

## PHASE 2 STOCK DEFINITIONS — FINAL ACTION

The Habitat Committee (HC) received a briefing from Pacific Fishery Management Council (Council) staff on the Groundfish Phase 2 Stock Definitions Action to identify species and stocks in need of conservation and management in the Exclusive Economic Zone. The HC briefly discussed the 10-Factor Analysis in Supplemental Attachment 2, which is intended to guide the Council in adopting a preliminary preferred alternative for each of the 40 groundfish species evaluated. The HC agrees with the analysis regarding Factor 1, that all 40 stocks are important components of the marine environment.

The HC focused its discussion on how the action could affect essential fish habitat (EFH) designations, as EFH can only be designated for stocks included in the fishery management unit (FMU). Removal of any groundfish species from the FMU could result in a change to the current spatial extent of groundfish EFH as well as the EFH descriptions and thus could affect EFH-related management decisions and EFH consultations. Because sablefish have the deepest distribution of current species in the FMU, this action is not expected to change the offshore extent of groundfish EFH. However, the upstream extent of groundfish EFH is driven by a few species, including starry flounder which has the potential to be removed from the FMU under this Action. In addition to potential changes in overall spatial extent, removing species from the FMU would also result in their EFH text descriptions being removed from the fishery management plan. Therefore, although these potential implications for EFH designations do not necessarily affect the action itself, the HC thought the Council would be interested in the additional context.

PPMC  
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