



Pacific Fishery Management Council

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

MEMORANDUM

DATE: October 24, 2025

TO: Scientific and Statistical Committee

FROM: Marlene A. Bellman, Staff Officer

SUBJECT: November 2025 Council Meeting Materials

The Pacific Fishery Management Council (Council, PFMC) November 2025 meeting will be held in person from November 13 through November 19, 2025, in Costa Mesa, CA. The Scientific and Statistical Committee (SSC) will meet **in person** on Thursday, November 13 through Saturday, November 15 starting at 8 a.m. each day. Your meeting materials are enclosed.

Instructions for how to connect to the Council and Advisory Body meetings will be posted on the Council's [November 2025 Meeting webpage](#) prior to the first day of the meeting. If you are joining 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 Thursday, November 13 at 8 a.m. the SSC meeting will be called to order by the SSC Chair and any designated alternates will be introduced. Next, 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 2025 meeting agenda and the September 2025 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.5 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. As of the advanced briefing book, a nomination for Cristina Lingvay (California Department of Fish and Wildlife) to the Groundfish Management Team has been submitted for consideration. Any SSC recommendations regarding membership appointments will be offered during the Council Closed Session on Saturday, November 15.

C.6 Future Council Meeting Agenda and Workload Planning

The SSC will discuss future workload planning matters and report to the Council under Agenda Item C.6 scheduled for Wednesday, November 19.

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 2026 and April 2026) or Year-at-a-Glance topics through 2026. The SSC statement regularly provides a table with important meeting dates and timelines.

J. Coastal Pelagic Species Management

J.2 Methodology Review

The joint coastal pelagic species (CPS) and groundfish [Terms of Reference for the Methodology Review Process](#) and [Council Operating Procedure 26](#) describe the overall process for conducting CPS methodology reviews. Additional Terms of Reference may also be drafted to guide the specific process for individual methodology reviews.

In 2025, the Southwest Fisheries Science Center (SWFSC) integrated their CPS survey with the Northwest Fisheries Science Center's Joint U.S.- Canada Integrated Ecosystem and Pacific Hake Survey, resulting in an Integrated West Coast Pelagics Survey (referred to as the Integrated Survey). The Integrated Survey maintains the methods and gear as was previously used on the CPS Survey except for a new Multi-Function Trawl (MFT) Net. The SWFSC has proposed a review of this net change, tentatively planned for February 23-27, 2026 (including travel dates).

The SSC should discuss the candidate review topic and proposal (NMFS Report 1) and provide recommendations, including any feedback on the proposed Terms of Reference drafted specifically for a Methodology Review meeting on this topic (Attachment 1) and guidance for scheduling in February 2026.

The SSC will provide recommendations under Agenda Item J.2 on Monday, November 17.

J.3 Pacific Sardine Stock Definitions

In April 2025, the Council scheduled an agenda item to review the fishery management unit (FMU) defined in [Table 1-1](#) of the Coastal Pelagic Species Fishery Management Plan (CPS FMP) and the stock definitions within it, particularly evaluating how sardine is defined. The current FMU and management framework is based on the long-held hypothesis that Pacific sardine off the U.S. west coast consists of three subpopulations, with the northern subpopulation (NSP) being exploited by U.S. fisheries. However, new scientific publications on Pacific sardine (*Sardinops sagax*) population structure indicate the subpopulation hypothesis may not be correct. Several other factors further complicate this matter, including the prolonged closure of the directed fishery and restrictive catch limits, only a proportion of fishery landings being composed of the NSP, and the recent emergence of Japanese sardine (*Sardinops melanosticta*) in the California Current.

To ensure that the CPS FMU reflects the biological realities of sardine in U.S. waters, the Council must address two key questions:

1. Which species and populations of sardine should be included in the FMU?
2. How should those stocks be identified and delineated to align management with the true geographic and biological extent of the resource?

Put in other words, the Council's task is to determine whether the current FMU and the stocks defined within it adequately encompasses the population structure of Pacific sardine—and whether Japanese sardine should be added—so that management actions remain consistent with the principles of the Magnuson-Stevens Act, National Standards 1, and sound fishery science.

Attachment 1 provides supporting information to answer these questions. A potential purpose and need and two action alternatives are presented. The two action alternatives are included that could add unmanaged Pacific sardine to the FMU to capture the full Pacific sardine population, with the option to also add Japanese sardine to the FMU. The action alternatives differ in how Pacific sardine stock(s) are defined.

The SSC should consider available scientific information related to both Pacific sardine and Japanese sardine. This review should look for A) completeness of the scientific record regarding the extent and biology of these two species off the U.S. west coast, B) the degree to which the available scientific information could support Council action to re-define the Pacific sardine stock, and C) the degree to which available scientific information on Japanese sardine suggests it be managed as a stock in the FMP.

The SSC provided broad guidance on the practice of delineating stocks during the groundfish stock definitions process, recommending that population structure be foundational to defining stocks and delineating boundaries for management, relying most heavily on genetic evidence to do so ([Agenda Item E.8.a, Supplemental SSC Report 1, November 2023](#), [Agenda Item H.5.a, Supplemental SSC Report 1, November 2022](#); [Agenda Item F.4.a, Supplemental SSC Report 1 June 2022](#), [Agenda Item E.3.a, Supplemental SSC Report 1, November 2021](#)). The SSC has also noted that stock delineations should consider potential shifts in distribution due to changing

environmental conditions ([Agenda Item H.6.a, Supplemental SSC Report 1, March 2025](#)). The SSC should confirm whether these recommendations (cited in Sections 2 and 3 of Attachment 1) apply to CPS and sardine specifically, making any additional recommendations for identifying and delineating stocks of CPS, as necessary. The SSC may also note any additional scientific information to be considered in delineating stocks of sardine not covered in Attachment 1 (i.e. in Section 3 of Attachment 1). In particular, the SSC may note whether there is sufficient scientific information (such as life history, stock status, geographic extent) available to determine whether Japanese sardine is in need of conservation and management and should be added to the FMU (see brief analyses in Section 2.4.2.1 of Attachment 1). The SSC is not necessarily expected to come to a consensus on a single ‘best’ delineation for Pacific or Japanese sardine but may recommend a range of viable options (see proposed Alternatives in Section 6 of Attachment 1) to support Council decision-making.

The SSC will provide recommendations under Agenda Item J.3 on Monday, November 17.

G. Salmon Management

G.3 Methodology Review Results

At the September 2025 meeting, the Council moved two topics forward for Salmon Methodology Review, a.) modification to the Oregon Production Index Hatchery (OPIH) coho salmon forecast methodology, including the index exponential-decay-weighting approach adopted for use in 2025 (Attachment 1) and b.) technical revision to the marine survival forecast of the Oregon Coast Natural (OCN) coho work group harvest matrix (Attachment 2).

The SSC will be provided with an overview by the SSC Salmon Subcommittee regarding the salmon methodology review conducted on October 9, 2025 (see report under the SSC Materials section of the briefing book). The SSC will discuss the results of the methodology review and provide any recommendations to the Council, so the Council may approve the use of any new methodologies. Changes adopted by the Council in November are typically implemented in the coming season, or the Council may provide guidance for handling any unresolved methodology issues, if necessary.

The Salmon Technical Team (STT) will be available to brief the SSC on their statement and answer any questions. Note that the review meeting took place during the federal furlough, so federal employees who are SSC Salmon Subcommittee and STT members were unable to participate in the review.

The SSC will provide the results of the review and provide recommendations for any proposed methodology changes under Agenda Item G.3 on Sunday, November 16.

G.4 Sacramento River Fall Chinook Fishery Management Plan Amendment – Workgroup Report, Initial Scoping

In September 2025, the Council discussed transitioning work on updating the Sacramento River Fall Chinook (SRFC) management framework to a Pacific Coast Salmon Fishery Management Plan (FMP) amendment process.

Under this agenda item, the Council will receive an update from the Sacramento River fall Chinook Workgroup (SRWG) and a summary of two attachments developed by Council staff. Attachment 1 summarizes SRWG reports, SSC, STT, and Salmon Advisory Subpanel (SAS) input, and Council guidance to date regarding updates to the SRFC management framework and lists the expertise needed to develop and analyze management alternatives. Attachment 1 also identifies key questions the Council should be prepared to address at this meeting that will assist in future planning and the development of an FMP amendment scoping document. Attachment 2 outlines a tentative timeline for developing the FMP amendment.

The SSC should review the SRWG report and FMP Planning documents (Attachments 1 and 2). The SSC should comment on the peer review approaches outlined in Attachment 1 and provide input regarding the overall structure of a peer review process, as well as the specific roles and responsibilities of the peer reviewers.

The SSC will provide recommendations under Agenda Item G.4 on Sunday, November 16.

F. Groundfish Management

F.2 Adopt Stock Assessments

Under this agenda item, the Council is scheduled to adopt remaining assessments and relevant analyses to set groundfish harvest specifications for the upcoming biennial management period (2027-28), if not endorsed at the September 2025 meeting. The SSC will review and consider endorsing a new update stock assessment for widow rockfish and catch-only projections for Oregon black rockfish and bocaccio, as best scientific information available for management decision-making. For the widow rockfish update assessment, this includes the stock assessment category and sigma to represent the scientific uncertainty within the assessment and used in calculating harvest specifications.

The Council provided guidance in September 2025, based on SSC and Advisory Body recommendations, to conduct a Supplemental Review of the 2025 widow rockfish update stock assessment. Stock assessment authors provided responses to the requests made by the SSC in September and the Groundfish Subcommittee (GFSC) from their August meeting, as well as supplemental review material with a proposed new base model (Attachment 3). The Supplemental Review Panel will provide a report from the October 14 and 16, 2025 meeting, with recommendations for SSC consideration at this meeting; see SSC Materials section of the briefing book for the Panel report. Due to the federal furlough, stock assessment authors (i.e., federal employees) and federal members of the SSC were not able to participate in the Supplemental Review. In addition, a complete stock assessment document to accompany the proposed base model is not yet available. The SSC will consider recommendations from the Supplemental

Review Panel for the widow rockfish update assessment, complete their review, and provide recommendations to the Council.

The SSC will provide recommendations under Agenda Item F.2 on Saturday, November 15.

F.3 Harvest Specifications and Management Measures for 2027-2028 – Part 1

Under this agenda item, the Council is tasked with adopting interim final 2027-28 overfishing limits (OFLs) and acceptable biological catches (ABCs) for stocks and stock complexes that fall under default harvest control rules (HCR) (Attachment 1). The Council should also consider identifying a preliminary preferred alternative for species where a range of alternative HCRs were identified at the September 2025 meeting. If there is a desire to depart from default HCRs for any other stocks or stock complexes, the Council is tasked with adopting a range of alternative OFLs, ABCs, and annual catch limits (ACLs) for detailed analysis.

Attachment 1 details 2027-28 harvest specifications under default HCRs in Table 1-9, per Council decisions at the September 2025 meeting. The Council requested extended projections of default harvest specifications for aurora rockfish (Attachment 2) and Oregon kelp greenling, pending SSC endorsement at this meeting. The Council also requested that 2025 catch-only projections for bocaccio and black rockfish off Oregon be provided with the standard implementation of time-varying sigma to calculate buffers (see November 2025 Agenda Item F.2, Attachments 2-3).

In September 2025, the Council requested alternative harvest projections associated with alternative HCRs for canary rockfish, chilipepper rockfish, petrale sole, rougheye/blackspotted rockfish (Attachment 2), shortspine thornyhead (Attachment 3), yelloweye rockfish, and yellowtail rockfish north 40° 10' N. lat. (default and alternative projections in summary comparison Table 1-1 of Attachment 1).

Due to the federal furlough, default harvest specifications for Oregon kelp greenling, and alternative harvest projections for canary rockfish, chilipepper rockfish, petrale sole, yelloweye rockfish, and yellowtail rockfish are not yet available. Briefing book materials will be revised, as appropriate, should projections become available prior to the November Council meeting.

The SSC will review 2027-2028 groundfish harvest specifications under default harvest control rules and projected harvest specifications for species under alternative harvest control rules. The SSC will recommend 2027 and 2028 OFLs and ABCs to inform Council decisions under Agenda Item F.3 on Sunday, November 16.

F.5 Harvest Specifications and Management Measures Flexibility

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 the following five items for consideration:

- Carryover (All-sector): Add a framework to the FMP to allow unutilized annual ACLs to be used in the following year in a prescriptive manner in order to expedite issuance of additional quota to fisheries.

- Phase-In of ABC Changes: Add a framework to the FMP to allow for phase-in of ABC changes to provide stability to fisheries due to changes in stock status and resulting changes in harvest specifications (both increases and decreases).
- Mid-Biennium Harvest Specifications Change: Add a framework to the groundfish FMP to allow increases in harvest specifications in the second year of a biennium for newly assessed stocks in a prescriptive manner in order to expedite issuance of additional quota to fisheries.
- Accounting for Off-The-Top Deductions: Proposes changing the current framework for off-the-top deductions (i.e., expected mortality from scientific research, tribal fisheries, incidental fisheries and exempted fishing permits) from being deducted from the ABC instead of the ACL, aiming to prevent unnecessary fishery closures and increase available quota to groundfish sectors.
- Harvest Specifications Frequency: Considers changing the biennial specification cycle to an annual specifications process. Additionally, staff has added another concept that would retain the biennial specifications process, but reduce the frequency by which we set harvest specifications.

The Council also tasked staff with beginning a dialogue with the Scientific and Statistical Committee on preventing and evaluating overfishing on a multi-year time scale through ideas such as looking at average catch compared to multi-year ABCs/ACLs. Given timing constraints, this dialogue has not begun, but a proposal is for this to occur under the forthcoming “Risk Management Framework - Sigma, Risk Tables, and Other Approaches - Scoping” item shaded on the April 2026 Council Agenda in the year-at-a-glance (Agenda Item C.6, Attachment 1, November 2025).

At this meeting, the Council is scheduled to consider the materials in Attachment 1 and 2 (and Supplemental Attachment 3), adopt a problem statement, range of alternatives, and select a preliminary preferred alternative if possible. The Council is scheduled to take final action at the March 2026 meeting.

The SSC should review the materials for this Agenda Item, including Supplemental Attachment 3, which will provide an assessment of the interaction between alternatives, and provide any comments and recommendations. Specifically, the SSC should focus on the following topics:

1. For Carryover and Phase-In ABC, are there any additional eligibility criteria or other factors that should be considered to reduce the risk of overfishing while providing increased flexibility as envisioned in the 2016 National Standard 1 Guideline revisions and outlined in the National Standard 1 Technical Guidance Memo (Holland, et al 2020)?
2. For Carryover, options for calculating buffers between the OFL and ABC are provided in Attachment 1. The SSC is requested to examine those options, provide any comments or recommendations, and identify any other appropriate options for calculating buffers in a carryover environment. These buffer considerations could also apply in the Phase-In framework.
3. For the Harvest Specifications Frequency, what is an appropriate duration for approving a time series of long-term harvest specifications (OFLs and ABCs), recognizing that these annual specifications would be in place for multiple years, and only select stocks with new assessments or projections would be updated annually or biennially (depending on the

Alternative)? Establishment of long-term harvest specifications is influenced by the availability of harvest specification tables from assessments, which vary by species.

4. For all items, are there any other considerations that the Council should be aware of in terms of impacts to risk of overfishing or the stock assessment process?

The SSC will provide recommendations under Agenda Item F.5 on Tuesday, November 18.

F.7 Trawl Catch Share Program Review

The Council provided guidance on the scope and focus of a trawl catch share review in September 2024. Specifically, the Council requested the review document examine trawl catch share program performance and provide a diagnosis of why the program does not appear to be meeting its economic goals and objectives. This could include factors related to program design, as well as factors that fall outside of the Council's purview, with a priority focus on the non-whiting sector.

The Council reviewed a preliminary draft of the trawl catch share program review in September 2025, which contained the majority of the program performance part of the analysis. The project team incorporated Council suggestions as appropriate into Attachment 1 and responses to the recommendations can be found in Attachment 2. Additionally, the preliminary diagnosis can be found in Attachment 1.

The SSC Economics Subcommittee is scheduled to conduct a meeting on November 7, 2025 in order to provide recommendations to the full SSC at this meeting on this Agenda Item. The presentations to the subcommittee will focus on the diagnosis portion and not the entire program performance part of the document. The SSC should provide feedback from their review of the diagnosis conclusions and any feedback that may assist in specifically helping to identify what factors impacting the fishery not achieving their economic goals and objectives are related to the catch share program design versus outside factors (i.e., markets). Additionally, the SSC should recommend any research and data needs.

In terms of responding to any concerns of the SSC, the Council could take any recommendations into consideration and theoretically adopt the review document as final incorporating any changes as recommended by the SSC.

At this meeting, the Council is scheduled to provide feedback on the trawl catch share review document, including the diagnosis, and adopt as final. After which, the Council could then consider program changes through follow-on actions.

The SSC will provide recommendations under Agenda Item F.7 on Tuesday, November 18.

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:

J.1 – Coastal Pelagic Species: National Marine Fisheries Service (NMFS) Report

The NMFS Southwest Fisheries Science Center is expected to discuss current CPS-related science and research activities with the Council.

D.1 – NMFS 2025 Accomplishments and 2026 Priorities

The NMFS West Coast Region and Science Centers will report on their 2025 accomplishments and 2026 priorities as they relate to the Strategic Plans.

D.2 – Council and NMFS Workload – Capacity Alignment

An update from the Pacific Council and NMFS leadership is anticipated, should they have an opportunity to meet prior to the November Council meeting. This update would provide information regarding the nature of capacity constraints across the broader fishery management system, how those constraints affect the functional capacity of Pacific coast fisheries management, and some considerations for how the Council may be able to take certain actions to align fishery management needs with existing capacities.

D.4 – Council Operations and Priorities

The Council will receive an update on the progress to date implementing the Council recommendations to improve Council operations. These recommendations are in response to the Council's long-term budget prognosis, staff and advisor workload, and the need to address these challenges while maintaining and enhancing the Council's decision-making process.

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

MAB:ael

Council Enclosures include:

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

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

November 2025 SSC Agenda
Draft September 2025 SSC Minutes
Closed Session
Informational Reports
General Information and Council Roster

PFMC
10/23/25