GROUNDFISH MANAGEMENT TEAM REPORT ON ADAPTIVE MANAGEMENT TOOLS AND CHALLENGES IN WEST COAST FISHERIES

The Groundfish Management Team (GMT) **supports the Adaptive Management project, tools identified, and objectives as outlined in Agenda Item C.4, Supplemental Attachment 1 and recommends the Council continue moving forward with pursuing the Adaptive Management project.**

It is the GMT's understanding that ideas in the Adaptive Management project consist of both general tools for all Fisheries Management Plans (FMP) and specific tools that address the needs of the Pacific Coast Groundfish Fishery Management Plan (Groundfish FMP). The GMT appreciates the GAP's proposals in March (Agenda Item H.8.a Supplemental GAP Report 1 March 2025) and agrees that many ideas discussed reflect options the Council could explore as part of this broader effort. While all FMPs will benefit from these efforts, groundfish fisheries would likely experience outsized benefits from the proposed tools and approaches to increase flexibility and responsiveness in the Council process. This is because groundfish seasons are year-round, and the Groundfish FMP constitutes the bulk of the species under Council management. Furthermore, groundfish harvest specifications are set on a biennial cycle which would benefit from additional inseason fisheries management tools. **The GMT recommends the Council prioritize tools, measures, and approaches that would increase flexibility and adaptability in the Groundfish and other FMPs.**

During the GMT's April 4 webinar, the team discussed the potential benefits outlined in the "Analytical Efficiencies" category, particularly the utilization of Programmatic Environmental Impact Statements (PEIS). It is the team's general understanding that a PEIS may be utilized to provide the necessary, overarching, National Environmental Policy Act (NEPA) analysis necessary for the ongoing implementation of the Groundfish FMP. Some information the Council typically sees as part of the biennial Harvest Specifications and Management Measures process may no longer be necessary for meeting NEPA requirements each biennial cycle if a PEIS sufficiently covers a wide range of possible scenarios. A strategically designed PEIS would benefit the biennial process by incrementally reducing the administrative burden each cycle of producing an extensive NEPA document. This procedure of developing a PEIS has been successful for other Regions' fisheries. The GMT also expects that analytical efficiencies could reduce the risk of needing an emergency management measure; this in itself is more efficient, as emergency management measures only last 180 days with the ability to extend an additional 180 days. The GMT supports further exploration into how a PEIS, or other analytical efficiencies such as if/then tools, could be utilized in the Groundfish or other FMPs to reduce analytical workload.

Lastly, the GMT notes that the term "adaptive management" can be used in multiple ways, and the way it is used in the context of Agenda Item C.4 does not fully align with the formal academic concept of adaptive management[1]. This may cause confusion for some readers, so future

[1] For example, a common formal definition of adaptive management is, "a stepwise iterative process in which interventions are implemented, their effects monitored and evaluated, and the next intervention adapted according to knowledge gained." (Månsson et al. 2023)

documents could clarify how it is defined in this context, or use an alternative term like “flexible management” if the intent is to mean being nimble and adapting to external change or unforeseen circumstances.

PFMC
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