

INITIAL STOCK ASSESSMENT PLAN AND TERMS OF REFERENCE

This agenda item concerns planning for new groundfish stock assessments that are anticipated to be completed in 2023 and 2025 which will be used to inform the harvest specifications and management measures decisions for groundfish fisheries in 2025 and beyond.

The decision on which stocks to assess in the next two assessment cycles entails whether the assessment should be a full assessment that requires peer review by a Stock Assessment Review (STAR) Panel, a data-moderate assessment, or an update assessment that requires only a review by the Council's Scientific and Statistical Committee (SSC). Council policy on this subject has been to schedule no more than ten full assessments in a given year with no more than two full assessments reviewed at each STAR Panel. A maximum of five STAR Panels should be considered for next year.

In June 2020, the Council adopted a list of candidate stocks for assessment in 2023 as follows (underlined stocks are stronger candidates): full assessments for petrale sole, black rockfish, sablefish, rougheye rockfish, shortbelly rockfish, and redbanded rockfish; a full or update assessment for yellowtail rockfish north of 40°10' N. lat.; full or data-moderate assessments for yellowtail rockfish south of 40°10' N. lat., greenspotted rockfish, and flathead sole; data-moderate assessments for bank rockfish, brown rockfish, starry rockfish, longspine thornyhead, shortspine thornyhead, English sole, rex sole, treefish, olive rockfish, and speckled rockfish; and an update assessment for yelloweye rockfish.

Drs. Jim Hastie and Chantel Wetzel, National Marine Fisheries Service (NMFS) Northwest Fisheries Science Center (NWFSC), will report on proposed stock assessment priorities (Attachments 1, 2, and 3). While the proposed stock assessment priorities are helpful in deciding which stocks are assessed next year, it is important to note these "priorities" are informative, not prescriptive.

There are three Terms of Reference (TOR) that guide the stock assessment process; one specifies how stock assessment reviews should occur and defines the roles and responsibilities of various entities contributing to this process (Attachment 4), one guides the development of rebuilding analyses used to develop harvest specifications and rebuilding plans for overfished and rebuilding species, and one guides how new methodologies that inform analyses used in groundfish and Coastal Pelagic Species (CPS) management decision-making are reviewed. Only the stock assessment review process TOR are provided in the advanced briefing book since there are only recommended edits for that TOR at this time, the other TOR are available electronically. Recommendations on the stock assessment process are provided in draft summary minutes from the January 25, 2022 Groundfish Stock Assessment Process Review Workshop in Attachment 5. In June 2020, the Council decided there should be separate TOR for the Groundfish and CPS stock assessment processes. While this agenda item focuses on a new Terms of Reference for the groundfish stock assessment process, the SSC and CPS Management Team are expected to report and recommend a process and schedule for finalizing a new TOR for the CPS stock assessment process under this agenda item.

The Council will consider the input from NMFS, state and Tribal agencies, advisory bodies, and the public before providing a preliminary decision on 2023 and 2025 stock assessment priorities by species, type of assessment (full, data-moderate, or update), and language for the three draft TORs. The Council is scheduled to make final decisions on groundfish stock assessment planning at their June meeting.

Council Action:

Adopt for Public Review:

- 1. A Preliminary List and Schedule of Stocks for Assessment in 2023 and 2025,**
- 2. A Draft Terms of Reference for Groundfish Stock Assessments,**
- 3. A Draft Terms of Reference for Methodology Reviews, and**
- 4. A Draft Terms of Reference for Rebuilding Analyses.**

Reference Materials:

1. Agenda Item E.8, Attachment 1: Description of assessment prioritization methodology applied to U.S. West Coast groundfish stock to inform the selection of species assessments in 2023 and 2025.
2. Agenda Item E.8, Attachment 2: Detailed summary of available data to support West Coast groundfish stock assessments in 2023.
3. Agenda Item E.8, Attachment 3: NMFS Assessment Prioritization Workbook (**Electronic Only**).
4. Agenda Item E.8, Attachment 4: Draft Terms of Reference for the Groundfish and Coastal Pelagic Species Stock Assessment Process for 2023-2024.
5. Agenda Item E.8, Attachment 5: Draft Terms of Reference for the Groundfish Rebuilding Analysis for 2023-2024.
6. Agenda Item E.8, Attachment 6: SSC Groundfish Subcommittee Report on Groundfish Stock Assessment Process Review Webinar held on January 25, 2022.
7. If received, Public Comments are electronic only ([see e-portal](#)).

Agenda Order:

- E.8 Initial Stock Assessment Plan and Terms of Reference John DeVore
- a. Reports and Comments of Management Entities and Advisory Bodies
 - b. Public Comment
 - c. **Council Action:** Adopt for Public Review a Preliminary List and Schedule of Stocks for Assessment in 2023 and 2025 and Draft Terms of Reference for Assessments, Methodology Reviews, and Rebuilding Analyses

PFMC
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