

GROUND FISH ADVISORY SUBPANEL REPORT ON INITIAL STOCK ASSESSMENT PLAN AND TERMS OF REFERENCE

Full Assessments for 2025

The Groundfish Advisory Subpanel (GAP) recommends the following species be considered for full assessments in 2025 (not in priority order):

- Sablefish
- Quillback rockfish off California
- Widow rockfish
- Yellowtail rockfish
- Chilipepper rockfish
- A subset of the slope species (aurora, rougheye, splitnose, bank, or redbanded rockfish)
- Petrale sole

Sablefish continues to be a very important commercial species. The previous two assessments, including last year's update assessment, have suggested very strong recruitment in recent years. There has been some discussion within the Council that we should conduct a new full assessment to validate those recent recruitment events.

Quillback rockfish has become a constraining nearshore species for the recreational and commercial sectors, particularly in north-central and northern California. It has been recently declared overfished and a rebuilding plan established. There may be sufficient new data to inform a new full assessment.

Widow rockfish is a very important species for our commercial trawl sectors. The last full assessment was conducted in 2015, so it is becoming stale and the decreasing annual catch limits (ACLs) are sure to become constraining to our trawl fisheries. Widow could also be a candidate for an update assessment.

Yellowtail rockfish is a very important stock both recreationally and commercially, particularly for fisheries north of 40° 10' N lat. The last full benchmark assessment was conducted in 2017.

Chilipepper rockfish is a key species for both commercial and recreational fisheries. With the liberalization of our rockfish conservation areas (RCA) and the Cowcod Conservation Areas, it is expected that fishing pressure on chilipepper will increase. Stationary vertical jig gear usage within the non-trawl RCA will also increase pressure on this species. It has not been assessed since 2015, so a new benchmark assessment is warranted.

The GAP suggests we may want to consider conducting new benchmark assessments for one of our slope species. Aurora rockfish was last assessed in 2013 so that is now a stale assessment and likely to impact ACLs moving forward. Other possible suggestions for review might be splitnose

rockfish, rougheye/blackspotted rockfish and bank rockfish. Bank rockfish landings have been increasing in recreational fisheries as that fishery has moved into deeper waters.

The GAP also expressed concern about the recent petrale sole assessment that will result in reduced ACLs in 2025 and beyond and being in the precautionary zone starting in 2026. The GAP suggests the Council may want to consider a new full assessment for petrale sole. An environmental index has been developed to better inform estimates of recruitment and cohort strength in recent model years. Both the Stock Assessment Review Panel and petrale Stock Assessment Team agreed that this promising tool needed more evaluation before using it as an index of abundance, but may now be acceptable for incorporation into the assessment.

Data-Moderate Assessments for 2025

1. English Sole
2. Chilipepper rockfish (if a full assessment isn't conducted)

2024/2025 Workshops

Ms. Marlene Bellman, Council staff, also briefed the GAP on upcoming Scientific and Statistical Committee workshops this year, which includes a sablefish management strategy evaluation workshop, a spiny dogfish harvest control rule workshop, and a closed area workshop. A GAP representative is expected to attend these workshops.

Terms of Reference

The GAP also reviewed the revisions to the Terms of Reference and finds those revisions acceptable.

Stock Assessment Prioritization Tool

The GAP appreciates the new [online stock assessment prioritization tool](#) developed by Dr. Chantel Wetzel and the Northwest Fisheries Science Center.

PFMC
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