



Pacific Fishery Management Council

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Marc Gorelnik, Chair | Merrick J. Burden, Executive Director

MEMORANDUM

DATE: June 2, 2023
TO: Scientific and Statistical Committee
FROM: Marlene A. Bellman, Staff Officer
SUBJECT: June 2023 Council Meeting Materials

The Pacific Fishery Management Council (Council) June 2023 meeting will be held in person from June 21 through June 27, 2023, in Vancouver, Washington. The Scientific and Statistical Committee (SSC) will meet **in person** with a web broadcast on Wednesday, June 21 and Thursday, June 22, starting at 8 a.m. each day. Your meeting materials are enclosed.

Instructions for how to connect to Council and Advisory Body meetings will be posted on the Council's [June 2023 Meeting webpage](#) prior to the first day of the meeting. Upon entering the meeting remotely, please modify your entry to reflect your full identification (full name and affiliation). This additional information helps participants identify speakers during public comment. All meetings are open to the public and at least one opportunity for public comment has been scheduled for each meeting day.

This meeting is being conducted in person with a web broadcast that provides the opportunity for remote public comment. In the event an outage occurs, or technical issues arise that impact the experience of remote attendees, we will attempt to resolve them but, ultimately, we cannot guarantee that they will be resolved satisfactorily.

SSC Administrative Matters

On Wednesday June 21, the SSC meeting will be called to order by the SSC Chair and new members or designated alternates will be introduced. Next, the SSC will receive a briefing from the Council's Executive Director, Merrick Burden, to provide clarification on Council direction, informational updates, etc. The SSC will finalize their June 2023 meeting agenda and the April 2023 meeting minutes. Subcommittee assignments will be reviewed and updated as necessary.

Two additional SSC administrative matters are included in the SSC Agenda with SSC reports scheduled to be provided at future Council meetings. National Marine Fisheries Service (NMFS) has been working on Technical Guidance for National Standard 1 Reference Points and Status Determinations for several years. It has taken some considerable effort to develop a logical approach to deal with the many issues and the diversity of regional approaches that have evolved over the past 25 years. A draft National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration (NOAA)

Technical Memorandum document is provided to the SSC and was also discussed at a recent [Council Coordinating Committee \(CCC\) meeting](#) (May 22-25, 2023). Dr. Richard Methot will be available to discuss the document and solicit initial feedback. Feedback will be summarized for discussion at the October CCC meeting, prior to document publication. A Council meeting agenda item is anticipated in September 2023 for future SSC reporting.

A second NMFS topic for SSC feedback is related to estimating nearshore groundfish catch distribution shoreward and seaward of three nautical miles (federal versus state waters) to inform scoping during Phase 2 of groundfish stock definitions. Dr. Sean Matson will be available to discuss the preliminary approach and solicit initial feedback. A Council meeting agenda item is anticipated in November 2023 for scoping Phase 2 stock definition complexes and future SSC reporting.

C. Council Administrative Matters

C.7 Membership Appointments and Council Operating Procedures

Under Membership Appointments and Council Operating Procedures (COPs), the SSC will have a closed session to review the nomination of Christian Heath for the vacant Oregon Department of Fish and Wildlife seat on the Groundfish Management Team. This nomination was made as of advanced briefing book publication; the SSC may be asked to review any additional vacant management or technical team seats which come in before the June Council meeting. The SSC recommendations will be offered during the Council Closed Executive Session on Thursday, June 22.

In March 2023, the Council adopted a Harassment Reporting Procedures Policy (posted on the [Rules and Procedures](#) page) and discussed additional steps to promote a respectful and harassment-free work environment. Attachment 6 contains the staff-recommended measures, including COP updates, along with a summary of the Council, Advisory Body, and Tribal comments from [March 2023](#). Under this agenda item, the Council should identify the measures for implementation and next steps.

C.2 Council Meeting and Process Efficiencies

In April 2022, the Council directed staff to bring forward recommendations to improve Council operational efficiency. An initial staff white paper was provided in September 2022 ([Agenda Item C.3, Attachment 1, Sept 2022](#)) and a second white paper in April 2023 ([Agenda Item F.2, Attachment 1, April 2023](#)). In the third white paper for this meeting (Agenda Item C.2, Attachment 1), Council staff lay out a process and schedule for considering changes in Council procedures that would culminate in preparation of submission of the next funding request to NOAA for the 2025-2029 period. The proposed process would entail several steps, beginning with an analysis of options by staff, vetting of the analysis and results by the Budget Committee, consideration by a “committee of the whole” of Council members in a strategic planning meeting, and final decisions regarding alignment of Council efficiencies and the next grant cycle by the Council. The SSC may wish to treat this agenda item as informational, however if SSC comments are provided, they would be reported to the Council on Friday, June 23.

C.8 Future Council Meeting Agenda and Workload Planning

The SSC will discuss future workload planning matters and report to the Council on this matter under Agenda Item C.8 scheduled for Tuesday, June 27. Future workload planning will include discussion with SSC subcommittees regarding any updates to the groundfish stock assessment cycle and development of coastal pelagic species (CPS) accepted practices guidelines for stock assessments. The SSC statement regularly provides a table with important meeting dates and timelines.

G. Coastal Pelagic Species

G.2 Pacific Mackerel Assessment and Biennial Management Measures – Final Action

At this meeting, the Council will adopt biomass estimates for 2023 and 2024, and resulting management and harvest specifications for Pacific mackerel, including overfishing limit (OFL), acceptable biological catch (ABC), and annual catch limit (ACL), for two consecutive fishing years (2023-24 and 2024-25).

A stock assessment team from NMFS Southwest Fisheries Science Center produced a benchmark assessment (Agenda Item G.2, Attachment 1) and a Stock Assessment Review (STAR) panel reviewed the assessment in April 2023. The SSC will consider the assessment and STAR panel report (Agenda Item G.2, Attachment 2) and provide a recommendation on the adoption of the assessment, biomass estimate, as well as an OFL and category designation. The SSC will provide recommendations under Agenda Item G.2 on Thursday, June 22.

G.3 Essential Fish Habitat Amendment – Final Action

At this meeting, the Council is scheduled to adopt their final preferred alternative (FPA) for an Amendment to the CPS Fishery Management Plan (FMP) to define Essential Fish Habitat (EFH). As part of the CPS EFH review, a literature review was completed and a call for information was issued. The literature and other information produced from those efforts form the basis for the EFH descriptions and other EFH components.

The SSC is asked to evaluate whether the scientific literature and other information represent an adequate basis for making EFH decisions, and the Alternatives Document (Agenda Item G.3, Attachment 1) and EFH Appendix (Agenda Item G.3, Attachment 2) provide sufficient rationale for making the following EFH decisions:

- Based on different habitat needs and associations (in particular a benthic habitat association), market squid EFH is proposed to be separated from CPS finfish, with its own spatial extent and habitat descriptions.
- EFH spatial extent for market squid is based on a species distribution model (SDM) applied to CPS species. An addendum to the EFH Appendix (Agenda Item G.3, Attachment 2) provides methodological details of how the SDM was applied. The SSC is asked to evaluate whether the modeling approach used to define EFH provides a reasonable scientific basis for decision making by the Council.

Overall, the Council requests the SSC provide a recommendation regarding the scientific basis to define CPS EFH. The SSC will provide recommendations under Agenda Item G.3 on Thursday, June 22.

H. Groundfish Management

H.3 Amendment 31 Stock Definitions – Final Action

Under this agenda item, the Council is scheduled to adopt their FPA for Amendment 31 to the Pacific Coast Groundfish FMP to define stocks for 14 managed groundfish species (i.e., priority species). The FMP is provided with red-lined revisions to support this action in Agenda Item H.3, Attachment 2. The Council will need to formally adopt changes to the FMP under this agenda item.

Under this item, the SSC is requested to consider the methods by which species with sub-area assessments can be combined to achieve harvest specifications for the stock defined area, as described in Section 3.2.1 of Agenda Item H.3, Attachment 1. Additional considerations are presented in Agenda Item H.3, NWFSC Report 1.

The Council will also need to consider how to incorporate the stock definition process into the groundfish management timeline. COP 9, Schedule 1 provides a detailed decision-making timeline which governs the biennial harvest specifications and management measure process. Council staff have drafted two timeline proposals for Council consideration. These proposals are detailed in the analytical document in Chapter 4 (Agenda Item H.3, Attachment 1). The SSC should review these proposals and comment, as appropriate. The Council is anticipated to provide guidance on the preferred proposal and any recommended changes, which will be brought back at the September 2023 meeting under the Membership Appointments and Council Operating Procedures agenda item for the Council to adopt. The SSC will provide any recommendations under Agenda Item H.3 on Saturday, June 24.

H.7 2025-2026 Harvest Specifications and Management Measures Planning

Under this agenda item, the Council is scheduled to adopt a detailed process and schedule governing the development of harvest specifications and related management measures for 2025-2026 groundfish fisheries (Agenda Item H.7, Attachment 1). Key decision deadlines in this cycle are outlined for adopting groundfish stock assessments, harvest specifications, exempted fishing permits, and management measures. The SSC will provide recommendations under Agenda Item H.7 on Sunday, June 25.

Thank you all for your dedication to West Coast fishery management and the Council process.

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Enclosures include:

Council and SSC Administrative Matters

1. Agenda Item A.3 – Council Meeting Agenda
2. Agenda Item C.2 – Council Meeting and Process Efficiencies
3. Agenda Item C.7 – Membership Appointments and Council Operating Procedures

4. Agenda Item C.8 – Future Council Meeting Agenda and Workload Planning

Coastal Pelagic Species Management

5. Agenda Item G.2 – Pacific Mackerel Assessment and Biennial Management Measures – Final Action
6. Agenda Item G.3 – Essential Fish Habitat Amendment – Final Action

Groundfish Management

7. Agenda Item H.3 – Amendment 31 Stock Definitions – Final Action
8. Agenda Item H.7 – 2025-2026 Harvest Specifications and Management Measures Planning

SSC Agenda, Draft SSC Minutes, Closed Session, Etc.

9. June 2023 SSC Agenda
10. Draft April 2023 SSC Minutes
11. SSC Supplemental Materials
12. Closed Session
13. Informational Reports
14. General Information and Council Roster