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NORTH PACIFIC FISHERY MANAGEMENT COUNCIL

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D2 Planning for Fall 2026 Groundfish Stock Assessment Cycle

February Council Meeting

SSC Action Memo

Council Staff: Sara Cleaver, Dr. Diana Stram

Other Presenters: Dr. Melissa Haltuch (AFSC), Chris Lunsford (AFSC)

Action Required: 1. Receive report and provide feedback and recommendations as necessary.

BACKGROUND

This agenda item consists of a report from an internal agency workgroup on plans for the fall 2026 groundfish stock assessment cycle. Due to the lapse in Federal appropriations in fall 2025, most stock assessment products were not completed as planned. During the December 2025 meeting, AFSC leadership stated that in 2026, they would not be able to complete all the assessments that were scheduled for 2025 and those planned in 2026 with existing resources.

Per December 2025 SSC recommendations, an internal agency workgroup, consisting of AFSC leadership, SSC members, and Council staff coordinators, was formed and met in January to prioritize and recommend stocks for prioritization in 2026. The report coming out of that meeting accounts for AFSC staff capacity as well as recommendations that came out of the December 2025 SSC and Council meetings. The report describes the criteria upon which this prioritization was done, which stock assessment products can be expected in 2026, and identification of stocks that could be reviewed during September/October 2026 rather than November/December 2026 to distribute final review efforts across both timeframes.

SSC comments and feedback on this agenda item will be provided to the Council during B reports at the February 2026 meeting.