

GROUND FISH MANAGEMENT TEAM REPORT ON THE OMNIBUS PROCESS AND COUNCIL OPERATING PROCEDURE 9

In September 2018, the Groundfish Management Team (GMT) discussed the strengths and weaknesses of the Pacific Fishery Management Council's (Council) omnibus process in [Agenda Item I.9.a, Supplemental GMT Report 1, Sept 2018](#). We described our concerns and stated that:

A weakness of the current process is that prioritization only happens every other year and is not responsive to emergent fishery needs, changes in the fishery, or unscheduled disruptions (e.g., lawsuits or staff shortages). This can create a situation in which some ideas “jump the line”, either as new management measures outside the intended scope for inclusion in harvest specifications, or those slated for separate agenda time ahead of previously-prioritized omnibus items (such as Amendment 21-3). When this happens, other previously prioritized actions are often put on hold. The list then becomes stale over the two years, and items continue to sit that may no longer be needed or may no longer be the best solution to the problem. Yet, these measures are still considered every two years, adding to discussion and workload.

We propose a new approach to address these issues, based on considerable discussion of potential revisions to the current prioritization process described in Council Operating Procedure 9 (COP 9), that would make the process more efficient and more responsive to changing fisheries and management needs.

Recurring Stand-Alone Agenda Item

Specifically, the GMT has suggested that the Council consider new groundfish management measures at each meeting ([Agenda Item I.9.a, Supplemental GMT Report 1, Sept 2018](#) and [Agenda Item G.4.a, GMT Report 2, March 2019](#)). This proposed approach would include adding a standalone item to the Council's agenda following the NMFS Report. The GMT sees this agenda item as a place where we would provide brief, routine updates on initial scoping or analysis to inform Council action on moving forward or removing items from the list. Additionally, the GMT could refresh the Council on the GMT's ongoing workload and priorities near the beginning of the Council meeting (similar to the new NMFS report matrix). We anticipate this agenda item would take between 30 minutes to one hour with the expectation that it generally take less than 30 minutes, as new items do not arise at every meeting.

We understand there may be some concern with adding an additional agenda item to the Council's current workload. The GMT believes that the proposed new agenda item would actually create efficiency by providing a more formal process for the defacto prioritization of new issues that is already occurring, as well as improving the groundfish workload discussion at the close of the meeting. A stand-alone agenda item would provide an explicit time for proposing new groundfish management initiatives and re-prioritizing those items against the current workload. Formalizing this process provides a clear and equitable path for stakeholders, increases transparency of prioritization decisions, and allows the Council to discuss groundfish workload and priorities for

new items in a more comprehensive fashion. Concerns with additional workload created by this new agenda item could be further addressed by developing a very explicit Situation Summary that limits input on this item to new groundfish issues and clarifies that the agenda item is not an additional open public comment item.

Improved Workload Planning

To further improve the process, the GMT also recommends that Council staff compile a written summary of new groundfish management measures that have arisen during the course of the current meeting (if any) for the Future Meeting Planning agenda item. These items could be considered along with the final groundfish workload prioritization list when determining scheduling for future groundfish agenda items. The GMT believes that this would allow the Council to take a more holistic approach in prioritizing new management measures while ensuring that items that “jump the queue” only do so with the Council’s explicit intention. There are certainly emergency cases where jumping the queue is justified, but this process would ensure that the Council explicitly determines that immediate action is necessary at the expense of previously identified priority items. The GMT and the Groundfish Advisory Subpanel (GAP) would continue to provide guidance on what issues to agendize at future meetings.

Process Revisions (As Needed)

The GMT also suggests revisiting this process via ongoing GMT/GAP discussions and a progress report to the Council in March 2020. At this time, the process could be adjusted as needed.

Recommendations:

The GMT recommends that the Council adopt a new workload prioritization process that utilizes brief groundfish workload check-ins at every meeting and that Council staff revise COP 9 with input from the GMT to reflect this process. Proposed changes to COP 9 could then be reviewed and approved in April or June 2019 under the COP administrative agenda item.

The GMT recommends that Council staff compile a written summary of new groundfish management measures that have arisen during the course of the current meeting (if any) for the Future Meeting Planning agenda item.

PFMC
03/09/19