



**NOAA
FISHERIES**

Agenda Item E.4.a
Supplemental NMFS Presentation 1
June 2026

Groundfish stock assessment considerations and planning for 2027, 2029, and beyond

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June 2026

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Objectives

- **Recommend a final list of species by assessment type for 2027**
- **Review NMFS preliminary 10-year plan, including preliminary priorities for 2029**
- **If there are questions, discuss available data to support stock assessment report (Attachment 2)**

Summary of the PFMC decision in March

- In March 2026, the Pacific Fishery Management Council (Council) requested more information at this meeting on age-reading capacity, data availability, and related issues to consider full benchmark assessments for the following species:
 - 2027 cycle:
 - Redbanded rockfish, Lingcod north and south of 40° 10' N. lat., Widow rockfish, and Yellowtail rockfish south of 40° 10' N. lat.
 - 2029 cycle:
 - Black rockfish off Oregon and Washington and Pacific spiny dogfish

Summary of available data (Attachment 2)

- Summaries of federal survey data for all FMP species, including indices of abundance and composition data (same as was provided in March).
- Additional information included for the species identified at the March meeting, including:
 - length, age, and otolith data summaries for commercial, recreational, CCFRP, and GCDC, when available;
 - catch time series based upon the Groundfish Expanded Multi-year Mortality report; and
 - select research that may be considered in a future stock assessment.

NMFS capacity for 2027

- Overall anticipated capacity: 4-6 benchmarks, 0-2 updates
- Tradeoffs among species depend on ageing work and the number of assessment areas needed.
- Scheduling fewer benchmark assessments in 2027 saves analyst capacity to develop new frameworks for right-sizing assessments and to support research needs for potential 2029 assessments.
- Prioritize catch-only projection requests when recent attainment of ACLs has been high or a fishery or sector is constrained.

Ageing capacity and coordination to support 2027 assessments

- Staff from NWFSC, ODFW, and WDFW met following the March Council meeting to discuss ageing workload for the identified species.
- Ageing staff across agencies confirmed capacity to age Lingcod, Redbanded rockfish, Yellowtail rockfish south 40° 10' N. lat., and Petrale sole to support 2027 assessments.
- There is ongoing research being led by WDFW to improve age estimation for Pacific spiny dogfish to support a 2029 stock assessment.
- For species with large numbers of unread otoliths, subsampling will be conducted.

Species recommended for benchmark assessments

- Lingcod (2 areas)
 - North of 40° 10' N. lat.
 - South of 40° 10' N. lat.
- Redbanded rockfish (coastwide)
- Yellowtail rockfish south of 40° 10' N. lat.

Previously recommended species

- **Widow rockfish**
 - Delaying an assessment until 2029 provides time for ongoing and new research to develop, which could be considered in a future assessment.
- **Bocaccio**
 - Delaying a Bocaccio assessment until 2029 supports SWFSC capacity to focus on Yellowtail rockfish south of 40° 10' N. lat. in 2027

Species recommended for update assessments

- **Petrale sole**
 - Last assessed in 2023 with a target assessment frequency of every 4 years.
- **Shortspine thornyhead**
 - Within capacity if only 4 benchmark assessments were selected.

Species for catch-only projections

- The following species were identified by the GAP and GMT at the March meeting:
 - Canary rockfish: GAP and GMT
 - Sablefish: GAP and GMT
 - Cowcod south of 40° 10' N. lat.: GAP
 - Darkblotched rockfish: GAP
 - Shortspine thornyhead: GAP and GMT
 - Widow rockfish: GAP and GMT
 - Chilipepper: GMT



NMFS preliminary 10-year assessment schedule

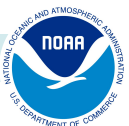
Species + model areas	2027	2029	2031	2033	2035	2037
Petrale sole	U		U		B	
Sablefish			U			B
Lingcod north	B		U		U	
Lingcod south	B		U		U	
Widow rockfish		B			U ³	
Canary rockfish			B			
Shortspine thornyhead			B			
Yellowtail rockfish north		U		U		B
Yellowtail rockfish south	B	U		U		B
Bocaccio		B		U ³		
Vermilion rockfish WA ¹		B			U	
Vermilion rockfish OR ¹		B			U	
Vermilion and sunset rockfish NCA ¹		B			U	
Vermilion and sunset rockfish SCA ¹		B			U	
Elasmobranch		B- Pacific spiny dogfish		B-TBD		B-TBD
Shelf rockfish		B-Black rockfish OR/WA ²	B-TBD	B-TBD	B-TBD	B-TBD
Slope rockfish	B-Redbanded rockfish	B-Darkblotched rockfish	B-TBD	B-TBD	B-TBD	B-TBD
<i>Pacific hake - Pacific hake treaty</i>	<i>B</i>	<i>B</i>	<i>B</i>	<i>B</i>	<i>B</i>	<i>B</i>

¹ The stock definitions are vermilion/sunset rockfish south of 42° and vermilion rockfish north of 42° N. lat. ² The stock definitions are two stocks in Oregon and Washington.

³ This is a revision from Attachment 1 in the briefing book

Potential considerations for the 10-year schedule

- Which species are Council's priorities for the 10-year schedule?
- Assessment frequency conflicts (biology vs. management)?
- Tradeoffs: predictability/efficiency vs. flexibility (e.g., generalize flexible slots)?
- Balance northern/southern species for Science Center staffing.
- Preliminary schedule has uneven workload and split of assessment types across years.
- Under development: a pathway to schedule assessments for species not selected for the 10-yr schedule



Streamlining approaches for older assessments and lower priority species

- The flexible slots in the 10-yr schedule are insufficient to provide timely science advice for the remaining FMP species.
- Expand assessment methods for Category 3 species to provide streamlined approaches to update catch limits.
- Develop and apply methods using population indicators (e.g., survey indices for flatfish species with low rates of attainment) to adjust catch limits and identify if a species should be prioritized for an assessment.

Questions?

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