

## GROUND FISH MANAGEMENT TEAM REPORT ON 2027-28 HARVEST SPECIFICATIONS AND MANAGEMENT MEASURES PLANNING

### Schedule

Upon review of [Agenda Item E.8, REVISED Attachment 1](#), the Groundfish Management Team (GMT) recommends the Pacific Fishery Management Council (Council) adopt the proposed schedule as drafted. The GMT notes that adopting a preliminary preferred alternative (PPA) for annual catch limits (ACLs) by November 2025 is essential to the development of the GMT's over-winter analysis, which is necessary for final Council action on the ACLs in April 2026 and management measures in June 2026.

As outlined in the proposed schedule, the GMT would like to remind the Council that the submission deadline for revisions to 2025 and 2026 catch assumptions is September 4th, 2025. Any requested revisions to GMT-provided catch assumptions in the first two years of the projection period should be provided in writing to the GMT, including rationale. At the September meeting, the GMT approves revisions as appropriate and communicates these revisions to stock assessment teams to complete revised projections by November Council meeting.

### Management Measures

Based on guidance from the National Marine Fisheries Service (NMFS), the GMT understands that the biennial process should focus on routine management measures that are necessary for the implementation of the harvest specifications (e.g., commercial trip limits, bag limits, and minor adjustments to rockfish conservation areas, etc.).

The proposed schedule for the 2027-28 harvest specifications and management measures process calls for the Council to adopt a preliminary range of proposed management measures for inclusion in the biennial process at the September 2025 meeting. Several items have been preliminarily identified, via previous Council action, state reports, and public requests, for consideration as part of the 2027-28 biennial management measures package. We will provide additional information on topics forwarded by the Council for inclusion at a later meeting. The below non-exhaustive list includes preliminary actions for Council consideration on inclusion in the 2027-28 process, presented in no particular order. This list is subject to change and does not preclude the GMT from identifying other potential changes, nor does it preclude us from identifying at a later date that any of these are not appropriate or feasible in the 2027-28 management measures package. It is possible the GMT and Council will not have the capacity to analyze and take action on every management measure identified, especially if the September and/or November Council meetings are remote. The GMT requests Council guidance in prioritizing management measure items throughout the process.

- Management measure changes in response to 2025 stock assessments and resulting stock status outcomes.
- Develop species-specific trip limits for species managed within a complex. As part of the inseason action at the November 2024 meeting, the GMT was informed by NMFS that an

inseason action was not an appropriate rulemaking vehicle for creating a new sub-trip limit for a species managed within a stock complex ([Agenda Item I.6.a Supplemental GMT Report 1, November 2024](#)).

- Analyze potential allocation changes for biennially allocated stocks. The Council and Groundfish Advisory Subpanel (GAP) have both indicated particular interest in canary rockfish allocations ([Agenda Item E.5.a, Supplemental GAP Report 1, June 2025](#)), but the GMT will coordinate with the GAP to identify if any other stocks are good candidates. For any stocks where a longer timeline would be needed to sufficiently explore options and analyze impacts, the Council could agendize them for a separate rulemaking package.

When considering potential intersector allocation changes, the Council should, to the extent practicable, consider the ecological, economic, and social factors under the framework of accepted practices for analysis of allocations. For example, analysis informing the guidelines identified in the [NMFS Procedure 01-119-02](#) “Recommended Practices and Factors To Consider When Reviewing and Making Allocation Decisions”, can be carried out in a multitude of ways depending on available resources and time constraints. Recognizing that there is limited time during the 2027-28 management measures analysis, the GMT could lean on certain elements that are feasible to accomplish in the allotted time frame. The Scientific and Statistical Committee may be particularly helpful in establishing best practices on aligning analytical approaches with the specifics of the West Coast Groundfish Fishery and integrating them into the biennial management measures analysis process.

During the 2025-26 groundfish harvest specifications and management measures cycle, the Council and GMT explored potential canary rockfish allocation changes in response to concerns about the lower ACLs starting in 2025. However, due to time constraints, the GMT was not able to fully investigate all possible options last cycle. Additionally, the GMT was unclear on the boundaries we could develop options within. If management measures for canary rockfish, or any other stock, are a priority for the Council in 2027-28 to alleviate industry constraints, the GMT recommends the Council task the GAP with bringing forward detailed information in September on the specific constraints preventing each sector from optimum utilization and impacting their business operations. For example, the GMT has heard of challenges with acquiring canary rockfish quota in the trawl fishery due to the risk of lightning strikes (*i.e.*, high bycatch events) on a vessel level. The GMT is also aware that different challenges likely exist in the non-trawl and recreational sectors, as well as nuanced differences across the three states. Moving into September with a better, more specific understanding of these industry challenges will help the GMT and Council formulate a problem statement that the GMT can then use to develop options for management measure changes. If the Council prioritizes canary rockfish management measure changes to be explored, the GMT also sees merit in the team bringing information to the Council in September on the history of current canary rockfish management measures (including allocations) so that the Council has a shared understanding of the current management structure before considering whether changes can or should be made. The GMT would also consult NMFS on the boundaries we could develop options within. Should the Council wish to task the GAP and GMT with this scoping process, we ask for detailed guidance from the Council in the Fall of 2025 regarding the analyses they would like the GMT to do based on the information presented in September. The GMT’s ability to sufficiently and effectively inform the Council’s decision on any potential changes in 2027-28 hinges on this guidance.