

---

# C5 Groundfish Spatial Apportionment

Sara Cleaver (NPFMC Staff)

October 2025



## December 2024

- Council requested communication between SSC leadership, Council leadership, and staff on possible approaches for subarea/spatial apportionments of ABC within the groundfish harvest specifications process

Consider:

- the intended purpose of subarea apportionments of ABC
- the role of Council advisory bodies in recommending those apportionments
- the application of the [spatial management policy](#) (SMP), and
- timing within the process.



link to [June 2025 Subarea Apportionment Report](#)

# ABC vs. Spatial (subarea) Apportionments of ABC

## ABC

- SSC required by MSA to provide ACL (ABC) recommendations at the level of the stock or stock complex.
- FMPs document process, including application of the ABC control rule.
- Exceeding stock ACL (ABC) triggers accountability measures
- Council cannot recommend TAC greater than ACL (ABC) **for a stock or stock complex.**



## Spatial apportionments of ABC (“subarea ABCs”)

- No MSA requirements
- Not ACLs; Exceedances do not trigger accountability measures
- FMPs do not detail a process for apportionment of ABC
- *In practice, have been used as maximum TACs for Council (by area)*



# PROPOSAL on Spatial Apportionment

## Intended to:

- increase efficiency and transparency throughout the annual groundfish harvest specifications process.
- streamline conversations regarding spatial apportionments recommended by the PT/SSC and the TACs recommended by the Council which have taken specifications cycles in the past.
- clarify the reasoning behind spatial apportionments beyond the stock level within the groundfish harvest specifications process.

**May need to continue to be refined.**



---

**Unless directed otherwise by the Council, staff plan to move ahead with the following proposal regarding spatial apportionment of groundfish and provide relevant guidance during the annual harvest specifications process:**

- New terminology
- Clarified purpose of apportionment
- Process clarifications / revisions
- Revised harvest specifications tables (Nov/Dec)



# New terminology: BRDs

A spatial apportionment of a stock or stock complex will be referred to as a **Biologically-informed Recommended Distribution (BRD)**.

- Based on approved apportionment methods (survey biomass, catch for Tier 6) according to BSIA
- Socio-economic factors should **not** be incorporated into the recommendations of BRD nor methods to calculate BRDs



# Biologically-informed Recommended Distributions (BRDs): Purpose

- Extra layer of precautionary management to account for uncertainty in stock structure (localized depletion)
- Biologically-informed starting point for TAC recommendations (Information to inform TAC)
- No change; **“subarea ABC” = BRD**
- During annual specifications, Council may recommend a subarea TAC = BRD;
- Council’s TAC recommendations incorporate socioeconomic considerations: seasonal access to fisheries, commercial importance to communities, efficient utilization of resources.



## Process Clarifications / Revisions

- Assessment authors/PT/SSC: Continue to recommend ABCs at the stock level
- Authors/PT/SSC: Continue to recommend apportionment *methods*, provide BRDs (where appropriate).
- Council identifies stocks for which PT/SSC feedback RE apportionment/stock structure is requested.
  - During the GPT meetings, Inseason Mgmt input
- Council takes SSC- recommended BRDs & information in the report into consideration to inform TAC recommendations
  - Sum of subarea TACs must be  $< ABC$
  - In most cases, intent to continue to recommend subarea TACs  $< BRDs$





# TABLES: SAFEs, Harvest Specifications Recommendations

Stock/ Assemblage	Area	202X			
		OFL	ABC	TAC	Catch <sup>2</sup>
Stock complex X	W	197	197	197	46
	C	315	315	315	90
	E	525	525	525	80
	Total	1,555	1,037	1,037	216

	OFL	ABC	BRD	(TAC)	Catch
W			197	232 ↑	##
C			315	375 ↑	##
E			525	430 ↓	##
Total	1,555	1,037	=	1,037	###

**Proposed** specifications tables in Sept Oct 2025 **would not** be updated  
**Final** specifications tables in Nov/Dec 2025 **would be** updated



Example of PT/SSC Table 1 for OFL, ABC, and BRD recommendations (metric tons) for GOA Groundfish Final Harvest Specifications for 202X and 202X

Species	Area	2025				Catch as of (Date)	202X EXAMPLE PT Recommendation			202x EXAMPLE PT Recommendation		
		OFL	ABC	TAC			OFL	ABC	BRD	OFL	ABC	BRD
Pollock	State GHL	n/a	4,769		3,640	n/a		3,326	n/a		3,326	
	W (610)	n/a	38,882	38,882	31,457	n/a		27,453	n/a		27,453	
	C (620)	n/a	90,937	90,937	71,571	n/a		60,477	n/a		60,477	
	C (630)	n/a	50,587	50,587	20,534	n/a		37,963	n/a		37,963	
	WYAK	n/a	5,565	5,565	1,382	n/a		3,883	n/a		3,883	
	Subtotal	269,916	190,740	185,971	124,944	153,971	133,075		153,971	133,075		
	SEO	12,998	9,749	9,749	-	12,998	9,749		12,998	9,749		
Total	282,914	200,489	195,720	124,944	166,969	142,824		166,969	142,824			
Pacific Cod	W	n/a	8,745	8,121	4,216	n/a		8,182	n/a		8,182	
	C	n/a	20,590	15,442	14,401	n/a		19,263	n/a		19,263	
	E	n/a	2,937	2,203	489	n/a		2,748	n/a		2,748	
	Total	38,712	32,272	23,766	19,106	36,459	30,193		36,459	30,193		
Sablefish	W	n/a	4,699	4,699	2,620	n/a		4,687	n/a		4,687	
	C	n/a	9,651	9,651	6,998	n/a		9,622	n/a		9,622	
	WYAK	n/a	2,926	2,926	2,295	n/a		2,652	n/a		2,652	
	SEO	n/a	5,320	5,320	4,073	n/a		5,589	n/a		5,589	
	GOA Total	n/a	n/a	22,596	15,686	n/a		22,550	n/a		22,550	
Alaska-wide OFL and ABC	AK Total	55,084	47,146	n/a	21,758	57,797	47,008		57,797	47,008		
Shallow-Water Flatfish	W	n/a	23,337	13,250	63	n/a		23,902	n/a		23,902	
	C	n/a	27,783	27,783	2,742	n/a		28,455	n/a		28,455	
	WYAK	n/a	2,778	2,778	1	n/a		2,846	n/a		2,846	
	SEO	n/a	1,667	1,667	1	n/a		1,707	n/a		1,707	
Total	68,121	55,565	45,478	2,807	69,610	56,910		69,610	56,910			
Deep-Water Flatfish	W	n/a	237	237	8	n/a		231	n/a		231	
	C	n/a	2,655	2,655	78	n/a		2,568	n/a		2,568	
	WYAK	n/a	1,856	1,856	3	n/a		1,795	n/a		1,795	
	SEO	n/a	2,314	2,314	2	n/a		2,238	n/a		2,238	
Total	8,387	7,062	7,062	91	8,114	6,832		8,114	6,832			
Rex Sole	W	n/a	3,367	3,367	23	n/a		3,353	n/a		3,353	
	C	n/a	13,639	13,639	474	n/a		13,582	n/a		13,582	
	WYAK	n/a	1,463	1,463	1	n/a		1,413	n/a		1,413	
	SEO	n/a	2,905	2,905	-	n/a		2,825	n/a		2,825	
	Total	25,978	21,364	21,364	498	25,743	21,173		25,743	21,173		
Arrowtooth Flounder	W	n/a	30,409	14,500	486	n/a		33,716	n/a		33,716	
	C	n/a	64,871	64,871	16,329	n/a		68,511	n/a		68,511	
	WYAK	n/a	7,870	7,870	29	n/a		6,719	n/a		6,719	
	SEO	n/a	16,099	6,900	22	n/a		11,039	n/a		11,039	
	Total	142,465	119,249	94,141	16,866	143,347	119,985		143,347	119,985		
Flathead Sole	W	n/a	13,273	8,650	145	n/a		13,757	n/a		13,757	
	C	n/a	21,307	21,307	763	n/a		22,083	n/a		22,083	
	WYAK	n/a	3,876	3,876	0	n/a		4,018	n/a		4,018	
	SEO	n/a	2,047	2,047	0	n/a		2,122	n/a		2,122	
Total	49,414	40,503	35,880	908	51,176	41,980		51,176	41,980			
Pacific ocean perch	W	n/a	1,787	1,787	1,667	n/a		1,688	n/a		1,688	
	C	n/a	28,757	28,757	21,294	n/a		27,156	n/a		27,156	
	WYAK	n/a	2,110	2,110	1,946	n/a		1,993	n/a		1,993	
	SEO	n/a	7,065	7,065	-	n/a		6,672	n/a		6,672	
Total	47,466	39,719	39,719	24,907	44,826	37,509		44,826	37,509			
Northern Rockfish	W	n/a	2,635	2,635	315	n/a		1,346	n/a		1,346	
	C	n/a	2,280	2,280	817	n/a		3,549	n/a		3,549	
	E	n/a	-	-	NA	n/a		n/a	n/a		n/a	
	Total	5,750	4,815	4,815	1,132	5,948	4,895		5,948	4,895		
Shorthead Rockfish	W	n/a	34	34	15	n/a		34	n/a		34	
	C	n/a	189	189	137	n/a		189	n/a		189	
	E	n/a	424	424	191	n/a		424	n/a		424	
	Total	863	647	647	343	863	647		863	647		
Dusky Rockfish	W	n/a	145	145	71	n/a		199	n/a		199	
	C	n/a	7,365	7,365	2,122	n/a		5,527	n/a		5,527	
	WYAK	n/a	84	84	5	n/a		204	n/a		204	
	SEO	n/a	30	30	-	n/a		91	n/a		91	
	Total	9,281	7,624	7,624	2,198	7,319	6,021		7,319	6,021		
Rougheye and Blackspotted Rockfish	W	n/a	197	197	51	n/a		229	n/a		229	
	C	n/a	315	315	140	n/a		366	n/a		366	
	E	n/a	525	525	98	n/a		608	n/a		608	
	Total	1,555	1,037	1,037	289	1,631	1,203		1,631	1,203		
Demersal shelf rockfish	W/C/WYAK	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a		361	n/a		361	
	SEO	376	283	283	153	524	394		524	394		



Example of PT/SSC Table 1 for OFL, ABC, and BRD recommendations (metric tons) for BSAI Groundfish Final Harvest Specifications for 202X and 202X

Species	Area	Current Year			Catch as of 11/1/20XX	Plan Team Recommended 20XX			Plan Team Recommended 20XX		
		OFL	ABC	TAC		OFL	ABC	BRD	OFL	ABC	BRD
Pollock	EBS	2,957,000	2,417,000	1,375,000		2,496,000	2,036,000		2,496,000	2,036,000	
	AI	55,728	46,051	19,000		56,231	46,437		56,231	46,437	
	Bogoslof	77,354	58,015	250		77,354	58,015		77,354	58,015	
Pacific cod	BS	183,509	153,617	133,602		169,243	141,520		169,243	141,520	
	AI	16,782	13,376	8,694		16,273	12,973		16,273	12,973	
Sablefish	BSAI/GOA	58,532	47,605	NA		57,797	47,008		57,797	47,008	
	BS	NA	13,203	8,496		NA		13,037	NA		13,037
	AI	NA	11,566	7,940		NA		11,421	NA		11,421
Yellowfin sole	BSAI	299,247	262,557	135,000		305,039	267,639		305,039	267,639	
Greenland turbot	BSAI	2,598	1,678	1,678		2,059	1,328		2,059	1,328	
	BS	NA	1,415	1,415		NA		1,120	NA		1,120
	AI	NA	263	263		NA		208	NA		208
Arrowtooth flou	BSAI	104,428	88,683	14,000		102,472	87,035		102,472	87,035	
Kamchatka flou	BSAI	8,019	6,800	6,800		7,790	6,606		7,790	6,606	
Northern rock s	BSAI	165,444	157,487	75,000		166,220	158,225		166,220	158,225	
Flathead sole	BSAI	101,621	83,807	36,000		106,283	87,700		106,283	87,700	
Alaska plaice	BSAI	34,576	28,745	15,903		33,965	28,230		33,965	28,230	
Other flatfish	BSAI	26,083	19,562	4,500		26,083	19,562		26,083	19,562	
Pacific Ocean pr	BSAI	44,594	37,375	33,458		43,084	36,578		43,084	36,578	
	BS	NA	10,121	10,121		NA		9,905	NA		9,905
	EAI	NA	6,278	6,278		NA		6,144	NA		6,144
	CAI	NA	5,559	5,559		NA		5,441	NA		5,441
Northern rockfis	BSAI	22,848	18,694	12,000		22,284	18,232		22,284	18,232	
Blackspotted/Rc	BSAI	838	706	706		902	766		902	766	
	EBS/EAI	NA	408	408		NA		441	NA		441
	CAI/WAI	NA	298	298		NA		325	NA		325
Shortraker rock	BSAI	631	473	473		631	473		631	473	
Other rockfish	BSAI	1,406	1,054	1,054		1,406	1,054		1,406	1,054	
	BS	NA	639	639		NA		639	NA		639
	AI	NA	415	415		NA		415	NA		415
Atka mackerel	BSAI	122,622	103,247	82,000		107,889	92,361		107,889	92,361	
	EAI/BS	NA	46,650	39,000		NA		41,731	NA		41,731
	CAI	NA	26,511	24,443		NA		23,716	NA		23,716
Skates	WAI	NA	30,087	18,557		NA		26,914	NA		26,914
Skates	BSAI	44,086	36,523	27,646		43,285	35,833		43,285	35,833	
Sharks	BSAI	689	450	400		689	450		689	450	
Octopuses	BSAI	6,080	4,560	400		6,080	4,560		6,080	4,560	
<b>Total</b>	BSAI	<b>4,334,715</b>	<b>3,588,065</b>	<b>2,000,000</b>	<b>1,673,260</b>	<b>3,849,059</b>	<b>3,188,585</b>		<b>3,849,059</b>	<b>3,188,585</b>	

OFL = Overfishing Limit, ABC = Acceptable Biological Catch, TAC = Total Allowable Catch. Beginning in 2025, the Groundfish Plan Teams and Council bodies will use new terminology for groundfish harvest specifications. The purpose of this change is to make the following distinction: the ABC (ACL) is specified at the stock or stock complex level, and the overall TAC for a stock or stock complex cannot be set above ABC. ABC (ACL) is tied to MSA requirements and accountability measures (AMs). Spatial apportionments are based on survey data, fishery data, or a combination of the two data types, and are meant to inform distribution of the TAC across areas. These spatial apportionments will be referred to as Biologically-informed Recommended Distributions (BRD).



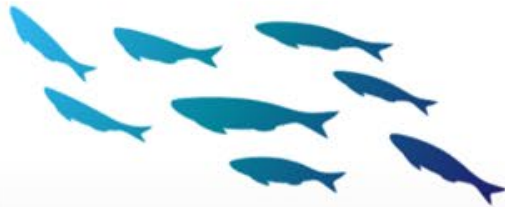
**Example of AP/Council Table 1 for recommendations (metric tons) for GOA Groundfish Final Harvest Specifications for 202X and 202X**

Species	Area	2025 Catch as of				202X EXAMPLE Recommendation			202X EXAMPLE Recommendation		
		OFL	ABC	TAC	(Date)	OFL	ABC	TAC	OFL	ABC	TAC
Pollock	State GHL	n/a	4,769		3,640	n/a			n/a		
	W (610)	n/a	38,882	38,882	31,457	n/a		38,882	n/a		38,882
	C (620)	n/a	90,937	90,937	71,571	n/a		90,937	n/a		90,937
	C (630)	n/a	50,587	50,587	20,534	n/a		50,587	n/a		50,587
	WYAK	n/a	5,565	5,565	1,382	n/a		5,565	n/a		5,565
	Subtotal	269,916	190,740	185,971	124,944	153,971	133,075	185,971	153,971	133,075	185,971
	SEO	12,998	9,749	9,749	-	12,998	9,749	9,749	12,998	9,749	9,749
Total	282,914	200,489	195,720	124,944	166,969	142,824	195,720	166,969	142,824	195,720	
Pacific Cod	W	n/a	8,745	6,121	4,216	n/a		6,121	n/a		6,121
	C	n/a	20,590	15,442	14,401	n/a		15,442	n/a		15,442
	E	n/a	2,937	2,203	489	n/a		2,203	n/a		2,203
	Total	38,712	32,272	23,766	19,106	36,459	30,193	23,766	36,459	30,193	23,766
Sablefish	W	n/a	4,699	4,699	2,620	n/a		4,699	n/a		4,699
	C	n/a	9,651	9,651	6,698	n/a		9,651	n/a		9,651
	WYAK	n/a	2,926	2,926	2,295	n/a		2,926	n/a		2,926
	SEO	n/a	5,320	5,320	4,073	n/a		5,320	n/a		5,320
	GOA Total	n/a	n/a	22,596	15,686	n/a		22,596	n/a		22,596
Alaska-wide OFL and ABC	AK Total	55,084	47,146	n/a	21,758	57,797	47,008	n/a	57,797	47,008	n/a
Shallow-Water Flatfish	W	n/a	23,337	13,250	63	n/a		13,250	n/a		13,250
	C	n/a	27,783	27,783	2,742	n/a		27,783	n/a		27,783
	WYAK	n/a	2,778	2,778	1	n/a		2,778	n/a		2,778
	SEO	n/a	1,667	1,667	1	n/a		1,667	n/a		1,667
	Total	68,121	55,565	45,478	2,807	69,610	56,910	45,478	69,610	56,910	45,478
Deep-Water Flatfish	W	n/a	237	237	8	n/a		237	n/a		237
	C	n/a	2,655	2,655	78	n/a		2,655	n/a		2,655
	WYAK	n/a	1,856	1,856	3	n/a		1,856	n/a		1,856
	SEO	n/a	2,314	2,314	2	n/a		2,314	n/a		2,314
	Total	8,387	7,062	7,062	91	8,114	6,832	7,062	8,114	6,832	7,062
Rex Sole	W	n/a	3,367	3,367	23	n/a		3,367	n/a		3,367
	C	n/a	13,639	13,639	474	n/a		13,639	n/a		13,639
	WYAK	n/a	1,453	1,453	1	n/a		1,453	n/a		1,453
	SEO	n/a	2,905	2,905	-	n/a		2,905	n/a		2,905
	Total	25,978	21,364	21,364	498	25,743	21,173	21,364	25,743	21,173	21,364

## **Spatial Apportionment: Joint Groundfish Plan Team Report**

**The Teams requested that documentation describing the rationale for when and how a BRD is specified be provided.**





Thank you!

“Council supports the SSC (and Plan Teams) continuing to recommend apportionments of ABC using the best biological and methodological information available, while socioeconomic information will continue to be incorporated into TAC decisions at the AP and Council”

## What about the Spatial Management Policy (SMP)? (From June 2025 Discussion Paper)

- 1. As soon as preliminary scientific information indicates that further stock structure separation or other spatial management measures may be considered, the stock assessment authors, plan teams (groundfish, crab, scallop), and SSC should advise the Council of their findings and any associated conservation concerns and reasonable timeframes to address the concern.*

Declining biomass/abundance shown in survey  
Change in apportionment methodology results in lower BRD  
...Does the SMP apply / should Step 1 be triggered?

*“The SSC’s understanding is that ... this policy is only meant to be invoked for splitting areas into smaller subarea apportionments. In other words, the recommendation of different apportionment analytical methods or the introduction of new data would not invoke the spatial management policy.”* June 2025 SSC Report

