

STAFF PROPOSAL FOR TRAWL CATCH SHARE REVIEW AND INTERSECTOR ALLOCATION HEARINGS

Pacific Fishery Management Council (Council) staff have discussed staffing in relation to the projects on the Year-At-A-Glance (YAAG, Agenda Item C.6, Attachment 1) and offer options for the Council to consider for the trawl catch share program and intersector allocation review hearings.

Hearing Requirements

In considering the number of hearings to host in conjunction with the trawl catch share program and intersector allocation reviews, the Council should note that hearings are not mandated as a part of any catch share program or allocation review process. While there are significant benefits to additional outreach outside of Council meetings, such as reaching other participant groups not usually involved with the Council and being in the communities that the Council supports, the Council process does allow for public participation in its normal course of business through both written and oral public comment. There is a tradeoff to consider between dedicating staff time to hosting hearings and analyzing ongoing actions.

Changes to YAAG/Groundfish Workload

There have been several changes in the YAAG and to the groundfish workload that need to be considered. Central to this action is the expansion of the intersector allocation review in September 2024 to include both formal and biennial intersector allocations- expanding the necessary data and analysis of program performance needed to go into the review report. While this report will be key to understanding potential impacts to user groups and therefore potentially identifying changes to intersector allocations for the 2027-2028 harvest specifications and management measures process (including the use of set aside management for at-sea sectors), the trawl catch share report is not as intertwined with the harvest specifications. Therefore, staff have proposed moving finalization of that report to September 2025 which we understand would delay consideration of any follow-on actions. Regarding the YAAG, gear switching deeming was moved from March 2025 to June 2025 after the September 2024 meeting and Council staff will begin working with National Marine Fisheries Service (NMFS) staff at the start of 2025 to finalize the analysis and assist with identification of legacy participants and holdings.

Given these considerations and after reviewing staff officer workload, staff have prepared two options for the Council to consider on hearing locations.

Option A: September 2024 Proposal with Workload Delay

As described in the Situation Summary, the Council gave guidance to consider six in-person hearings along with two online hearings in September 2024. The trawl catch share program and intersector allocation reviews are proposed (shaded currently on YAAG) to come back to the Council in September 2025 and June 2025 respectively for final adoption. This necessitates that any hearings be held no later than late April or early May in order to incorporate the hearing reports into the review documents (particularly for the intersector allocation review). No hearings are

proposed earlier than late April given groundfish workload for March (including Limited Entry Fixed Gear [LEFG] Follow On preliminary preferred alternative) and that it is unlikely that preliminary information from the trawl catch share review would be ready to distribute at any hearings. While there are no groundfish items scheduled in April, there is not sufficient staff capacity to handle six in-person hearings in the April to May timeframe due to other workload in preparation for both April and June Council meetings. The June 2025 agenda contains several mandatory groundfish items (harvest specifications planning, stock definitions phase two) as well as final Council action on other non-mandatory Council priorities (e.g., LEFG Follow On). If the Council wants to maintain six in-person hearing locations as proposed, it is likely to take up to two full work weeks (including travel) for staff to host these locations (see Table 1). Therefore, the Council will need to recommend the delay of either final action on the LEFG Follow On actions or the finalization of the trawl catch share and intersector allocation reviews (thereby postponing consideration of follow-on actions or information to support the harvest specifications) to allow staff to host hearings, develop related materials for the June meeting in addition to other responsibilities.

Option B: Staff Proposal

Under this option, Council staff is proposing there be three in-person hearings (locations to be determined) as well as one online hearing with listening stations that provide the opportunity for remote public comment. This proposal is intended to provide stakeholders the opportunity to comment in groundfish port communities while limiting the need for Council staff to travel to all six hearings in person. Council staff suggest that for the three in-person hearings, the Council consider either one in-person location per state or focusing on more remote communities such as Westport, WA or Morro Bay, CA.

The proposal for one online hearing with listening stations would allow an opportunity for any stakeholder to participate virtually but would allow each state to set up at least one listening station at the locations of their choosing. For example, California could choose to offer listening stations in San Diego and Santa Rosa (to attract community members from Eureka and Fort Bragg). Listening stations would need to be hosted by state or NMFS staff that would help display any presentation materials and help with public comment sign up. These stations would allow for more participation from stakeholders who may not have adequate internet service to connect to only virtual meetings or those that want to be in person but can't make the other designated in-person hearings. During the public comment period, those in person at listening stations would be allowed to testify as well as those online. The hearing officer for the online hearing would be allowed to be in person at one of the listening stations (with travel paid for by the Council) or could participate remotely. Council staff could also record the presentation presented at the online hearing and make that available on our website for members of the public who are unable to make any of the hearings. Public comment could then be made at the June or September meetings (depending on the subject of the comment relative to the intersector allocation review or the catch share program review). Ultimately this would result in savings of approximately four to six days of staff time and travel compared to Option A (see table below).

Table 1. Draft timeline of options for trawl catch share and intersector allocation hearings and other deadlines.

Week	Option A	Option B
Week of April 7th	April Council Meeting (9-15)	April Council Meeting (9-15)
Week of April 14th	Hold 2 CA hearings post April CM (3 days of staff travel)	Hold 1 hearing in-person post April CM (2 days of staff travel)
Week of April 21 st	Hold 2 WA or OR hearings (3 days of staff travel) + 1 online hearing	Hold 1 in-person hearing (1-2 days of staff travel) ^a
Week of April 28 th	Hold 2 WA or OR hearings (3 days of staff travel) + 1 online hearing	Hold 1 in-person hearing (1-2 days of staff travel) ^a
Subtotal Days for Hearings	10.5 days	4.5-6.5 days
Week of May 5th	Compile reports	Compile reports
Week of May 12 th	Briefing Book Week	Briefing Book Week

^a Online hearing held on one of these two weeks.

PFMC
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