

Groundfish Programmatic Workplan

The Council conducted its most recent *comprehensive* review of its Programmatic Groundfish Management Policy¹ (Policy) at its February 2022 meeting², highlighting Council activities in calendar years 2019-2021 which continue to fulfill the Priorities and Objectives established in the Policy. Annual review of the Policy is a requirement of the GOA and BSAI Groundfish FMPs, and the Council fulfills that requirement through this Programmatic Workplan, a concise tool that presents Council actions relative to Policy Objectives and is provided at every Council meeting. The Council generally conducts a comprehensive review of the Policy every three years, in order to accommodate the multi-year lifespan of major Council actions. A comprehensive review is scheduled for 2026.

The table below provides a two-meeting (previous and current) snapshot of the Programmatic Workplan, listing only Council actions related to the Groundfish FMPs and indicating their correspondence to Programmatic Management Objectives. Those Management Objectives were intended to support decision-making under the Groundfish FMPs. Although the Policy's EBFM approach is reflected in actions outside of the Groundfish FMPs, not all actions are included in the table. The tabular presentation of the Programmatic Workplan below as well as prior versions of the table are available on the Council eAgendas: (<https://meetings.npfmc.org/>).

| Goal | Management Objective | Council actions | |
|--|--|--|---|
| | | December 2025 | February 2026 |
| 1. Prevent Overfishing Maintain Sustainable Harvest | 1. Adopt conservative harvest levels for multi-species and single species fisheries and specify optimum yield. | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • GOA Pcod harvest specifications • Planning for 2026 groundfish stock assessment cycle (SSC) • Update on HCR work (SSC) | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Groundfish harvest final specifications³ • IPHC halibut assessment update |
| | 2. Continue to use the optimum yield caps for the BSAI and GOA groundfish fisheries. | | |
| | 3. Provide for adaptive management by continuing to specify optimum yield as a range. | | |
| | 4. Provide for periodic reviews of the adequacy of F40 and adopt improvements, as appropriate. | | |
| | 5. Continue to improve the management of species through species categories. | | |
| 2. Promote Sustainable Fisheries and Communities | 6. Promote conservation while providing for optimum yield in terms of the greatest overall benefit to the nation with particular reference to food production, and sustainable opportunities for recreational, subsistence, and commercial fishing participants and fishing communities. | <p>These considerations are applied in all Council management recommendations.</p> <p>See specific actions also under Goals 1, 7 and 8.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • USCG Reports | |
| | 7. Promote management measures that, while meeting conservation objectives, are also designed to avoid significant disruption of existing social and economic structures | | |
| | 8. Promote fair and equitable allocation of identified available resources in a manner such that no particular sector, group or entity acquires an excessive share of the privileges. | | |
| | 9. Promote increased safety at sea. | | |

¹ <https://www.npfmc.org/management-policies/>

² <https://meetings.npfmc.org/CommentReview/DownloadFile?p=f8c3ef0f-41e6-49d8-a17f-1714eaf6a1ba.pdf&fileName=D3%20Groundfish%20Management%20Policy%20Review.pdf>

³ The lapse in Federal appropriations from October 1–November 12, 2025 impacted the information available to support the usual groundfish harvest specifications process. An overview of the Groundfish Final Harvest Specifications is provided under D4/D5 for the December 2025 Council meeting.

| Goal | Management Objective | Council actions | |
|--|---|-----------------------------|--|
| | | December 2025 | February 2026 |
| 3. Preserve Food Web <i>Ecosystem-based Fishery Management</i> | 10. Develop indices of ecosystem health as targets for management. 11. Improve the procedure to adjust acceptable biological catch levels as necessary to account for uncertainty and ecosystem factors. 12. Continue to protect the integrity of the food web through limits on harvest of forage species. 13. Incorporate ecosystem-based considerations into fishery management decisions, as appropriate. | • ESR previews ⁴ | • Abbreviated GOA ESR and updates to Pacific Cod ESP to support GOA Pcod harvest specs |
| 4. Manage Incidental Catch and Reduce Bycatch and Waste | 14. Continue and improve current incidental catch and bycatch management program. 15. Develop incentive programs for bycatch reduction including the development of mechanisms to facilitate the formation of bycatch pools, vessel bycatch allowances, or other bycatch incentive systems. 16. Encourage research programs to evaluate current population estimates for non-target species with a view to setting appropriate bycatch limits, as information becomes available. 17. Continue program to reduce discards by developing management measures that encourage the use of gear and fishing techniques that reduce bycatch which includes economic discards. 18. Continue to manage incidental catch and bycatch through seasonal distribution of total allowable catch and geographical gear restrictions. 19. Continue to account for bycatch mortality in total allowable catch accounting and improve the accuracy of mortality assessments for target, prohibited species catch, and noncommercial species. 20. Control the bycatch of prohibited species through prohibited species catch limits or other appropriate measures. 21. Reduce waste to biologically and socially acceptable levels. | | • BS chum salmon bycatch final action |
| 5. Reduce and Avoid Impacts to Seabirds and Marine Mammals | 22. Continue to cooperate with U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service (USFWS) to protect ESA-listed species, and if appropriate and practicable, other seabird species. 23. Maintain or adjust current protection measures as appropriate to avoid jeopardy of extinction or adverse modification to critical habitat for ESA-listed Steller sea lions. 24. Encourage programs to review status of endangered or threatened marine mammal stocks and fishing interactions and develop fishery management measures as appropriate. 25. Continue to cooperate with NMFS and USFWS to protect ESA-listed marine mammal species, and if appropriate and practicable, other marine mammal species. | | |

⁴ Due to the lapse in Federal appropriations complete Ecosystem Status Reports were not available for the December 2025 meeting. ESR Previews prepared for September 2025 Groundfish Plan Team meetings will be presented. See C3 Action Memo: Contextual Information Supporting Groundfish Harvest Specifications

| Goal | Management Objective | Council actions | |
|--|--|-----------------------------------|--|
| | | December 2025 | February 2026 |
| 6. Reduce and Avoid Impacts to Habitat | <p>26. Review and evaluate efficacy of existing habitat protection measures for managed species.</p> <p>27. Identify and designate essential fish habitat and habitat areas of particular concern pursuant to Magnuson-Stevens Act rules, and mitigate fishery impacts as necessary and practicable to continue the sustainability of managed species.</p> <p>28. Develop a Marine Protected Area policy in coordination with national and state policies.</p> <p>29. Encourage development of a research program to identify regional baseline habitat information and mapping, subject to funding and staff availability.</p> <p>30. Develop goals, objectives and criteria to evaluate the efficacy and suitable design of marine protected areas and no-take marine reserves as tools to maintain abundance, diversity, and productivity. Implement marine protected areas if and where appropriate.</p> | • EFH 2028 5-year review workplan | • EFH 2028 5-year review workplan (SSC) |
| 7. Promote Equitable and Efficient Use of Fishery Resources | <p>31. Provide economic and community stability to harvesting and processing sectors through fair allocation of fishery resources.</p> <p>32. Maintain the license limitation program, modified as necessary, and further decrease excess fishing capacity and overcapitalization by eliminating latent licenses and extending programs such as community or rights-based management to some or all groundfish fisheries.</p> <p>33. Provide for adaptive management by periodically evaluating the effectiveness of rationalization programs and the allocation of access rights based on performance.</p> <p>34. Develop management measures that, when practicable, consider the efficient use of fishery resources taking into account the interest of harvesters, processors, and communities.</p> | | • IFQ report to fleet |
| 8. Increase Alaska Native & Community Consultation | <p>35. Continue to incorporate local and traditional knowledge in fishery management.</p> <p>36. Consider ways to enhance collection of local and traditional knowledge from communities, and incorporate such knowledge in fishery management where appropriate.</p> <p>37. Increase Alaska Native participation and consultation in fishery management.</p> | | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Tribal consultation and engagement update as part of chum bycatch final action • Remote accessibility options, tribal engagement meetings/reports, AP members representing tribes (ongoing) |

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| 9. Improve Data Quality, Monitoring and Enforcement | <p>38. Increase the utility of groundfish fishery observer data for the conservation and management of living marine resources.</p> <p>39. Develop funding mechanisms that achieve equitable costs to the industry for implementation of the North Pacific Groundfish Observer Program.</p> <p>40. Improve community and regional economic impact costs and benefits through increased data reporting requirements.</p> <p>41. Increase the quality of monitoring and enforcement data through improved technology.</p> <p>42. Encourage a coordinated, long-term ecosystem monitoring program to collect baseline information and compile existing information from a variety of ongoing research initiatives, subject to funding and staff availability.</p> <p>43. Cooperate with research institutions such as the North Pacific Research Board in identifying research needs to address pressing fishery issues.</p> <p>44. Promote enhanced enforceability.</p> <p>45. Continue to cooperate and coordinate management and enforcement programs with the Alaska Board of Fish, Alaska Department of Fish and Game, and Alaska Fish and Wildlife Protection, the U.S. Coast Guard, NMFS Enforcement, International Pacific Halibut Commission, Federal agencies, and other organizations to meet conservation requirements; promote economically healthy and sustainable fisheries and fishing communities; and maximize efficiencies in management and enforcement programs through continued consultation, coordination, and cooperation.</p> | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Observer Annual Deployment Plan update⁵ • NMFS (partial) and ADFG in-season reports | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Final Annual Observer Deployment Plan available • NMFS in-season report <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • NPPR report • AFSC report on stock assessment prioritization (SSC) <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Enforcement precepts (ongoing) <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Agency reports |

⁵ Due to the lapse in Federal appropriations a final plan will not be available for the December meeting.