

STOCK ASSESSMENT PLAN AND TERMS OF REFERENCE - FINAL ACTION

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 or data-moderate assessment that require peer review by a Stock Assessment Review (STAR) Panel, 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 eight full assessments in a given year with no more than two full assessments reviewed at each STAR Panel. A maximum of four STAR Panels should be considered for next year if there is capacity at the science centers to do so.

In March 2022, the Council adopted a preliminary list of stocks for assessment in 2023 as follows:

- 1) Full assessments for black rockfish, petrale sole, copper rockfish, quillback rockfish, and yellowtail rockfish or roughey and blackspotted rockfishes;
- 2) Data-Moderate Assessments for longspine thornyhead, shortspine thornyhead, English sole, and rex sole;
- 3) Catch-Only Projection Updates for cowcod, Pacific spiny dogfish, and yelloweye rockfish.

The Council also adopted a preliminary list of candidate species for full assessments in 2025: sablefish, yelloweye rockfish, Pacific spiny dogfish, and yellowtail rockfish or roughey and blackspotted rockfishes (whichever is not assessed in 2023).

Drs. Jim Hastie and Chantel Wetzel, National Marine Fisheries Service (NMFS) Northwest Fisheries Science Center (NWFSC), will report on proposed stock assessment priorities (Attachments 1-5). While the proposed stock assessment prioritization materials are useful in deciding which stocks are assessed next year, it is important to note these "priorities" are informative, not prescriptive.

The Council also requested feedback on the following questions:

- 1) How will 2023 assessments proceed in line with discussions on stock definitions?
- 2) How should stocks of the same species be assessed according to conservation need (i.e., do all areas need to be assessed at once)?
- 3) Presuming nearshore and shelf stocks should be assessed at as fine a scale as the data allows or when areas are combined, how should regional differences in status be evaluated?
- 4) What is the feasibility of a research assessment for shortbelly rockfish in 2023, 2025, or out-of-cycle?

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. The version of the stock assessment TOR provided as Attachment 4 is revised from the draft reviewed in March with language recommended by the SSC Groundfish Subcommittee determined during their April 22 virtual meeting.

The Council will consider the input from NMFS, state and Tribal agencies, advisory bodies, and the public before deciding 2023 and 2025 stock assessment priorities by species, type of assessment (full, data-moderate, or update), and language for the three draft TORs.

Council Action:

Adopt:

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

Reference Materials:

1. Agenda Item F.3, Attachment 1: Summary of Final Information to Inform Selection of Species for Assessment in 2023, Workload, and Other Considerations.
2. Agenda Item F.3, Attachment 2: NMFS Assessment Prioritization Workbook (**Electronic Only**).
3. Agenda Item F.3, Attachment 3: Description of assessment prioritization methodology applied to U.S. West Coast groundfish stock to inform the selection of species assessments in 2023 and 2025.
4. Agenda Item F.3, Attachment 4: Detailed summary of available data to support West Coast groundfish stock assessments in 2023 (**Electronic Only**).
5. Agenda Item F.3, Attachment 5: California Collaborative Fisheries Research Program: Data availability for stock assessments.
6. Agenda Item F.3, Attachment 6: Draft Terms of Reference for the Groundfish Stock Assessment Process for 2023-2024.
7. If received, Public Comments are electronic only.

Agenda Order:

- F.3 Stock Assessment Plan and Terms of Reference – Final Action John DeVore
- a. Reports and Comments of Management Entities and Advisory Bodies
 - b. Public Comment
 - c. **Council Action:** Adopt a Schedule and Final List of Groundfish Stocks for Assessment in 2023 and a Final Stock Assessment TOR; Refine the Preliminary List of Stocks for 2025 Assessments

05/12/22