



Pacific Fishery Management Council

7700 NE Ambassador Place, Suite 101 Portland, OR 97220-1384
Phone 503-820-2280 | Toll free 866-806-7204 | Fax 503-820-2299 | www.pcouncil.org
Brad Pettinger, Chair | Merrick J. Burden, Executive Director

MEMORANDUM

DATE: February 14, 2025
TO: Scientific and Statistical Committee
FROM: Marlene A. Bellman, Staff Officer
SUBJECT: March 2025 Council Meeting Materials

The Pacific Fishery Management Council (Council, PFMC) March 2025 meeting will be held in person from March 4 through March 11, 2025, in Vancouver, WA. The Scientific and Statistical Committee (SSC) will meet **in person** with a web broadcast on Tuesday, March 4 starting at 1 p.m. and continue Wednesday, March 5 and Thursday, March 6, 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 [March 2025 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, March 4, 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 also have an opportunity to engage with the Deputy Director, Kelly Ames, for any follow-up questions from the [Advisory Body Practices and Procedures Meeting](#) held on January 22, 2025. The SSC will finalize their March 2025 meeting agenda and the November 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 public comments to be considered prior to the SSC taking up an Agenda Item.

E. Salmon Management

E.2 Review of 2024 Fisheries and Summary of 2025 Stock Forecasts

Each year in March, the Council reviews the Stock Assessment and Fisheries Evaluation (SAFE) document (Review of Ocean Salmon Fisheries) and stock abundance projections (Preseason Report I), scheduled under Agenda Item E.2. The SSC will review the forecasts for stocks that are required to have annual catch limits (ACLs) specified and determine if the forecasts represent the best scientific information available (BSIA) for use in modeling 2025 ocean salmon fisheries, specifying acceptable biological catches (ABCs), and setting ACLs. Three stocks are required to have ACLs specified – Sacramento River fall Chinook, Klamath River fall Chinook, and Willapa Bay natural coho. Note that any advanced version of these forecasts is a draft, which will be updated shortly before the SSC convenes.

The Salmon Technical Team (STT) will be available for discussion or questions.

The SSC will provide any recommendations under Agenda Item E.2 on Thursday, March 6.

H. Groundfish Management

H.4 Final Assessment Methodologies: Accepted Practices Guidelines for 2025-2026

The SSC Groundfish Subcommittee will present results from their December 2-3, 2024 meeting (Agenda Item H.4.a, SSC Groundfish Subcommittee Report 2) which produced a draft of the Accepted Practices Guidelines for Groundfish Stock Assessments in 2025 and 2026 document (Agenda Item H.4.a, SSC Groundfish Subcommittee Report 1). This document is intended to supplement the Council's [Terms of Reference \(TOR\) for the Groundfish Stock Assessment Review Process in 2025 and 2026](#), which was adopted in June 2024.

The SSC will provide their review, any suggested modifications, and recommendations to the Council under Agenda Item H.4 on Saturday, March 8.

H.6 Phase 2 Stock Definitions

The Council will consider adopting a range of alternatives (ROA) for the Phase 2 stock definition step. The analysis to support the decision-making process identified a framework pathway to improve efficiency for this process (Agenda Item H.6, Attachment 1). The framework proposes using a 25 percent threshold of mortality in Federal waters as a means to identify species that could move forward in the stock definition process without further evaluation. The species for which 25 percent or more of mortality occurs in the Exclusive Economic Zone (EEZ) are categorized as not needing further evaluation (Group A). The species for which less than 25 percent of mortality occurs in the EEZ are categorized as requiring further evaluation (Group B). In brief, this threshold identified 60 species in Group A and 26 in Group B. An ROA was developed for this action based on the threshold analysis.

The SSC should consider the proposed stock definition options for species in Group A (Table 34) and Appendix B and review them for consistency with the scientific literature review ([Agenda Item I.8 Attachment 3, September 2024](#)) in order to provide guidance on stock structure related to

the options proposed (i.e., one stock, two stocks, etc.) and inform delineating stock definitions for those options.

For Agenda Item H.6, the SSC will provide any recommendations to the Council on Sunday, March 9.

F. Ecosystem Management

F.1 2024-25 California Current Ecosystem Status Report and 2025 Science Review Topics

The SSC will review the California Current Integrated Ecosystem Assessment (IEA) State of the California Current report and provide their recommendations to the Council on the use and future content of this report. The SSC will also evaluate a list of proposed topics for review by the SSC Ecosystem Subcommittee and identify priority topics for discussion next September (e.g., fall 2025).

The SSC Ecosystem-Based Management Subcommittee will provide a summary report of their meeting on November 5, 2024 and any recommendations to the full SSC (see SSC Materials section of briefing book). A presentation will be made to the SSC by members of the NOAA California Current IEA Team.

The SSC will provide their comments and recommendations under Agenda Item F.1 scheduled for Friday, March 7.

J. Council Administrative Matters

J.3 Membership Appointments and Council Operating Procedures

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, none have been submitted. Any SSC recommendations regarding membership appointments will be offered during the Council Closed Executive Session on Thursday, March 6.

Additionally, under Closed Session, the SSC will discuss plans for the SSC Vice-Chair role. Results of any election and discussion will be communicated to PFMC staff and updated on relevant rosters, webpages, etc.

J.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 J.4 scheduled for Tuesday, March 11.

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 should update any plans with the full SSC for the upcoming 2025 stock assessment cycle.

SSC Administrative Matters

Cross Fishery Management Plan

Research and Data Needs - Development of Preliminary Recommendations

In November 2024, the Council began a review process for updating and communicating research and data needs to support the management of U.S. west coast fisheries (Agenda Item D.3). The framework included identification of science and management challenges to assist in guiding the research and data needs prioritization process. The Council adopted a set of challenges that stretch across more than one FMP and for which multiple types of research activities could be pursued.

During the March 2025 SSC meeting, the SSC should develop preliminary research and data needs recommendations for submission to the advanced briefing book for the April 2025 Council meeting (due March 19, 2025). This step should be informed by outreach efforts to Council advisory bodies per Council guidance in November 2024. Preliminary recommendations should be crafted to best address the top challenges identified by the Council.

In April 2025, the Council is scheduled to adopt a list of preliminary research and data needs associated with the science and management challenges. The preliminary list can be further refined and a final list is scheduled to be adopted at the June 2025 Council meeting. The vision is that, when the Council's research and data needs process has concluded, there will be a relatively small set of categorical challenges identified and a list of specific research and data needs within each.

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

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Council Enclosures include:

Agenda Item A – Council Meeting Agenda

Agenda Item J – Administrative Matters

Agenda Item E – Salmon Management

Agenda Item F – Ecosystem Management

Agenda Item H – Groundfish Management

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

1. March 2025 SSC Agenda
2. Draft November 2024 SSC Minutes
3. SSC Supplemental Materials
4. Closed Session
5. Informational Reports
6. General Information and Council Roster

PFMC

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