



Pacific Fishery Management Council

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

MEMORANDUM

DATE: October 25, 2024

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

FROM: Jessi Doerpinghaus, Groundfish Staff Officer

SUBJECT: November 2024 Council Meeting Materials

The Pacific Fishery Management Council (Council) will meet November 14-18, 2024 in Costa Mesa, California. The Groundfish Management Team (GMT) and the Groundfish Advisory Subpanel (GAP) will convene meetings starting Wednesday, November 13, 2024, at 8 a.m. The GAP and GMT will adjourn on Friday, November 15, 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 November 2024 agenda. The following agenda items may be of particular interest to the GMT, the GAP, and other groundfish-interested stakeholders.

Administrative

C.5 Membership Appointments and Council Operating Procedures – Including Final 2025-27 Advisory Body Appointments

During this agenda item, the Council will discuss forming an ad hoc committee to help draft a comment letter on the expected proposed rule to revise National Standard Guidelines 4, 8, and 9 which cover allocation, communities, and bycatch ([Advanced Notice of Proposed Rule Making, May 2023](#); [Agenda Item H.6.a, Supplemental NMFS Presentation 1, September 2023](#); [Council Comment Letter October 2023](#)). The proposed ad hoc committee would be comprised of members from existing Council advisory bodies, similar to the Marine Planning Committee. Advisory Bodies should review the proposed approach (Agenda Item C.5, Attachment 2) and situation summary, provide feedback, and recommend individuals to serve on the proposed ad hoc committee.

Groundfish Management

I.1 National Marine Fisheries Service Report

The West Coast Region will update the Council regarding rule making, current activities, and other pertinent information related to the Council. The Northwest Fishery Science Center has provided reports and data regarding Pacific halibut bycatch and salmon bycatch in groundfish fisheries.

I.2 Trawl Catch Share Program and Intersector Allocation Reviews: Hearing Officers and Locations

In September 2024, the Council provided initial guidance relative to proposed hearing locations for the trawl catch share program and intersector allocation review. Attachment 1 provides a proposal from Council staff on those hearing locations. The GAP and GMT should consider the proposal and offer feedback to the Council.

I.3 Methodology Review: Final Fishery Impact Model Review Topics and Stock Assessment Methodologies

The Council will consider adoption of new methodologies endorsed by the Scientific and Statistical Committee (SSC), which include development of an updated groundfish catch projection model to predict fishery impacts for use by the GMT and a methodology review topic for potential use in groundfish stock assessments. Regarding the updated catch projection model, the GMT should consider developing a scope of work and a draft schedule, with the goal to complete the model in time for SSC review in advance of the 2027-28 harvest specifications and management measure process. The GMT and GAP should consider the needs of these methodologies and comment appropriately.

I.4 Stock Definitions for Species Assessed in 2025 and 2027 – Final

The Council is scheduled to adopt their final preferred alternative (FPA) to define stock units, including geographic delineations of chilipepper rockfish, English sole, redbanded rockfish, roughey/blackspotted rockfish, widow rockfish, yellowtail rockfish, and yelloweye rockfish. The GMT and GAP should review the attachments and consider if there are any additional management implications of the proposed definitions that the Council should be made aware of in their decision making.

I.5 Cordell Bank Conservation Area Revisions

In September 2023, the California Department of Fish and Wildlife (CDFW) brought forward a proposal to remove the Cordell Bank Groundfish Conservation Area (GCA) and implement a new Groundfish Exclusion Area (GEA) in order to minimize regulatory complexity. Further, the GCA was originally put into place to minimize impacts to overfished rockfish and is no longer needed given the rebuilding of the stocks (e.g., canary rockfish). The Council is scheduled to adopt a purpose and need, range of alternatives, and a preliminary preferred alternative if possible. The GAP and GMT should consider the analysis in Attachment 1 in their recommendations to the Council.

I.6 Inseason Adjustments 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. The Council is also scheduled to adopt the off-the-top deduction to accommodate the incidental mortality of Pacific whiting in 2023 research activities and in the pink shrimp fishery. 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, Wednesday, November 13 to ensure adequate analysis.

Cross Fishery Management Plan

D.2 Marine Planning

The Marine Planning Committee (MPC) met online October 9 to consider updates from the Bureau of Ocean Energy Management, the states, National Marine Fisheries Service (NMFS), and a tribal update. The MPC also heard presentations from the NMFS West Coast Region/Northwest Fisheries Science Center on Socioeconomic Characterization of West Coast Fisheries in Relation to Offshore Wind Energy Development as well as a presentation from the West Coast Ocean Alliance on cumulative impacts and data gaps. MPC Report 1 summarizes these topics. Advisory Bodies should provide supplemental reports if there is relevant information missing from the MPC Report, or if additional clarification is needed. This agenda item will also include a CDFW report that provides information on the California Marine Protected Areas petition process to consider proposed changes to California's Marine Protected Area system.

D.3 Research and Data Needs

Under this agenda item, the Council is scheduled to adopt top science and management challenges to guide the research and data needs prioritization process. These challenges can be thought of as categories that may stretch across more than one FMP and for which multiple types of research activities could be pursued. To initiate discussion on this matter, Council staff have compiled an initial draft of categorical topics and challenges that stretch across various FMPs and for which the Council has, at one time or another, expressed a collective interest (Attachment 1). This is the initial step in the framework to review and update the Council's research and data needs (Attachment 2). Advisory bodies should review this as a starting point and provide feedback and recommendations on top science and/or management challenges from their perspective.

D.4 Council Operations and Priorities

In June 2024, the Council provided guidance and set benchmarks to improve operational efficiency, reduce costs, enhance public participation, and strengthen decision-making processes. At the November meeting, staff will present an update on the progress made in implementing these recommendations.

Pacific Halibut Management

G.1 2025 Catch Sharing Plan and Annual Regulations – Final

Under this agenda item, the Council is expected to adopt proposed changes to the Pacific Halibut Catch Sharing Plan (CSP) and 2025 regulations for the non-tribal directed commercial Pacific halibut (DC halibut) and sport seasons. The September 2024 [Decision Document](#) summarizes the items under consideration by the Council at this meeting, which include options for the commercial and recreational fisheries for the 2025 season. The GAP should review the proposed changes to the CSP and season structures and comment as appropriate.

G.2 Commercial Fishery Regulation Changes: Vessel Monitoring Systems, Seabird Avoidance, and Catch Reporting – Final

At the September 2024 meeting, the Council adopted a range of alternatives for three actions that would modify management measures for the non-Tribal directed commercial Pacific halibut (DC halibut) fishery and landings of Pacific halibut in the DC halibut and salmon troll fisheries and provided clarifications to the problem statement. In brief, for DC halibut vessel participants:

Action 1 would require use of vessel monitoring systems, Action 2 would require use of seabird avoidance measures, and Action 3 would modify Pacific halibut catch reporting requirements. The Council adopted a preliminary preferred alternative for Action 2 in September and is expected to adopt FPAs for all three actions in November. The GAP should review the actions and make recommendations, as appropriate.

Other Items

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

- The GAP and GMT will host a [joint webinar](#) meeting to discuss items on the Council's November Agenda on Monday, October 28 from 1 p.m. to 4 p.m.
- The Ad Hoc Equity & Environmental Justice (EEJ) Committee will host an online [organizational meeting](#) to discuss the NMFS EEJ Strategy Regional Implementation Plan and review work on other Pacific Council EEJ projects meeting on Wednesday, November 6, 2024 from 1 p.m. to 5 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 [November 2024 Meeting briefing book webpage](#).

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

TMP:kma

Enclosures include:

1. Agenda Item A.3 – Council Meeting Agenda
2. Agenda Item B.1 – Comments on Non-Agenda Items
3. Agenda Item C – Administrative Matters
4. Agenda Item D – Cross Fishery Management Plan
5. Agenda Item G- Pacific Halibut Management
6. Agenda Item I – Groundfish Management
7. Enforcement Consultants Agenda
8. GAP Agenda
9. GMT Agenda
10. SSC Agenda and Draft Minutes
11. Informational Reports
12. General and Hotel Information and Council Roster

PFMC

10/21/24