

## GROUND FISH MANAGEMENT TEAM REPORT ON RESEARCH AND DATA NEEDS

The Groundfish Management Team (GMT) appreciates Pacific Fishery Management Council (Council) staff providing an initial suite of proposed Challenges in [Agenda Item D.3, Attachment 1](#). We support the proposed list and offer some considerations for refining it. Our discussion largely centered on nuances within draft Challenge 1 (data limited stocks). To either supplement or replace Challenge 1, we identified two distinct challenges, namely 1) the need to collect more data and 2) how to manage fisheries with limited data. In the GMT's view, they are separate but interrelated, as described below:

### 1) Data limitations

- Many species in the Groundfish Fishery Management Plan are considered data poor or data limited, imposing challenges to assessing the status of those species. While this issue is highlighted in the existing Challenge 1, there is both a management and a data element to this challenge. Data needs exist even for stocks not considered data limited. Therefore, separating out topics specifically related to data limitations could better focus future research and data collection.
- In addition to current data limitations, existing data streams (*e.g.*, the National Marine Fisheries Service groundfish bottom trawl survey) may be impacted by declining funding, competing ocean uses (*e.g.*, offshore wind), and other disruptions (*e.g.*, pandemics).

### 2) Management challenges resulting from limited data

- Given limited data and/or limited resources (and the potential for increasing limitations in the future), the issue becomes how best to conduct stock assessments and make management decisions that meet our conservation mandates while safeguarding the future of West Coast fisheries.

Regarding Challenges 2-4, we offer several additional comments:

- Challenge 2 - Fishery impact projections:
  - While the current table of topics references offshore wind, there are other marine activities that are likely to be relevant to the Council managed fisheries, both offshore and shoreside (*i.e.*, important ports). Offshore, these activities include aquaculture, marine carbon removal, and deep sea mineral extraction/mining. Within ports important to commercial and recreational fisheries, the substantial increase in investment and industrial use associated with other ocean uses may provide a range of positive and negative impacts to existing infrastructures and users. While the exact impacts remain uncertain in all of these examples, increased competition for finite resources ashore and at-sea is important to consider. Therefore, we suggest the topic of offshore wind be broadened to account for the breadth of marine activities impacting fishery dynamics. Alternatively, the Council could consider creating an additional Challenge focused on competing ocean uses.

- Challenge 3 - Socioeconomic Resilience:
  - Equity and environmental justice (EEJ) is likely connected to socioeconomic resilience but is a separate domain that is not explicitly addressed here. The Council could consider including EEJ topics under this category, or as a separate Challenge.
  
- Challenge 4 - Intersection of ecosystem dynamics and fishery science/management:
  - We emphasize it is important to consider the adaptiveness of our management process to external change. These changes may include environmental, economic, or social aspects.

Finally, we are interested in any information on how updated research and data needs will be amplified and disseminated to universities and other bodies that could help fill these needs.

PFMC  
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