

SCIENTIFIC AND STATISTICAL COMMITTEE REPORT ON  
AMENDMENT 31: STOCK DEFINITIONS – FINAL ACTION

Todd Phillips (Council staff) briefed the Scientific and Statistical Committee (SSC) on the analytical document and preliminary preferred alternatives (PPAs) for Amendment 31 (Agenda Item H.3, Attachment 1) that are being considered for final action regarding 14 priority groundfish species. Vermilion rockfish and vermilion/sunset rockfish were the only two species without PPAs. Alternative 2A, which identifies a combined Washington-Oregon stock and a separate California stock, was added as a potential option for quillback rockfish. As stated in March 2023, the SSC finds scientific support for defining stocks of vermilion rockfish and vermilion/sunset rockfish at a scale finer than coastwide, but does not find scientific justification for a particular alternative. The SSC reiterates from its March 2023 statement ([Agenda Item F.7.a, Supp SSC Report 1, March 2023](#)) that there is scientific support for Alternative 3 (stock delineation at state boundaries) for quillback rockfish.

The presentation also outlined two alternative timelines for the process of stock definition, which will ultimately be integrated into Council Operating Procedure 9. The SSC recommends adopting Proposal 2 (Agenda Item H.3, Attachment 1, Fig. 4) for the biennial groundfish management cycle. Proposal 2 involves accepting final action on stock definitions prior to the pre-assessment phase, as recommended by the SSC in November 2021 ([Agenda Item E.2.a, Supp SSC Report 1, Nov 2021](#)).

The SSC concurs with the recommendations provided by the Northwest Fisheries Science Center (NWFSC) report on proposed approaches for combining multiple sub-area assessments (Agenda Item H.3.a, NWFSC Report 1). The simplest and most intuitive approach to estimating acceptable biological catch (ABC) would be to weight sub-area sigmas by the proportional sub-area overfishing limits to estimate stock-level sigma. The standard approach to increasing sigma over time should then be applied. When multiple area assessments are conducted, the SSC recommends applying 40-10 and 25-5 harvest control rules to the stock-level ABC to calculate stock-level annual catch limits in each year. The SSC Groundfish Subcommittee will revisit questions regarding whether and how to define stock status for stocks with multiple sub-area assessments and stock categories at an upcoming meeting in August 2023.

The SSC reviewed draft language for Amendment 31 to the Pacific Groundfish Fishery Management Plan (Agenda Item H.3, Attachment 2) and has no concerns with the revised text.