

SCIENTIFIC AND STATISTICAL COMMITTEE REPORT  
ON PHASE 2 STOCK DEFINITIONS – PLANNING

The Pacific Fishery Management Council (Council) completed Phase 1 of the stock definitions process with the adoption of Amendment 31 to the Pacific Coast Groundfish Fishery Management Plan (FMP) in June 2023. Phase 2 of the process will involve several steps: (a) defining stocks for at least 75 species, (b) selection of whether any of the stocks currently in the FMP should be redesignated as Ecosystem Component (EC) species, (c) identifying whether management of any stocks should be removed from the FMP or delegated to the states, and (d) revising groundfish stock complexes.

The proposed schedule for developing the Phase 2 stock definitions (Agenda Item E.8, Attachment 2) is focused on stock definition and the catch proportion analysis. It should be extended to include science-related activities expected to be associated with specification of groundfish stock complexes, identification of EC species, and consideration of either removal from the FMP or delegation of management authority to the states, noting that these activities have substantial scientific and policy components.

The SSC recommends reviewing the following methodologies before they are applied (see also Agenda Item C.8.a, Supplemental SSC Report 1), specifically:

- the methodology to be used for the state/Federal catch proportion analysis for recreational fisheries; and
- how the approach proposed to be used for catch proportion analysis for commercial fisheries developed by Sean Matson ([June 2023 Briefing Book, SSC Materials](#)) was revised based on the review by the SSC in June 2023.

Additional review of methods may be needed if information other than catch proportions (e.g., sea floor mapping in Oregon and California) are to be used as part of the basis for deciding whether stocks are to be delegated to the states.

The SSC recommends that the conceptual approach for the stock definition step include the aspects considered during Phase 1 within an interdisciplinary framework, as previously recommended by the SSC (see [Agenda Item F.4.a, Supplemental SSC Report 1, June 2022](#) and [Agenda Item F.7.a, Supplemental SSC Report 1, March 2023](#)). In addition, the literature review should consider variation in life history characteristics (e.g., growth, maturity) when identifying stocks for species. There is also a need to develop a way to identify stocks for data-poor species - for example based on information for similar species. The productivity and susceptibility analysis should take into account climate change risks and make use of ecosystem information.

The SSC anticipates that its review of the literature survey for undefined groundfish stocks and the productivity and susceptibility analysis will focus on the interpretation of the information in relation to stock definition rather than on basic material.

A workshop related to accounting for closed areas in assessment and management would be valuable, as this may help to inform the delegation of stocks to states. In addition, there would be value in the SSC reviewing any methods that are planned for developing stock complexes.

PFMC  
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