

ADAPTIVE MANAGEMENT AND FLEXIBILITY – SCOPING

The Adaptive Management and Flexibility project (Adaptive Management project) is one of three special projects for which the Pacific Fishery Management Council (Council) has received dedicated funding. The objective of the Adaptive Management project is to identify and apply management innovations that allow for more timely and efficient responses to a changing environment. As part of this agenda item, Council staff will present a scoping paper that seeks to support further discussion of an implementation framework or suite of actions that the Council could consider advancing under this project.

The Adaptive Management project aligns with the goals of the Council’s Potential Future Fishery Ecosystem Plan (FEP) Initiative 2.8, *Assess Flexibility in Fisheries Management Process Initiative*, which was added to the FEP’s [Ecosystem Initiatives Appendix](#) in September 2022. This initiative in turn emerged from the Council-sponsored climate change scenario planning exercise completed in March 2021 as part of the Climate and Communities Initiative (CCI); a core theme coming out of the scenario planning effort was interest in building more flexibility into the fishery management process.

At the April 2025 Council meeting, the Council discussed [several tools and approaches](#) that could be further developed under this project; some of these tools are tailored to specific fishery management plans (FMPs), while others are more cross-cutting in nature. As part of the April agenda item, the Council adopted a motion that provides guidance to Council staff to develop an action plan for exploring and implementing these and other tools for increasing flexibility and adaptive management in all of the Council’s FMPs. The Council also prioritized the Groundfish FMP for an evaluation of these tools; that work is currently being taken up under the [Groundfish Harvest Specifications Flexibility action](#), for which the Council established the scope at its June 2025 meeting.

In response to the Council’s April guidance regarding cross-FMP tools, Council staff prepared Attachment 1 under this agenda item, which offers a preliminary assessment of the challenges associated with flexibility, timeliness, and responsiveness in the Council’s decision-making process, particularly in the face of environmental changes and unexpected events. Attachment 1 also provides a review of several tools and approaches that could increase the Council’s flexibility, enhance its adaptive capacity, or accelerate the pace of Council action timelines. During their discussions of this agenda item, Advisory Bodies may identify additional actions, measures, and processes in their respective FMPs that could benefit from more nimble and adaptive approaches.

Given the range of challenges that affect the flexibility, timeliness, and responsiveness of Council processes and the diversity of potential strategies and tools for addressing those challenges, the Council should clearly define the specific problems this action seeks to address and articulate desired outcomes. A clear problem statement and well-defined objectives will support the development of a focused set of action alternatives and metrics to effectively assess their success. Staff will use this information to develop a purpose and need for the action and further refine a range of alternatives for adoption at a future meeting.

At this meeting, the Council should consider the materials in Attachment 1 and further define the problem(s). Depending on the scope of action, the Council may also wish to provide guidance on sequencing actions.

Council Tasks:

- 1. Adopt a Problem Statement.**
- 2. Provide guidance on developing a range of alternatives, including identifying a narrow list of priority actions that can be accomplished within the Special Project timeframe.**
- 3. Provide guidance on next steps, including sequencing actions, if necessary.**

Reference Materials:

1. Agenda Item H.1, Attachment 1: Council Staff Report.
2. If received, Public Comments are electronic only ([see e-portal](#)).

Agenda Order:

- H.1 Adaptive Management and Flexibility – Scoping Gilly Lyons
- a. Reports and Comments of Management Entities and Advisory Bodies
 - b. Public Comment
 - c. **Council Action:** Adopt Scope of Action, Provide Guidance on Next Steps

PFMC
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