

GROUND FISH MANAGEMENT TEAM REPORT ON PROTOCOL FOR REVIEWING ECOSYSTEM COMPONENT SPECIES CATCH AND IDENTIFYING STOCKS IN NEED OF CONSERVATION AND MANAGEMENT

The Groundfish Management Team (GMT) reviewed Pacific Fishery Management Council (Council) staff report [Agenda Item H.1, Attachment 1, September 2026](#) about establishing a process for review of Ecosystem Component (EC) species. The GMT generally agrees with the overall proposed process as said process addresses the specifications for EC species as described in the Groundfish Fishery Management Plan (FMP), but the GMT proposes some edits in comments below.

Proposed Reporting Framework

Report location

The GMT recommends that the proposed mortality report be developed and housed as an "Ecosystem Component Species Mortality" report on the Pacific Fisheries Information Network (PacFIN) Oracle Application Express (APEX) reporting system website, as opposed to being developed by the GMT. This would allow the report to be publicly available and accessed at any time.

Metrics Reported

The GMT should be consulted during the development of the report to ensure the correct metrics are provided in the APEX report. Pertinent metrics to include in the report are total mortality, total landings, and ex-vessel revenue (adjusted for inflation) for each EC species in the FMP going back to 2002. This information should be reported for each sector as well as summed across all sectors. Mortality and landings provide measures of retention and discarding, and ex-vessel revenue can be used to assess developing fisheries or targeting. Total mortality and total landings should also be provided as a percent change from the previous year, and as a proportion relative to the average value in years before and after the species was declared an EC species.

Measures of vulnerability include published vulnerability scores from sources cited in Attachment 1 as well as the most recent International Union for Conservation of Nature (IUCN) status. For EC species planned to be added in the forthcoming Phase 2 amendment, status (if available) as well as annual catch limits should also be added, though the GMT notes that such values will become less relevant as time passes.

The above metrics are described to help frame the task in this agenda item; however, the exact form of information and way in which it is presented are expected to be updated as the report is developed. Should new information become available, whether to the GMT or to other advisory bodies, existing values and the way they are presented may be updated. The GMT notes that not all EC species are required to be recorded at the species level on fish tickets, which creates uncertainty in landing and revenue estimates for these species. However, these are the best data currently available. Mandatory reporting of all EC species, or of only EC species catch associated with revenue, could be considered but may be infeasible for processors.

Potential thresholds

The GMT agrees that there should not be a one-size-fits-all threshold for whether a species warrants further consideration; any determination should be applied on a species-by-species basis. Criteria for further consideration could be based on examples from past EC-determination actions both at the PFMC or other Councils. Some of these examples include the substantive changes seen in big skate mortality or a combination of factors as applied by the Mid-Atlantic Council's unmanaged species "watchlist". The GMT notes that the FMP (Section 4.4) already includes a mortality threshold for shortbelly rockfish.

Location of catch

The GMT recommends that information about the location of catch (i.e. state versus Federal waters) be deferred until species are flagged for additional consideration. The 10-factor analysis incorporates such considerations, and the process for determining location data is complicated, and not easily communicated within a PacFIN APEX report. The GMT also notes that discard estimates in state waters are highly uncertain given that WCGOP ceased coverage of state-permitted fisheries in 2025. Additionally, recreational sampling programs vary by state, and not all states estimate recreational mortality in state versus Federal waters.

Roles for Council Advisory Bodies

The GMT agrees that the Science and Statistical Committee (SSC) and Groundfish Advisory Subpanel (GAP) will be able to provide useful information on updated vulnerabilities and species targeting, respectively. Incorporating information from those advisory bodies will be useful in informing the Council about any findings by the GMT that further consideration is warranted. The GMT works closely with the GAP and anticipates information on targeting will be incorporated into the GMT's review of the information prior to any submitted report to the Council.

Process for reporting to Council

The GMT will review the provided information from the PacFIN APEX report as well as additional information following the proposed process detailed in the Council staff report yet recommends a slightly longer review schedule. **Specifically, the GMT recommends that this item be agendized for GMT workload in March every four years, starting in 2028, yet allow flexibility for more frequent review as needed.** The GMT only anticipates a detailed report when the information suggests further analysis by the Council is needed. In most years, a brief "No significant trends noted; no further analysis needed" statement is anticipated. The GMT anticipates that the first iteration of this report will involve a more detailed exploration of thresholds for Council review and direction. The GMT notes that the anticipated source for mortality for the PacFIN APEX report would be the Groundfish Mortality report and associated Groundfish Expanded Multi-year Mortality (GEMM) product. Therefore, the mortality data for the first application of this approach would include data through 2026 and be derived from the GEMM that will be presented as an informational report at the Council's September 2027 meeting.

PFMC

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