

HARVEST SPECIFICATIONS AND MANAGEMENT MEASURES FLEXIBILITY

At the March 2025 meeting, under the Groundfish Workload and New Management Measures agenda item, the Pacific Fishery Management Council (Council) adopted several priorities aimed at providing flexibility in establishing harvest specifications intended to increase stability in the fishery (Items D1-D4 from [Agenda Item H.8.a, Supplemental GAP Report 1](#)). At the April meeting, the Council prioritized the Groundfish Fishery Management Plan (FMP) for near-term application of selected adaptive management and flexibility tools, while continuing to explore the potential benefits of these or similar tools for other Council-managed fisheries.

In response to these actions, Council and National Marine Fisheries Service staff prepared a scoping document in June 2025 which offered a preliminary assessment of the challenges facing the groundfish fishery and initial scope of items to be considered. The Council directed staff develop a problem statement based on the discussion of fleet impacts in [Agenda Item E.7.a, Supplemental GAP Report 1](#) and prioritized the following five items for further consideration:

- **Carryover (All-sector):** Add a framework to the FMP to allow unutilized annual catch limits (ACLs) to be used in the following year in a prescriptive manner in order to expedite issuance of additional quota to fisheries.
- **Phase-In of ABC Changes:** Add a framework to the FMP to allow for phase-in of acceptable biological catch (ABC) changes to provide stability to fisheries due to changes in stock status and resulting changes in harvest specifications (both increases and decreases).
- **Mid-Biennium Harvest Specifications Change:** Add a framework to the groundfish FMP to allow increases in harvest specifications in the second year of a biennium for newly assessed stocks in a prescriptive manner in order to expedite issuance of additional quota to fisheries.
- **Accounting for Off-The-Top Deductions:** Proposes changing the current framework for off-the-top deductions (i.e., expected mortality from scientific research, tribal fisheries, incidental fisheries and exempted fishing permits) from being deducted from the ABC instead of the ACL, aiming to prevent unnecessary fishery closures and increase available quota to groundfish sectors.
- **Harvest Specifications Frequency:** Considers changing the biennial specification cycle to an annual specifications process.

The Council also tasked staff with beginning a dialogue with the Scientific and Statistical Committee on preventing and evaluating overfishing on a multi-year time scale through ideas such as looking at average catch compared to multi-year ABCs/ACLs. Given timing and workload constraints, this dialogue has not begun. However, staff note that the upcoming “Risk Management Framework” item, tentatively scheduled in April 2026, may allow for this discussion.

At this meeting, the Council should consider the materials in Attachment 1, adopt a problem statement, range of alternatives, and select a preliminary preferred alternative if possible.

Council Tasks:

- 1. Adopt problem statement.**
- 2. Adopt a range of alternatives.**
- 3. Adopt a PPA, if possible.**

Reference Materials:

1. Agenda Item F.5, Attachment 1: Summary of Alternatives and Options (**Electronic Only**).
2. Agenda Item F.5, Attachment 2: Analytical Document.
3. If received, Public Comments are electronic only ([see e-portal](#)).

Agenda Order:

- F.5 Harvest Specifications and Management Measures Flexibility Jessi Waller
- a. Reports and Comments of Management Entities and Advisory Bodies
 - b. Public Comment
 - c. **Council Action:** Adopt a Problem Statement, Range of Alternatives, and Preliminary Preferred Alternative, if Possible.

PFMC
10/22/25