



Pacific Fishery Management Council

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Pete Hassemer, Chair | Merrick J. Burden, Executive Director

MEMORANDUM

DATE: August 28, 2025

TO: Scientific and Statistical Committee

FROM: Marlene A. Bellman, Staff Officer

SUBJECT: September 2025 Council Meeting Materials

The Pacific Fishery Management Council (Council, PFMC) September 2025 meeting will be held in person from September 17 through September 24, 2025, in Spokane, WA. The Scientific and Statistical Committee (SSC) will meet **in person** on Thursday, September 18 starting at 1 p.m., Friday, September 19 and Saturday, September 20 starting at 8 a.m. each day. On Saturday, September 20, the SSC is scheduled to be adjourned by 12 p.m., as a stock assessment outreach session is planned for 1 p.m. that day which SSC members may wish to attend. In addition, the SSC Groundfish Subcommittee will meet **in person** on Thursday, September 18, starting at 8:00 a.m. and adjourning prior to the full SSC meeting. Your meeting materials are enclosed.

Instructions for how to connect to the Council and Advisory Body meetings will be posted on the Council's [September 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 comments. 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 broadcast and 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 Thursday, September 18 at 1 p.m. 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 finalize their September 2025 meeting agenda and the June 2025 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.

During open discussion, SSC members are asked to consider a PFMC SSC representative to attend a Center for Independent Experts (CIE) panel to review the Fisheries Integrated Modeling System and provide feedback. The CIE review is being planned by NOAA Fisheries for November 4–6, 2025 in a virtual venue.

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.

I. Administrative Matters

I.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, two nominations for the vacant SSC at-large seat have been submitted for consideration; Dr. Yi Xu and Dr. Aaron Berger. Any SSC recommendations regarding membership appointments will be offered during the Council Closed Session on Sunday, September 21.

I.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 I.4 scheduled for Wednesday, September 24.

Future workload planning may include discussion with SSC subcommittees to plan for Council tasks noted in future Council meeting quick reference agendas (i.e. November 2025) or Year-at-a-Glance topics through 2026. The SSC statement regularly provides a table with important meeting dates and timelines. The SSC Groundfish Subcommittee should discuss any plans with the full SSC for the current 2025 stock assessment cycle and harvest specifications process.

F. Salmon Management

F.1 Methodology Review – Final Topic Selection

In April 2025, [three preliminary review topics](#) were selected by the Council; the Oregon Production Index Hatchery forecast methodology, and two topics proposed by the Sacramento River Fall Chinook Work Group. Please see full topic descriptions in the F.1 Situation Summary.

In September, the Council is informed of the topics that will be ready for review in October and notified of any assistance needed from management entities to accomplish the review (per COP 15). The Salmon Methodology Review is scheduled to be held online and is scheduled for October 9 and 10, 2025. All salmon methodology review materials are due at least two weeks prior and made available to the SSC Salmon Subcommittee and Salmon Technical Team.

At the November Council meeting, after the methodology review is conducted, the SSC and Salmon Technical Team provide the results of the review and any recommended changes. Changes adopted by the Council in November are typically implemented in the coming season, or the Council may provide guidance for handling any unresolved methodology issues, if necessary.

Under Agenda Item F.1, the SSC plans to discuss any candidate salmon topics and provide recommendations for methodologies to be reviewed. The SSC will provide recommendations under Agenda Item F.1 on Sunday, September 21.

G. Groundfish Management

G.2 Phase 2 Stock Definitions

Phase 2 stock definitions were initiated by the Council in September 2024, with a process designed to investigate managed groundfish species and determine if they are in need of conservation and management in the exclusive economic zone (EEZ; i.e., Federal waters) based on the Magnuson-Stevens Act and the 10 factors in 50 CFR §600.305(c) of the National Standard Guidelines. The range of alternatives was adopted at the March 2025 meeting, along with the Council's preliminary preferred alternative (PPA) for 47 groundfish species, and a request to further analyze 39 groundfish species under the 10 Factors.

In June 2025, the Council adopted final preferred alternatives (FPAs) for 44 species under Alternative 1 and adopted stock definitions for 25 of these species which had not yet been defined. Alternative 1 identifies species as in need of conservation and management in the EEZ, requiring the Council to adopt a stock definition (if not already defined), and those species will remain in the Pacific Coast Groundfish Fishery Management Plan (FMP) as actively managed species.

Under this agenda item, the Council is scheduled to adopt an FPA for the remaining 42 species (or stocks of these species, as applicable). A draft 10-Factor analysis was provided to the Council in June and PPAs were adopted for 40 species (or stocks). The Council also directed staff to analyze three additional species (harlequin, stripetail, and rosethorn rockfishes) under the full 10 Factors for consideration at the September meeting. Stripetail and rosethorn rockfishes were previously adopted under Alternative 1 as PPA in March 2025, but the Council requested the 10-Factor analysis in order to inform their FPA decision. Including these additional species, a total of 42 species will be under consideration for the FPA decision in September 2025.

Council staff completed a draft Environmental Assessment (Attachment 1) and updated the 10-Factor analysis and stock definition analysis (Appendix to Attachment 1) to support the Council's decision making under this Agenda Item. This analysis includes recommended updates to the draft 10-Factor analysis originally presented in June 2025 based on the discussions of the SSC and the Council, as well as refinements and corrections by analysts.

The SSC will review PPA stock definitions of groundfish species (black, blue, copper, deacon rockfishes, cabezon, kelp greenling, stripetail rockfish, and rosethorn rockfish) considered for FPA under Alternative 1 (in need of conservation and management in the EEZ) as outlined in Attachment 1. Specifically, the SSC should review the proposed stock definitions for blue/deacon rockfish (2 stocks off the coasts of Oregon and Washington), cabezon and kelp greenling (single stocks off the

coast of Washington), and stripetail and rosethorn rockfish (single, coastwide stocks), relative to scientific literature, etc. These species have not had stocks defined in previous stock definition actions and related FMP amendments. The SSC may also comment on how assessment results could inform harvest specifications under proposed stock definitions (e.g. combining two independent sub-area assessments with different stock categories) and make recommendations, as appropriate.

The SSC should provide any recommendations or comments under Agenda Item G.2 to the Council on Monday, September 22.

G.3 Adopt Stock Assessments

Under this agenda item, the SSC will review and consider endorsing new full/benchmark and update stock assessments and catch-only projections, as best scientific information available for management decision-making.

The SSC Groundfish Subcommittee will provide recommendations from their review on August 12-13, 2025, to the full SSC. The SSC also began reviewing this Agenda Item during a meeting held on September 3, 2025 to review STAR Panel 1 and 2 stocks and provide recommendations (yellowtail rockfish N. 40° 10', chilipepper rockfish, California quillback rockfish). Thus, the SSC may have two separate reports under this Agenda Item in briefing book material.

The Council is scheduled to approve assessments and relevant analyses used to set groundfish harvest specifications for fisheries management. In the event it is necessary to further review any assessments, new projections, or rebuilding analyses, the SSC's Groundfish Subcommittee is scheduled to convene an in-person Supplemental Review on October 14 -17, 2025 in Seattle, WA; see workload planning agenda item. The SSC Groundfish Subcommittee recommendations from the Supplemental Review process would be provided to the SSC and Council in November 2025.

The SSC will provide recommendations on best scientific information available or the need for any further review under Agenda Item G.3 on Monday, September 22.

G.4 Stock Assessment Methodology – Final Topics

The SSC will review new methodologies proposed to inform future groundfish stock assessments, per Council Operating Procedure 25 (COP 25). The SSC will recommend to the Council if proposed methodologies merit a formal review. They will also inform the Council if expertise outside the SSC will be needed for any methodology review topic they recommend.

The methodology review of final topics would be scheduled during 2026. If endorsed, these new methodologies would be available for the upcoming cycle of stock assessments in 2027.

The SSC will provide recommendations under Agenda Item G.4 on Monday, September 22.

G.6 2027-2028 Harvest Specifications and Management Measures - Initial

The Council will begin deciding groundfish harvest specifications for 2027-2028 groundfish fisheries at this meeting.

Under Amendment 24, the default harvest control rules (HCR) are applied to the best available scientific information to determine the 2027 and 2028 OFLs, acceptable biological catches (ABC), and annual catch limits (ACL). A supplemental attachment will provide the proposed 2027 and 2028 OFLs, ABCs based on the SSC's default sigmas for each stock category and the Council's default overfishing probabilities (P*s – probability of overfishing) from the 2025-2026 management cycle, and ACLs that comport with the Council's default HCRs. A second supplemental attachment will provide any harvest specification projections for 2027 and beyond for select stocks where projections were unavailable.

The SSC will review the proposed OFLs, stock categories, and sigma values (σ – scientific uncertainty), and make their recommendations to the Council. The SSC Groundfish Subcommittee will provide any recommendations or feedback to the full SSC from their September 18, 2025 meeting.

In the event it is necessary to further review any assessment or new projections, the SSC's Groundfish Subcommittee is scheduled to convene a supplemental review panel prior to the November Council meeting, which would necessitate providing harvest specification recommendations in November. The Council may also consider alternative HCRs at this meeting, for which revised harvest specifications would be anticipated in November as well.

The SSC will provide recommendations under Agenda Item G.6 on Tuesday, September 23.

G.7 Inseason Adjustments – Final Action

At the June 2025 meeting, the Council requested the Northwest Fisheries Science Center, in conjunction with the NMFS West Coast Region, to add 2026 projections to the catch-only projections for petrale sole, shortspine thornyhead, and canary rockfish. The Council recommended that, if possible, Council staff and NMFS develop ad hoc alternative ABC HCRs for the SSC and Council to consider at the September 2025 meeting. The projections, including projections for the ad hoc HCRs, are now available for Council review.

The catch-only projections were provided as Attachments under Agenda Item G.3 Adopt Stock Assessments for SSC review and best scientific information available determinations. Under Agenda Item G.7 Inseason Adjustments – Final Action, the projections along with the requested 2026 alternative harvest specifications are included to facilitate Council discussion of inseason constraints and consideration of harvest specification adjustments for 2026. See Table 2 for petrale sole, Table 2 and 3 for canary rockfish, and Table 2 and 3 for shortspine thornyhead. Table 3 for shortspine thornyhead represents a phase in approach for the ABC, as provided for under the Magnuson-Stevens Act and National Standard 1.

The SSC will recommend 2026 OFL/ABC values should the Council express interest in changing the harvest specifications for petrale sole, shortspine thornyhead, and/or canary rockfish.

The SSC will provide recommendations under Agenda Item G.7 on Tuesday, September 23.

Informational Council Agenda Items

The SSC may find several other Council Agenda Items of interest, or which may contain informational materials relevant to the SSC including:

G.1 – National Marine Fisheries Service (NMFS) Report

The NMFS Northwest Fisheries Science Center is expected to discuss current groundfish-related science and research activities with the Council.

H.1 – Adaptive Management and Flexibility – Scoping

The objective of the Adaptive Management project is to identify and apply management innovations and process improvements that allow for more timely and efficient responses to changing environmental conditions and unexpected events. In response to the Council's April 2025 guidance, Attachment 1 is provided under this agenda item, which seeks to support further discussion of an implementation framework or suite of actions that the Council could consider advancing under the Adaptive Management project.

H.2 - Council Response to Executive Orders and Administration Updates

Under this agenda item, the Council will adopt its final priorities in response to Executive Order 14276, *Restoring American Seafood Competitiveness*. Identified actions should stabilize markets, improve access, enhance economic profitability, and prevent closures. The EO also directs the Council to commit to a work plan with dates for final Council action and NMFS implementation, and identified actions are expected to appear in the Office of Management and Budget's Unified Agenda. Staff recommend submitting a letter to NMFS highlighting overarching priorities common across the FMPs, along with a matrix of specific regulatory actions, amendments, and EFPs (Attachments 5 and 6). In addition, several Council members propose a separate letter to the Secretary of Commerce identifying broader actions beyond the EO that could strengthen seafood competitiveness (Agenda Item H.2.a).

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

MAB:kma

Council Enclosures include:

Agenda Item A.4 – Council Meeting Agenda

Agenda Item I – Administrative Matters

Agenda Item F – Salmon Management

Agenda Item G – Groundfish Management

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

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Draft June 2025 SSC Minutes

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PFMC
08/28/25