

FINAL STOCK ASSESSMENT PLAN FOR 2027, PRELIMINARY PRIORITIES FOR 2029 AND BEYOND

This agenda item covers final planning for 2027 groundfish stock assessments and initial planning for 2029 and beyond. This will inform the harvest specifications and management measures for fisheries in 2029 and beyond. The decision on which stocks to recommend for assessment in the next two assessment cycles entails several considerations, including whether the assessment should be a benchmark assessment, a data-moderate assessment, or an update assessment, and whether they require peer review by a Stock Assessment Review (STAR) Panel or only a review by the Scientific and Statistical Committee (SSC). The number of assessments that can be produced has typically (though not exclusively) been dependent on the capacity of the Science Centers, with no more than a total of two assessments (e.g., benchmark or data-moderate) reviewed at each STAR Panel. A maximum of three STAR Panels should be considered for next year (2027), but fewer may be conducted depending on how many species are recommended for updates. As noted in NMFS Report 1 from March 2026, the Science Centers estimate that they could accommodate four to six benchmarks and zero to two update assessments, depending on the species prioritized. In addition to these assessments, the Council should consider species for catch-only projections for 2027.

In March 2026, the Pacific Fishery Management Council (Council) requested that the Science Centers work with partners to provide more information at this meeting on age-reading capacity, data availability, and related issues to consider full benchmarks assessments for the following species:

For the 2027 cycle:

- Redbanded rockfish
- Lingcod
- Widow Rockfish
- Yellowtail rockfish south of 40° 10' N. lat.

For the 2029 cycle,

- Black rockfish off Oregon and Washington
- Spiny dogfish

Drs. Kristin Marshall and Chantel Wetzel, National Marine Fisheries Service (NMFS) Northwest Fisheries Science Center (NWFSC), provided a report in response to the Council's requests (Attachment 1). NMFS also provided an extended summary of available data for the species identified by the Council in March 2026 (Attachment 2).

In addition to the 2027 and 2029 priorities, the NMFS NWFSC provided a preliminary ten-year outlook for groundfish stock assessments (Attachment 1). This proposal is intended to help states and Federal agencies plan for stock assessment capacity, including aging tasks, and to streamline

the assessment prioritization process each biennium. While the proposal is for a ten-year plan, the Council will continue to have an opportunity to make recommendations on stock assessments every biennium in case changes need to be made. Additionally, through the Terms of Reference process (Agenda Item E.7), it is anticipated that there will be discussions on how to build a process to deviate from an assessment type or plan if new information surfaces on the ability to conduct that assessment.

However, with the shift to having some species on a regular assessment schedule, Council and NMFS staff are proposing changing from a two-meeting process (March and June of even years) for selecting species for an assessment to a one-meeting process (June of even years). Such a change would entail the development of a Council Operating Procedure (COP) to describe this new stock assessment prioritization process. This is consistent with the recommendation under the Term of Reference (TOR) agenda item (Agenda Item E.7) to move the stock assessment prioritization description from the TOR to the COPs. Council staff are proposing to bring back a proposed COP on the stock assessment prioritization in November 2026 so that the process is finalized before adopting the ten-year plan in March 2027 (see Year-at-a-Glance Schedule, Agenda Item C.5, Attachment 1).

The Council will consider the input from NMFS, state and Tribal agencies, advisory bodies, and the public before providing final recommendations on 2027 stock assessment priorities by species and the type of assessment (benchmark, data-moderate, update, or catch-only projection) and preliminary recommendations for the ten-year proposed plan (including 2029 priorities).

Council Tasks:

- 1. Consider information provided on capacity and available data from the NMFS NWFSC.**
- 2. Recommend a final list of species by assessment type for 2027.**
- 3. Provide comments on the preliminary ten-year plan, including preliminary priorities for 2029.**

Reference Materials:

1. Agenda Item E.4, Attachment 1: Groundfish Stock Assessment Considerations and Planning for 2027, 2029 and Beyond.
2. Agenda Item E.4, Attachment 2: Summary of Available Data to Support Assessments of U.S. West Coast Groundfish Stocks (*Electronic Only*).
3. If received, Public Comments are electronic only ([see e-portal](#)).

Agenda Order:

- E.4 Final Stock Assessment Plan for 2027, Preliminary Priorities
for 2029 and Beyond Jessi Waller/Diana Perry
- a. Reports and Comments of Management Entities and Advisory Bodies
 - b. Public Comment
 - c. **Council Action:** Adopt a Schedule and Final List of Groundfish Stocks for Assessment in 2027; Adopt a Preliminary List of Stocks for 2029 and Beyond

PFMC
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