

GROUND FISH MANAGEMENT TEAM REPORT ON STOCK ASSESSMENT CHECK-IN PLAN – FINAL ACTION

The Groundfish Management Team (GMT) reviewed the documents in the advanced briefing book and received an overview from Dr. Jim Hastie and Dr. Chantel Wetzel of the National Marine Fisheries Service (NMFS) Northwest Fisheries Science Center (NWFSC) and Mr. John DeVore of the Pacific Fishery Management Council (Council).

Final Recommendations of Species to be Assessed in 2023

The GMT continues to recommend the stocks to be assessed in 2023 that we recommended in our June 2022 statement ([Agenda Item F.3.a, Supplemental GMT Report 1, June 2022](#)), provided again in Table 1 below, except cowcod which has been removed from the list of the requested catch-only updates in 2023. The GMT's recommendations support the ability for the Council to select Option A in [Agenda Item G.7, Attachment 1, September 2022](#), which would include benchmark (full) assessments for copper rockfish in California, assessments for rex sole and shortspine thornyhead, as well as allow additional time for age reading of petrale sole and canary rockfish before their Stock Assessment Review (STAR) panels.

Conducting assessments of copper rockfish only off of California in 2023 and not also assessing the population off Oregon and Washington, in the absence of Scientific and Statistical Committee (SSC) approval, may remove a coastwide stock definition option for copper rockfish during the Amendment 31 process. If the Council sees merit in retaining both coastwide and state boundaries as stock definitions options for copper rockfish, then the GMT requests that update length-based data-moderate assessments for Oregon and Washington, which may potentially be reviewed at the August SSC meeting, be added to the assessment list in 2023. The GMT requests information from the Science Centers as to whether these additional update assessments combined with all assessments presented in Option A would be feasible given assessor capacity.

The recently released West Coast Groundfish Observer Program total mortality report ([Agenda Item G.1.b NWFSC Report 1, September 2022](#)) indicates that recent estimated total mortality of cowcod continues to be low (i.e., estimated total removals of 13 mt in 2021) relative to the 2022 Annual Catch Target (ACT) of 50 mt. This mortality is within the current non-trawl sector specific ACTs included in the 2023-24 Harvest Specification and Management Measure rulemaking package, negating the short-term need for potential limited increases to the Overfishing Limit that might result from a catch-only update.

Table 1. The GMT’s recommended species to be assessed in 2023, the recommended assessment type, and the NMFS rank for each species.

Species	GMT Recommended Assessment Type	NMFS Rank³
Black rockfish ¹	Full Assessment	1
Copper rockfish off California only ^{1,4}	Full Assessment	29
Petrale sole	Full Assessment	3
Canary rockfish	Full Assessment	13
Shortspine thornyhead	Data-Moderate	21
Rex Sole	Data-Moderate	23
Widow rockfish	Catch Only Update	12
Yelloweye rockfish	Catch Only Update	10

¹ The assessment will most likely have multiple assessment areas along the U.S. West Coast which will require the Council to take action at or by the November 2023 Council meeting to identify a preliminary preferred alternative to define the management areas.

² If coastwide stock status is considered within Amendment 31 update length-based data-moderate assessments may also need to be conducted in 2023.

³ [Agenda Item F.3., Supplemental REVISED Attachment 2, June 2022](#)

Finally, the GMT reiterates our recommendations for species to be assessed in 2025 (Table 2), recognizing that this list is likely to change between now and 2024.

Table 2. The GMT’s recommended species to be assessed in 2025, the recommended assessment type, and the NMFS rank for each species.

Species	GMT Recommended Assessment Type	NMFS Rank³
Sablefish	Full	5
Rougheye and blackspotted rockfishes	Full	27
Pacific spiny dogfish	Full	43
China rockfish	Full	25
Aurora rockfish	Full	63
Yelloweye rockfish	Full or Update	9
Quillback rockfish	Full	4
Yellowtail rockfish	Full or Full and Update⁴	10

³ [Agenda Item F.3, Supplemental REVISED Attachment 2, June 2022](#)

⁴ Either full assessments for both areas north and south of 40° 10' N. lat. could be conducted or potentially an update north of 40° 10' N. lat. and a full assessment south of 40° 10' N. lat.