



New England Fishery Management Council

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E.F. "Terry" Stockwell, Chairman | Thomas A. Nies, *Executive Director*

MEMORANDUM

DATE: January 7, 2015
TO: Groundfish Committee
FROM: Frank Blount, Groundfish Committee Chairman
SUBJECT: Groundfish Committee meeting on Thursday, January 14, 2016

There will be a Groundfish Committee meeting at the DoubleTree by Hilton, Danvers, MA on Thursday, January 14, starting at 9:00 AM.

Purpose. The purpose of the Committee meeting is to 1) receive an update from the Plan Development Team (PDT) on witch flounder analysis for Framework Adjustment 55, for informational purposes only; 2) discuss and plan for 2016 Council priorities for groundfish; 3) review and potentially provide input on draft guidance prepared by NMFS related to the evaluation of catch share programs; 4) review and discuss potential 5-year research priorities for groundfish; and 5) discuss other business, as necessary.

Meeting Materials. Paper copies of the documents listed below will be provided at the meeting. A PDF of each document is posted to www.nefmc.org. Staff will provide copies of any additional meeting materials that are not included in this package. If you have any questions about the documents, please contact Jamie Cournane (jcournane@nefmc.org; 978-465-0492 ext. 103).

1. Meeting memo (this document)
2. Agenda
3. Framework Adjustment 55 – Witch Flounder – for informational purposes
 - a. PDT memo to SSC and CC the Groundfish Committee re 2016 ABC for Witch Flounder (January 13, 2016)
 - b. SSC memo to the Council re FY 2016- FY 2018 Groundfish OFLs/ABCs (November 17, 2015)
 - c. Presentation: PDT analysis of 2016 ABC for Witch Flounder
4. Presentation: 2016 Council Priorities for Groundfish
5. Review of Draft NMFS Guidance to Evaluate Catch Share Programs
 - a. NMFS Draft Guidance for Conducting Reviews of Catch Share Programs
 - b. NEFMC Staff Input on NMFS Guidance on Catch Share Program Reviews (November 13, 2015)
6. Five-Year Research Priorities for Groundfish

- a. NEFMC Research Priorities and Data Needs, 2010-2014
 - b. PDT memo to the Groundfish Committee re 2016 Groundfish Priorities and Five-Year Research Priorities for Groundfish, January 12, 2016
7. Correspondence

Framework Adjustment 55 – Witch Flounder

Recent activity. The Council took final action on FW 55 at its December meeting, with the exception of the FY 2016- FY 2018 witch flounder ABCs and OFLs. The Council requested that the SSC provide an alternative for the FY 2016- FY 2018 witch flounder ABCs/OFLs for the Council to consider in which the FY 2016 ABC was not constrained by $75\%F_{MSY}$.

Since the Council meeting, the PDT has been working on analysis for the SSC to consider at its upcoming meeting on January 20th (Docs. 3a and 3b).

Next Steps. On January 14th, Council staff will provide an overview of the PDT's work (Doc. 3c). The information will be provided for informational purposes only, as the Committee is meeting prior to the SSC meeting. Committee members should refrain from making any motions/recommendations until the Council meeting.

The Council is scheduled to take final action on FW 55 for the witch flounder item at its January 2016 meeting.

Priorities

Recent Activity: The Council selected 2016 priorities at its December 2015 meeting. The PDT discussed the Council's 2016 priorities for groundfish (Doc. 6b). In particular, the PDT provides information for the Committee to consider when discussing the priority of an At-Sea Monitoring action.

Next Steps: On January 14th, Council staff will provide an overview of the priorities for 2016 (Doc. 4). The Committee may wish to develop a problem statement for the At-Sea Monitoring action and further discuss development of recreational fisheries priorities among other priorities.

To make the most of our meeting time on **January 14th**, you are encouraged to prepare motions in advance and either bring them to the meeting or send them to Jamie Cournane (jcournane@nefmc.org).

The Council may receive an update from the Committee on the development of 2016 priorities at its January 2016 meeting.

Review of Draft NMFS Guidance to Evaluate Catch Share Programs

Recent Activity. Input from Council staff has been compiled on the NMFS draft guidance for catch share program reviews, in expectation of the Council submitting a response to the guidance by the January 29, 2016 deadline (Docs. 5a and 5b). On November 19, 2015, the Scallop Committee discussed the draft guidance and staff input.

Next Steps. Staff will prepare a draft cover letter with the staff input attached, for Council approval at its January Council meeting. The Groundfish Committee should give any input to help shape the Council's response.

5-Year Research Priorities for Groundfish

Recent Activity. The PDT discussed possible 5-year research priorities for groundfish (Doc. 6b). The most recent summary of research priorities is provided (Doc. 6a).

Next Steps. The Committee will review the work of the PDT and make additional recommendations for 5-year research priorities for groundfish. Council staff will compile results prior to sending to the SSC and Council for review later in the year.