

FINAL STOCK ASSESSMENT PLAN AND TERMS OF REFERENCE

This agenda item concerns planning for groundfish stock assessments anticipated to be completed in 2025 and 2027 to inform the harvest specifications and management measures for groundfish fisheries in 2027 and beyond.

In March 2024, the Pacific Fishery Management Council (Council) adopted a preliminary list of groundfish species to be assessed in 2025 and for potential assessment in 2027. The decision on which stocks to assess in the next two assessment cycles entails whether the assessment should be a full assessment, a data-moderate assessment, or an update assessment, and whether they require peer review by a Stock Assessment Review (STAR) Panel or only a review by the Scientific and Statistical Committee (SSC). Council policy on this subject in the past has been to schedule no more than eight full assessments in a given year, with no more than two full assessments reviewed at each STAR Panel. A maximum number of STAR Panels should be considered for next year (2025). See Agenda Item F.4 for species not yet defined as stocks under Amendment 31 to the Pacific Coast Groundfish Fishery Management Plan.

2025 Proposed Species (March 2024)	Assessment Type	Anticipated Assessment Area(s)	Stock Definition
Sablefish	Benchmark	Coastwide	Amendment 31
Quillback rockfish off California	Benchmark	South of 42° N. Lat.	Amendment 31
Rougheye/Blackspotted rockfish	Benchmark	Coastwide	
Yellowtail rockfish	Benchmark (both) or Benchmark (South) & Update (North)	Coastwide, or North of 40° 10' N. lat. South of 40° 10' N. lat.	
Chilipepper rockfish	Benchmark or Data moderate	Coastwide	
Widow rockfish	Update	Coastwide	
Petrale sole	Benchmark	Coastwide	Amendment 31
Yelloweye rockfish	Benchmark or Update	Coastwide	
English sole	Data moderate	Coastwide	
Canary rockfish	Catch-only update	Coastwide	Amendment 31
Shortspine thornyhead	Catch-only update	Coastwide	Amendment 31

2027 Proposed Species (March 2024)	Assessment Type	Anticipated Assessment Area(s)	Stock Definition
Pacific spiny dogfish shark	Benchmark	Coastwide	Amendment 31
Vermilion/Sunset rockfish	TBD	Multiple Areas	Amendment 31
Petrale sole (if not done in 2025)	Benchmark	Coastwide	Amendment 31
Yelloweye rockfish (if not done in 2025)	TBD	Coastwide	
Slope rockfish species (TBD)	TBD	Coastwide	

Drs. Jim Hastie and Chantel Wetzel, National Marine Fisheries Service (NMFS) Northwest Fisheries Science Center, will report on proposals for stock assessment priorities and scheduling (Attachments 1 and 2). Attachment 2 contains a summary of available data to support groundfish stock assessments. Additionally, staff from the Oregon Department of Fish and Wildlife (ODFW) summarized the data available to inform groundfish stock assessments (Agenda Item C.7, ODFW Report) in response to a Council member request at the April Council meeting ([Agenda Item G.4.a, Supplemental Council Member Report 1, April 2024](#)). Additional discussions regarding the Council member request to summarize the data enterprise is expected under Workload Planning. An [online groundfish assessment prioritization tool](#) was developed to present the overall scoring by species and for each factor. While the proposed stock assessment priorities are helpful in deciding which stocks are assessed next year, it is important to note these “priorities” are informative, not prescriptive. Additional considerations are provided in a report related to concerns regarding assessment frequency and capacity (NMFS-NWFSC Report 1).

There are three Terms of Reference (TOR) that guide the stock assessment process; a.) specifies how stock assessment reviews should occur and defines the roles and responsibilities of various entities contributing to this process, with a supplemental accepted practices guidelines document; b.) guides the development of rebuilding analyses used to develop harvest specifications and rebuilding plans for overfished and rebuilding species; and c.) guides how new methodologies that inform analyses used in groundfish and coastal pelagic species management decision-making are reviewed. Updates to the accepted practices guidelines are anticipated in the fall by the SSC Groundfish Subcommittee (via a public meeting), after any methodology reviews and/or workshops have occurred. A revised accepted practices guidelines document is planned for the March 2025 Council meeting.

Only the stock assessment review process and rebuilding analyses TOR documents have recommended edits for the next cycle. The stock assessment review TOR provided as Attachment 3 (clean proposed version) and Attachment 4 (suggested edits since last cycle’s 2023-2024 version) is revised from the draft reviewed in March 2024.

The Council will consider the input from NMFS, state and Tribal agencies, advisory bodies, and the public before deciding on a schedule for final 2025 and preliminary 2027 stock assessment priorities by species, type of assessment (full, data-moderate, or update), and language for the three 2025-2026 TOR documents.

Council Action:

Adopt:

- 1. A list and schedule of groundfish stocks for assessment (by type) in 2025,**
- 2. Preliminary list of stocks for assessment in 2027,**
- 3. A Terms of Reference for groundfish stock assessment review,**
- 4. A Terms of Reference for groundfish rebuilding analyses,**
- 5. A Terms of Reference for methodology reviews.**

Reference Materials:

1. Agenda Item F.3, Attachment 1: Groundfish Assessment Prioritization to Inform the Selection of Species for Assessment in 2025 and Additional Considerations.

2. Agenda Item F.3, Attachment 2: Summary of available data to support U.S. West Coast groundfish stock assessments (*Electronic Only*).
3. Agenda Item F.3, Attachment 3: Draft Terms of Reference for the Groundfish Stock Assessment Review Process for 2025-2026 (*Electronic Only*) (clean version, all edits accepted).
4. Agenda Item F.3, Attachment 4: Draft Terms of Reference for the Groundfish Stock Assessment Review Process for 2025-2026 (*Electronic Only*) (edits since 2023-2024 version).
5. Agenda Item F.3, Attachment 5: Draft Terms of Reference for the Groundfish Rebuilding Analysis for 2025-2026.
6. Agenda Item F.3, Attachment 6: Draft Terms of Reference for the Methodology Review Process for Groundfish and Coastal Pelagic Species for 2025-2026.
7. Agenda Item F.3.a, NMFS-NWFSC Report 1: Analysis of Assessment Capacity and Target Frequencies for Conducting West Coast Groundfish Assessments.
8. If received, Public Comments are electronic only.

Agenda Order:

- F.3 Final Stock Assessment Plan and Terms of Reference Marlene A. Bellman
- a. Reports and Comments of Management Entities and Advisory Bodies
 - b. Public Comment
 - c. **Council Action:** Adopt a Schedule and Final List of Groundfish Stocks for Assessment in 2025; Adopt Final Terms of Reference for Assessments, Methodology Reviews, and Rebuilding Analysis; and Refine the Preliminary List of Stocks for 2027 Assessments, As Needed

PFMC
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