



## Pacific Fishery Management Council

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Pete Hassemer, Chair | Merrick J. Burden, Executive Director

## MEMORANDUM

DATE: October 24, 2025

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

FROM: Groundfish Staff Officer

SUBJECT: November 2025 Council Meeting Materials

The Pacific Fishery Management Council (Council) and its advisory bodies will meet in person November 13-19, 2025 at the Hyatt Orange County/Costa Mesa, 3050 Bristol Street, CA 92626. (714-540-7000) The Groundfish Advisory Subpanel (GAP) and the Groundfish Management Team (GMT) will convene their sessions starting Friday, November 14, 2025, at 8:00 a.m. in Pacific 3 and Emerald Bay 2 conference rooms, respectively. Their meetings will adjourn on Tuesday, November 18, 2025 when business for the day is completed. All meetings are open to the public and at least one opportunity for public comment has been scheduled for each meeting day.

The Council will consider several important groundfish agenda items and related matters of interest at this meeting. The briefing book materials attached to this memorandum provide detailed information for these items on the Council's November 2025 agenda. The following agenda items summarized below may be of particular interest to the GMT and GAP.

### **Pacific Halibut**

#### **H.1 2026 Commercial and Recreational Catch Sharing Plan and Annual Regulations – Final Action**

Under this agenda item, the Council is expected to adopt proposed changes to the 2026 Commercial and Recreational Pacific Halibut Catch Sharing Plan and annual regulations. In September 2025, the Council adopted, for public review, proposed minor modifications to sport fisheries in Washington, Oregon, and California and a status quo season structure for the DC halibut fishery. The specific options adopted for public review are described in the September 2025 Decision Document. The GAP should review the options and provide comments as appropriate.

### **Groundfish**

#### **F.2 Adopt Stock Assessments**

Under this agenda item, the Council is scheduled to adopt remaining assessments and relevant analyses to set groundfish harvest specifications for the upcoming biennial management period (2027-28), if not endorsed at the September 2025 meeting. At this meeting, the Scientific and Statistical Committee (SSC) will review and consider endorsements as best scientific information available for management decision-making.

In September, the Council provided guidance to conduct a Supplemental Review of the 2025 widow rockfish update stock assessment. The Supplemental Review Panel will provide a report with recommendations for SSC consideration; see SSC Materials section of the briefing book for the Panel report. Due to the federal furlough, stock assessment authors and federal members of the SSC were not able to participate in the Supplemental Review. In addition, a complete stock assessment document to accompany the proposed base model is not yet available. The SSC will consider recommendations from the Supplemental Review Panel for the widow rockfish update assessment, complete their review, and provide recommendations to the Council. The Council also requested that 2025 catch-only projections for bocaccio and black rockfish off Oregon be provided with the standard implementation of time-varying sigma to calculate buffers, which have yet to be formally adopted.

### **F.3 & F.8 Harvest Specifications and Management Measures for 2027-2028**

Under F.3, the Council is scheduled to adopt final interim harvest specifications, including overfishing limits, sigma values, stock categories, and acceptable biological catches for stocks and stock complexes. Additionally, the Council will consider preliminary preferred annual catch limits for stocks with alternative harvest control rules under consideration. Those stocks are canary, chilipepper, rougheye/blackspotted, yellowtail north of 40°10 N. lat., and yelloweye rockfishes, petrale sole and shortspine thornyhead. The GAP and GMT should make recommendations regarding their preferred alternative harvest control rule and speak harvest specifications, as appropriate.

Under F.8, the Council will consider 2027-28 management measures and any remaining harvest specifications remaining from F.3. Under this agenda item, the Council will adopt a range of management measures for overwinter analysis by the GMT, such as off-the-top deductions, set-asides for the at-sea whiting fishery, and annual catch targets. The Council will also discuss preliminary two-year allocations for analysis and give guidance on routine management measures, as necessary, to implement the harvest specifications for the next biennium. The GMT and GAP should provide statements regarding any management that should be analyzed during the overwinter period to inform the Council's direction to the GMT and Council staff.

### **F.4 Exempted Fishing Permits**

At this meeting, the Council is scheduled to consider recommending 2027-28 exempted fishing permit (EFP) proposals for public review and forward EFP off-the-top deductions (if any are requested) for further analysis by the GMT and GAP under Agenda Item F.8, Part 2. Additionally, the Council is expected to contemplate a process to endorse out-of-cycle EFPs. The GMT and GAP should review any EFPs submitted to the Council based on the criteria detailed in [Council Operating Procedure 19](#) and comment accordingly. Further, the GMT and GAP should consider if efficiencies in the groundfish process could be gained by developing an out-of-cycle EFP process and what may be necessary to accomplish it.

### **F.5 Harvest Specifications Flexibility**

In June 2025, Council and National Marine Fisheries Service staff developed a scoping document outlining challenges related to harvest specifications and management measures flexibility and information on potential actions. The Council to prioritize five key items for further consideration: (1) establishing a carryover framework to use unutilized annual catch limits (ACLs) in the following year, (2) phasing in changes to acceptable biological catch (ABC) to reduce instability, (3) allowing mid-biennium harvest specification increases for newly assessed stocks, (4) revising how off-the-top deductions are applied to prevent unnecessary closures, and (5) evaluating a shift from biennial to annual harvest specifications. The Council also tasked staff with engaging the Scientific and Statistical Committee on approaches for evaluating overfishing across multiple years, a discussion expected to begin under the upcoming “Risk Management” agenda item. The GAP and GMT should consider the information in Attachment 1 and recommend a problem statement, range of alternatives, and preliminary preferred alternative if possible.

### **F.6 Final Inseason Adjustments for 2025 and 2026, Including 2026 Whiting Set-Asides**

The Council will consider progress of the groundfish fisheries to date as well as any potential routine inseason adjustments to the 2025 and 2026 fisheries, as necessary, to achieve Council groundfish fishery objectives under this agenda item. The Council is scheduled to adopt the Pacific whiting set-asides for the 2026 research and pink shrimp fisheries.

### **F.7 Trawl Catch Share Program Review**

The Council and its advisory bodies reviewed a preliminary draft of the trawl catch share program review in September 2025 and provided recommendations to the project team. The project team has incorporated those applicable suggestions into Attachment 1 and responses to the recommendations can be found in Attachment 2. Additionally, the preliminary diagnosis can be found in Section 4 of Attachment 1.

The GAP and GMT should provide feedback on the trawl catch share review document, including recommendations of research and data needs. After the completion of the review and identification of the conclusions of the program’s performance, the Council could then consider program changes through follow-on actions. Currently, consideration of the follow-on actions is noted during the standing Workload and New Management Measures agenda item in March with proposed scoping in June 2026.

### **F.9 Take Reduction Team- Update**

On July 26, 2023, the U.S. District Court for the Northern District of California approved a settlement between NOAA Fisheries and the Center for Biological Diversity requiring NOAA to form a Take Reduction Team (TRT) under the Marine Mammal Protection Act to address bycatch risks, initially focused on the Federal sablefish pot fishery. In April 2025, NOAA revised the TRT’s scope to include only two humpback whale stocks (Central America/Southern Mexico and Mainland Mexico) and the Federal sablefish pot fishery, narrowing its original scope. The TRT is scheduled to meet November 3–6, 2025, in Vancouver, WA, with Dr. Rebecca Lent representing the Council and providing a verbal update for Council discussion and guidance. GAP and GMT should provide any feedback or concerns to the Council as necessary.

## **Cross Fishery Management Plan**

### **D.3 Marine Planning- Aquaculture Opportunity Areas**

The Council's Ad Hoc Marine Planning Committee (MPC) met online October 31, 2025, primarily to consider the recently issued [Final Programmatic Environmental Impact Statement](#) (FEIS) on the establishment of National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration (NOAA) Aquaculture Opportunity Areas (AOAs) in the Southern California Bight (SCB). There are 10 defined geographic areas that have been evaluated to determine their potential suitability for commercial aquaculture, which are described on the Southern California AOA [webpage](#). No applications for commercial development have been publicly issued at the time of the advanced Briefing Book, although a [notice of intent](#) to develop commercial scale kelp aquaculture at site N2-D in Federal waters off Ventura was submitted at the end of 2024. The GAP and GMT should generally discuss and consider potential impacts to commercial and recreational fishing, habitat and ecosystems, navigation and transit, and other impacts (positive or negative) as appropriate.

### **D.4. Council Process and Efficiencies**

At this meeting, the Council will receive an update on the progress to date implementing the Council recommendations to improve Council operations (Supplemental Attachment 1). These recommendations are intended to address the Council's ongoing budget constraints, staff and advisor workload concerns, and the need to address these challenges while maintaining and enhancing the Council's decision-making process. Advisory Subpanels will be given a set of discussion questions to facilitate their response.

### **Other Items**

The following are additional pre-Council meeting briefings that may be of interest (as shown on the [Council's online calendar](#)):

- The GMT will host a [work session](#) via webinar on October 20, 21 and October 27-29.
- The SSC Economic Subcommittee will host a [meeting](#) to review the Trawl Catch Share Program Review on November 7<sup>th</sup> from 12-4 pm.

This mailing includes the enclosures listed below. Please review these briefing materials in advance to facilitate an efficient meeting week. Please note that the Council will continue to encourage participants to obtain briefing book materials via our website. Printed materials are not available at the meeting, unless requested.

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

TMP:slh

Enclosures include:

1. Agenda Item A. – Council Meeting Agenda and Executive Director’s Report
2. Agenda Item B.1 – Open Comment (***Electronic Only via the e-portal***)
3. Agenda Item C – Administrative Matters
4. Agenda Item D – Cross FMP
5. Agenda Item F – Groundfish Management
6. Agenda Item H – Pacific Halibut Management
7. Enforcement Consultants Agenda
8. GAP Agenda
9. GMT Agenda
10. Scientific and Statistical Committee Agenda and Draft Minutes
11. Informational Reports
12. General Information and Council Roster

PFMC

10/23/25