

GROUND FISH ADVISORY SUBPANEL REPORT ON FUTURE COUNCIL MEETING AGENDA AND WORKLOAD PLANNING

September Quick Reference Agenda

Referencing the [September 2026 Quick Reference agenda](#), the Groundfish Advisory Subpanel (GAP) remains concerned about the efficacy of not including groundfish for September of even years.

While September 2026 was originally meant to include a light groundfish agenda – only inseason – the workload anticipated for September 2026 grew to include three groundfish items, halibut, and other administrative and cross-fishery management plan items that could have benefited from in-person deliberation. With up to 10 potential GAP statements, this extends the virtual time the GAP (and Groundfish Management Team [GMT]) will need to meet. While it was wise to attempt a light September agenda for groundfish, it has led to November and March agendas becoming filled with several complex and foundational policy discussions. We want to document this issue now and will bring it back up under the Council efficiencies agenda item in September 2026. Advance joint virtual meetings between the GAP and GMT improve communication and efficiency, but it's not ideal. The anticipated September structure includes both joint and separate workload conversations, but these interactions are consistently more effective in person, where side discussions, clarification of technical issues, and relationship-building among advisory body members can occur naturally. Additionally, most GAP members block off Council dates, but we don't yet have a virtual September GAP meeting scheduled and it greatly extends the commitment of being an advisory body member to have substantial virtual meetings.

Repeatedly forgoing in-person September meetings, even every other year, risks reducing continuity in the advisory process and diminishes opportunities for newer members to engage with other people in the Council process. Maintaining an in-person September meeting helps preserve institutional knowledge, improves collaboration, and strengthens the quality of advice provided to the Council. Additionally, as noted, it creates a situation where surrounding meetings become potentially slated with over 10 groundfish items plus additional non-groundfish items.

Year-at-a-Glance

Regarding [Agenda Item C.5, Attachment 1 \(Year-at-a-Glance calendar\)](#), the GAP and groundfish industry request the Council find a specific mechanism to accurately assess the discard mortality of shortspine thornyhead. Currently the discards are assumed to be 100 percent mortality, but fishermen and scientists alike do not believe this to be the case. Research would be needed to identify a more accurate discard mortality rate that could then be applied to the management of this stock. By doing this, the mortality figure being used in stock assessments would be more accurate, and fishermen in all sectors would be able to increase their catch of other species that are currently constrained by shortspine thornyhead bycatch.