

Groundfish Management Policy Revisions

Ecosystem Committee, October 5-6, 2026



May 2026 Ecosystem Committee Recommendations

Ecosystem Committee May [Report](#)

The EC recommended the Council consider modifying the existing Groundfish Management Policy, as resources allow and recognizing that an FMP amendment would be necessary to make these changes. The Committee also recommended the Council not finalize changes to the policy in June by initiating an FMP amendment, **to allow for additional EC discussion on specific revisions, particularly for Goal 3: Preserve Food Web and Goal 8: Increase Alaska Native Consultation.**



June 2026 Council motion

Council [Motion](#) E1:
Groundfish Management Policy Goals and Objectives
June 9, 2026

Upon review, the Council finds that the Groundfish Management Policy Review document is complete and the Council's work during the 3-year review period continues to generally align with and support the current management policy. The Council also supports amending the BSAI and GOA Groundfish Fishery Management Plans to modernize and update the language in the management approach, goals, and objectives. **The Council tasks the Ecosystem Committee to further review the current management policy and make recommendations to the Council prior to the Council initiating an FMP amendment.**



June 2026 Council motion

Reference Slides:

Current Groundfish Management Policy Goals and Objectives



Groundfish Management Policy

Goal 1: Avoid Overfishing

1. Adopt conservative harvest levels for multi-species and single species fisheries and specify optimum yield.
2. Continue to use the optimum yield cap 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.



Groundfish Management Policy

Goal 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.
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.



Groundfish Management Policy

Goal 3: Preserve Food Web

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.



Groundfish Management Policy

Goal 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 non-commercial 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.



Groundfish Management Policy

Goal 5: Avoid Impacts to Seabirds and Marine Mammals

- 22. Continue to cooperate with the 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 of 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.



Groundfish Management Policy

Goal 6: Reduce and Avoid Impacts to Habitat

- 26. Review and evaluate efficacy of existing habitat protection measures for managed species.
- 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.



Groundfish Management Policy

Goal 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.
- 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.



Groundfish Management Policy

Goal 8: Increase Alaska Native consultation

- 35. Continue to incorporate local and traditional knowledge in fishery management.
- 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.



Groundfish Management Policy

Goal 9: Improve Data Quality, Monitoring, and Enforcement

Objectives

- 38. Increase the utility of groundfish fishery observer data for the conservation and management of living marine resources.
- 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.
- 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.

