



Pacific Fishery Management Council

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Pete Hassemer, Chair | Merrick J. Burden, Executive Director

MEMORANDUM

DATE: October 27, 2026

TO: Scientific and Statistical Committee

FROM: Diana Perry, Staff Officer

SUBJECT: November 2026 Council Meeting Materials

The Pacific Fishery Management Council (Council, PFMC) November 2026 meeting will be held in person from November 14, 2026 through November 18, 2026, in Garden Grove, CA. The Scientific and Statistical Committee (SSC) will meet **online** on Tuesday, November 10 and meet **in person** on Friday, November 13 and Saturday, November 14 starting at 8 a.m. each day (see [Meeting Page](#)). Your meeting materials are enclosed.

Instructions for how to connect to the Council and Advisory Body meetings will be posted on the Council's [website](#) prior to the first day of the meeting. If you have been approved to join the meeting remotely, please modify your entry to reflect your full identification (full name and affiliation). This additional information helps participants identify speakers during public comments. All meetings are open to the public and at least one opportunity for public comment has been scheduled for each meeting day.

This meeting is being broadcast and provides the opportunity for remote public comment. In the event an outage occurs, or technical issues arise that impact the experience of remote attendees, we will attempt to resolve them but, ultimately, we cannot guarantee that they will be resolved satisfactorily.

SSC Administrative Matters

On Tuesday, November 18 at 8:00 a.m. the SSC meeting will be called to order by the SSC Chair and any designated alternates will be introduced before beginning with a closed session. The public portion of the meeting will begin immediately following the closed session where the SSC will receive a briefing from the Council's Executive Director, Merrick Burden, to provide clarification on Council direction and informational updates. The SSC will finalize their November 2026 meeting agenda and the September 2026 meeting minutes. Subcommittee assignments will be reviewed and updated, as necessary. SSC recusals will be noted, plans for presenting SSC statements to the Council will be discussed, and an open SSC discussion period will follow.

A public comment period will be conducted at the beginning of each day to allow for public comments to be considered prior to the SSC taking up an agenda item.

C. Administrative Matters

C.4 Membership Appointments

Under Membership Appointments, the SSC reviews any vacant management or technical team seats which are submitted before the Council meeting in an SSC closed session. One nomination was submitted to fill the last SSC at-large seat (Closed Session A.1, Attachment 3) and another was received for the Idaho Department of Fish and Game seat on the SSC (Closed Session A.1, Attachment 2). The SSC should also review a nomination from the Oregon Department of Fish and Wildlife to fill their seat on the Salmon Technical Team (Closed Session A.1, Attachment 1). SSC recommendations regarding membership appointments will be offered during the Council Closed Session on Saturday, November 14.

C.5 Future Council Meeting Agenda and Workload Planning

The SSC will discuss future workload planning matters and report to the Council under Agenda Item C.5 scheduled for Wednesday, November 18.

Future workload planning may include discussion with SSC subcommittees to plan for Council tasks noted in future Council meeting quick reference agendas (i.e., March 2027, April 2027) or Year-at-a-Glance topics. The SSC statement regularly provides a table with important meeting dates and timelines.

F. Salmon Management

F.3 Sacramento River Fall Chinook Spawner Abundance at Maximum Sustainable Yield (S_{MSY}): Peer Review Results and Next Steps

The Chair of the Sacramento River fall Chinook (SRFC) S_{MSY} peer review panel, Dr. Scott Rumsey, and Panelists Dr. Thomas Buehrens and Dr. Tim Copeland will brief the SSC on the peer review panel's (Panel's) final report. The Panel was tasked with reviewing the use of the Ricker stock-recruitment relationship for SRFC, the ratio method ($S_{MSY} = F_{MSY} \times S_{MP}$) for estimating S_{MSY} , four candidate recruitment datasets, potential alternative approaches, and the appropriate range of years for analysis.

The SSC should review the Panel's conclusions. As described in the final report, the Panel does not recommend any of the evaluated recruitment datasets as a stand-alone dataset for estimating S_{MSY} at this time but regards the cohort reconstruction as the strongest long-term approach once the data series covers sufficient years and conditions. Therefore, the SSC is not being asked to make a determination about best scientific information available at this time.

The SSC may provide scientific advice to the Council that is related to the Panel report. The Panel's conclusions articulated the limitations and biases of the evaluated datasets. The Panel also

described how certain considerations could help in the development of harvest strategies that could be used until such time that data sufficiency reviews indicate that a cohort-reconstruction-derived S_{MSY} value can be identified.

G. Groundfish Management

G.3 Methodology Review: Final Fishery Impact Model Review Topics & Stock Assessment Methodologies

Council Operating Procedure 25 ([COP 25](#)) specifies the Council process for reviewing proposed new methodologies to inform management decisions. Two types of methodologies are considered in COP 25, those proposed for use in groundfish stock assessments and groundfish impact analyses.

Stock Assessment Methodologies

In September 2025, the Council adopted methodology review topics for potential use in the 2027 and beyond groundfish stock assessments. The SSC Groundfish Subcommittee (GFSC) conducted a methodology review on the suitability of a fishery-dependent index of abundance and an eDNA index of abundance in groundfish stock assessments in October 2026. The SSC GFSC provided a summary report from the review and the full SSC will provide their recommendations to the Council at this meeting.

Impact Projection Methodologies

The California Department of Fish and Wildlife (CDFW) provided a report (Attachment 1) on the California Cooperative Groundfish Survey (COOP) sampling design and the California Commercial Fishery Data (CALCOM) expansion methodology. CDFW proposes a review in 2027 for potential use in the 2029 and beyond assessment cycles. The GMT is scheduled to meet October 26-30, 2026, to discuss, among other matters, whether there are proposed changes to the fishery projection models that may warrant an SSC review. The SSC, in conjunction with the GMT, should determine whether a review is needed based on the guidelines in COP 25. If selected, the anticipated schedule would be for the SSC to conduct a groundfish methodology review in advance of the September 2027 Council meeting, to align with potential use in the 2029-30 harvest specifications and management measure process.

Revisions to COP 25

At the September 2026 Council meeting, under the Agenda Item C.4 Council Efficiencies, the Council adopted a routine schedule that anticipates a limited number of groundfish items at September meetings in even years. The SSC should make a recommendation on how to accommodate the methodology review process within that schedule, taking into account their routine workload. The options include: (1) maintaining the schedule in COP 25, with methodology reviews considered part of the light groundfish agenda in September of even years; or (2) modifying COP 25 to shift these decisions to November of even years.

Additionally, staff would like to propose revisions to COP 25 that would simplify and clarify the process while preserving the Council's original intent. If scheduled, SSC feedback will be essential to this effort.

G.4 Stock Assessment Process Review Adjustments for 2027

The Council relies on stock assessments to manage fisheries sustainably and partners with the Northwest and Southwest Fisheries Science Center partners (Science Centers) at the National Marine Fisheries Service (NMFS) to create a stock assessment process that is open and transparent. This is a complex process involving iterations between reviewers and scientists, stakeholder engagement, public comment, and has often involved deliberations by the Council (see Attachment 1 for a brief visual description of major points in the current stock assessment process).

At the June 2026 meeting, the Council considered 64 actions identified in a report on ways to improve the stock assessment process ([Agenda Item E.3, Attachment 1, June 2026](#)) and recommendations of a selection of those actions and additional actions from advisory bodies. The Council identified short-term and long-term priority actions that Council staff in collaboration with partners at NOAA and on the Advisory Bodies, where appropriate, could work to improve the stock assessment process ([see June 2026 Decision Summary Document](#)).

The SSC should consider the changes for the 2027-2028 biennial stock assessment cycle and provide the Council recommendations on those actions. Regarding possible longer-term matters, a status update on the long-term items could be brought back to the Council in March 2027 when the Council is anticipated to finalize its ten-year stock assessment plan.

G.5 Stock Assessment Terms of Reference for 2027-2028

This agenda item concerns the three Terms of Reference (TOR) documents that guide the stock assessment process; a.) specifies how stock assessment reviews should occur and defines the roles and responsibilities of various entities contributing to this process, with a supplemental accepted practices guidelines document; b.) guides the development of rebuilding analyses used to develop harvest specifications and rebuilding plans for overfished and rebuilding species; and c.) guides how new methodologies that inform analyses used in groundfish and coastal pelagic species management decision-making are reviewed. Updates to the accepted practices guidelines are anticipated in the winter by the SSC Groundfish Subcommittee (via a public meeting). A revised accepted practices guidelines document is planned for the March 2027 Council meeting. Only the stock assessment review process TOR documents have recommended edits for the next cycle. The stock assessment review TOR provided as Attachment 1 (clean proposed version). Attachment 2 is the red line draft comparing the proposed draft with the 2025-2026 version.

The Council will consider the input from advisory bodies and the public before deciding on language for the three 2025-2026 TOR documents. The SSC should review Attachment 1 and 2 and provide recommendations to the Council on a final TOR.

G.7 Harvest Specification and Management Measures Flexibility – Final Action

At the March 2025 meeting, the Council adopted several priorities aimed at providing flexibility in establishing harvest specifications intended to increase stability in the fishery. In June 2025, the Council further prioritized five items for consideration: Carryover (allowing unused annual catch limits for selected stocks to be carried forward using final catch data from two years prior); Phase In acceptable biological catch (ABC) harvest control rules (phasing in changes to ABC resulting

from new scientific information); “Green Light” Framework (permitting mid-biennium increases in harvest specifications for newly assessed stocks when assessments indicate improved stock status); Changes to Off-the-Top Deductions (accounting for off-the-top deductions off of the ABC instead of the annual catch limit); and Harvest Specifications Frequency (adopting harvest specifications for longer time periods while maintaining the biennial cycle).

The Council adopted a range of alternatives (ROA) and preliminary preferred alternative (PPA) for each action as recommended by the Groundfish Advisory Subpanel ([Agenda Item F.5.a, Supplemental GAP Report 1, November 2025](#)) and Groundfish Management Team ([Agenda Item F.5.a, Supplemental GMT Report 1, November 2025](#)) in November 2025. In September 2026, the SSC reviewed a preliminary version of the document and provide comments and recommendations as shown in Agenda Item G.7, SSC Report 1. The SSC should review Attachment 1 and provide any additional comments and recommendations to support consideration of a final preferred alternative (FPA). Note the SSC should only focus on the action items below as they are related directly to the SSC’s roles and responsibilities under the Magnuson Stevens Fishery Conservation and Management Act (MSA) and the National Standard Guidelines as were described in the September 2026 SSC Memo. The Council is scheduled to adopt fishery management plan (FMP) language to implement the Council’s final recommendations for this action, and any other final implementation details, in June 2027.

G.8 Risk Management Framework

Over the last few years, the Council has posed questions that fall under the umbrella of risk management. The Council recently identified “Risk Management” as a priority agenda item under its Workload and New Management Measure process in April 2026. Attachment 1 is a staff white paper that outlines potential changes across three interconnected areas: stock assessments, harvest policy, and management/catch controls. These concepts vary in complexity, analytical needs, and potential implementation timelines. The Washington Department of Fish and Wildlife (WDFW) has also produced a report on potential ideas for this item based on a stakeholder meeting held in August. The SSC should consider the materials and provide comments on the initial scope. Given the preliminary stage of this potential action, the SSC is asked to provide general scientific advice on the following:

1. Provide preliminary feedback on the approaches described in Attachment 1, including their potential to address instability in harvest specifications and fishing opportunities and underutilization of the resource due to constraining or choke stocks.
2. Identify key scientific considerations, uncertainties, or limitations that should inform further development of these approaches.
3. Identify other potential approaches, including those used in other fisheries or management frameworks, that may warrant consideration during initial scoping.

J. Coastal Pelagic Species Management

J.2 2028-29 Stock Assessment Prioritization and Schedule

The stock assessment prioritization (SAP) process was designed to guide stock assessment priorities, survey design, and the long-term integrity and value of abundance indices while providing sufficient flexibility to allow for revisions in the intervening years based on new

information. Under this agenda item, the Council will be recommending stock assessment and other related priorities for the 2028-2029 biennium and providing direction on long term priorities, as appropriate. Attachment 1 provides considerations from Council and NMFS staff on the proposed schedule of CPS stock assessments and additional CPS analyses for the SSC and Council to consider. The Council will specifically need to address the following decision points while considering potential workload conflicts outlined in Attachment 1:

- Confirm a U.S. (coastwide) benchmark assessment for Pacific sardine in 2028
- Confirm priorities for 2029: A Pacific mackerel benchmark assessment and a Pacific sardine update assessment are proposed for 2029. The Council has also expressed interest in additional work (i.e., a Management Strategy Evaluation (MSE) or similar analysis) related to Pacific sardine following the 2028 benchmark. Consider whether to adjust the proposal for 2029 to accommodate any additional workload priorities.
- Consider impacts of shifting workload on 2030: If the proposal for 2029 is adjusted, it may impact the ability to complete the anticipated 2030 central subpopulation of northern anchovy (CSNA) assessment. Additional workload related to Pacific sardine may also continue to present workload conflicts beyond the next biennium.
- Provide direction on scoping a long term coastal pelagic species (CPS) assessment schedule that reduces workload conflicts and improves efficiency of the stock assessment schedule

The SSC should provide any perspective and recommendations regarding the proposed priorities and schedule, including the related decision points and workload conflicts.

J.3 Fishery Management Plan Amendment: Revised Sardine Stock and Management Provisions – Final Action

Considering the newly available information on Pacific sardine population structure, including genetic studies and a review of all preceding research on Pacific sardine population biology, the Council has determined it appropriate to revise the stock definition for Pacific sardine, as described in the fishery management unit (FMU) of the Coastal Pelagic Species Fishery Management Plan (CPS FMP).

At this meeting, the Council is scheduled to adopt a final preferred alternative (FPA) for an amendment to the Coastal Pelagic Species Fishery Management Plan (CPS FMP) that would revise the Pacific sardine stock definition and specify management provisions for that stock.

The main decision points for the Council at final action that the SSC should provide input on are as follows:

1. **Stock Definition** - Whether to revise the Pacific sardine stock definition to reflect updated science on population biology. Doing so would define a single, coastwide U.S. stock and would apply the CPS management framework to that stock
2. **Management Provisions** - If the stock is revised, the current management framework for Pacific sardine may be applied, and the Council can consider several adjustments within that framework under Alternative 1 including:
 - a. **Specification of a minimum stock size threshold (MSST)** for the overfished

status determination criteria (SDC)

- b. **Set DISTRIBUTION to 1** in the overfishing limit (OFL), acceptable biological catch (ABC)

Options for specifying MSST:

- a) **Static Value:** MSST = X mt age 1+ biomass or reasonable proxy consistent with BSIA
Option a.i: MSST = 65,000 mt age 1+ biomass or reasonable proxy
Option a.ii: MSST = 150,000 mt age 1+ biomass or reasonable proxy
b) **Formulaic (PPA):** MSST = $10\%B_0 - 30\%B_0$ (where X% is determined upon BSIA), or other reasonable proxy

The SSC will provide recommendations to the Council on an FPA and any rationale or additional information to support this decision point, including the following tasks:

1. Determination of BSIA on population dynamics to support delineation of the Pacific sardine stock, per best practices for defining stocks
2. Determination of BSIA to specify an MSST for a U.S. Pacific sardine stock
3. Confirm proposed FMP text (Attachment 3, Section XX) is accurate and complete in capturing recommendations on SDC, provide recommendations on revisions, as appropriate
4. Clarification of past recommendations including, what an “MSE or similar analysis” following the 2028 Pacific sardine benchmark assessment could accomplish, and building on any other initial recommendations from previous meetings (November 2025, April 2026, September 2026), as appropriate.

Attachment 1 summarizes the information available to support these tasks. NMFS Report 1 under this item summarizes the technical information on population dynamics and SDCs to support these tasks.

Informational Council Agenda Items

The SSC may find several other Council Agenda Items of interest, or which may contain informational materials relevant to the SSC including:

- Groundfish G.2: Economics Workshop Report
- Highly Migratory Species I.1: NMFS Report

Thank you all for your dedication to West Coast fishery management and the Council process.

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Council Enclosures include:

Agenda Item A.3 – Council Meeting Agenda
Agenda Item C – Administrative Matters
Agenda Item F – Salmon Management
Agenda Item G – Groundfish Management
Agenda Item J – Coastal Pelagic Species Management

SSC Agenda, Draft SSC Minutes, Closed Session, Etc.

November 2026 SSC Agenda
Draft September 2026 SSC Minutes
Closed Session
Informational Reports
General Information and Council Roster

PFMC
10/27/26