

SCIENTIFIC AND STATISTICAL COMMITTEE REPORT ON  
STOCK DEFINITIONS FOR SPECIES ASSESSED IN 2025 AND 2027 - PRELIMINARY  
PREFERRED ALTERNATIVE

The Scientific and Statistical Committee (SSC) reviewed a report entitled “Range of Alternatives Analysis for Proposed Amendment to the Pacific Groundfish Fishery Management Plan” (Agenda Item I.5, Attachment 1). The report outlines a range of alternative stock definitions and includes a literature review of the groundfish species under consideration.

The SSC finds the analysis to be robust and recommends it for use by the Council. The SSC appreciates that report authors took into account its previous recommendations by adding: indicators of the quality of information available, updated information about yelloweye rockfish movement, and information about trends in survey abundance where available. Also, the new summary of literature on best scientific practices for stock delineation in Appendix 1 provides a good basis for the Phase II process that the Council is undertaking in Agenda Item I.8.

Yelloweye rockfish is the only species for which there is more than one alternative presented in the report. The SSC agrees with the report’s summary of the information available for yelloweye rockfish. There is insufficient scientific support to warrant stock structure finer than coastwide at this time. Relatively long larval durations and preliminary evidence for broad-scale movements of adults promote population connectivity.

The SSC supports the only alternative proposed for yellowtail rockfish, delineating two stocks separated at Cape Mendocino, California. Genetic differences and different habitat preferences north and south of Cape Mendocino and evidence of spatial variation in life history traits provide scientific support for stock structure consistent with Alternative 3.

Scientific information supports the coastwide alternative for widow rockfish and chilipepper rockfish, though densities of chilipepper rockfish are negligible off Washington. Widow rockfish may exhibit spatial variation in life history traits, but long larval durations and spatially synchronous recruitment may promote a high degree of population connectivity.

There is insufficient scientific information to assess stock structure for English sole, redbanded rockfish, and rougheye/blackspotted rockfish at this time. As the SSC has previously stated, the lack of scientific evidence for stock structure does not necessarily reflect evidence for a single coastwide stock. Stock definitions should be revisited as new information becomes available.

Given the potential for assessing redbanded rockfish in 2027, the SSC recommends it remain on the list of stocks for which stock definitions are finalized under this proposed amendment.