

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. As determined by the Council in February 2019, a comprehensive review of the Policy is done on a three-year cycle in order to accommodate the multi-year lifespan of major Council actions.

The table below provides a two-meeting (previous and current) snapshot of the Programmatic Workplan, listing only Council actions relate 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, these other actions are not 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 2023	February 2024
1. Prevent Overfishing <i>Maintain Sustainable Harvest</i>	1. Adopt conservative harvest levels for multi-species and single species fisheries and specify optimum yield.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Groundfish final specifications • Discuss climate readiness funding opps incl. harvest control rule, OY changes 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Update on climate readiness funding incl programmatic evaluation • Discuss case studies for national SSC workshop
	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.	These considerations are applied in all Council management recommendations. See specific actions also under Goals 1,7 and 8. <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>

Goal	Management Objective	Council actions	
		December 2023	February 2024
3. Preserve Food Web <i>Ecosystem-based Fishery Management</i>	10. Develop indices of ecosystem health as targets for management.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Discuss options for climate readiness funding incl 2024 climate scenario workshop 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Update on climate readiness funding incl programmatic evaluation • Planning for 2024 climate scenario workshop
	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.		
4. Manage Incidental Catch and Reduce Bycatch and Waste	14. Continue and improve current incidental catch and bycatch management program.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Industry crab avoidance reports • PSC limits as part of groundfish final specifications 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • BBRKC area closures analysis • GOA Tanner crab protections paper • Small sablefish discard mortality rate discussion paper
	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.			
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.		

Goal	Management Objective	Council actions	
		December 2023	February 2024
6. Reduce and Avoid Impacts to Habitat	26. Review and evaluate efficacy of existing habitat protection measures for managed species.	• EFH review implementation amendments	• Report on benthic habitat research • Pelagic trawl gear definition discussion paper
	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.		
	28. Develop a Marine Protected Area policy in coordination with national and state policies.		
	29. Encourage development of a research program to identify regional baseline habitat information and mapping, subject to funding and staff availability.		
	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.		
7. Promote Equitable and Efficient Use of Fishery Resources	31. Provide economic and community stability to harvesting and processing sectors through fair allocation of fishery resources.	• GOA Pcod allocation review	• AFA program review workplan • GOA Pcod allocation review
	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.		
	33. Provide for adaptive management by periodically evaluating the effectiveness of rationalization programs and the allocation of access rights based on performance.		
	34. Develop management measures that, when practicable, consider the efficient use of fishery resources taking into account the interest of harvesters, processors, and communities.		
8. Increase Alaska Native & Community Consultation	35. Continue to incorporate local and traditional knowledge in fishery management.	• NMFS tribal consultation report	
	36. Consider ways to enhance collection of local and traditional knowledge from communities, and incorporate such knowledge in fishery management where appropriate.		
	37. Increase Alaska Native participation and consultation in fishery management.	• Remote accessibility options, tribal engagement meetings, AP members representing tribes (ongoing)	

Goal	Management Objective	Council actions	
		December 2023	February 2024
9. Improve Data Quality, Monitoring and Enforcement	38. Increase the utility of groundfish fishery observer data for the conservation and management of living marine resources.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Final Observer Annual Deployment Plan for 2024 NMFS and ADFG inseason mgmt. reports 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> E-logbooks exempted fishing permit review
	39. Develop funding mechanisms that achieve equitable costs to the industry for implementation of the North Pacific Groundfish Observer Program.		
	40. Improve community and regional economic impact costs and benefits through increased data reporting requirements.		
	41. Increase the quality of monitoring and enforcement data through improved technology.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> 2024 research priorities process underway – public input 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> 2024 research priorities process underway – Plan Team recs
	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.		
	43. Cooperate with research institutions such as the North Pacific Research Board in identifying research needs to address pressing fishery issues.		
	44. Promote enhanced enforceability.		
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.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Enforcement precepts (ongoing) 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Agency reports 	