Agenda Item H.5.a
Supplemental SSC Report 1
November 2022

SCIENTIFIC AND STATISTICAL COMMITTEE REPORT ON STOCK DEFINITIONS

The Scientific and Statistical Committee (SSC) discussed the proposed range of alternatives for Council consideration for Amendment 31 to the Pacific Coast Groundfish Fishery Management Plan, as well as the document prepared for this agenda item (Agenda Item H.5, Attachment 1). As noted in the SSC's June and September 2022 statements on this agenda item, defining stocks through an amendment to the Groundfish FMP involves a combination of scientific and policy considerations, and the SSC limited discussion to scientific considerations.

The SSC discussed the white paper that synthesizes the state of the knowledge for priority stocks and the management implications of the different prioritized stock definitions. The SSC supports the proposed alternatives for all species listed in Attachment 1, with the exception of sunset/vermillion rockfish. The SSC recommends replacing alternative 3 for vermilion/sunset rockfish in favor of a new alternative 4 that draws a line at Point Conception and also allows for state-specific breaks. This better aligns with the sunset/vermillion rockfish population structure and eliminates the need for new assessments. In the future, a generalized version of alternative 3 that allows for latitudinal breaks informed by scientific evidence could be considered.

The SSC recommends examining the evidence for stock structure on a species-specific basis for nearshore stocks. Past SSC recommendations for stock definitions have generally been consistent with the recognition that nearshore rockfish are more likely to have finer-scale population structure compared to shelf or slope groundfish species. Typically, management of nearshore stocks is not based on coastwide overfishing limits, acceptable biological catches, and status determinations because the evidence supports population structure at a finer scale than coastwide. In cases where there is a lack of data on spatial structure, the SSC recommends stock definitions and stock assessments at finer spatial scales, based on scientific evidence for similar species and data availability.

PFMC
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