

SCIENTIFIC AND STATISTICAL COMMITTEE REPORT ON
STOCK DEFINITIONS FOR SPECIES ASSESSED IN 2025 AND 2027 — RANGE OF
ALTERNATIVES

The Scientific and Statistical Committee (SSC) reviewed a report entitled “Stock Definitions for a range of Alternatives and Associated Management Implications for Stocks to be Assessed in 2025 and 2027” (Agenda Item F.4, Attachment 1). The report outlines a range of alternative stock definitions and includes a literature review of the groundfish species under consideration.

The SSC recommends that future versions of the report include additional information, such as:

- Trends in survey abundance for slope species by state or north and south of 40° 10’ N., as available. Conflicting trends between areas could be used to support multiple stock alternatives.
- Indicators of the quality of information presented in Table 1 (Agenda Item F.4, Attachment 1).
- An updated summary of yelloweye rockfish movement to address inconsistencies in describing adult movement.
- Relevant information on similar species when species-specific data are not available.

The SSC has the following specific recommendations regarding the proposed action alternatives:

- Alt. 2 (State/Region) is not appropriate for chilipepper rockfish, given that only a small fraction of this species is found north of the California-Oregon border. Thus, only Alt. 1 (Coastwide) should be considered for chilipepper rockfish.
- Alt. 2 (State/Region) should also be considered for yelloweye rockfish (i.e. two separate stocks, one for California and one for Washington-Oregon) due to uncertainty in movement rates.
- Alternatives will be needed for any additional species chosen for assessment in the 2025 cycle.

The SSC reiterates the need for a holistic process of defining stocks that follows best scientific practices. The SSC has not had conclusive discussions regarding the biological attributes to consider when providing guidance on stock definitions. The SSC continues to support the establishment of a working group to align the Council process for defining stocks with processes recommended by other expert working groups, such as the [ICES Stock Identification Methods Working Group](#).

The Council may want to reconsider stock definitions periodically, as new scientific information becomes available. This is particularly important given that the lack of evidence for multiple stocks does not necessarily reflect evidence for a single coastwide stock. The Council should consider adopting FMP language so that it is relatively straightforward to change stock definitions as new information becomes available.