

Workplan for Groundfish Management Policy Review

December 2025 Council Meeting

Background

The Council is due for a periodic review of the Groundfish Management Policy, as required by the Bering Sea Aleutian Islands (BSAI) and Gulf of Alaska (GOA) Groundfish Fishery Management Plans (FMPs). The BSAI and GOA Groundfish FMPs include a [Management Policy, goals, and objectives](#) adopted through the 2004 Programmatic Supplemental Environmental Impact Statement (PSEIS). Regular reviews of Groundfish FMP Objectives are required by the FMPs as a means of adaptive management.

Management Policy Reviews are a self-imposed monitoring requirement that provide the Council with regular opportunities to review the Groundfish Management Policy and Council activities in support of the Policy, consider modifications to Management Policy objectives, and consider whether the Council should undertake additional activities to fulfill goals and objectives. Reviews are conducted approximately every 3 years¹.

As an outcome of the review the Council could choose to make changes to Groundfish FMP policy guidance, which would require an FMP amendment. However, the Groundfish Management Policy Review is a process requirement that does not require any changes to be made. The Council has not adopted changes to goals or objectives in response to past reviews. This review is only required by and would be limited to the Groundfish FMPs. If the Council finds this exercise valuable, it could consider applying a similar approach to other FMPs in the future.

At the December 2025 Council meeting, **staff will describe the proposed approach for the next review process, which will cover the period 2022-2025.** The Council may provide input on this approach, and could also task the Ecosystem Committee with providing input on aspects of the review related to the Committee's scope. Staff intends the review to be presented to the Council for discussion in June 2026.

Proposed approach

At a minimum, the next Groundfish Management Policy Review would follow the same process as the 2019-2021 review. Consistent with past reviews, staff would develop a detailed summary of Council actions and activities relative to the Policy to support the Council's discussion.

While previous reviews have provided a useful snapshot in time, it has been 20 years since the implementation of the Groundfish Management Policy through the 2004 PSEIS. **The Council**

¹Reviews were conducted annually until February 2018, at which point the Council switched to an every-3-year review cycle to align with the timespan of Council actions. The most recent review was completed in 2022 for the period 2019-2021. See D3 Groundfish Management Policy [Review](#), February 2022

may find it valuable to look more holistically at the history of groundfish management under the current Policy. Staff suggest taking a more cumulative approach to the 2022-2025 review process that would highlight significant changes and turning points in groundfish management. This would also support the Council objectives for climate resilience by capturing the Council's work on climate resilience planning and incorporation of Local Knowledge, Traditional Knowledge, and subsistence information. This would enable the Council to reflect comprehensively on the existing body of policy guidance, including the Groundfish FMP Management Policy, goals, and objectives, as well as the context of other guidance including the Ecosystem Policy, Bering Sea FEP Goals and Objectives, and LKTKS Protocol.

Staff propose developing a review document based on the following four steps. Steps 1 and 2 are tabular outputs that follow the approach of previous reviews and provide consistency across review processes. Steps 3 and 4 are narrative outputs that would help support a more comprehensive review document and Council discussion. This approach would also be responsive to public comment by providing an accessible summary of the Council's work and self-evaluation.

Proposed steps:

1. Develop an updated 20-year chronology of Council actions and activities by goal area, 2004-present. This would primarily involve updating existing information.² (Low workload)
2. Map Council action and activities to Groundfish FMP objectives, 2022-2025, using a table format similar to past review documents.³ (Low workload)
3. Provide a set of concise narrative profiles of Council activities relative to the 9 Management Policy goal areas. These descriptions would complement document tables (Steps 1 and 2) by summarizing major changes, Council actions, and other milestones with regard to each goal area over the review period. This approach would provide more context for what, why, and how actions support goals and objectives, and support public participation in a strategic discussion of the role of FMP guidance. Descriptions would draw on existing Council language (e.g. motions, purpose and need statements, and newsletter updates). The approach may vary by goal area, as some are associated with more Council actions than others. (Moderate workload)

Profiles could also include the following:

² Examples include the 2015 Alaska Groundfish Fisheries Programmatic Supplemental Environmental Impact Statement [Supplemental Information Report](#), previous Groundfish Management Policy review documents, and the D2 PSEIS [Roadmap](#), February 2023

³For example, see D3 Groundfish Management Policy [Review](#), February 2022

- a. Issues and Council actions during the review period (2022-2025) that were considered but not pursued and/or resulted in no further action (e.g., Programmatic Evaluation, Bristol Bay Red King Crab Closure Areas, potential GOA FEP scoping). These issues generated useful documentation and provide important context for how the Council balances goals and objectives, resources, and priorities.
 - b. Selected examples of Council activities prior to the review period (pre-2022) that help tell the story of groundfish management by illustrating significant changes in management practices (e.g., bycatch management, electronic monitoring).
 - c. Incorporate by reference other Council work products that help identify opportunities, information needs, and gaps (e.g., Climate Readiness Synthesis, Climate Resilience Workplan, Community Engagement Committee recommendations, LKTKS Protocol).
4. Provide an additional narrative section focusing on the Council's climate resilience work. This is an important area of Council focus and progress that is not explicitly captured by the existing Groundfish FMP goals and objectives. This topic also spans multiple goal areas and a separate profile could help avoid duplication or splitting the discussion of this topic across multiple goal areas (particularly Goal 1: Prevent Overfishing and Goal 3: Preserve Food Web). A narrative could be structured similarly to the profiles described under Step 3. The Council could direct staff to apply this approach to other topics of interest that are not captured by the existing Groundfish Policy goals, such as outreach and engagement. (Moderate workload)

Next steps

Staff will proceed with the review process as outlined unless the Council provides other direction at the December 2025 Council meeting. The Council may also task the Ecosystem Committee with providing input on the review process and/or ideas for goals and objectives that may be appropriate to revise.

Staff intend to provide a review document for the Council's discussion at the June 2026 Council meeting. The Council's task in June, in addition to reviewing the Management Policy and recent Council actions and activities, would be to consider whether FMP guidance, along with the broader body of Council policy guidance, continues to communicate Council values and priorities, provide guidance to staff, and provide transparency regarding how the Council considers information and tradeoffs in its management advice.

Previous reviews have been discussed and completed in a single Council meeting. The Council may find this version sufficient to support discussion and complete the review process, or it may identify areas where additional information or deeper exploration of a topic may be helpful.