

SCIENTIFIC AND STATISTICAL COMMITTEE REPORT ON
FUTURE COUNCIL MEETING AGENDA AND WORKLOAD PLANNING

The Scientific and Statistical Committee (SSC) discussed workload planning and has the following updates to its September 2024 statement under this agenda item.

The SSC Groundfish Subcommittee plans to hold a two day in-person/hybrid meeting to discuss and prepare the Accepted Practices Guidelines for Groundfish Stock Assessments in 2025 and 2026 document on December 2-3, 2024. An updated version of the document will be available and posted shortly after the meeting for stock assessment scientists, and provided to the full SSC and the Council in March 2025. Representatives of the Groundfish Management Team (GMT) and the Groundfish Advisory Subpanel (GAP) will also participate in the meeting as advisers. The meeting will also include presentations on two associated topics, which had previously been discussed as potential workshops, a.) use of remotely operated vehicle data in stock assessments (from the California Department of Fish and Wildlife [CDFW]) and b.) results of a literature review of methods addressing large area closures within stock assessments. This meeting may also discuss guidance on the inclusion of risk tables in 2025 groundfish stock assessment reports.

In addition to the Accepted Practices Guidelines document, a report from the meeting will be available at the March 2025 Council meeting. The SSC notes that by the March meeting, analysis and modeling for the 2025 assessments will be ongoing. Consequently, there will be no scope to alter any of the guidelines or recommendations made by the Groundfish Subcommittee at that time. This is consistent with how the guidance provided by this meeting and document has been previously developed and adopted, which is somewhat less prescribed than the terms of reference for stock assessment review and other more formal protocols regarding the stock assessment review process.

The groundfish Pre-Assessment Data Workshop 1 (virtual) for quillback rockfish off California and chilipepper rockfish is anticipated for January 23 or 24, 2025.

The groundfish Pre-Assessment Data Workshop 2 (virtual) for yellowtail rockfish North 40°10' N. Lat. is anticipated for January 29 or 30, 2025.

The CPS Subcommittee will conduct a review of the update stock assessment for Pacific sardine on February 26, 2025. This meeting will also discuss ongoing work related to a potential revision to the E_{MSY} for Pacific sardine.

The SSC is proposing an additional half day prior to the March 2025 Council meeting (March 4, in-person Vancouver, WA) to start on its regular agenda and allow time to prepare for Research and Data Needs recommendations, including engagement with other advisory bodies, prior to the April 2025 agenda item.

The groundfish Pre-Assessment Data Workshop 3 (virtual) for rougheye/blackspotted rockfish and sablefish is anticipated for March 18 or 19, 2025.

STAR Panel 1 will cover the yellowtail rockfish North 40°10'N. Lat. benchmark assessment on May 19-23, 2025 in Seattle, WA. The schedule will be for a full day on Monday and half days thereafter. The SSC anticipates a final decision on the STAR Panel chair within the next several weeks, and as only one CIE reviewer is anticipated for this Panel, two additional STAR Panel reviewers with knowledge of West Coast groundfish assessments are requested. Representatives from the GMT and GAP are requested.

The SSC Groundfish Subcommittee should meet in-person in Rohnert Park, CA to review update stock assessments on June 11, 2025, the day prior to the full SSC at the June 2025 Council meeting. Representatives from the GMT and GAP are requested.

STAR Panel 2 will cover benchmark assessments for chilipepper rockfish and California quillback rockfish on June 23-27, 2025 in Santa Cruz, CA. The STAR Panel chair will be Cheryl Barnes and one additional STAR Panel reviewer with knowledge of West Coast groundfish assessments is requested. Representatives from the GMT and GAP are requested.

STAR Panel 3 will cover rougheye/blackspotted rockfish and sablefish on July 14-18, 2025 in Seattle, WA. The meeting chair will be John Field and one additional STAR Panel reviewer with knowledge of West Coast groundfish assessments is requested. Representatives from the GMT and GAP are requested.

After the STAR Panels, the SSC Groundfish Subcommittee should meet to review stock assessments (and rebuilding analyses [as needed]) and to prepare harvest specifications before the September 2025 Council meeting. The SSC suggests a 1.5 to 2 day virtual meeting in mid-August 2025.

The SSC Groundfish Subcommittee meeting (commonly referred to as “mop-up”) for further review of stock assessments not recommended by STAR Panels and rebuilding analyses (as needed) is anticipated during the week of Sept 29-Oct 3, 2025 with a potential hybrid (in-person and online) format.

The SSC discussed the potential external review of PFMC stock assessment process (Agenda Item A.4, Supplemental Attachment 1), and has some concerns related to the accelerated pace being contemplated for this process. One key concern is that discussions or interviews with assessment analysts could be disruptive to those analysts during the time period in which they are most actively compiling data, developing assessment models and documenting the results. The SSC also suggests that any review of the assessment development and review process would be better informed if the reviewers had the opportunity to participate in most if not all of the key activities within this process, particularly with respect to the STAR Panel reviews, which the SSC regards as a fundamental strength of the PFMC assessment review process. Finally, the SSC noted that if a highly compressed or accelerated review was undertaken and a report produced prior to conducting the 2025 STAR Panels, there would be no opportunity to alter the current process nor to respond to recommendations, which could undermine confidence in the process and in the assessment results by some stakeholders. The SSC recommends that if this review moves forward,

it does so with a more measured pace, and includes scope for the review body to participate in data workshops and STAR Panels, with any report or recommendations to be delivered after conclusion of the review panels and adoption of the 2025 assessments.

The SSC Ecosystem Subcommittee anticipates conducting its annual review of Ecosystem Status Report Science Topics in Fall 2025 (virtual), pending proposals by the California Current Integrated Ecosystem Assessment team in March 2025.

The SSC proposes the Coastal Pelagic Species (CPS) Subcommittee conduct a review of the new SWFSC/NWFSC integrated survey in early 2026 to identify any issues or additional analyses to be conducted prior to use of the results from the survey in CPS stock assessments.

The SSC Economics Subcommittee proposes conducting a review of the Trawl Catch Share Program Review in advance of the September 2025 Council meeting so that final action can address findings of the SSC Economics Subcommittee and the SSC. This review could occur in the summer of 2025.

SSC statements need to be clear, complete, and accurate to provide scientific advice to the Council. The SSC appreciates having a full day to draft and review statements following their review of a topic, as it did at this meeting. To ensure adequate time for statement development and review by the SSC and as well as time for Council members and advisory bodies to consider the finished statements ahead of an agenda item reaching the Council floor, some changes in how the SSC approaches reviews could be warranted, especially given the desire for shorter Council meetings and flexibility in the SSC for taking up items not on the advanced briefing book agenda. Possible changes include starting a half day earlier (1.5 days prior to the first day of the Council meeting), reviewing some items a meeting ahead of when SSC statements are needed, moving items that need SSC input to later in the Council meeting agenda, or moving SSC meetings to be fully ahead of the Council meeting.

An additional challenge previously identified is review of Pre-Season Report I for salmon management. While key pieces of this document are provided to the SSC with as much advanced notice as possible, the complete document is typically not available until just days prior to the start of the March Council meeting. Only a few pieces of information in this document routinely change, so scheduling additional review of this document for accuracy could be completed outside of the March Council meeting.

Proposed Workshops and SSC Subcommittee Meetings for 2024 and Beyond

Italic items are noted as potential or preliminary

Shaded rows indicate newly added items since the prior statement

	Workshop/Meeting	Potential Dates	Sponsor/ Tentative Location	SSC Reps.	Additional Reviewers	AB Reps.	Council Staff
1	Groundfish Stock Assessment Accepted Practices Guidelines for 2025-2026, including topics: ROV data in stock assessments and approaches to deal with large closed areas	December 2-3, 2024	PFMC Office – Portland, OR /Hybrid	Groundfish Subcommittee	NA	GMT GAP	Bellman
2	Pre-Assessment Data Workshop 1: Chilipepper Rockfish Quillback Rockfish - California	<i>January 23-24, 2025 (tentative)</i>	Council/Virtual	Groundfish Subcommittee	NA	GMT GAP	Bellman
3	Pre-Assessment Data Workshop 2: Yellowtail Rockfish North of 40°10'N.Lat.	<i>January 29-30, 2025 (tentative)</i>	Council/Virtual	Groundfish Subcommittee	NA	GMT GAP	Bellman
4	Sardine Update Stock Assessment Review Meeting	February 26, 2025	Council/Virtual	CPS Subcommittee	NA	CPSMT CPSAS	Bernaus/ Waller
5	<i>SSC Preparation for Research and Data Needs</i>	<i>March 4, 2025 (half-day prior to full SSC)</i>	<i>Council/ Vancouver, WA</i>	<i>SSC/SSC Subcommittee Chairs</i>	NA	NA	<i>Bellman</i>
6	Pre-Assessment Data Workshop 3: Rougheye/Blackspotted Rockfish Sablefish	<i>March 18-19, 2025 (tentative)</i>	Council/Virtual	Groundfish Subcommittee	NA	GMT GAP	Bellman
7	Groundfish STAR Panel 1: Yellowtail Rockfish North of 40°10'N.Lat.	May 19-23, 2025 (half-days)	Seattle, WA/ Hybrid	<i>XXXX – Chair, XX - Reviewer</i>	CIE (TBD), <i>XX - Invited Reviewer</i>	GMT GAP	Bellman

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8	<i>Groundfish Subcommittee Review: Update Stock Assessments</i>	<i>June 11, 2025 (day prior to full SSC)</i>	<i>Council/ Rohnert Park, CA</i>	<i>Groundfish Subcommittee</i>	<i>NA</i>	<i>GMT GAP</i>	<i>Bellman</i>
9	Groundfish STAR Panel 2: Chilipepper Rockfish Quillback Rockfish - California	June 23-27, 2025	Santa Cruz, CA/ Hybrid	Barnes – Chair	CIE (TBD), <i>Invited Reviewer: Dorn (proposed)</i>	GMT GAP	Bellman
10	Groundfish STAR Panel 3: Rougheye/Blackspotted Rockfish Sablefish	July 14-18, 2025	Seattle, WA/ Hybrid	Field – Chair, Free - Reviewer	CIE (TBD)	GMT GAP	Bellman
11	<i>Economic Subcommittee Meeting: Trawl Catch Share Program Review</i>	<i>Summer 2025</i>	<i>Virtual</i>	<i>Economics Subcommittee</i>	<i>NA</i>	<i>GMT GAP</i>	<i>Bellman</i>
12	<i>Groundfish Subcommittee Meeting: Stock Assessment/Rebuilding Review and Prepare Harvest Specifications</i>	<i>Mid-August 2025 (Before Sept CM)</i>	<i>Council/Virtual</i>	<i>Groundfish Subcommittee</i>	<i>TBD</i>	<i>GMT GAP</i>	<i>Bellman</i>
13	<i>Further Review of Groundfish Stock Assessments/Rebuilding Analyses</i>	<i>Sept 29-Oct 3, 2025 (tentative) (After Sept CM)</i>	<i>Council/ Hybrid: Location TBD</i>	<i>Groundfish Subcommittee</i>	<i>TBD</i>	<i>GMT GAP</i>	<i>Bellman</i>
14	<i>Ecosystem Subcommittee Review: Ecosystem Status Report Science Topics</i>	<i>Fall 2025</i>	<i>Council/Virtual</i>	<i>Ecosystem Subcommittee</i>	<i>TBD</i>	<i>EWG EAS</i>	<i>Bellman</i>

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15	<i>Salmon Methodology Review</i>	<i>October 2025</i>	<i>Council/ Portland, OR</i>	<i>Salmon Subcommittee</i>	<i>TBD</i>	<i>STT</i>	<i>Bellman/ Forristall</i>
16	<i>CPS Methodology Review: SWFSC/NWFSC Integrated Survey</i>	<i>Early 2026</i>	<i>TBD</i>	<i>CPS Subcommittee</i>	<i>TBD</i>	<i>CPSMT CPSAS</i>	<i>Bellman/ Bernaus</i>

PFMC
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