

GROUNDFISH ADVISORY SUBPANEL REPORT ON FINAL STOCK ASSESSMENT
PLAN AND TERMS OF REFERENCE

Groundfish Advisory Subpanel (GAP) summary of 2025 Assessments

Species	GAP Recommendation of Assessment Type	Anticipated Assessment Area a/	GMT Recommendation
Chilipepper rockfish	Benchmark	Coastwide	Same as GAP
Quillback rockfish	Benchmark	South of 42° N. lat.	Same as GAP
Sablefish	Benchmark	Coastwide	Same as GAP
Rougeye/blackspotted rockfish	Benchmark	Coastwide	Same as GAP
Yellowtail rockfish	Benchmark	North of 40° 10' N. lat.	Update
Redbanded rockfish	Benchmark	Coastwide	Same as GAP
Widow rockfish	Update	Coastwide	Benchmark
Yelloweye rockfish	Update	Coastwide	Same as GAP
Canary rockfish	Catch-Only Projection	Coastwide	Same as GAP
Shortspine thornyhead	Catch-Only Projection	Coastwide	Same as GAP
Black rockfish	Catch-Only Projection	Oregon	Same as GAP
Petrale sole	Catch-Only Projection	Coastwide	Same as GAP
Darkblotched rockfish	Catch-Only Projection	Coastwide	Not included

a/ Pending stock definitions action(s) prior to being assessed

Full Assessments

Chilipepper rockfish is a key species for both commercial and recreational fisheries. With the liberalization of the trawl and non-trawl rockfish conservation areas (RCAs) and the Cowcod Conservation Area (CCA), it is expected that fishing pressure on chilipepper will continue to increase. It is expected that we will see increased pressure on this valuable species with non-bottom contact gear usage with non-trawl RCA. It has not been assessed since 2015, so a new benchmark assessment is warranted.

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, but the GAP is uncertain. We continue to urge the collection and processing of any new data that will inform the assessment.

Sablefish continues to be a very important commercial species and may become an important recreational species given limited other opportunities. 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 as well as with some in the fishing industry that we should conduct a new full assessment to validate those recent strong recruitment events.

Rougheye and blackspotted rockfish are very important species for both the trawl fisheries and fixed gear fisheries. These were last assessed in 2013 so that assessment is stale and may lead to Category 3 designation soon. There has been ongoing research on the genetics of blackspotted and rougheye rockfish that has achieved better estimates of the proportion of each species along the West Coast. The new data better estimates growth and maturity as well.

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. Similar to chilipepper, with the allowance for non-bottom contact gear within the non-trawl RCA, catch of yellowtail rockfish is expected to greatly increase.

Redbanded rockfish is a highly attained species within the slope rockfish complex. This species has not been previously assessed. The GAP believes a new benchmark assessment is warranted.

Update Assessments for 2025

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) will likely become constraining to our trawl fisheries.

The GAP believes doing an update assessment for yelloweye rockfish is warranted. The stock is currently scheduled to be rebuilt in 2028 so doing an update to confirm that rebuilding is on track may be a good idea.

Catch-Only Projections

The GAP agrees with the GMT's proposal for catch-only projections for canary rockfish, shortspine thornyhead, black rockfish (Oregon), and petrale sole. While the projections may result in only minor increases for these stocks, given the recent assessment results and likely high attainment with the forthcoming constraining ACLs, any additional amounts of fish would be crucial for the fishing industry.

For darkblotched rockfish, given the high bycatch events seen in recent years and declining ACLs, the GAP recommends doing a catch-only projection.

The GAP does *not* agree with the Groundfish Management Team's (GMT) recommendation for a catch-only projection for bocaccio, given the low attainment, and it is not likely to be

constraining. The GAP also does not support the GMT proposal for a catch-only projection for vermillion/sunset. The projection may result in lower ACLs as we move into the next management cycle. The GAP notes that the California Department of Fish and Wildlife has recently implemented very strict recreational bag limits and reduced open access trip limits for vermillion rockfish.

2024/2025 Workshops

Council staff officer Ms. Marlene Bellman briefed the GAP in March on proposed upcoming workshops this year related to stock assessments that include a sablefish management strategy evaluation workshop, a spiny dogfish harvest control rule workshop, and a closed-area workshop. The GAP will provide further input on what we would like to see at a closed-area workshop in our Agenda Item C.7 Future Workload statement.

As we establish the groundfish stocks to be assessed in 2025, groundfish pre-assessment workshops will be necessary. The GAP recommends that these pre-assessment groundfish workshops should be better publicized so that we may attain critical input from the fishing communities. One or more GAP representatives are expected to attend all of these workshops.

Assessments for 2027

Though it is quite early in the process, the GAP has come up with a list of species that may warrant strong consideration for full benchmark assessments in 2027. Those species, in no particular order of priority, include the following:

- Yelloweye rockfish
- Cowcod rockfish
- Black rockfish (Oregon only)
- Canary rockfish
- Petrale sole
- Lingcod (North and South)

Terms of Reference

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

Future Stock Assessments and Harvest Specifications

Looking to the future of stock assessments and resulting harvest specifications, the GAP continues to be concerned by the added layers of precaution under the “new” sigma approach that was adopted in 2019. Since that time, we have felt the impacts of the sigma deductions to acceptable biological catch/ACLs in all of the fisheries that GAP members represent - during the same period that we have faced unprecedented disruptions from COVID-19, climate change, inflation, increasing costs, and unstable market conditions. The GMT clearly delineated the effects of the methodology informing sigma values in Tables 1 and 2 from its March 2019 report ([Agenda Item G.3.a, Supplemental GMT Report 1, March 2019](#)), which we have pasted into an appendix below. The GAP and GMT both identified the significant economic impacts of this sigma approach ([Agenda Item G.3.a, Supplemental GAP Report 1, March 2019](#) and [Agenda Item G.3.a,](#)

[Supplemental GMT Report 1, March 2019](#)). With limited survey and assessment funding and the large number of stocks managed within the groundfish FMP, more stocks are likely to face “time penalty” deductions in the harvest specifications. The GAP recommends the Council begin a holistic review of the sigma approach and its impacts, and begin development of solutions to protect against lost potential economic and community opportunities. For example, the Council may reconsider the phased-in approaches such as those outlined by NMFS in its June 2019 report ([Agenda Item D.5.a, NMFS Report 1, June 2019](#)). Additionally, the GAP understands there is consideration of using risk tables developed through Fishery Ecosystem Plan Initiative 4 to modify sigma which could potentially be discussed within this holistic approach.

Appendix 1. Staleness “penalty” deductions from OFL under time-varying sigma for P*=0.45 and P*=0.40 stocks ([Agenda Item G.3.a, Supplemental GMT Report 1, March 2019](#))

Table 1. Deductions from the OFL to the ABC for P*=0.45 (maximum in the FMP) based on the old sigma approach and the new sigma approach with a higher base (year - 1) deduction that progressively increases each year for staleness.

P*=0.45	Category I		Category II		Category III		
	Year	Old	New	Old	New	Old	New
	1	4.4%	6.1%	8.7%	11.8%	16.6%	22.2%
	2	4.4%	6.5%	8.7%	12.6%	16.6%	22.2%
	3	4.4%	7.0%	8.7%	13.5%	16.6%	22.2%
	4	4.4%	7.4%	8.7%	14.3%	16.6%	22.2%
	5	4.4%	7.8%	8.7%	15.1%	16.6%	22.2%
	6	4.4%	8.3%	8.7%	15.9%	16.6%	22.2%
	7	4.4%	8.7%	8.7%	16.7%	16.6%	22.2%
	8	4.4%	9.1%	8.7%	17.4%	16.6%	22.2%
	9	4.4%	9.6%	8.7%	18.2%	16.6%	22.2%
	10	4.4%	10.0%	8.7%	19.0%	16.6%	22.2%

Table 2. Deductions from the OFL to the ABC for P*=0.40 based on the old sigma approach and the new sigma approach with a higher base (year - 1) deduction that progressively increases each year for staleness.

P*=0.4	Category I		Category II		Category III		
	Year	Old	New	Old	New	Old	New
	1	8.7%	11.9%	16.7%	22.4%	30.6%	39.8%
	2	8.7%	12.7%	16.7%	23.8%	30.6%	39.8%
	3	8.7%	13.6%	16.7%	25.3%	30.6%	39.8%
	4	8.7%	14.4%	16.7%	26.7%	30.6%	39.8%
	5	8.7%	15.2%	16.7%	28.1%	30.6%	39.8%
	6	8.7%	16.0%	16.7%	29.4%	30.6%	39.8%
	7	8.7%	16.8%	16.7%	30.7%	30.6%	39.8%
	8	8.7%	17.6%	16.7%	32.0%	30.6%	39.8%
	9	8.7%	18.3%	16.7%	33.3%	30.6%	39.8%
	10	8.7%	19.1%	16.7%	34.6%	30.6%	39.8%