

Special Project 1: Adaptive Management and Flexibility

Nationwide Review of If-Then Statements
and Inseason Management Actions +
Council Action Meeting Requirements

Agenda Item C.5 – September 20, 2026

Two Items Under Special Project 1

- Nationwide Review of If-Then Statements and Inseason Management Actions (Attachment 1)
- Council Action Meeting Requirements (Attachment 2)



Council Tasks and Action

Council Tasks:

1. Consider contents of staff reports and whether the Nationwide Review of If, Then Statements and Council Meeting Requirements actions under Special Project 1 can be considered complete.
2. Recommend adjustments to Council Meeting Requirements for incorporation into COP 11, with the option of final action to update the COPs under Agenda Item D.4.

Council Action:

Adopt staff report as final or provide further direction, as appropriate; recommend adjustments to Council Meeting Requirements for incorporation into Council Operating Procedures

If-Then Review: Background and Definitions

Frameworking

NMFS Operational Guidelines (Procedure 01-101-03) describe “frameworking” as “establishing in an FMP/amendment or regulations a mechanism for implementing recurrent, routine, or foreseeable actions in an expedited manner.”

- **If-then statements** predefine specific actions that will be taken when certain conditions are met. They consist of predetermined, generalized responses (and the thresholds that trigger them) to different scenarios, where analysis and review of those responses are completed in advance.
- **Inseason actions** are management changes made while a fishing season is already in progress to respond quickly to new data or emerging conditions.

Overview: If-Then Statement Typology

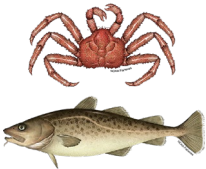
If-Then Statement Types

#	Type	Description
A	Harvest Control Rules	Predefined rules that describe how harvest is managed based on specified conditions.
B	Hard Fishing Stops	Reaching a predefined threshold results in some type of fishery closure.
C	Graduated Response Ladders	Crossing early thresholds triggers more restrictive management measures (e.g., possession limits) before a full closure.
D	Future-Year Corrections	Results from one season (e.g., underharvest or overharvest) trigger an action for a future season.
E	Environmental or Oceanographic Triggers	The trigger relates to specific environmental or oceanographic conditions (e.g., sea surface temperature).
F	Permit-Focused Actions	Focus on fishery access through fishing permits (e.g., issuance of new permits or review of thresholds related to a minimum number of permits).

Type A: Harvest Control Rules

Harvest control rules can function as if-then statements because they establish pre-agreed guidelines for managing harvest based on the status of a stock indicator. Some regional fishery management councils use if-then statements to determine which HCR applies during the harvest specification process.

Examples:

Council	Species/Fishery	Class	If → Then (Summarized)	Automatic?
NPFMC	 Alaska groundfish and BSAI crab	if-may	A stock qualifies for a tier based on the information available → catch limits are set by a formula specific to that tier	No

*All of the species drawings in this presentation are from the NOAA Fisheries Species Directory.

Type B: Hard Fishing Stops

The hard fishing stops type was the largest category of if-then statements identified in this research. A hard stop generally follows a simple structure: if a specified threshold or condition is reached or projected to be reached, then fishing stops, either through a sector or a fishery closure, a spatial restriction, an individual-vessel fishing prohibition, or another measure.

Subtypes:

- B1. Target-Species Closures
- B2. Cascading Measures
- B3. Individual/Vessel-Level Cutoffs
- B4. Bycatch/Protected Species/Prohibited Species Measures
- B5. Spatial Measures (Area Closures, Gear Restricted Areas, Area Trip Limits)
- B6. Effort Caps

Type B: Hard Fishing Stops (cont.)

Examples:

Council	Species/Fishery	Subtype / Class	If → Then (Summarized)	Automatic?
Gulf Council	 Multiple reef fish species	B1. Target-Species Closures; if-shall	Landings reach or are projected to reach the applicable ACT → NMFS closes the sector (commercial or recreational) for the remainder of the fishing year	Yes
Atlantic HMS Management Division	 Atlantic swordfish	B1. Target-Species Closures, B2. Cascading Measures; if-shall	Directed quota is reached → fishery closes and incidental retention limit automatically activates (15 fish for longline, 2 fish for handgear, etc.)	Yes
Gulf Council	 Shrimp (red snapper)	B4. Bycatch, B5. Spatial Measures; if-may	Shrimp fishing effort and bycatch mortality of red snapper in the 10-30 fathom area of statistical zones 10-21 exceeds the established threshold → NMFS may implement a seasonal closure of shrimp fishing in all or part of the affected area	No

Type C: Graduated Response Ladders

A graduated response ladder uses “early warning” thresholds to progressively reduce harvest as a fishery approaches a catch limit. A ladder can include one or more if-then statements as rungs of the ladder and can be based on one or more conditions.

Subtypes:

- C1. Single Condition
- C2. Multi-Condition

Example:

Council	Species/Fishery	Subtype / Class	If → Then (Summarized)	Automatic?
MAFMC	 Atlantic scup	C1 – Single Condition / if-shall	80% of the Winter I quota has been landed → NMFS drops the possession limit to 1,000 pounds Winter 1 quota remains unused → Winter II increases by 1,500 lb for every 500,000 lb of unused Winter I quota rolled over	Yes for both

Type D: Future-Year Corrections

If-then statements providing future-year corrections for either overharvest or underharvest are common across regions. Most are post-season AMs that address overage after they occur and therefore are not automatic.

Subtypes:

- D1. Overage Deduction
- D2. Overage Deduction - Multi-Condition
- D3. Underharvest/Carryover - Multi-Condition

Example:

Council	Species/Fishery	Subtype / Class	If → Then (Summarized)	Automatic?
SAFMC	 Multiple species	D2. Overage Deduction (Multi-Condition) / if-shall	Commercial landings and total landings exceed the ACL and the stock is overfished → NMFS will reduce the commercial ACL for that following year by the amount of the commercial ACL overage in the prior fishing year	No

Type E: Environmental or Oceanographic Triggers

The Council is exploring if-then statements as a tool for responding more quickly to changing environmental and habitat conditions.

Examples:

Council	Species/Fishery*	Class	If → Then (Summarized)	Automatic?
PFMC	 Pacific HMS (loggerhead sea turtles)	if-shall	El Niño conditions are forecasted or occurring off the coast of southern California → no person may fish with, set, or haul back drift gillnet gear June through August in U.S. waters of the Pacific Ocean east of the 120° W. meridian	Yes
SAFMC	 Shrimp	if-may	Florida, Georgia, North Carolina, or South Carolina closes all or part of its state waters to the harvest of brown, pink, or white shrimp under the FMP procedures and criteria → NMFS may concurrently close the South Atlantic EEZ adjacent to the closed state waters	No

Type F: Permit-Focused Actions

Permit-focused if-then statements govern fishery access through permits. They can trigger a Council-related action (i.e., a review) or authorize NMFS to adjust fishery access based on specified biological or management conditions without further Council action.

Examples:

Council	Species/Fishery	Class	If → Then (Summarized)	Automatic?
WPFMC	 Western Pacific bottomfish	if-may	The RA determines, in consultation with the Council, that bottomfish stocks in the Ho'omalū Zone are able to support additional fishing effort → the RA may issue new Ho'omalū Zone limited access permits under 665.13	No

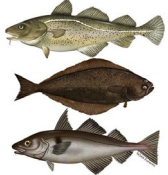
Overview: Types of Inseason Actions

Inseason actions are regulatory changes made while a fishing season is underway to respond quickly to new data or emerging conditions. A primary use of inseason actions in the examples reviewed is to respond to catch rates relative to catch limits and optimize harvest.

Subtypes:

- A1. Retention Limits
- A2. Fishing days/season
- A3. Quota adjustments
- A4. Multiple Potential Actions

Examples of Inseason Actions:

Council	Species/Fishery	Subtype	Inseason Action (Summarized)
Atlantic HMS Management Division	 Atlantic bluefin tuna	A1. Retention Limits	Catch rates, quota availability, estimated landings, fish availability, or other management considerations warrant → NMFS may increase, decrease, or suspend the daily retention limit (including zero retention)
		A2. Fishing days/season	After considering various factors, NMFS determines that Restricted Fishing Days should be modified or waived → NMFS may waive or modify Restricted Fishing Days through Federal Register notice
		A3. Quota adjustments	Based on specific criteria and other relevant factors → NMFS may make inseason and annual adjustments to quotas
PFMC	 Pacific salmon	A4. Multiple Potential Actions	In consultation with the Chair of the Council and the appropriate State Directors, the RA determines that flexible inseason management provisions are warranted → NMFS may take various actions (see 50 CFR 660.409(b)(1))
NEFMC	 Groundfish	A4. Multiple Potential Actions	Catch information indicates that a common pool sub-ACL or trimester TAC is being harvested faster or slower than expected, or that catch is approaching a management threshold → the RA may adjust common pool possession limits inseason

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Cross-Cutting Observations

- If-then statements are used for diverse management needs across U.S. regions.
- Fewer examples were identified to “greenlight” fishing.
- Mechanisms can be time-intensive to develop and implement.
- A broad range of alternatives in supporting analyses increases future flexibility.
- Timely implementation depends on process design and sufficient capacity.
- Framework mechanisms must comply with all applicable laws.
- Review can serve as a reference going forward.

Council Action Meeting Requirements

Objective

Build more flexibility into Council action timelines

Pathway

Targeted edits to COP 11 to describe situations where an accelerated schedule would be appropriate (shown in the redline edits in Attachment 2)

Next Steps

Consider proposed revisions under this agenda item; if desired, adopt under Agenda Item D.4

Proposed Criteria

- The action is well-analyzed with clear supporting documentation.
- The action is subject to broad agreement, as captured by Advisory Body reports, public comment, and/or Council discussion.
- The action is widely considered low-controversy or non-controversial.
- An accelerated meeting schedule would still allow for adequate public notice and opportunity for public participation.



Thank You!