Agenda Item C.3.a
Supplemental REVISED SSC Report 1
April 2026

SCIENTIFIC AND STATISTICAL COMMITTEE REPORT ON WIDOW ROCKFISH ALTERNATIVE HARVEST CONTROL RULE

The Scientific and Statistical Committee (SSC) reviewed the analysis of the Council-proposed annual catch limit (ACL) alternatives for widow rockfish (Agenda Item C.3 Attachment 1) and discussed their potential risks and impacts as well as methods for deriving Overfishing Limits (OFLs) and Acceptable Biological Catches (ABCs) for selected alternatives. Jessi Waller (Council staff) was available to answer questions and clarify Council requests.

The SSC appreciates the work of the STAT to produce this analysis, which the SSC found to be correctly conducted and useful for evaluating short-term risks and medium-term tradeoffs associated with the alternatives. The analysis shows that alternatives with higher catches in 2027 and 2028 require lower catches from 2029 to 2036 to reach a similar fraction of unfished spawning output in 2036. The 2027 and 2028 ACLs from Alternatives 2a, 2b, and 2c exceed the OFL from the default control rule (Alternative 1), which is calculated as the yield resulting from $F_{SPR=50\%}$. Therefore, if fully attained, ACLs from Alternatives 2a, 2b, and 2c would have a greater than 50% chance of exceeding $F_{SPR=50\%}$. Under a conventional reading of the Pacific Coast Groundfish Fishery Management Plan and the default OFL control rule, this would be considered to be overfishing.

The SSC found that the analysis does not explicitly address the long-term risks and impacts of the *ad hoc* Council-proposed catch limits for 2027 and 2028. This is because the long-term risks and impacts of these catch limits also depend on Council decisions about catch limits after 2028. Although the analysis presented in Appendix A of Agenda Item C.3 Attachment 1 shows that switching to the default ACL harvest control rule in 2029 would return stock to $B_{40\%}$ no later than 2031 under all of the alternatives, this is based on a deterministic catch projection. A stochastic management strategy evaluation (with a defined harvest control rule after 2028) would be necessary to fully understand the long-term risks of the alternative *ad hoc* catch limits proposed for 2027-2028.

The SSC discussed alternative ways to define the OFL that could be consistent with recent technical guidance (March 2026, Informational Report 4). The SSC agreed that a harvest control rule that sets the OFL at a constant proxy MSY value whenever the stock is estimated to be above the proxy B_{MSY} ($B_{40\%}$) would be consistent with that guidance. Given that the stock is currently estimated to be above the $B_{40\%}$ reference point, the SSC determined that the OFL should be set equal to the yield corresponding to $B_{40\%}$, which is 6,239 mt (March 2026, Agenda Item D.2, Attachment 1, Table v). Under the assumption that the ABCs are set to the ACL values provided

in the alternatives, only the ABCs for 2027 and 2028 proposed under Alternative 1 (4,596 and 4,810 mt) and Alternative 2c (5,858 mt) are below the OFL of 6,239 mt. The ABCs for 2027 and 2028 proposed under Alternative 2a (8,400 mt) and Alternative 2b (6,720 mt) exceed this OFL and thus lead to a probability of overfishing (P*) greater than 0.5. The SSC calculated the buffer and implied P* associated with each alternative assuming a sigma of 0.5, which is the default for a Category 1 assessment, provided in the table below:

Value	Alt 1		Alt 2a		Alt 2b		Alt 2c	
	2027	**2028**	**2027**	**2028**	**2027**	**2028**	**2027**	**2028**
OFL (mt)	4,916	5,172	6,239	6,239	6,239	6,239	6,239	6,239
ABC = ACL (mt)	4,596	4,810	8,400	8,400	6,720	6,720	5,858	5,858
Implied ABC buffer	0.935	0.930	1.346	1.346	1.077	1.077	0.939	0.939
Sigma	0.5375	0.5750	0.5	0.5	0.5	0.5	0.5	0.5
Implied P*	0.45	0.45	0.724	0.724	0.559	0.559	0.450	0.450

If the Council wanted to set the ABCs by specifying a risk tolerance policy, it could select ABCs associated with any of the following P* values:

Value	P* = 0.45		P* = 0.40		P* = 0.35		P* = 0.30	
	2027	**2028**	**2027**	**2028**	**2027**	**2028**	**2027**	**2028**
OFL (mt)	6,239	6,239	6,239	6,239	6,239	6,239	6,239	6,239
Sigma	0.5	0.5	0.5	0.5	0.5	0.5	0.5	0.5
ABC buffer	0.939	0.939	0.881	0.881	0.825	0.825	0.769	0.769
ABC = ACL (mt)	5,858	5,858	5,497	5,497	5,147	5,147	4,797	4,797

Any of the ABCs from Alternatives 1 or 2c or those from the P*-based values in the table above would be consistent with the OFL resulting from the approach based on equilibrium MSY and past default practices around risk tolerance with P* ≤ 0.45. Ramp down approaches, which set the 2027 and 2028 ABCs to any value less than the OFL, would be consistent with an existing precedent for *ad hoc* phase in control rules (e.g., yellowtail rockfish, March 2026, Agenda Item D.6, Attachment 5).

As stated in March 2026 (D.4.a Supplemental SSC Report 1), the SSC emphasizes that its application of this approach to deriving the OFL is limited to this specific case. In particular, the SSC's discussion and recommendations would differ for a stock assessed or projected to be below the proxy B_{MSY} reference point. More broadly, the SSC cautions that the frequent use of *ad hoc* harvest control rules would add workload and result in the use of harvest policies that have not been evaluated using management strategy evaluation for their ability to meet management objectives.