

SCIENTIFIC AND STATISTICAL COMMITTEE REPORT ON
INITIAL HARVEST SPECIFICATIONS AND MANAGEMENT MEASURE ACTIONS FOR
2021-2022 MANAGEMENT

The Scientific and Statistical Committee (SSC) reviewed a report by the SSC Groundfish Subcommittee (GFSC) of their August 2019 meeting (Groundfish Subcommittee Report, August 2019; attached to Agenda Item H.5.a, Supplemental SSC Report 1) and Agenda Item H.8, Supplemental REVISED Attachment 1 provided by Council staff. The SSC evaluated 1) the overfishing limits (OFLs) for the 2021-2022 management cycle, 2) the time-varying sigmas (i.e., increasing scientific uncertainty with age of assessment) used to calculate annual acceptable biological catch (ABC) buffers, and 3) the category designation for each stock and area.

Reviewed OFLs were obtained directly from 2019 assessments (including updates) because projections therein already included time-varying sigmas for calculating ABCs. For assessments conducted prior to 2019, new projections were requested from Northwest Fisheries Science Center (NWFSC) and Southwest Fisheries Science Center (SWFSC) stock assessment staff that incorporated the new time-varying uncertainty buffers for calculating ABCs. The OFLs for shortspine thornyhead, canary rockfish, English sole, and brown rockfish were not yet available for review, or need additional examination, and will need to be considered at the November SSC meeting. The SSC endorses all remaining OFLs and category designations in Tables 1 and 2 in Agenda Item H.8, Supplemental REVISED Attachment 1 as the best scientific information available, pending the following decisions or outcomes.

The OFLs adopted for 2022 are contingent on the assumption of ABC removals in 2021, which are in turn contingent on the Council's choice of the probability of overfishing (P^*), use of alternative harvest control rules, or other phased-in approaches as discussed under Agenda Item H.7, and may need to be revised based on Council decisions or changes to P^* values. Further, there was a mix of approaches used for specifying the catch used during the projection period when updating OFL projections to incorporate time-varying sigmas used to determine new ABC buffers. A standardized approach for specifying this catch, which could include a process similar to a catch-only projection, should be defined in the next Terms of Reference for the Groundfish and Coastal Pelagic Species Stock Assessment Review Process. The SSC may need to further review OFLs at the November meeting if alternative projections are requested or new discrepancies discovered.

The stock assessment category designation for shortbelly rockfish was changed from category 2 to category 3, because the time since the last assessment (2007) now exceeds half the life span of this species and the time-varying sigma for a category 2 stock with a P^* of 0.40 in 2021 (14 years since last assessment) and 2022 (15 years) is approaching the category 3 sigma.

The SSC expresses appreciation to the NWFSC and SWFSC stock assessors for completing the additional projections needed for all category 1 and 2 assessments that are currently being used to provide management advice with respect to the specifications process and the new time-varying sigmas. These new projections amounted to a considerable increase in workload during the 2019 assessment cycle.