

## GROUND FISH ADVISORY SUBPANEL REPORT ON STOCK DEFINITIONS

Mr. John DeVore, Council staff, and Ms. Keeley Kent, National Marine Fisheries Service (NMFS) briefed the Groundfish Advisory Subpanel (GAP) on stock definitions. The GAP offers the following comments and recommendations on stock definitions.

NMFS has delayed making a status determination for quillback rockfish and all the other species assessed in 2021. The 2021 quillback rockfish stock assessments were conducted for three areas delineated by state boundaries. However, NMFS has rejected any status determinations pending approval of a fishery management plan (FMP) amendment to define and codify stock boundaries for which status determinations can be made. The objective of this agenda item is to decide a process for deciding stock definitions in the FMP before status determinations are made for quillback rockfish and all other groundfish stocks requiring conservation and management. Once an FMP amendment is approved, NMFS would make status determinations and, if any defined stocks are declared overfished, NMFS would notify the Council and the two-year clock for developing a rebuilding plan would begin at that time.

Two different options are proposed by NMFS in [Agenda Item E.3.a, NMFS Report 1](#) to define stocks in the FMP. The GAP reviewed both options and supports Option 1 as our preferred choice.

We note that the [Scientific and Statistical Committee also supports Option 1](#). The GAP believes Option 2 would not be an adequate process to properly deliberate an FMP amendment that seeks to consider and potentially restructure our stock management units so they are more compliant to National Standard 1 guidelines. Should the Council choose to go with Option 1, the GAP supports the NMFS recommendation to prioritize the action under Workload and New Management Measure Priorities (Agenda Item E.6).

The California Department of Fish and Wildlife has already taken inseason action to reduce the take of both quillback and copper rockfishes in 2022. Further, precautionary management measures for these species are under consideration in the 2023-24 biennial harvest specifications and management measures process.

PFMC  
03/09/22