



## Pacific Fishery Management Council

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Brad Pettinger, Chair | Merrick J. Burden, Executive Director

### MEMORANDUM

DATE: August 30, 2024  
TO: Scientific and Statistical Committee  
FROM: Marlene A. Bellman, Staff Officer  
SUBJECT: September 2024 Council Meeting Materials

The Pacific Fishery Management Council (Council, PFMC) September 2024 meeting will be held in person from September 17 through September 24, 2024, in Spokane, Washington. The Scientific and Statistical Committee (SSC) will meet **in person** with a web broadcast on Tuesday, September 17, Wednesday September 18, and Thursday, September 19, starting at 8 a.m. each day. Your meeting materials are enclosed.

Instructions for how to connect to the Council and Advisory Body meetings will be posted on the Council's [September 2024 Meeting webpage](#) prior to the first day of the meeting. Upon entering the meeting remotely, please modify your entry to reflect your full identification (full name and affiliation). This additional information helps participants identify speakers during public comment. All meetings are open to the public and at least one opportunity for public comment has been scheduled for each meeting day.

This meeting is being conducted in person with a web broadcast that provides the opportunity for remote public comment. In the event an outage occurs, or technical issues arise that impact the experience of remote attendees, we will attempt to resolve them but, ultimately, we cannot guarantee that they will be resolved satisfactorily.

#### SSC Administrative Matters

On Tuesday, September 17, the SSC meeting will be called to order by the SSC Chair and any designated alternates will be introduced. Next, the SSC will receive a briefing from the Council's Executive Director, Merrick Burden, to provide clarification on Council direction and informational updates. The SSC will finalize their September 2024 meeting agenda and the June 2024 meeting minutes. Subcommittee assignments will be reviewed and updated, as necessary. SSC recusals will be noted, plans for presenting SSC statements to the Council will be discussed, and an open SSC discussion period will follow.

Per suggestion in March 2024, a public comment period will be conducted at the beginning of each day to allow for relevant public comments to be made and considered prior to the SSC taking up an Agenda Item.

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## K. Council Administrative Matters

### K.3 Membership Appointments and Council Operating Procedures – Including Final 2025-27 Advisory Body Composition

Under Membership Appointments and Council Operating Procedures (COPs), the SSC reviews any vacant management or technical team seats which are submitted before the Council meeting in an SSC closed session. As of the advanced briefing book, the SSC is requested to review nominations to the Coastal Pelagic Species Management Team and Highly Migratory Species Management Team for the National Marine Fisheries Service (NMFS) seats. Any SSC recommendations regarding membership appointments will be offered during the Council Closed Executive Session on Thursday, September 19.

Additionally, the SSC may wish to provide feedback on the process to establish term-limited positions for the upcoming term (2025-2027). The Council is scheduled to adopt the final compositions of term-limited Advisory Body positions and request nominations to fill the next three-year term. If directed, desired skill sets could be highlighted when soliciting nominations for the At-Large positions on the SSC, such as stock assessment expertise or others. Under the equity and environmental justice (EEJ) agenda item in June 2024, the Council discussed designating a social scientist position with expertise in EEJ on the SSC. Appointments are scheduled to be made in November 2024. The SSC should provide any comments related to Agenda Item K.3, outside of the Closed Session nomination feedback, to the Council on Monday, September 23.

### K.4 Future Council Meeting Agenda and Workload Planning

The SSC will discuss future workload planning matters and report to the Council on this matter under Agenda Item K.4 scheduled for Monday, September 23. Future workload planning may include discussion with SSC subcommittees to plan for Council tasks noted in future Council meeting quick reference agendas or Year-at-a-Glance topics. The SSC statement regularly provides a table with important meeting dates and timelines. The SSC Groundfish Subcommittee may provide an update to the full SSC on planning for the groundfish methodology review scheduled in October 2024.

A proposed framework for conducting the next review cycle of research and data needs is provided as Informational Report 4. The proposal incorporates an additional step to identify the most current Council challenges to relate which research and data needs can best address those. This updated framework is intended to assist in producing an effective process to structure the review, ensure its applicability to current challenges faced by the Council, and clarify communication of research and data needs priorities. The SSC plays a significant role in this review exercise and should review the framework related to the proposed structure, timeline, workload, etc. and provide any feedback.

## C. Cross FMP

### C.2 Equity and Environmental Justice (EEJ) – Gap Analysis Framework and Regional Implementation Plan

Under this agenda item, the Council will review and discuss the final West Coast EEJ Regional Implementation Plan (RP) (Agenda Item C.2, Attachment 1), which was released in August 2024. The plan serves as a roadmap for applying the National EEJ Strategy's goals and actions in the context of West Coast needs (National EEJ Strategy: Agenda Item H.5 Attachment 3, September 2023).

The Council will also review a draft Gap Analysis Workplan, which was developed in coordination with the Equity and Environmental Justice Committee (EEJC) and outlines Council processes and products that may benefit from improvements to better address EEJ considerations. The Council will provide feedback on the draft outline and is expected to provide feedback on the workplan. The Gap Analysis will consider the actions included in the NMFS RP and is anticipated to be completed in mid-to-late 2025.

Advisory Bodies will be provided with informational briefings on the above items but are not expected to submit any statements. Input from Advisory Bodies will be solicited when the draft Gap Analysis is available for review and any potential work outcomes or next steps are presented.

## E. Salmon Management

### E.2 Methodology Review – Final Topic Selection

The Council will consider candidate items for the salmon methodology review in 2024; as preliminary items were not selected in April 2024. In September, the Council is informed of the topics that will be ready for review in October and notified of any assistance needed from management entities to accomplish the review (per COP 15).

Under Agenda Item E.2, the SSC plans to discuss any candidate salmon topics with the Salmon Technical Team (STT) and provide SSC recommendations for methodologies to be reviewed in 2024. The SSC will provide recommendations to the Council on Thursday, September 19.

### E.3 Queets Spring/Summer Chinook Rebuilding – Range of Alternatives and Preliminary Preferred Alternative

Queets River spring/summer Chinook were declared overfished in November 2023 ([Agenda Item D.1.a, Supplemental NMFS Report, November 2023](#)). Under the Salmon Fishery Management Plan (FMP), a rebuilding plan is required for Council consideration within one year and be implemented by NMFS within two years.

The Salmon Technical Team (STT) is working collaboratively with tribal, state, and Federal entities to develop the rebuilding plan. The Council is slated to select a Preliminary Preferred Alternative in September 2024 and adopt a final plan for recommendation to NMFS in November 2024. The SSC should provide any recommendations on Agenda Item E.3 to the Council on Thursday, September 19.

## H. Ecosystem

### H.1 Fishery Ecosystem Plan Initiative 4: Groundfish and Salmon Risk Tables - Progress Review

The purpose of this Fishery Ecosystem Plan Initiative is to develop on-ramps for integrating ecosystem and climate information into Council fishery management plan decision making, with a focus on harvest specifications processes. In March 2024 the Council directed the Ecosystem Workgroup to work with NMFS Science Center staff to further develop the methodological framework and apply it to groundfish for potential use as part of 2027-2028 groundfish harvest specifications decision-making. The SSC Ecosystem Subcommittee conducted a review meeting on August 5, 2024 and provided a report to the full SSC, who will make any final recommendations to the Council. The Council also directed that this type of approach could be applied to selected salmon stocks; however, to date a comparable methodology has not been developed or reviewed.

The Council may provide guidance on application of the risk table methodology in the groundfish harvest specifications process, starting with 2025 stock assessment work, and a work plan for development and review of a similar methodology/approach for salmon stocks. There is also the broader question of whether the objectives of the initiative have been met and it can be considered completed. This would necessitate guidance on any further actions needed to integrate ecosystem and climate considerations into its fishery management plan management processes outside of future ecosystem agenda items.

The SSC should provide any recommendations under Agenda Item H.1 on Friday, September 20.

## I. Groundfish Management

### I.2 Methodology Review – Preliminary Fishery Impact Model Topics

The groundfish impact analyses in COP 25 specifies a focus on methodologies used to analyze and predict groundfish fishery impacts in the biennial specifications process (both biological and socioeconomic) in September of even years; therefore, such methodologies are the focus under this agenda item.

The Groundfish Management Team (GMT) or other entities may bring forward proposals for new impact projection models or other models to inform future management decisions, proposals for a review of models currently used in order to identify potential improvements, etc. The SSC, in conjunction with the GMT, will identify methodology issues which need documentation and/or merit a full review.

In September, the Council is scheduled to adopt a tentative list for public review. The Council is scheduled to adopt a final list of topics and a review schedule for 2025 at their November 2024 meeting if any proposals are considered and forwarded at this meeting. The Scientific and Statistical Committee would then review new methodologies proposed in the Council process.

The SSC should provide any recommendations or comments under Agenda Item I.2 on Saturday, September 21.

### I.4 2025 and 2027 Stock Assessment Plan and Schedule

In coordinating ageing capacity and developing the 2025 stock assessment preliminary schedule, concerns were raised in regard to the capacity to conduct adequate ageing to support the complete list of species scheduled for assessment in 2025 (NMFS NWFSC/SWFSC Report 1). Redbanded

rockfish was a late consideration for assessment in the 2025 cycle and poses an additional challenge as it has not previously been assessed using methods beyond those used for data-poor species. Thus, there are many years of data collected with no ages read and additional work to develop age reading for this species.

The SSC should consider the proposed revision to remove redbanded rockfish from the list of species to be assessed in 2025 to avoid ageing capacity issues that could risk bringing forward an assessment with less supporting data available than would be desired. The SSC should provide any recommendations or comments under Agenda Item I.4 on Saturday, September 21.

#### I.5 Stock Definitions for Species Assessed in 2025 & 2027 – Preliminary Preferred Alternative

A proposed Amendment to the Pacific Coast Groundfish Fishery Management Plan (FMP) concerns the definition of stocks to be assessed in 2025 and potentially assessed in 2027. A list of species for assessment in 2025 and preliminary for 2027 were adopted in June 2024 and may be reconsidered by the Council under Agenda Item I.5 at this meeting.

Also in June 2024, the Council adopted a Purpose and Need statement for the proposed Amendment and a range of alternative (ROA) stock definitions for this action. A project team was convened, comprised of Council and NMFS West Coast Region staff to complete an analytical document for the ROA (Attachment 1).

At this meeting, the Council is expected to consider the findings of the ROA analysis, refine the ROA, as appropriate, and select Preliminary Preferred Alternative stock definitions. The Council is scheduled to adopt a Final Preferred Alternative at the November 2024 Council meeting.

The SSC is asked to review this information, in particular the scientific literature review results relevant to stock structure, and provide any scientific guidance to the Council for consideration of stock definition alternatives. The SSC should provide any recommendations or comments under Agenda Item I.5 on Sunday, September 22.

#### I.8 Phase 2: Stock Definitions – Scoping

In Phase 2, the Council is expected to identify and define groundfish stocks in need of conservation and management as well as reconsider stock complexes. At this meeting, Council is scheduled to adopt the scope for this action. Council staff have written an informational document which summarizes the overall needs of this action (Attachment 1). A revised process plan is provided based on updated information for Council consideration when developing the timing of the action (Attachment 2). The timeline to address stock definitions works toward compliance with the Magnuson-Stevens Act to complete the action in a timely manner with the previously approved framework and available information. There is also a process for updating stock definitions if needed (COP 9), analogous to the stock assessment process where we continually refine models and methods over time but during the stock assessment year, we use available information to inform the harvest specifications process. Budget and workload should also be considered in the scoping for this action.

At this meeting, the SSC is requested to focus on two technical review tasks which provide a.) methodology approaches used for the state/federal proportion analysis (NMFS Report 1 and 2), and

b.) the current state of scientific knowledge on stock structure for groundfish species to inform the Phase 2 stock definitions process (Attachment 3). The SSC is requested to review the materials and provide any recommendations on the best scientific information available to utilize in Council decision making under Agenda Item I.8 on Sunday, September 22.

Thank you all for your dedication to West Coast fishery management and the Council process.

MAB:ael

Council Enclosures include:

Agenda Item A – Council Meeting Agenda  
Agenda Item C – Cross FMP  
Agenda Item K – Administrative Matters  
Agenda Item E – Salmon Management  
Agenda Item H – Ecosystem  
Agenda Item I – Groundfish Management

SSC Agenda, Draft SSC Minutes, Closed Session, Etc.

1. September 2024 SSC Agenda
2. Draft June 2024 SSC Minutes
3. SSC Supplemental Materials
4. Closed Session
5. Informational Reports
6. General Information and Council Roster

PFMC  
08/28/24