

GROUND FISH MANAGEMENT TEAM REPORT ON EMERGENCY ACTION: REVISED
2026 SPECIFICATIONS AND MEASURES FOR CANARY ROCKFISH, SHORTSPINE
THORNYHEAD, AND PETRALE SOLE – FINAL ACTION

Canary rockfish

The GMT recommends the Council take emergency action to adopt the revised 2026 harvest specifications for canary rockfish, utilizing an alternative Annual Catch Limit (ACL) Harvest Control Rule (HCR) in which no 40-10 rule is applied in 2026 as described in Table 3 of [Agenda Item G.8 Supplemental Attachment 4 September 2025](#).

Petrable sole

The GMT recommends the Council take emergency action to adopt the revised 2026 harvest specifications for petrale sole, utilizing an alternative ACL HCR where the ACL is set equal to the Allowable Biological Catch (ABC) in 2026 as described in Table 2 of [Agenda Item G.8 Supplemental Attachment 3 September 2025](#).

Shortspine thornyhead

The GMT recommends the Council take emergency action to adopt the revised 2026 harvest specifications for shortspine thornyhead, utilizing an alternative ACL HCR where the ABC value is set closer to the overfishing limit (OFL) in 2026 as a phase in approach described in Table 3 of [Agenda Item G.8 Supplemental Attachment 2 September 2025](#).

Updates Since June

In the following sections, the Groundfish Management Team (GMT) provides any relevant updates since our June 2025 report regarding fishery attainments, projections, and new information. We also discuss sector-specific benefits from the allocation differences shown in [Agenda Item G.8, Supplemental Attachment 5](#).

Canary rockfish

As discussed in [Agenda Item E.3.a, Supplemental GMT Report 1, June 2025](#), the canary rockfish coastwide ACL decreased from 1,296 mt in 2024, to 571 mt in 2025 (*i.e.*, a 56 percent decrease). In the 2025-2026 biennial harvest specifications and management measures (hereinafter 2025-26 biennial groundfish process) and the 2025 canary rockfish catch-only update projections, the GMT projected that all sectors except for the Individual Fishing Quota (IFQ) sector would attain their full allocated share in 2025 and 2026 (Table 1). For the IFQ sector, a projection model was used ([Harvest Specifications and Management Measures for 2025-2026](#)). Table 1 below shows canary rockfish mortality estimates and sector attainments as of September 22, with the exception of the recreational sectors for which estimates are specified in a footnote. As of September 22, the canary rockfish ACL of 571 mt is at 44 percent attainment (or 252.0 mt).

Table 1. Year-to-date estimated total mortality in metric tons (mt) with year-end harvest limits or set-asides (mt) and percent attainment for canary rockfish. Estimated mortality in all non-treaty commercial sectors are based on landings through September 22 combined with the recent three-year (2022-2024) average discard mortality estimate prorated by day of year, except at-sea sectors. Recreational fishery mortality (retained and discarded) is preliminary and estimated through July 31 for California, and through August 31 for Washington and Oregon.

Sector	Estimated Mortality (mt)	Harvest Limits or Set-asides (mt)	Percent Attainment
<i>Trawl</i>	<i>108.4</i>	<i>367.6</i>	<i>29%</i>
--At-Sea CP	0.1	20.0	15%
--At-Sea MS	2.9		
--IFQ (shoreside whiting)	41.5	347.6	30%
--IFQ (non-whiting)	63.9		
<i>Non-Trawl</i>	<i>80.7</i>	<i>140.7</i>	<i>57%</i>
--Non-Nearshore	21.9	50.7	49%
--Nearshore	2.9		
--WA - Recreational a/	18.7	17.3	108%
--OR - Recreational b/	22.5	26.0	87%
--CA - Recreational c/	14.7	46.7	31%
Fishery Harvest Guideline	189.1	508.3	37%
Research and Incidental d/	12.9	12.9	100%
Treaty d/	50	50	100%
Total (Harvest Limit = ACL)	252.0	571.2	44%

a/ WA Recreational: Estimates are through August 31 and preliminary. Year-end projection is 24.0 mt.

b/ OR Recreational: Estimates are through August 31. Year-end projection is 26.0 mt.

c/ CA Recreational: Estimates are through July & preliminary. Year-end projection assumes full attainment 46.7 mt.

d/ Full set-aside attainment is projected.

At-sea

As of September 22, a total of 3 mt of canary rockfish have been caught, or 15 percent of the 20 mt at-sea set-aside. The whiting mothership (MS) sector has caught 2.86 mt, and the catcher processor (CP) sector has caught 0.06 mt. Canary rockfish catch in 2025 is tracking higher than 4 out of the last 5 years by this date, with only 2023 as the exception when 20 mt had already been caught by mid-September. 2025 is also the third highest year since 1991 in terms of the largest three canary rockfish hauls, with 2023 as the top three largest hauls per year on record. Only one other year—2004—is higher than 2025. All three of the largest hauls in 2025 were in August. Based on [Agenda Item G.8 Supplemental Attachment 5 September 2025](#), the 20 mt at-sea set-aside for canary rockfish is not proposed to change in 2026 under this emergency action.

Individual Fishing Quota (IFQ)

As of September 22, a total of 105.4 mt of canary rockfish have been caught in the IFQ sector, or 31 percent of the 348 mt IFQ allocation. The IFQ model used in the 2025-26 management measures analysis projected year-end catches of 291 mt. The fact that catches are tracking slightly lower than expected by this date is likely a reflection of the reduction in activity by IFQ participants due to severely constraining allocations, in addition to difficulty acquiring quota pounds (QP) in the QP market, as discussed in public comment under Agenda Item B.1 of this meeting. Table 2 shows the distribution of canary rockfish vessel account QP balances relative to the annual vessel limit (AVL) through September 16 for the years 2021 through 2025 (i.e., vessel limit attainments). The vast majority (99th percentile) of vessel accounts typically attain around 40-70 percent of the canary rockfish vessel limit, which is 76,721 pounds in 2025 (or 10 percent of the sector allocation). However, compared to previous years, in 2025 vessel accounts on the higher end of the distribution appear to be reaching lower AVL attainments through mid-September, further indicating a lower level of overall fishing activity due to constraints as well as a “freezing” of the QP market.

[Agenda Item G.8 Supplemental Attachment 5 September 2025](#), Table 3 details two requests along with status quo indicating the 2026 canary rockfish IFQ allocation could increase by 15 mt under the default harvest control rule (HCR) or 39 mt if the Council removes the precautionary 40-10 rule. The AVL in 2026 would increase by 3,268 lbs. or 8,528 lbs., respectively. This increase, particularly the latter, would provide some relief to IFQ participants by potentially allowing for more canary rockfish QPs to be transferred across vessel accounts, thereby allowing participants to prosecute their target fisheries.

Table 2. IFQ canary rockfish QP balances relative to AVL (i.e., vessel limit attainment) through September 16 by percentile.

Year	50th	75th	90th	99th
2021	1.4%	9.4%	18.2%	52.6%
2022	0.5%	10.0%	21.0%	61.7%
2023	0.3%	10.0%	23.2%	49.1%
2024	0.2%	8.5%	20.2%	69.7%
2025	2.0%	13.0%	21.9%	46.8%

Commercial Non-trawl

As of September 22, the total mortality of canary rockfish is 9 mt in the Limited Entry Fixed Gear (LEFG) sector, and a total of 15.8 mt in the non-nearshore Open Access (OA) sector. Thus, the total mortality for the commercial non-trawl sector is 49 percent (24.8 mt) of the 50.7 mt allocated. Since the June meeting, the GEMM ([G.1.b NWFSC Report 2: Groundfish Mortality Table](#)) was published indicating discard mortality of canary rockfish in the commercial fixed gear sector has increased six-fold (2024 compared to 2023) and more participants are hitting at least 80 percent of their trip limits in 2025 than 2023/24. These data combined suggest regulatory discards, and a trip

limit increase could be warranted resulting in reduced waste and increased attainment. Additionally, areas to protect California quillback rockfish (over 550 miles of coast) prevented commercial non-trawl fishing for canary rockfish shoreward of 3 nm, areas where canary are both targeted and caught efficiently. These areas have only recently been opened ([90 FR 44998](#); September 18, 2025, [G.7.a Supplemental CDFW Report 1](#)), but data at present do not yet reflect this regulatory regime shift. Now that these areas have been opened, canary rockfish attainment in the commercial non-trawl nearshore sector will likely increase. [Agenda Item G.8 Supplemental Attachment 5 September 2025](#), Table 3 details two requests along with status quo indicating the non-trawl allocation could increase to 48.8 mt or 51.8 mt respectively. The increase would result in an additional 1.9 mt under request 1, or 4.9 mt under request 2. Although small, these increases in allocation could allow an additional buffer if trip limits adjustments are requested for 2026.

Recreational

Recreational sectors across all three states have been constrained by canary rockfish and any increase in allocations to the state specific harvest guidelines (HG) will provide immediate benefit by minimizing the possibility of inseason changes to meet but not exceed HGs. If additional restrictions are still needed after the emergency rule moving forward, any future restrictions may not need to be as stringent. This would provide immediate benefit and lessen the impacts on fishery participants.

Washington Recreational

To reduce recreational mortality, in 2025, the Washington Department of Fish and Wildlife (WDFW) implemented a five-fish daily canary rockfish sub-limit within the rockfish aggregate to align with the Washington recreational HG of 17.3 mt. Through August 2025, recreational canary rockfish mortality off Washington is estimated at 18.7 mt, with projections suggesting a full-season total near 24 mt (the Washington recreational bottomfish season closes the third Saturday of October). An unforeseen shift in fishing activity is driving this outcome: bottomfish trips have contributed less to canary mortality than in recent years, while salmon trips (including salmon/halibut combo trips) have produced higher canary mortality than any of the past three years, already exceeding full-season totals from 2022–2024. Although overall effort (i.e., angler trips) remains consistent, participation has shifted heavily toward salmon, which accounts for nearly 70 percent of all trips and 27 percent of total canary mortality. Washington’s ocean salmon seasons were structured with higher salmon quotas than in recent years and despite comparatively earlier closures of salmon fisheries in 2025, the shift has resulted in relatively greater canary catch.

Action through emergency regulation achieves direct benefit by lessening the need for disruptive inseason regulatory changes, thereby allowing fishery participants and businesses to continue as planned. The exceedance of the Washington canary rockfish share demonstrates the constraint this species has on the fishery and poses a management problem for 2026 planning. Additional reductions in the sub-limit for canary rockfish, an attractive recreational fish, risks further discouraging angler interest in bottomfish trips, impacting charter operators and other dependent businesses. Bottomfish serves as the “bread and butter” fishery, providing stable opportunity year to year in contrast to uncertain annual changes associated with salmon fishery quota/seasons. Action will benefit fishery participants by reducing the risk of further erosion of bottomfish fishery participation and lessening uncertainty for both anglers and businesses.

Oregon Recreational

The Oregon Department of Fish and Wildlife (ODFW) has adjusted the recreational bag limit twice through the inseason state rule making process to accommodate for unforeseen higher catches than anticipated for both black rockfish and canary rockfish in 2025. When either a nearshore species or an offshore species is close to attaining the HG, a depth restriction can be implemented to reduce the angling pressure in an area, thus relieving pressure on the resource. A depth restriction was not pursued in response to the higher catches, as both nearshore species and offshore species are reaching or exceeding the species-specific HG. As of September 18, the recreational general marine bag limit has been reduced to a three-fish daily bag limit per angler, canary rockfish remains limited to a one-fish sub-bag within the general marine daily bag limit. It is anticipated that a three-fish bag limit will reduce angler effort as charter companies will find it difficult to market the lower bag limits and private anglers may not see value in fishing with the lower bag limits. Preliminary estimates of canary rockfish through August 31 is 22.5 mt out of an HG of 26.0 mt (or 86.5 percent). This presents a management problem for the fishery which may be addressed through the emergency regulation and provide immediate benefits for fishery participants.

California Recreational

Inseason action to create a canary rockfish sub-bag limit was already taken by the California Fish and Game Commission ([Agenda Item G.7.a, Supplemental CDFW Report 1, September 2025](#)) and similar federal actions are recommended for Council adoption. Inseason changes are in response to the unforeseen and recent discovery that quillback rockfish abundance is significantly higher than previously thought, as identified by the results from the [2025 quillback rockfish off California stock assessment](#). The unforeseen inseason changes to depth limits described in the California Department of Fish and Wildlife (CDFW) report ([Agenda Item G.7.a, Supplemental CDFW Report 1, June 2025](#)) allow all depth fishing in several Groundfish Management Areas in state and Federal waters, which will allow anglers more access to the depth range where canary rockfish are commonly taken in the recreational fishery. The sub-bag limit, which is proposed under Agenda Item G.7, is projected to keep the California recreational canary rockfish catch within limits.

Even though the recommended California inseason actions are designed to stay within the current California state recreational HG, there is uncertainty in how changes to angler effort and catch will impact the recreational mortality on canary rockfish. The proposed inseason changes may not be sufficient to stay below the California recreational HG. If additional restrictions are still needed, adoption of the emergency rule would minimize the likely additional restrictions that may be needed. This in turn would lessen impacts on fishery participants by providing more certainty for future fishing trips and business planning.

Petrale sole

As discussed in [Agenda Item E.3.a, Supplemental GMT Report 1, June 2025](#), the petrale sole coastwide ACL decreased from 3,285 mt in 2024, to 2,354 mt in 2025 (i.e., a 28 percent decrease). For a fully attained stock, this has had substantial impacts to the IFQ fishery. Table 4 below shows petrale sole mortality estimates and sector attainments as of September 22nd, with the exception of the recreational sectors for which estimates are through July 31 for California, and August 31 for Washington and Oregon. As of September 22, the petrale sole ACL of 2,354 mt is at 70 percent attainment (or 1,648.6 mt).

Table 4. Year-to-date estimated total mortality in metric tons (mt) with year-end harvest limits or set-asides (mt) and percent attainment for petrale sole. Estimated mortality in all non-treaty commercial sectors are based on landings through September 22 combined with the recent three-year (2022-2024) average discard mortality estimate prorated by day of year, except at-sea sectors. Recreational fishery mortality (retained and discarded) is preliminary and estimated through July 31 for California, and through August 31 for Washington and Oregon.

Sector	Estimated Mortality (mt)	Harvest Limits or Set-asides (mt)	Percent Attainment
<i>Trawl</i>	1,304.8	2,005.5	65%
--At-Sea CP	0.0	5.0	0%
--At-Sea MS	0.0		
--IFQ (shoreside whiting)	0.03	2,000.5	65%
--IFQ (non-whiting)	1,304.8		
<i>Non-Trawl</i>	25.3	30.0	84%
-- Commercial	4.3	30.0	70%
-- Recreational a/	21		
Fishery Harvest Guideline	1,330.1	2,035.5	65%
Incidental/Miscellaneous b/	28.5	28.5	100%
Treaty b/	290	290	100%
Total (Harvest Limit = ACL)	1,648.6	2,354.0	70%

*Confidential and not included in total

a/ WA Recreational is 1.4 mt through August 31. OR Recreational is 4.4 mt through August 31. CA Recreational is 15.2 mt through July.

b/ Full set-aside attainment is projected.

At-sea

No petrale sole has been caught by the at-sea sectors as of the time of writing this report. Based on [Agenda Item G.8 Supplemental Attachment 5 September 2025](#), the 5 mt at-sea set-aside for petrale sole is not proposed to change in 2026 under this emergency action.

Individual Fishing Quota (IFQ)

As of September 22, a total of 1,305 mt of petrale sole have been caught in the IFQ sector, or 65 percent of the 2,001 mt IFQ allocation. The IFQ model used in the 2025-26 management measures analysis projected year-end catches of 1,852 mt. Table 5 shows the distribution of petrale sole vessel account quota pound (QP) balances relative to the annual vessel limit (AVL) through September 16 for the years 2021 through 2025. The petrale sole vessel limit is typically fully or near-fully attained by at least some vessel accounts (99th percentile is ~100 percent attainment) by mid-September. Compared to prior years, in 2025 more vessels attained greater than 75 percent of the vessel limit through mid-September, indicating there may be additional vessel accounts constrained by the limit in 2025 that would not have been constrained in prior years.

[Agenda Item G.8 Supplemental Attachment 5 September 2025](#), Table 2 shows one request to revise the petrale sole harvest specifications in 2026 in response to the catch-only projection, indicating the 2026 IFQ allocation could increase by 251 mt under the default harvest control rule (HCR), and the AVL in 2026 would increase by 24,901 lbs. This increase in 2026 would provide economic benefits to the IFQ fishery given that petrale sole is an economically important target stock and relieve constraints on those vessels targeting petrale sole. Additionally, industry input in the GAP at this meeting indicated that shoreside whiting vessels tend to treat high-value quota such as petrale sole as currency in order to trade for QPs of other target and bycatch stocks. Therefore, while petrale sole is targeted by the bottom trawl fleet, this increase in 2026 would benefit the entire IFQ fishery and improve flexibility in the overall QP market.

Table 5. IFQ petrale sole QP balances relative to AVL (i.e., vessel limit attainment) through September 16 by percentile.

Year	50th	75th	90th	99th
2021	0.1%	21.9%	44.8%	97.2%
2022	<0.1%	24.3%	57.8%	100.0%
2023	<0.1%	19.3%	56.1%	100.0%
2024	<0.1%	17.7%	70.4%	101.2%
2025	0.3%	18.5%	76.5%	100.0%

Shortspine thornyhead

As discussed in [Agenda Item E.3.a, Supplemental GMT Report 1, June 2025](#), the shortspine thornyhead coastwide ACL decreased from 2,030 mt in 2024, to 815 mt in 2025 (i.e., a 60 percent decrease). Table 6 below shows shortspine thornyhead mortality estimates and sector attainments as of September 22nd. As of September 22, 2025, the shortspine thornyhead ACL of 815 mt is at 39 percent attainment (or 316.1 mt).

At-sea

As of September 22, a total of 6.4 mt of shortspine thornyhead have been caught, or 9 percent of the 70 mt at-sea set-aside. The MS sector has caught 5.7 mt, and the CP sector has caught 0.7 mt. Through September 15, the year 2025 is tracking lower than the last four years but higher than any years between 2016 and 2020 for the following: 1) total at-sea catch, 2) number of hauls with any shortspine thornyhead catch, and 3) average amount of shortspine thornyhead in the top five largest hauls. Shortspine is typically caught in chronic amounts, rather than lightning strikes. 2025 is in the 66th percentile of years since 1991 in terms of the top five largest hauls of shortspine thornyhead, meaning 12 out of the 35 years since 1991 saw generally larger top five hauls than 2025. Four of those 12 years were 2021-2024, along with only one other year since 2006 (i.e., 2013).

The median at-sea catch per haul in the most recent five-year period is nearly three times that of any other five-year period since 1991 (Figure 1). Within the most recent five-year period, 2025 median catch per haul through mid-September is slightly higher than by this date in the last two years. The median catch per haul of shortspine thornyhead tends to be much higher after mid-

September than before. The 70 mt at-sea set-aside was exceeded in 2022, 2023, and 2024. When analyzing the 2025-26 management measures, the GMT initially considered the extremely high catches in 2022 and 2023 (the last two years of complete data at the time) to be anomalous, but that trend has continued into 2025. Based on [Agenda Item G.8, Supplemental Attachment 5 September 2025](#), the 70 mt at-sea set-aside for shortspine thornyhead is not proposed to change in 2026 under this emergency action.

Table 6. Year-to-date estimated total mortality in metric tons (mt) with year-end harvest limits or set-asides (mt) and percent attainment for shortspine thornyhead. Estimated mortality in all non-treaty commercial sectors are based on landings through September 22 combined with the recent three-year (2022-2024) average discard mortality estimate prorated by day of year, except at-sea sectors which record all catches (retained and discarded) inseason. Recreational fishery mortality (retained and discarded) is preliminary and estimated through July 31 for California, and through August 31 for Washington and Oregon

Sector	Estimated Mortality (mt)	Harvest Limits or Set-asides (mt)	Percent Attainment
<i>Trawl</i>	<i>165.4</i>	<i>475.7</i>	<i>35%</i>
--At-Sea CP	5.7	70.0	9%
--At-Sea MS	0.7		
--IFQ (shoreside whiting)	11.2	405.7	39%
--IFQ (non-whiting)	147.8		
<i>Non-Trawl</i>	<i>78.7</i>	<i>267.6</i>	<i>29%</i>
-- North of 34° 27' N. lat. (ACT)	43.5	67.0	65%
---- Commercial north	43.5	NA	NA
---- Recreational north	0.0		
-- South of 34° 27' N. lat.	35.2	200.6	18%
---- Commercial south	35.2	NA	NA
---- Recreational south	0.0		
Fishery Harvest Guideline	244.1	743.3	33%
Incidental/Miscellaneous a/	22	22	100%
Treaty a/	50	50	100%
Total (Harvest Limit = ACL)	316.1	815.3	39%

a/ Full set-aside attainment is projected.

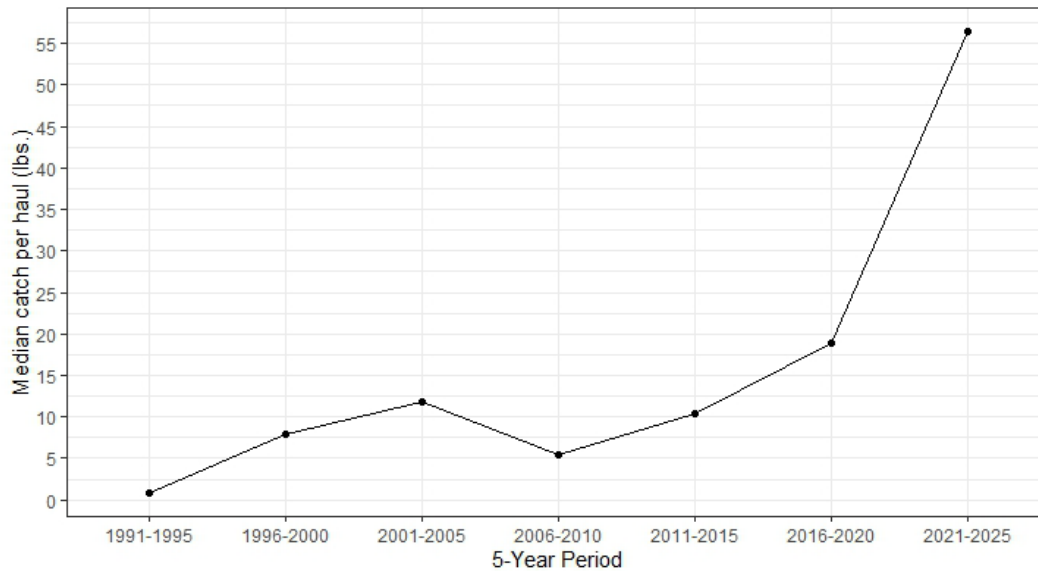


Figure 1. Median shortspine thornyhead catch per haul in the at-sea sectors (combined to protect data confidentiality) by five-year period since 1991.

Individual Fishing Quota (IFQ)

As of September 22, a total of 159.0 mt of shortspine thornyhead have been caught in the IFQ sector, or 39 percent of the 406 mt IFQ allocation. The IFQ model used in the 2025-26 management measures analysis projected year-end catches of 197 mt. Table 7 shows the distribution of shortspine thornyhead vessel account quota pound (QP) balances relative to the annual vessel limit (AVL) as of September 16 for the years 2021 through 2025. Compared to prior years, in 2025 more vessels attained greater than 50 percent of the vessel limit through mid-September, indicating there may be additional vessel accounts constrained by the limit in 2025 that would not have been constrained in prior years.

[Agenda Item G.8 Supplemental Attachment 5 September 2025](#), Table 1 details two requests along with status quo indicating the 2026 shortspine thornyhead IFQ allocation could increase by 6.6 mt under the default HCR or 51.3 mt if the Council implements the phase-in approach. The AVL in 2026 would increase by 1,300 lbs. or 10,175 lbs., respectively. These increases, particularly the latter, would provide some relief to IFQ participants by alleviating constraints for the high-attainment vessel accounts that are targeting high value stocks such as Dover sole and sablefish, while improving overall flexibility in the QP market.

Table 7. IFQ shortspine thornyhead QP balances relative to AVL (i.e., vessel limit attainment) through September 16 by percentile.

Year	50th	75th	90th	99th
2021	3.1%	10.6%	19.1%	28.0%
2022	4.1%	11.4%	18.5%	28.2%
2023	3.7%	11.1%	18.5%	34.7%
2024	4.1%	12.1%	20.8%	30.1%
2025	1.3%	12.5%	24.6%	53.5%

Non-Trawl Commercial

As of September 22, the commercial non-trawl sectors have caught 29 percent (78.6 mt) of the 267.6 mt allocated to them. [Agenda Item G.8 Supplemental Attachment 5 September 2025](#), table 1 details two requests along with status quo indicating the non-trawl allocation could increase to 221 mt or 239 mt respectively. The increase would result in an additional 2.7 mt under request 1, or 20.9 mt under request 2. Landings of shortspine thornyhead in the non-trawl have increased in recent years along with an increase in price per pound suggesting an emerging market. The additional allocation will support a sustainable fishery into the future, noting under the status quo allocation scheme non-trawl allocation is reduced from 267.6 mt in 2025 to 218.3 mt in 2026 reallocating the difference to the trawl sectors. The increase under request two may offset some of the impacts, notably for the area north of 34°27' N. lat. where an ACT set to 25 percent of the non-trawl allocation was adopted last cycle.

PFMC
09/22/25