

SCIENTIFIC AND STATISTICAL COMMITTEE REPORT ON 2027-28 HARVEST SPECIFICATIONS, MANAGEMENT MEASURES, AND EXEMPTED FISHING PERMITS – FISHERY MANAGEMENT PLAN (FMP) AMENDMENT FINAL ACTION

The Scientific and Statistical Committee (SSC) reviewed the revised annual catch limit (ACL) alternatives for widow rockfish ([Agenda Item E.6, Attachment 4](#)). The SSC clarified the rationale supporting the overfishing limit (OFL) recommendation for Alternative 2d (6,239 mt), originally presented at the April 2026 meeting ([Agenda Item C.3.a, Supplemental SSC Report 1](#)). The SSC discussed whether specifying an OFL and acceptable biological catch (ABC) under Alternative 2b is justified. Alternative 1 (no action) was not discussed further, as the OFL was derived from the default harvest control rule. Jessi Waller (Pacific Fishery Management Council (Council) staff) was available to answer questions and clarify Council requests.

Alternative 2d represents the SSC-specified OFL for widow rockfish (6,239 mt) for 2027 and 2028. The SSC recommends an OFL based on the yield associated with $B_{40\%}$ as a justifiable proxy for maximum sustainable yield (MSY), and thus the OFL given that the stock is estimated to be above the $B_{40\%}$ reference point. This approach is consistent with recent National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration (NOAA) technical guidance ([March 2026, Informational Report 4](#)) related to specifying reference points identified in National Standard 1 (NS1) of the Magnuson-Stevens Fishery Conservation and Management Act (MSA) and prevents overfishing, while allowing for long term optimum yield. The proposed ABC of 6,238 mt is applied over the next two years which is consistent with NS1 technical guidance for phase-in provisions.

The NOAA technical guidance recommends the use of a proxy ($B_{40\%}$ in this case) for B_{MSY} when unfished biomass (B_0) can be estimated more reliably than the biomass that corresponds to MSY. Moreover, when total egg production is estimated rather than spawning biomass, as is now the case for widow rockfish, it is appropriate to base the F_{MSY} proxy on the F that achieves that B_{MSY} proxy rather than on the F_{MSY} proxy for rockfish ($F_{50\%}$). Estimates of B_{MSY} and F_{MSY} based on the stock assessment output are not recommended when steepness is pre-specified rather than estimated. This is because the ratio of B_{MSY} to B_0 is effectively set, independent of any data, and thus is unreliable and overly precise. Steepness was pre-specified in the widow rockfish assessment, thereby justifying the use of proxies over model estimates. In contrast, estimates of B_0 in the assessment were relatively stable across all sensitivity model runs, indicating the data are informative about B_0 .

The pre-determined ACL for Alternative 2b is 6,720 mt and not compliant with (is greater than) the OFL of 6,239 mt.

The SSC reiterates that the application of the approach used to derive the OFL for Alternative 2d is limited to this specific case. The SSC recommends that the Council request analyses followed by a workshop or methodology review to evaluate harvest strategies that depart from currently used default control rules which have been previously evaluated for risk.

Value	Alt 1 (Default)		Alt 2b (20% ramp down)		Alt 2d (SSC-1)	
	2027	2028	2027	2028	2027	2028
OFL (mt)	4,916	5,172	6,239	6,239	6,239	6,239
ABC (mt)	4,596	4,810	-	-	6,238	6,238
ACL (mt)	4,596	4,810	6,720	6,720	6,238	6,238
Implied ABC buffer	0.935	0.930	-	-	0.9998	0.9998
Sigma	0.5375	0.5750	0.5	0.5	0.5	0.5
Implied P*	0.45	0.45	-	-	0.4999	0.4999
2029 fraction unfished	0.420		0.397		0.402	
Max. risk B<B _{40%}	0.474 in 2028		0.505 in 2029		0.497 in 2029	
Max. risk B<B _{25%}	0.242 in 2036		0.252 in 2036		0.249 in 2036	

PFMC
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