Council Priorities for 2027 & Beyond

DRAFT 2027 COUNCIL PRIORITIES RELATED TO WHITING

Whiting	Complete and submit FY 2027-2031 Specifications Action
EO 14276-NEFMC	Revise exemption areas (e.g., seasons, boundaries, gear-specific) - Holistic review and action identification with follow-on Omnibus (Habitat, etc) - FMP-based multiple actions as time allows

PREVIOUS DISCUSSION RE: SMALL-MESH MULTISPECIES EXEMPTION AREAS

- April 1 Data Workshop (AP & PDT)
  - Reviewed small-mesh multispecies to large-mesh groundfish catch ratios on large-mesh trips in/ around small-mesh exemption areas
  - Areas with higher catch ratios in and around Cultivator Shoal, Small-Mesh Area I, Stellwagen Bank
  - Expansion of existing areas rather than creating new areas
  - Suggestion to further investigate expansion of Cultivator Shoal Area into former Closed Area I and Small-Mesh Area II further west to abut the revised Western GOM closed area
- May 19 Committee/AP Meeting
  - Discussed results of further analysis on catch ratios
  - Suggestion to extend Raised Footrope Trawl Area season

Included in 5/19 Committee motion: "…consideration of exemption area expansion to the SW of the Cultivator Shoals Area and to the W of Small-Mesh Area II, and an extension of the raised footrope season to include January and February."

OUTLOOK, QUESTIONS AND ADDITIONAL COMMENTS

- Executive Committee discussed 2027 work priorities on Nov. 18 (yesterday) → Council will discuss in December (Wednesday, 12/9, 9:00 am)
- Revising exemption areas is likely a multi-year priority.
    - Input today will help to frame the scope of an action that considers exemption areas.
    - In addition to expanding exemption areas and extending the raised footrope trawl season (5/19 Committee motion), are there any additional objectives to focus on under this priority?
- Not looking to solicit new priorities for work in 2027.
    - Develop analytical assessments for red and silver hakes using WHAM and re-evaluate biological reference points
    - Consider classifying red and offshore hakes as ecosystem component species
    - Are there any other priorities to consider in 2028 and beyond?