

SCIENTIFIC AND STATISTICAL COMMITTEE REPORT ON FINAL STOCK
ASSESSMENT PLAN FOR 2027, PRELIMINARY PRIORITIES FOR 2029 AND BEYOND

The Scientific and Statistical Committee (SSC) reviewed the Pacific Fishery Management Council's (Council) preliminary list of species proposed for stock assessments in 2027 and 2029. In response to the Council's March 2026 request, the SSC evaluated new information from the Science Centers regarding age-reading capacity, data availability, and other considerations relevant to identifying the number and type of assessments that are feasible. Kristin Marshall and Chantel Wetzel (Northwest Fisheries Science Center) briefed the SSC on the additional information and a preliminary 10-year schedule for groundfish assessments as provided in [Agenda Item E.4, Attachment 1](#).

SSC Recommendations for the 2027 Stock Assessment Cycle

Based on the information provided, the SSC recommends the following stock assessments for 2027:

Benchmark Assessments

- Redbanded rockfish
- Lingcod north of 40°10' N latitude
- Lingcod south of 40°10' N latitude
- Yellowtail rockfish south of 40°10' N latitude

These stocks warrant full benchmark assessments due to the age (or lack) of existing assessments, evolving data needs, and their management importance.

Update Assessments

- Petrale sole

Available data and the timing of recent assessments support conducting an update for petrale sole rather than a benchmark assessment. Industry has expressed interest in conducting an assessment for shortspine thornyhead in 2027. This stock would be suitable for an update assessment in 2027.

Species-specific considerations

Widow rockfish – It is uncertain whether new information will be available (e.g., from the development of novel fishery-dependent catch per unit effort (CPUE) and eDNA indices) for a widow rockfish assessment in 2027. A methodology review is scheduled for the development and use of fishery-dependent CPUE indices and eDNA indices in early October 2026. Postponing a benchmark assessment for widow rockfish to 2029 will allow adequate time to further develop

these new indices and alternative modeling approaches. A benchmark assessment without these new data sources is unlikely to yield a different result from the last assessment.

Bocaccio – The SSC does not recommend an update assessment for bocaccio in 2027. The existing benchmark was conducted over 10 years ago and there are no new age estimates available at this time. Also, there is a mismatch between the spatial extent of the last assessment and the stock definition recently adopted by the Council. Given its importance for California fisheries, the SSC recommends a benchmark assessment for bocaccio in 2029.

Long-term Planning

The SSC supports the preliminary 10-year groundfish stock assessment plan presented by the Science Centers (Table 2 of [Agenda Item E.4, Attachment 1](#)). The plan establishes a regular rotation for ten species based on commercial, tribal, and recreational importance. Three assessment "slots" are reserved for shelf rockfish, slope rockfish, and elasmobranch stocks each cycle.

The SSC supports the development of less intensive approaches for providing management advice for species with informative survey indices, stock size estimated to be above the target biomass and with landings well below full attainment. These new approaches will need to be reviewed by the SSC and incorporated into the terms of reference for groundfish stock assessment.

PFMC

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