

## PHASE 2 STOCK DEFINITIONS – FINAL ACTION

The Phase 2 stock definitions process was initiated at the Pacific Fishery Management Council's (Council) September 2024 meeting when it adopted the Phase 2 process ([Agenda Item I.8, Attachment 1, September 2024](#)) and plan ([Agenda Item I.6, Attachment 2, September 2024](#)). As indicated in the process document, three sequential steps were identified to, as necessary, achieve Phase 2: Step 1 to identify and define stocks in need of conservation and management; Step 2 to contemplate stock complex revisions based on outcomes of Step 1; and Step 3 to consider delegation of management. In September, the Council directed staff to develop a range of alternatives (ROA, [Agenda Item H.6, Revised Supplemental Attachment 1, March 2025](#)) to support Step 1 for decision-making in March 2025. The ROA was adopted at the March 2025 Council meeting. Under this agenda item, the Council is scheduled to consider three connected tasks of the Phase 2 stock definitions process.

The first task is for the Council to consider adoption of the final preferred alternative (FPA) to identify 47 groundfish species (from a total of 86 species) as in need of conservation and management and to adopt stock definitions for these species. The second task is for the Council to consider adoption of a preliminary preferred alternative (PPA) and, as appropriate, stock definition(s) for the remaining 39 groundfish species, and potentially one more species. The third task for the Council under this agenda item is to review and consider modifications to the current list of ecosystem component (EC) species.

The Council adopted Alternative 1 as their PPA for 47 species from the total of 86 managed groundfish at their March 2025 meeting. Alternative 1 would identify these species as in need of conservation and management. These species would remain in the Pacific Coast Groundfish Fishery Management Plan (FMP) as actively managed species. The Council also adopted Option 1, a single stock definition, for these species as their PPA. Option 1 would delineate the stock unit as coastwide for 45 species and California-only for two species. Attachment 1 provides the analysis to support the FPA decision point. The Council is expected to adopt FPA stock definitions for these 47 species.

Regarding Attachment 1, four species (blackgill rockfish, bocaccio, cowcod, and greenspotted rockfish) were found to have sub-area assessments. If a coastwide stock definition (i.e., coastwide) is adopted for these species, the results of the sub-area assessments must be combined to generate an overfishing limit (OFL), acceptable biological catch (ABC), and annual catch limit (ACL) at the same scale as the definition. The Council is expected to hear from the SSC whether the approach used to combine different category assessments under Amendment 31 (Agenda Item H.3.a, [Supplemental SSC Report 1](#) and [NWFSC Report 1](#), June 2023) is appropriate for these species. These four species have two independent sub-area assessments with different categories (e.g. Category 3 and 2 or Category 3 and 1) that will need to be combined if the Council adopts Option 1 as their stock definition for these species.

Additionally, the FPA will require the FMP to be updated to reflect the stock definitions of these species. The most current version of the FMP is provided with red-lined revisions to support the PPA (Attachment 3). The Council should adopt the changes to the FMP based on their FPA.

In March 2025, the Council recommended a full [§600.305\(c\)](#) 10-factor analysis for the remaining 39 species. The analysis of the PPA (Attachment 1) identified a single species, harlequin rockfish, that should also be considered under the full 10-factor evaluation, thus increasing the total number of species in this analysis to 40. The 10-factor analysis can be used to assist the Council in identifying whether these 40 species need conservation and management. These 10 factors outlined at §600.305(c) consider environmental, fishery, social, economic, and governance aspects of the species related to each species. Under this agenda item, the Council is tasked with adopting a PPA for each of these species. The analysis in Supplemental Attachment 2 is provided to aid in their decision-making. At present, these species are considered under the three action alternatives: Alternative 1 would identify the species as in need of conservation and management; Alternative 2 would remove the species from the FMP, and Alternative 3 would designate the species as an ecosystem component. Under Alternative 2 and Alternative 3, the species would not be identified as a species in need of conservation and management, but the species would remain in the FMP only under Alternative 3. The difference between alternatives, in short, is if the Council can develop management measures for an EC species; whereas, if the species is removed from the FMP, it is completely removed from Federal management. In the case that the Council adopts Alternative 1 as PPA for any of these species, it will also need identify a stock definition option for each species.

At the March 2025 Council meeting, the Council directed staff to analyze fishery mortality of the current list of 28 EC species in the FMP since 2025, which was the year they were designated as EC species. This information will serve to inform the Council on whether these species' EC designation should be reconsidered. Due to workload considerations, Council staff tasked the GMT with this analysis. The GMT has completed the analysis (Agenda Item E.6.a, GMT Report 1, June 2025) and are expected to present their findings to the Council. Based on the GMT report, Staff modified the current EC species table in the FMP as shown in Attachment 3 to more precisely reflect the list of EC species.

### **Council Tasks:**

- 1. Adopt FPA for the 47 species analyzed in Attachment 1, as appropriate.**
- 2. Adopt FPA stock definitions for the 28 undefined species in Attachment 1, as appropriate.**
- 3. Adopt revised language to the FMP in conjunction with Attachment 1 decision-making and EC species, as appropriate.**
- 4. Consider the results of the the 10-Factor analysis of 40 species in Attachment 2, and adopt a PPA, including stock definitions, where appropriate.**
- 5. Provide guidance on next steps, as appropriate.**

### **Reference Materials:**

1. Agenda Item E.6, Attachment 1: Phase 2 Stock Definitions: Analysis of the Preliminary Preferred Alternative Proposed in March 2025 for Alternative 1 (*Electronic Only*).
2. *Agenda Item E.6, Supplemental Attachment 2: 10-Factor §600.305(c) Analysis of 40 Groundfish Species and a Proposed Range of Alternatives for Stock Definitions to Support Council Decision-Making for a Preliminary Preferred Alternative for Phase 2 Species (Electronic Only).*

3. Agenda Item E.6, Attachment 3: Draft Language for Amendment [TBD] to the Pacific Coast Groundfish Fishery Management Plan.
4. Agenda Item E.6.a, GMT Report 1: Groundfish Management Team Report on Ecosystem Component Species and Their Fishery Mortality.

Agenda Order:

- E.6 Phase 2 Stock Definitions Todd Phillips/Katrina Bernaus
- a. Reports and Comments of Management Entities and Advisory Bodies
  - b. Public Comment
  - c. **Council Action:** Adopt Final Preferred Alternatives Where Possible; Adopt Preliminary Preferred Alternatives Where Appropriate.

PFMC  
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