

GROUND FISH ADVISORY SUBPANEL REPORT ON
STOCK ASSESSMENT CHECK-IN AND PLAN – FINAL ACTION

Dr. Chantel Wetzel, National Marine Fisheries Service (NMFS), and Mr. John DeVore, Pacific Fishery Management Council (Council) staff, briefed the Groundfish Advisory Subpanel (GAP) on final stock assessment planning for 2023. The GAP offers the following comments and recommendations on stock assessment planning, which are consistent with the Scientific and Statistical Committee (SSC) recommendations.

Full Assessments for 2023

The GAP continues to support full stock assessments for the following species in 2023:

Black rockfish
Petrale Sole
Copper rockfish-California only
Canary rockfish

Black rockfish is an important species for the recreational sector and has new ROV survey data that may inform a new full assessment.

Petrale sole is an important trawl target species. The most recent update assessment suggested a decline in recruitment occurring in recent years possibly as far back as 2012. A full assessment is recommended since there is a new ecosystem driver of recruitment available for the next assessment.

Copper rockfish is one of the more important nearshore rockfish species economically for non-trawl fisheries in California. They are a major component of the nearshore rockfish take in southern California and are caught in both the nearshore and shelf rockfish fisheries. There is new data available, including data collected in the California Collaborative Fisheries Research Program (CCFRP), the NMFS hook and line survey, and ROV data that could better inform a full assessment.

Canary rockfish is another important species for both commercial and recreational fisheries. It is another stock assessment that has become stale as it will be 8 years since it was last assessed.

Data-Moderate Assessments for 2023

Shortspine Thornyhead
Rex Sole

Shortspine thornyhead was last assessed in 2013 and is a high attainment species in both fixed gear and trawl fisheries. Rex sole was also last assessed in 2013. A length-based data moderate assessment for both species is warranted to better inform management in the future.

he GAP supports going with Option A (Table 1) for the Stock Assessment Review Panel (STAR) schedule in 2023. We believe we get the biggest bang for the buck with this approach, particularly with STAR Panel 1. We believe the copper rockfish Stock Assessment Team (STAT) will receive numerous requests from the panel to do model runs. Having rex sole and shortspine thornyhead will provide a “buffer” to allow the panel to work on those reviews while allowing plenty of time for the STAT to adequately address the model run requests.

Sablefish

The GAP heard from industry representatives expressing serious concerns about the huge influx of both juvenile and adult sablefish showing up in fisheries. GAP members have heard from trawl fishermen, squid lightboat fishermen, sportfishing charter boat fishermen and even pier based sportfishermen that are encountering unusually large amounts of sablefish. It appears several new year classes have entered into the fisheries. Those GAP members that attended the most recent STAR panel for sablefish did note there were indications of multiple new year classes just beginning to show up in surveys. Industry is concerned that this likely expansion of sablefish biomass has not been accounted for in the latest assessment and that the upcoming management measures beginning in 2023 are not going to be reflective of the actual sablefish biomass. Industry has expressed concern that management may very well be affected beginning in 2023. Industry, and all GAP members, have requested that a new update sablefish assessment be considered immediately to justify those industry concerns.

PFMC
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