

## GROUND FISH MANAGEMENT TEAM REPORT ON SPECIAL PROJECT 2: SOCIOECONOMIC FRAMEWORK

While this special project is still in its early stages, the Groundfish Management Team (GMT) appreciates the Council prioritizing development of resources that better address impacts to fishing communities from management actions. The GMT is routinely tasked with analyzing these impacts in accordance with National Standard 8. As such, we see value in the proposed Community Resilience Decision Tool. In support of that ongoing development, we have designed this report to outline our current reservations, considerations, and questions in hopes that they prove beneficial to the Council and Northern Economics during future conversations and activity related to this project.

We note that the Economics Subcommittee has provided a robust list of general recommendations ([Scientific and Statistical Committee Economics Subcommittee Report on “Community Resilience Tool Methodology”](#), June 2026). The GMT supports this list of recommendations. We have organized our comments/suggestions around specific challenges the GMT has encountered when trying to introduce the concepts of community resilience, vulnerability, and adaptive capacity into our analysis.

### **Questions and Considerations related to Purpose/Scope/Utility**

*“If you can write down a problem clearly, you have already solved half of it.” - Charles Kettering*

The GMT would benefit from more detail on how the Council and Northern Economics view the current gaps in how socioeconomic and community-level considerations are integrated in Council decision-making, and where the developed tool(s) can ameliorate these gaps. This would help the GMT better understand how the tool could be best integrated into our analytical process and recommendations. We would also benefit from another round of discussion with Council, Northern Economics, and other advisory bodies (ABs) once some of these questions have been answered and the case studies completed, to give us another chance for feedback once we have a deeper understanding of the methods and applications.

Given that this tool is being developed under a multi-fishery management plan (FMP) agenda item, the GMT is also interested in better understanding where, when, and how this tool will be applied. Even within a single FMP (Groundfish, in this case), a single descriptive tool is rarely equally effective across the full suite of challenges that associated ABs are tasked with tackling. As shown in April of 2026, the existing socioeconomic analysis utilized in the biennial harvest specifications and management measures process, while designed to achieve a specific task within a single FMP, may not provide sufficiently detailed information to fully inform Council decision-making ([C.7.a Supplemental GMT Report 4](#)).

The case study selection should be deliberately broad and intentionally include some less-than-ideal circumstances to better elucidate limitations of the tool.

### **Considerations related to Implementation and Upkeep**

To meaningfully engage with this tool in a productive manner, a non-trivial amount of time would likely need to be invested in integrating it within current workflows. The GMT would benefit from

clarity on where the primary responsibility for implementing this tool is expected to fall, and what additional resources may be available to ensure this tool can be used in practical and beneficial ways. In addition, the tool will likely have to be maintained and updated to incorporate new and changing information, feedback and validation, and other updates that ensure it stays relevant and functional. Depending on the scale of quantitative components, the infrastructure around it (e.g. code, access, etc.) would likely also require some level of ongoing accompanying maintenance. It is currently unclear to us who would be responsible for the ongoing maintenance of this tool. While it is reasonable to assume that these questions could be answered at a later date, they are nonetheless germane to the development and implementation of these tools; particularly given ongoing operational constraints at the Council and within our various institutions.

### **Existing Knowledge Gaps**

With respect to Table 4 ([Agenda Item D.3.a, Attachment 2, p.11](#)) and the conclusion - *Generating comparable outputs: to support evaluations of vulnerability and potential impacts, it would be desirable for exposure, sensitivity, and adaptive capacity to have comparable outputs, either as index values or scores* ([Agenda Item D.3.a, Attachment 2, p.16](#)):

The GMT currently has access to considerable data on these concepts. For example, there are existing index/indicators values such as the Community Social Vulnerability Index (CSVI), fishing reliance/engagement metrics, etc. Despite that access, we have struggled with how to use these in an analytical manner and have generally defaulted to narrative or descriptive uses. In our analyses, we are currently able to put these data streams on fishing communities into tables and figures to describe those communities. Alternately, we can use the referenced composite index value or score to describe the communities. Nonetheless, the existence of this project indicates that these existing metrics and analyses are not particularly beneficial to Council deliberations. Ideally, the GMT would like to see (i) how these data series are going to be used to create an indicator(s) that gives the Council something they don't currently have access to and/or (ii) some kind of "users guide" that informs how these concepts (resilience, vulnerability, adaptive capacity) should be used to make actionable recommendations to the Council.

### **Potential Case Studies**

The GMT discussed multiple scenarios where the value of a community resilience tool was obvious to us, and others where it was not, acknowledging that we may not yet fully understand all the ways this tool could be leveraged. Below, we identify some case studies that could be considered to evaluate the use of this tool in the groundfish management process.

#### *Options that may be "good fits"*

##### **Gear Switching and/or Trawl Rationalization**

- Place-based indicators of fishing community resilience, adaptive capacity, and vulnerability seem to us to be particularly well suited to applications involving potential changes in the allocation of fishery resources to different user groups and different coastal communities. Gear switching is an example where the key management question is/was how much operational flexibility to grant harvesters, acknowledging that additional flexibility may benefit the fleet in the form of enhanced profitability but that those benefits would likely be unevenly distributed among communities.

Along the same vein, the Trawl Rationalization program and associated control rules have resulted in significant changes in effort distribution coastwide. The ripple effects of that program are still being felt along the West Coast, though the interplay of this action with the implementation of Rockfish Conservation Areas and strict rebuilding programs may be difficult to separate out.

*Options that may not be “good fits”*

California Quillback Rockfish rebuilding plans

- While community impacts are an integral part of developing rebuilding plans, the Magnuson Stevens Act and the Groundfish FMP is prescriptive in what actions must be taken to rebuild a stock. Given the scale of the Overfishing Limit (OFL) originally being grappled with in the Quillback rebuilding plan, there was limited flexibility available to address community impacts. In light of this, how would this tool’s approach to community resilience assessment add value or influence decision making in this instance?

PFMC

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