

SCIENTIFIC AND STATISTICAL COMMITTEE REPORT ON  
FINAL ASSESSMENT METHODOLOGIES

The Scientific and Statistical Committee (SSC) discussed the Accepted Practices Guidelines for Groundfish Stock Assessments in 2025 and 2026 ([Agenda Item H.4.a, SSC Groundfish Subcommittee Report 1](#)) that were developed by the SSC's Groundfish Subcommittee (GFSC) during a meeting on December 2-3, 2024. The GFSC considered three topics in its December meeting: 1) current approaches used to address spatial closures in stock assessments, 2) methodologies and resulting estimates of abundance from the remotely operated vehicle (ROV) survey conducted along the California coast, and 3) other needed revisions to the Accepted Practices Guidelines. John Field (Southwest Fisheries Science Center) provided a summary of the GFSC report ([Agenda Item H.4.a, SSC Groundfish Subcommittee Report 2](#)) and John Budrick (California Department of Fish and Wildlife [CDFW]) provided an update on revisions to the ROV survey methodologies ([Agenda Item H.4.a, Supplemental CDFW Report 1](#)).

The GFSC revisions to the Accepted Practices Guidelines for 2025 and 2026 included the addition of text on risk table guidance, the citation of the review on addressing spatial closures in stock assessments, and other minor changes. No explicit guidance on the use of ROV abundance indices was added, given that it is still in the early stages of development and has not yet been widely applied and reviewed in the assessment process.

The SSC does not suggest substantive changes to the version of the Accepted Practices Guidelines in the Briefing Book ([Agenda Item H.4.a, SSC Groundfish Subcommittee Report 1](#)), though a few minor edits will be made. The SSC endorses the Accepted Practices Guidelines for Groundfish Stock Assessments in 2025 and 2026, including the minor revisions.

The SSC appreciates CDFW's work on the ROV survey and endorses its potential use in stock assessments, though decisions over use will need to be made on a species-by-species basis and are ultimately up to the stock assessment team (STAT). The ROV survey could be used to produce estimates of the number (or biomass) of animals in the surveyed area (absolute abundance) or of trends in abundance (relative abundance). However, providing estimates of absolute abundance is more challenging analytically. They would also be expected to be subject to additional uncertainties compared to relative indices of abundance and would require further development and review before their use in an assessment. The SSC requested additional revisions be made to the ROV survey methodologies. In addition, the SSC highlights that any estimates or indices must be provided by the STAR Panel 2 data deadline of March 31<sup>st</sup>, 2025 to be considered in the California quillback rockfish stock assessment.