Sharing Plan Preliminary and Annual Regulations – Preliminary

Under this agenda item, the Council will consider revisions to Pacific Halibut Catch Sharing Plan (CSP) and regulations for the 2025 season. Final action for establishing the 2025 Pacific halibut fisheries is scheduled for the November 2025 Council meeting. The Council could adopt potential changes to the CSP for public review at this meeting; however, for items that cannot be resolved or fully addressed by November 2024, work will continue over the winter and spring with the goal of revisiting the remaining topics in June 2025, and implementation when practical. The GAP should consider recommending modifications to the CSP, as appropriate.

F.2 Commercial Fishery Regulation Changes: Vessel Monitoring Systems, Seabird Avoidance, and Catch Reporting - Range of Alternatives, Preliminary Preferred Alternative

In June 2023, the Council reviewed a scoping report ([Agenda Item E.1, Attachment 1](#)) on potential changes to the Pacific halibut CSP and non-tribal commercial halibut fishery regulations, which included the EC recommendations. At the September 2023 meeting, the Council reviewed additional information ([Agenda Item D.1, Attachment 6](#)) on these three items and adopted them for public review. At this meeting the GAP should consider providing comments that will assist the Council in adopting the ROA/PPA.

Ecosystem Matters

H.1 Fishery Ecosystem Plan Initiative 4: Groundfish and Salmon Risk Tables – Progress Review

The purpose of this Fishery Ecosystem Plan (FEP) Initiative is to develop on-ramps for integrating ecosystem and climate information into Council fishery management plan decision making, with a focus on harvest specifications processes. In March 2024, the Council directed the Ecosystem Workgroup (EWG) to work with NMFS Science Center staff to further develop the methodological framework and apply it to groundfish for potential use as part of 2027-28 groundfish harvest specifications decision-making. The Scientific and Statistical Committee (SSC) Ecosystem-Based Management Subcommittee reviewed the methodology, and the full SSC will report to the Council on this in September. The Council may provide guidance on application of the risk table methodology in the 2025 groundfish harvest specifications process. The GAP and GMT may wish to comment on how the Council could operationalize risk tables and other related issues, as appropriate.

Administrative Matters

K.3. Membership Appointments and Council Operating Procedures Including Final 2025-2027 Advisory Body Composition

During this agenda item, the Council considers administrative appointment issues and any relevant changes in the COP. Membership discussions include the current (2022-2024) and upcoming (2025-2027) AB terms. Additionally, the Council is scheduled identify a Council member to serve on the NMFS Office of Protected Resources marine mammal Take Reduction Team for Federal sablefish pot, Dungeness crab, and California spot prawn. Finally, the Council is expected to adopt a modification to COP 1 to revise the public comment period to five minutes for both individuals and groups.

Under this agenda item, ABs should focus their review on the process for establishing the term-limited positions for the upcoming term (2025-2027). At the June Council meeting, the Council

adopted proposed changes to the Groundfish Subpanels for public review (see [June Decision Summary Document](#)). In September 2024, the Council is scheduled to adopt the final compositions of term-limited Advisory Body position and the Ecosystem Workgroup, and request nominations to fill the next three-year term. Appointments are scheduled to be made in November 2024. Advisory Bodies should consider the form and function of the term-limited Advisory Bodies while taking into consideration the Council's financial status when recommending the proposed changes for public review.

Other Items

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

- The GAP will host a [webinar](#) meeting to discuss items on the Council's September Agenda on Thursday, September 5 from 12 p.m. to 3 p.m.
- The GMT will host a [webinar](#) meeting to discuss items on the Council's September Agenda on Tuesday, September 10, from 9 a.m. to 12 p.m.
- The EWG will host a [webinar](#) meeting to discuss and draft reports for items on the Council's agenda, including the FEP initiative, on September 9 -11 from 10 a.m. to 2:00 p.m. each day.

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 [September 2024 Meeting briefing book webpage](#).

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

JKD:kma

Enclosures include:

1. Agenda Item A.4 – Council Meeting Agenda
2. Agenda Item B.1 – Open Comment Period
3. Agenda Item C – Cross FMP Matters
4. Agenda Item F- Pacific Halibut Management
5. Agenda Item H- Ecosystem Management
6. Agenda Item I – Groundfish Management
7. Agenda Item K – Administrative Matters
8. Enforcement Consultants Agenda
9. GAP Agenda
10. GMT Agenda
11. SSC Agenda and Draft Minutes
12. Informational Reports
13. General and Hotel Information and Council Roster

PFMC
08/28/24