

GROUND FISH MANAGEMENT TEAM REPORT ON AMENDMENT 31 STOCK DEFINITIONS – FINAL ACTION

The Groundfish Management Team (GMT) received a briefing from Pacific Fishery Management Council (Council) staff Todd Phillips on the [Attachment 1](#) analysis and reviewed the briefing book items. The GMT provides the following recommendations and considerations for the Council.

The GMT continues to recommend Alternative 1 (single stock) for canary rockfish, Dover sole, Pacific spiny dogfish, petrale sole, rex sole, sablefish, squarespot rockfish, and shortspine thornyhead and Alternative 2 (i.e., two stocks separated at 40° 10' N. lat.) for lingcod. These alternatives align with the best scientific information available, the assessment area stratification, and how these species are currently managed (as detailed in [Agenda Item F.7.a, Supplemental GMT Report 1, March 2023](#)).

Nearshore Species

When considering management implications of the proposed alternatives, **the GMT continues to recommend Alternative 3 for the nearshore species being considered in this Agenda Item (i.e., black rockfish, quillback rockfish, and copper rockfish),** which appears to result in stock definitions that are most similar to current management. Alternative 3 maintains the ability to calculate state-specific harvest targets/shares used currently for these species. The GMT reminds the Council that Alternative 3 would maintain the relative level of autonomy each state utilizes in the management of their nearshore fisheries, including but not limited to Oregon's black/blue/deacon complex. In general, Alternative 2a would require the development of a new, discretionary state sharing arrangement between Washington and Oregon, either formal or informal, which would add management complexity and workload. **Now and in the future, the GMT recommends consistency in stock definitions for nearshore species unless there is clearly stated rationale for species-specific exceptions.**

Vermilion/Sunset Rockfish

The GMT recommends Alternative 3, which defines vermilion/sunset rockfish as three stocks separated by state boundaries, with the Oregon stock and Washington stock each consisting of vermilion rockfish, and the California stock consisting of a cryptic vermilion/sunset rockfish species pair. This alternative is recommended because it is the closest in alignment to current management and is less likely to increase management burden.

Process Timeline

The analysis proposed two alternative timelines for considering new scientific information regarding stock definitions, and pathways for considering changes to stock definitions to be added to Council Operating Procedures 9. **The GMT recommends Proposal 2 for the integration of new stock definition(s) information into the biennial process.** This timeline would allow for the specification of new stock definitions with the aid of stock assessors, and Final Preferred Alternative stock definition would be recommended by the Council before the stock assessors begin preliminary work on the assessments.