

GROUNDFISH MANAGEMENT TEAMS REPORT
ON COUNCIL RESPONSE TO EXECUTIVE ORDERS AND ADMINISTRATION
UPDATES

The Groundfish Management Teams (GMT) supports the Pacific Fishery Management Council (Council) submitting the [draft Council letter to National Marine Fisheries Service \(NMFS\)](#) and the corresponding “[matrix](#)” identifying overarching priorities and common issues across Fishery Management Plans (FMP). The GMT offers the following considerations regarding the Draft Letter to Mr. Soler, Assistant Administrator for Fisheries ([Agenda Item H.2, Attachment 4, September 2025.](#))

The GMT’s understanding is that, at this time, the Council’s response to Executive Orders (EO) does not include forthcoming actions that currently lack a “work plan”. However, the GMT notes that the Trawl Catch Share Review, which is currently ongoing (Agenda Item G.5 of this meeting), will result in several follow-on actions that are aimed at improving efficiency in the Catch Share fishery that may ultimately improve seafood competitiveness. Compared to some items currently on the list (e.g., Stock Definitions), the team thinks that Catch Share follow-on actions are more effective at improving seafood competitiveness and, to the extent possible, the Council should underscore this in their response.

The GMT also understands that the Council is currently contemplating action items that have the potential to address seafood competitiveness and economic growth that have yet to be prioritized on the agenda. Some examples are provided within the list of prioritized and proposed groundfish management measures ([Agenda Item H.8.a, GMT Report 2, March 2025](#)) and include: removing the non-trawl Rockfish Conservation Areas, implementing the Midwater Trawl Gear Targeting Non-whiting and Selective Flatfish Trawl Exempted Fishing Permits into regulation, discard mortality rates for sablefish in the recreational sector, and bottom longline discard mortality rates.

Additionally, the GMT notes that nearly all issues on the Groundfish Workload and New Management Measures Prioritization list also address the four EO priorities specifically, as they are often aimed at improving the groundfish fishery to achieve optimal utilization. The Pacific Coast Groundfish Fishery Management Plan goals and objectives are also designed to stabilize markets, improve access, enhance economic profitability, and prevent closures. Many of the priorities listed in EO 14276 require robust monitoring, science, and management (e.g. productive harvest of our seafood resources, stabilization of markets, improved access, enhanced economic profitability, and prevention of closures). As touched on in [H.2.a Supplemental HC Report 1](#) and [H.2.a Council Member Report 1](#), support for data collection, analysis, and translation of science into sound management are needed to best support American seafood competitiveness. Reduced support for National Marine Fisheries Service (NMFS), the Council, Sea Grant, academic research, climate-related research, and other fisheries-relevant work will make fulfilling the EO priorities more difficult.

The GMT offers the following comments on specific components of the draft Council letter and the accompanying matrix

Draft Council Letter to NMFS

The GMT suggests adding the red italicized text to bullet point five in the [draft Council letter](#), which is cited below. The placement of large offshore infrastructure, such as aquaculture, could effectively close or limit access to fishery resource users if they are placed in areas which have historically been utilized by the fisheries. Taking historical fishing activity into consideration during the development of offshore infrastructure would improve access and prevent closures per the EO guidance.

“The Council continues to review and provide comments on marine planning activities, including offshore wind energy, aquaculture, and other ocean uses. Such engagement directly supports the objectives of the EO by ensuring that new ocean development is compatible with sustainable fisheries, *currently utilized fishing areas and gear types*, fish habitat protection, and the long-term competitiveness of U.S. seafood.”

Matrix

The GMT recommends adding 2027-28 Harvest Specifications and Management Measures to the matrix, as there are multiple items within that package that would meet the goals outlined in the EO. Specifically, the following items are currently being contemplated for further analysis (Agenda Item G.6.a, Supplemental GMT Report 3 of this meeting) and would meet EO’s priorities:

- Management changes that allow for greater utilization of the overall Annual Biological Catch could improve seafood competitiveness and economic growth by, for example, reducing the amount deducted in incidental and research sectors from a recent maximum to an average and generally setting catch limits that are not overly restrictive.
- Allowing all depth recreational fishing off California instead of utilizing Rockfish Conservation Area lines would improve access and prevent closures.
- Management changes as a result of yelloweye rockfish being declared rebuilt.
- Allowing retention of Cowcod would improve access and enhance economic profitability.
- Creating Stock Complex Species Specific Trip Limits in order to address under-attainment of underutilized groundfish stocks managed in a complex helps improve access to target species and enhance economic profitability.

PFMC
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