In November 2010, in response to serious, chronic problems with achieving a January 1 start to the fishery as described in the groundfish Fishery Management Plan (FMP), the Council initiated a process to 1) generate recommendations for a workable detailed process and schedule for the 2013-14 cycle and 2) investigate solutions for biennial cycle process issues, including whether an FMP amendment should be pursued. Background information on the problems and process to develop solutions can be found in the April 2011 briefing book, Agenda Item I.2. In April 2011, the Council adopted a very detailed front-loaded schedule for Council decision-making and the National Marine Fisheries Service (NMFS) review and implementation process for the 2013-14 harvest specifications and management measures, as a preliminary preferred alternative (PPA) for public review and further analysis (Attachment 1).

The primary Council action under this agenda item is to adopt a final process and schedule for developing the 2013-14 groundfish fishery specifications and management measures. In accomplishing this action, the Council will need to make a final decision on the proposal to amend Council Operating Procedure (COP) 19 from annual consideration of exempted fishing permit (EFP) applications to consideration every 2 years, aligned with the biennial decision-making process (Attachment 2). In response to a Council request from April 2011, the Groundfish Management Team provided clarification on their recommendation for a Scientific and Statistical Committee review of the conservation performance of the Council’s rebuilding plans (GMT Report). The Council is also scheduled to receive a briefing on efforts to analyze the existing stock complexes (Supplemental Attachment 3), although this may not necessarily alter the PPA schedule and process, which calls for a decision on stock complex definition at the September Council meeting. In adopting a final detailed process and schedule, the intent would be that the Council and all responsible parties feel reasonably assured of its achievability.

A secondary Council action under this agenda item is to consider longer term solutions to make the biennial process more easily and reliably achievable. At its April 2011 meeting, the Council requested further analysis of a programmatic approach for completing harvest specifications, which may or may not require amending the FMP. Attachment 4 provides background on the need and potential design of a programmatic approach. The Council also recommended the advisory bodies comment on a proposed schedule to amend the FMP, if necessary. Attachment 5 shows potential schedules that begin with the November 2011 Council meeting.
Council Action:

1. Consider modifying COP 19 for groundfish EFPs to align with biennial decision-making.
2. Adopt a final process and schedule for developing the 2013-14 groundfish harvest specifications and management measures.
3. Consider solutions to biennial cycle process issues, including a programmatic approach which may involve an FMP amendment.

Reference Materials:

3. Agenda Item E.4.a, Supplemental Attachment 3: Analytical Update Regarding the Potential Reconstruction of Stock Complexes.
5. Agenda Item E.4.a, Attachment 5: Possible Schedules for Groundfish Fishery Management Plan Amendment Considerations.

Agenda Order:

a. Agenda Item Overview
b. Reports and Comments of Advisory Bodies and Management Entities
   c. Public Comment
d. **Council Action**: Adopt a Final Process and Schedule; Adopt Modifications to Council Operating Procedure 19 for Groundfish EFPs; Provide Further Guidance on Solutions for Biennial Cycle Management

PFMC
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