



## Pacific Fishery Management Council

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Pete Hassemer, Chair | Merrick J. Burden, Executive Director

### MEMORANDUM

DATE: October 27, 2026

TO: Groundfish Advisory Subpanel, Groundfish Management Team, and Groundfish Interested Persons

FROM: Todd Phillips, Groundfish Staff Officer

SUBJECT: November 2026 Council Meeting Materials

The Pacific Fishery Management Council (Council) and its advisory bodies will meet in person [November 13-18, 2026](#) at the [Hyatt Regency Orange County](#), 11999 Harbor Blvd., Garden Grove, CA 92840 (714-750-1234). The Groundfish Advisory Subpanel (GAP) and the Groundfish Management Team (GMT) will convene their sessions starting Friday, November 13, 2026, at 8:00 a.m. in Royal A and Royal B conference rooms, respectively. Their meetings will adjourn on Tuesday, November 17, 2026, when business for the day is completed. All meetings are open to the public and at least one opportunity for public comment has been scheduled for each meeting day.

The Council will consider several important groundfish agenda items and related matters of interest at this meeting. The briefing book materials attached to this memorandum provide detailed information for these items on the Council's November 2026 agenda. The following agenda items summarized below may be of particular interest to the GMT and GAP.

### **Pacific Halibut**

#### **H.1 2027 Commercial and Recreational Catch Sharing Plan and Annual Regulations – Final Action**

Under this agenda item, the Council is expected to adopt proposed changes to the 2027 Commercial and Recreational Pacific Halibut Catch Sharing Plan and annual management measures. In September 2026, the Council adopted, for public review, proposed minor modifications to sport fisheries in Washington and Oregon and a status quo season structure (no change from 2026) for the California sport fishery and non-tribal directed commercial (DC) halibut fishery. The specific options adopted for public review are described in the [September 2026 Decision Document](#). The GAP should review the options and provide comments as appropriate.

## **Groundfish**

### **G.1 National Marine Fisheries Service (NMFS) Report**

The Council will receive a briefing from the NMFS West Coast Region and Science Centers. Expected discussion items include status of rulemaking for completed Council actions and the groundfish mortality report. The Science Center is expected to discuss current groundfish-related science and research activities with the Council, including the recently completed 2025 estimated groundfish mortality and salmon mortality in groundfish fisheries reports. Additionally, the Pacific States Marine Fisheries Commission is anticipated to update the Council regarding 2026 electronic fishing effort and review costs relative to available appropriations.

### **G.2 Economics Workshop Report**

Following a motion made by the Council in April 2026, a workshop to explore how to more effectively use economic information in the Council process, using the groundfish specifications process as a case study, was held on September 30, 2026. The workshop participants consisted of Council staff, Northwest Fisheries Science Center (NWFSC) and Southwest Fisheries Science Center (SWFSC) staff, and contactors with experience contributing to economic information used within the Council process. This report summarizes the discussions that were held during this workshop which identify limitations preventing economic information from effectively being used to support Council decision-making and outlines suggested next steps to work towards reducing these limitations.

### **G.3 Methodology Review: Final Fishery Impact Model Review Topics and Stock Assessment Methodologies**

Council Operating Procedure 25 ([COP 25](#)) specifies the Council process for reviewing proposed new methodologies to inform management decisions. Two types of methodologies are considered in COP 25, those proposed for use in groundfish stock assessments and groundfish impact analyses.

#### *Stock Assessment Methodologies*

In September 2025, the Council adopted methodology review topics for potential use in the 2027 and beyond groundfish stock assessments. The Scientific and Statistical Committee (SSC) Groundfish Subcommittee (GFSC) conducted a methodology review on the suitability of a fishery-dependent index of abundance and an eDNA index of abundance in groundfish stock assessments in October 2026. The SSC GFSC provided a summary report from the review and the full SSC will provide their recommendations to the Council at this meeting.

The California Department of Fish and Wildlife (CDFW) provided a report (Attachment 1) on the California Cooperative Groundfish Survey (COOP) sampling design and the California Commercial Fishery Data (CALCOM) expansion methodology. CDFW proposes a review in 2027 for potential use in the 2029 assessment cycle. The SSC should consider their capacity to conduct a review in 2027 and provide a recommendation when determining whether to proceed with a review of this topic. Alternatively, the SSC could recommend the CDFW proposal alongside other stock assessment methodology changes in 2027, with review occurring in 2028 in time for the 2029 assessments, under the routine process described in COP 25.

### *Impact Projection Methodologies*

The GMT is scheduled to meet October 26-30, 2026, to discuss, among other matters, whether there are proposed changes to the fishery projection models that may warrant an SSC review. The GMT and GAP should consider requesting methodology reviews for relevant items and provide detailed statements regarding the purpose and need of the review.

### *Revisions to COP 25*

At the September 2026 Council meeting, under the Agenda Item C.4 Council Efficiencies, the Council adopted a routine schedule that anticipates a limited number of groundfish items at September meetings in even years. The Council should provide direction under this agenda item on how to accommodate the methodology review process within that schedule. The options include: (1) maintaining the schedule in COP 25, with methodology reviews considered part of the light groundfish agenda in September of even years; or (2) modifying COP 25 to shift these decisions to November of even years.

Additionally, staff would like to propose revisions to COP 25 that would simplify and clarify the process while preserving the Council's original intent. The GMT and GAP should consider these revisions and include comments on these revisions in their report for Council consideration.

## **G.4 Stock Assessment Process Review Adjustments for 2027**

The Council relies on stock assessments to manage fisheries sustainably and partners with the Northwest and Southwest Fisheries Science Center partners (Science Centers) at NMFS to create a stock assessment process that is open and transparent. This is a complex process involving iterations between reviewers and scientists, stakeholder engagement, public comment, and has often involved deliberations by the Council (see Attachment 1 for a brief visual description of major points in the current stock assessment process).

At the June 2026 meeting, the Council considered 64 actions identified in a report on ways to improve the stock assessment process ([Agenda Item E.3, Attachment 1, June 2026](#)) and recommendations of a selection of those actions and additional actions from advisory bodies. The Council identified short-term and long-term priority actions that Council staff in collaboration with partners at NOAA and on the Advisory Bodies, where appropriate, could work to improve the stock assessment process ([see June 2026 Decision Summary Document](#)). The GAP and GMT should consider the proposed process improvements and provide comments for Council consideration.

## **G.5 Stock Assessment Terms of Reference (TOR) for 2027-28**

This agenda item concerns the three TOR documents that guide the stock assessment process. Only the stock assessment review process TOR documents have recommended edits for the 2029-30 biennial management cycle. The stock assessment review TOR provided as Attachment 1 (clean proposed version). Attachment 2 (suggested edits since last cycle's 2025-26 version) is the red line draft comparing the proposed draft with the 2025-26 version.

The Council will consider the input from advisory bodies and the public before deciding on language for the three 2027-2028 TOR documents. The GAP and GMT should review Attachment 1 and 2 and provide recommendations to the Council on a final TOR for Stock Assessment Review.

### **G.6 Inseason Adjustments for 2026-27 including Pacific Whiting Off-the-Top Bycatch Deductions – Final Action**

Under this agenda item, the Council will consider two items: 1) routine inseason adjustments to the 2026 and 2027 fisheries, as necessary, to achieve but not exceed annual catch limits and 2) adoption of Pacific whiting set-asides for the 2027 research and pink shrimp fisheries. The GMT and GAP will consider inseason adjustments requests and develop recommendations, as appropriate. Requests to the GMT for inseason adjustments should be made no later than noon Saturday, November 14 to ensure thorough and complete analysis. The GMT and GAP should review Pacific whiting recent mortality, as shown Attachment 1, when recommending set-asides for the pink shrimp and research fisheries and comment, as appropriate.

### **G.7 Harvest Specifications and Management Measures Flexibility – Final Action**

The Council is considering final action on a set of Groundfish Fishery Management Plan (FMP) changes designed to provide greater flexibility and stability in establishing harvest specifications, building on priorities adopted in March and April 2025 and a range of alternatives and preliminary preferred alternatives adopted in November 2025. The proposed tools include Carryover (allowing unused annual catch limits for selected stocks to be carried forward using final catch data from two years prior); Phase In acceptable biological catch (ABC) harvest control rules (phasing in changes to ABC resulting from new scientific information); “Green Light” Framework (permitting mid-biennium increases in harvest specifications for newly assessed stocks when assessments indicate improved stock status); Changes to Off-the-Top Deductions (accounting for off-the-top deductions off of the ABC instead of the annual catch limit); and Harvest Specifications Frequency (adopting harvest specifications for longer time periods while maintaining the biennial cycle). The GAP and GMT should review Attachment 1 and SSC Report 1 and provide recommendations to the Council on a final preferred alternative. The Council will adopt associated Groundfish FMP changes and implementation details expected to be considered in June 2027.

### **G.8 Risk Management Framework**

Over the last few years, the Council has started to have questions revolving around risk management of its fisheries and identified the “Risk Management” item as a priority under its Workload and New Management Measure process in April 2026. Council staff have prepared a white paper which preliminarily scopes ideas that have been discussed by the Council and its advisory bodies in relation to the topic (Attachment 1). The Washington Department of Fish and Wildlife (WDFW) has also produced a WDFW report on potential ideas for this item. The GAP and GMT should consider the materials and provide comments on the initial scope.

## **Cross Fishery Management Plan**

### **D.2 Marine Planning**

The Council’s Ad Hoc Marine Planning Committee will report on topics relevant to Council-managed fisheries and coastal fishing communities, including wave and tidal energy, deep-sea mineral mining, marine aquaculture, marine carbon dioxide removal, an update on West Coast Oceans Alliance activities, as well as other state and tribal updates. A draft comment letter on high seas mineral mining activities is expected to be included as an attachment under this agenda item.

## Other Items

The following are additional pre-Council meeting briefings that may be of interest (as shown on the [Council's online calendar](#)):

- The GMT will host a [work session](#) October 26-30 at the Pacific Fishery Management Council's office. The meeting will be broadcast via webinar.
- The Habitat Committee will host a [webinar](#) November 3<sup>rd</sup> and 4<sup>th</sup> to consider items on the Council's November agenda.

## California Current Integrated Ecosystem Assessment (CCIEA) Fishermen's Roundtables

The NOAA CCIEA Team is seeking fishermen's and other stakeholders' on-the-water observations and experiences to help inform the 2026–27 Ecosystem Status Report. Two in-person roundtables will be held in conjunction with the November Council meeting, and while the roundtables are not Council-sponsored, we encourage Council meeting participants to attend and provide input. The two roundtables will follow the same format and are being scheduled separately in order to allow as many people to attend as possible. Groundfish participants are encouraged to join the roundtable in Royal on November 12 from 3–5 p.m.

This mailing includes the enclosures listed below. Please review these briefing materials in advance to facilitate an efficient meeting week. Please note that the Council will continue to encourage participants to obtain briefing book materials via our website. Printed materials are not available at the meeting, unless requested.

Thank you for your commitment to the Council process and management of Pacific groundfish fisheries.

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Enclosures include:

1. Agenda Item A.3 – Council Meeting Agenda and Executive Director's Report
2. Agenda Item B.1 – Open Comment (*Electronic Only via the [e-portal](#)*)
3. Agenda Item C – Administrative Matters
4. Agenda Item D – Cross FMP
5. Agenda Item G – Groundfish Management
6. Agenda Item H – Pacific Halibut Management
7. Enforcement Consultants Agenda
8. GAP Agenda
9. GMT Agenda
10. Scientific and Statistical Committee Agenda and Draft Minutes
11. Informational Reports
12. General Information and Council Roster

PFCMC

10/27/26