

GROUND FISH MANAGEMENT TEAM REPORT ON FISHERY ECOSYSTEM PLAN
INITIATIVE 4 GROUND FISH AND SALMON RISK TABLES – PROGRESS REVIEW

The Groundfish Management Team (GMT) generally supports the development of on-ramps for integrating ecosystem and climate information into Pacific Fishery Management Council (Council) fishery management decision making, with the focus on harvest specifications processes. The Ecosystem Workgroup (EWG) provided a series of questions for the team to consider ([Agenda Item H.1.a, EWG Report 1, September 2024](#)). The GMT addresses those questions in this report.

Regarding the use of risk tables for sablefish in the 2027-28 biennium, the GMT does not possess the expertise necessary to advise the Council on the use of these tables in terms of the impacts to sigma at this time; therefore, we defer to the Scientific and Statistical Committee's judgment on this matter.

The GMT considered the implementation timeline and suggests weighing in on species selection at the September meeting after stock assessment prioritization in June, as the June meeting is demanding for the GMT in finalizing harvest specifications and management measures.

The GMT sees merit in applying the risk table to further refine the selection of sigma since the risk table accounts for scientific information but does not see a role for the GMT in that process. Using the risk tables to adjust sigma, which is associated with scientific uncertainty, aligns with the apparent focus for risk tables to incorporate additional relevant scientific information. However, applying the ecosystem uncertainty component to sigma precludes the GMT and the Council from weighing in on this aspect of decision-making which in part is a policy call to assess risk tolerance. If the Council opts to apply the risk tables to adjust P^* , moving this process to a management decision, the GMT could be involved in reviewing and providing input on their application.

The GMT does not feel we need to take a formal role in reviewing draft risk tables if sigma is used to determine risk tables. A GMT and Groundfish Advisory Subpanel (GAP) representative participates in the stock assessment review (STAR) process; therefore, the GMT would have the opportunity to ask questions or engage in discussion during STAR panel meetings when the risk tables are presented.

One criterion suggested by the EWG is whether the process should consider only those species near full attainment of the annual catch limit be considered for risk table development. The GMT thinks this criterion could potentially be overly exclusive. Fishery management and stocks targeted by fishermen change over time, which can lead to changes in attainment. Incorporating and implementing information from risk tables for species with sufficient information can make management more robust to future changes in the fishery. In addition to determining attainment, GMT expertise on fishery management and changing fishery dynamics could be useful in the selection of species for risk table development.

If the Council chooses to use risk tables, the GMT currently does not see a need to amend the Pacific Coast Groundfish Fishery Management Plan to incorporate them into the process. When used to modify future harvest specifications from a stock assessment, a decision regarding how to formalize the risk assessment tables into the Council process can be determined.

PFMC
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