

GROUND FISH MANAGEMENT TEAM REPORT ON FUTURE COUNCIL MEETING AGENDA AND WORKLOAD PLANNING

The Groundfish Management Team (GMT) extends our thanks to the Pacific Fishery Management Council (Council) and Council staff for supporting the GMT's request from April to convene one day earlier at this meeting than originally scheduled. This allowed the GMT to frontload work, which was particularly beneficial, as this meeting included the Final Preferred Alternative (FPA) for 2027-28 Harvest Specifications and Management Measures (a.k.a., "Harvest Specifications"). The GMT was able to have uninterrupted time on the first day of this meeting to prepare Harvest Specifications documents, quality assessment/quality control final harvest guidelines (HGs) and allocations, and have preliminary discussions on other agenda items. As a result, the GMT was able to correct several errors in various analytical documents and previous reports. Additionally, the GMT was able to focus our discussion on several agenda items prior to joint GMT/Groundfish Advisory Subpanel (GAP) sessions, which made joint sessions more efficient. The GMT would find this practice helpful for future Harvest Specifications meetings, or other meetings involving substantial groundfish workload. The GMT requests the Council consider allowing the team to start two days prior to the Council meeting for every June of even years. Given that June is final action, it is important that errors be rectified before the Council floor addresses Harvest Specifications.

High Level Concerns

The GMT has several high-level concerns about the impact that the recently adopted efficiency measures are having on the public participation aspects of the Council process. To briefly highlight the most immediate concerns: meeting schedules (both for the Council itself and for Advisory Bodies) have been shortened and individual agenda items compressed, public comment time has been reduced on the Council floor, and advisory body report presentations to the Council have been increasingly moved toward summarization. Furthermore, these changes in Council operation and scheduling are compounded by reductions in capacity at multiple institutions that play a key role in facilitating, supporting, and implementing Council action, with remaining staff having higher workloads, greatly reduced telework allowance, and more responsibilities that may reduce their ability to contribute to the Council process.

While these have been actions in response to ongoing operational constraints, and they may not pose a significant impact to this process in isolation, the cumulative impact risks sacrificing service to the public. A cornerstone of a public process should be to provide regular, consistent, and complete opportunity for public engagement on items important to interested parties. If the meeting schedule is frequently subject to change, *and* the advisory body reports are not reviewed in detail on the floor, *and* the time scheduled for individual public comment is reduced – what is the cumulative impact on participants? While the GMT does not have the solution to this problem, we do think this is an important concern to regularly raise as the Council wrestles with how best to allocate limited time and resources.

September 2026

The GMT requests that the team be scheduled to convene remotely for Thursday through Saturday of the September Council meeting to facilitate any follow-up discussion and report writing for the

three Groundfish items currently scheduled, as well as the two Cross Fishery Management Plan (FMP) and one Administrative item relevant to the GMT. While none of these items are expected to be controversial and necessitate in-person GMT and GAP engagement, the team has concerns about being expected to produce reports in the span of a single webinar, as is currently planned. If required to attend for only a webinar, the GMT would expect to complete reports for only the three Groundfish agenda items. Additionally, inseason always has the potential to create high workload in September, as the updated annual Groundfish Expanded Mortality Multiyear (GEMM) report is published at this time, and management adjustments are often made for the remainder of the year. The GMT may need to respond to new mortality estimates with inseason action, which requires digesting the GEMM report and conducting any further analysis.

Moving forward, the team requests that the Council reconsider the schedule of GMT/GAP attendance at Council meetings. Specifically, we request that all September meetings of even years allow for remote GMT participation for all members for at least part of the meeting and that any non-inseason groundfish items added are considered administrative in nature or non-controversial. If the intent is to agendize inseason-only, the GMT requests that more rigid guardrails be established for future years to align expectations with workload. Being remote is not an ideal work environment for this public process, but we acknowledge it reduces Council travel costs.

November 2026

The GMT may need to provide seven reports in November, with three reports due on the second day. We recognize that there is limited ability to shift the schedule of groundfish items. However, given the volume of workload and the expectation that most of the team travel on Monday or Tuesday, while also finalizing reports for Tuesday and Wednesday, the team requests that we convene starting Thursday, November 12 to facilitate frontloading of reports early in the week.

Year-At-A-Glance (YAG)

Given there are currently no shaded groundfish items on the YAG until June 2027 and workload constraints through March, the GMT does not recommend any changes on the YAG for groundfish items.

Additional Meetings

Members of the GMT will also be participating in various ancillary meetings and work sessions outside of Council meetings over the next several months, both as members of the GMT and as part of their other duties. A non-comprehensive list is found in Table 1.

Table 1. Non-comprehensive meetings and workshops the GMT expects to participate in outside of Council meetings in 2026 in chronological order, along with expected GMT responsibilities.

Host	Meeting Purpose	Date(s)	Location	GMT Responsibilities
Council	Groundfish Terms of Reference	Late summer 2026	TBD	Advise on changes to the TOR relevant to the GMT
Council	Groundfish Harvest Specifications Flexibility Topic Review	TBD (anticipated late summer or early fall)	TBD	
PSMFC ^{a/}	RecFIN ^{d/} Meeting	September 2026	Newport, OR	Meet with RecFIN staff to discuss recreational fishery data collection/needs
Council	Groundfish Methodology Review – Standardization of the commercial fishery-dependent indices and eDNA	October 2026	TBD	Serve as management advisors to the Groundfish and Economics Subcommittees
PSMFC ^{a/}	FIN ^{b/} /Groundfish Workgroup	Fall 2026	Virtual	Meet with PacFIN ^{b/} staff to discuss groundfish data needs
PSMFC ^{a/}	Annual PacFIN ^{b/} Meeting	Fall 2026	Virtual	Meet with PacFIN ^{b/} staff and other agencies to discuss data needs
Council	GMT October Work Session (requested)	October 2026	Virtual	Review the Harvest Specifications Flexibility analysis, discuss stock complexes and any other topics, as needed
IPHC ^{c/}	Interim Meeting / Annual Meeting	December 2026 / January 2027	Virtual	Participate as part of other job duties

a/ Pacific States Marine Fisheries Commission

b/ Fisheries Information Network (or Pacific Fisheries Information Network)

c/ International Pacific Halibut Commission

d/ Recreational Fisheries Information Network

PFMC
06/14/26