Draft SSC Report October 2025

SSC Report

Admin & C3 BSAI Crab Harvest Specifications

SSC Administrative Discussion

- The SSC received a presentation from Diana Evans (NPFMC) on administrative items, including:
    - NPFMC funding, future meeting schedules, and the EOs
- The SSC *thanks* David Witherell for his many years of service and wishes him the best in retirement
- The SSC also received information from Robert Foy (NOAA-AFSC) on contingency planning for groundfish stock assessments if the federal government shuts down

B4 AFSC Report

- The SSC did not receive the AFSC presentation due to the government shutdown.

C3 BSAI Crab Harvest Specifications

General Crab Comments

- The SSC *recommends* continued progress towards making SAFE documents as consistent in structure and content as practicable.

- The SSC notes that crab stock assessment authors currently use the OFL for catch projections

  - The SSC *recommends* that the authors and CPT provide a justification if catches are set to the OFL in projections, or use a more realistic estimate of future catches as is done in groundfish assessments.

C3 BSAI Crab Harvest Specifications

General Crab Comments - SAFEs and ESPs

- The SSC *appreciates* the inclusion of socioeconomic indicators the crab SAFEs and ESPs and their availability for use as contextual information for TAC setting.

- The SSC *recommends* the following additions to BSAI crab SAFE documents and ESPs:

  - Add a count of active vessels by ownership community to the "Number of Active Vessels" indicator.

  - Add a count of active shore-based processors by community of operation

C3 BSAI Crab Harvest Specifications

General Crab Comments - SAFEs and ESPs (cont.)

- Together, addition of these or similar vessel and processor community-based fishery participation indicators would:
  - Allow for annual tracking of changing of key patterns of fishing community sustained participation in the major BSAI crab fisheries.
  - Complement other sources of fishing community-based data, such as ACEPO, with time-series and species-level data not available elsewhere.

C3 BSAI Crab Harvest Specifications

Ecosystem Status Report Preview

- Broadscale warming in the Gulf of Alaska and Aleutian Islands.

- The Eastern Bering Sea temperature was variable, with late summer warming that has the potential to affect winter ice dynamics.

- The SSC *recommends* development of composite metrics that might help interpret individual indices that are not following typical patterns.

- The SSC *recommends* expanded articulation of uncertainty in reported metrics.

C3 BSAI Crab Harvest Specifications

Trawl Survey Updates

- The SSC *commends* the survey team and the crab assessment authors for providing data and assessments on the short fall timeframe

- There were generally positive trends for BBRKC, Tanner in the western, and snow crab but continued low abundances for most stocks except Tanner

- While there are positive signs for some stocks, the SSC *continues* to be concerned with the low stock status of many crab stocks

C3 BSAI Crab Harvest Specifications

Trawl Survey Updates

- The SSC *noted* that hybrids comprised 20% of all *Chionectes* males above 101 mm observed in the 2025 EBS bottom trawl survey

- Hybrid abundance raises biological, assessment, and management issues that could not be addressed this year within the framework of the compressed crab assessment cycle

- The SSC *looks forward* to the results of the May 2026 CPT discussion and *agrees* that the current approach needs to be re-evaluated.

- The SSC *notes* that having a potential response in place, even if the prevalence of hybrid crab in survey observations does not continue in the future, is critical to respond appropriately given the timeline for assessment and management for BSAI crab

C3 BSAI Crab Harvest Specifications

EBS Snow Crab

- Snow crab has been at its lowest historical level over the past five years following a catastrophic stock collapse in 2019-2020. Biomass of large male snow crab preferred by the fishery remains very low.

- The SSC *noted* the continuing signs of stock recovery in the 2025 EBS bottom trawl survey.

  - These included an 175% increase in abundance of mature females, approaching the average for the time series.

  - High levels of clutch fullness

  - 34% increase in industry-preferred males, and increases in all other male size classes.

C3 BSAI Crab Harvest Specifications

EBS Snow Crab

- A Tier 3 assessment using GMACS was recommended by the assessment authors and the CPT.

- The SSC *found unacceptable convergence properties* with the Tier 3 assessment and recommended against its use.

- Instead, the SSC *recommends* use of a Tier 4 "fallback" assessment.
    - Based on MMB and using a Tier 4 harvest control rule
    - The SSC intends this to be a temporary approach until an acceptable Tier 3 model can be developed.

C3 BSAI Crab Harvest Specifications

EBS Snow Crab

- The SSC *reviewed* the ABC buffers in 2022, 2023, and 2024 (25%, 50%, and 65%, respectively)

- The SSC *recommends* an ABC buffer of 40% be applied to the Tier 4 OFL as intermediate between the smaller and the larger buffers.

  - The Tier 4 assessment does not have the convergence problems of the Tier 3 assessments in 2023 and 2024

  - Uncertainty in the appropriate definition of maturity remains a major concern.

C3 BSAI Crab Harvest Specifications

EBS Snow Crab

- Based on the Tier 4 assessment, *overfishing is not occurring for snow crab*.

- Stock status in 2024/2025 is estimated to be 42% of the B_{MSY}, which is below the minimum stock size threshold, *placing the stock in overfished status.*

- The stock size increases to 74% of the B_{MSY} in 2025.

- Snow crab will remain under a rebuilding plan until it has rebuilt to the B_{MSY} level.

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C3 BSAI Crab Harvest Specifications

EBS Snow Crab

- The definition of maturity (mature male biomass vs. >95 mm carapace width) has been a source of disagreement between the assessment author, the CPT, and the SSC.

- After extensive discussion at this meeting, the SSC again *concluded* that the available regional-specific information was not sufficient to support a change in the maturity definition.

- The SSC *recommends* continued use of mature male biomass.

- This choice has major implications for stock rebuilding, level of acceptable harvest, and future of the snow crab fishery.

C3 BSAI Crab Harvest Specifications

<u>EBS Snow Crab</u>

- The SSC made several prioritized *recommendations* for the next assessment including:
    - A section in the SAFE document providing an update on rebuilding.
    - Exploring development of an alternative ABC control rule and options for reference points. The SSC is willing to participate in a working group to facilitate this effort.
    - Reiterated recommendations from previous meetings

C3 BSAI Crab Harvest Specifications

Tanner Crab

- Full assessment, same model as last year with updated data

- An increase of males in the western area, but decreases in males and females in the eastern area.

- The SSC *recommends* using Model 22.03d5 for 2025/2026 harvest specifications (as recommended by the CPT)

- The SSC *recommends* 20% buffer between OFL and ABC, consistent with CPT and last year's buffer (same concerns)

- Tier 3a, this stock is not overfished and overfishing did not occur.

C3 BSAI Crab Harvest Specifications

Tanner Crab

- The SSC made several prioritized ***recommendations*** for the next assessment including:
  - An analysis of including/excluding hybrid data (as appropriate) into the Tanner crab assessment.
  - An additional section in the Tanner ESP on hybrids with a focus on their interaction with Tanner crab
  - Further review of current scientific understanding on maturity and reproductive biology to better inform Tanner crab management, as practicable

C3 BSAI Crab Harvest Specifications

Bristol Bay Red King Crab

- Full Assessment; male and female survey abundance increased from 2024, but no substantial recruitment since mid-2000s.

- The SSC *recommends* Model 24.0c2 in agreement with the author and CPT

- Tier 3b, not overfished and overfishing did not occur

- The SSC supports a 20% buffer (no change from 2024), in agreement with the CPT and author, based on continued uncertainty due to retrospective patterns, effects of cold pool distributional shifts, and lack of fit to recent NMFS female survey biomass.

C3 BSAI Crab Harvest Specifications

Bristol Bay Red King Crab

- The SSC made several ***recommendations*** for the next assessment including:
    - Supporting the CPT recommendations on reporting of jittering, MCMC, and MCMC projections
    - Looking at spatial aggregation of the directed fishery and spatial comparison of NMFS survey metrics
    - Developing additional model size bins for the larger females
    - Developing a common framework for using BSFRF data for snow crab, Tanner crab, and BBRKC
    - Topics for inclusion in the discussion of ESP, ESR and risk table considerations

C3 BSAI Crab Harvest Specifications

Bristol Bay Red King Crab

- The SSC *recommends (cont.)*:
    - Continued evaluation of the Northern District data in the stock assessment
    - Consideration of Bristol Bay and Pribilof Islands genetics and movement studies and the incorporating State of Alaska observer program crab directed fisheries data to inform the upcoming EFH 5-year review

C3 BSAI Crab Harvest Specifications

Pribilof Island Red King Crab

- Full assessment; last assessed in 2022
- Survey catch showed continued low abundance with mature male abundance decreasing by 2% relative to 2024. Recruitment low since 2010.
- The SSC *recommends* the CPT and author recommended model 25.2, which incorporates ADFG pot survey data.
- Tier 4b; not overfished and overfishing did not take place in 2024/2025
- 25% ABC buffer - as recommended by the CPT in 2022 and consistent with king crab low information stocks (SMBKC, PIBKC).

C3 BSAI Crab Harvest Specifications

Pribilof Island Red King Crab

- The SSC *agrees* with the CPT that this assessment to be moved to a four-year cycle; the survey biomass and length composition information should be monitored annually.
- The SSC *recommends* further work examining the impact of losing the corner stations.
- The SSC *reiterates* the recommendations raised in our 2022 minutes.

C3 BSAI Crab Harvest Specifications

Pribilof Island Blue King Crab

- Full assessment, last assessed in 2023.

- NMFS bottom trawl surveys continue to show zero or very low catches of mature male PIBKC biomass

- Status determination uses Tier 4 approach, while a Tier 5 approach is used for an OFL

- The SSC *agrees* with the author and the CPT and *recommends* the OFL and ABC from the model fit to the survey MMB placing the stock in Tier 4c

- 25% ABC buffer in agreement with the CPT

- The stock remains overfished; overfishing is not occurring.

C3 BSAI Crab Harvest Specifications

Pribilof Island Blue King Crab

- The SSC and CPT *recommends* moving the stock review to a 4 year cycle to align PIRKC
- The SSC *supports* the CPT recommendation to use a 50% handling mortality.
- The SSC *recommends* a careful selection of the appropriate distributional family and model structure for the sdmTMB modeling
- The SSC *recommends* that the SAFE report include an update on the rebuilding plan that also includes fishing communities recently participating in the fishery when it was open
- The SSC *supports* continued development of risk tables

C3 BSAI Crab Harvest Specifications

Overfishing Status Updates

- The SSC received overfishing status updates for three stocks:
  - WAIRKC, PIGKC, SMBKC

- Catch did not exceed the OFL for any of these stocks, therefore, overfishing did not occur in 2024/2025 (2024 for PIGKC)

- SMBKC remains overfished

- WAIRKC and PIGKC are Tier 5, so no status determination can be made

- Specifications for AIGKC were set in June 2025; however, complete catch is not available until September.

- Total catch did not exceed the OFL for AIGKC, therefore, overfishing did not occur for AIGKC in 2024/2025.

C3 BSAI Crab Harvest Specifications

Risk Tables

- The SSC *appreciates* the CPT's work creating risk tables and discussing how risk tables interact with buffers

- The SSC *looks forward* to hearing the results of future CPT discussions

- While the CPT highlighted differences in the assessment of risk and application of risk tables between crab and groundfish, the SSC *strongly suggests* that there are many parallels

- The SSC *encourages* the CPT to include groundfish experience as some of the aspects under discussion have already been vetted by the GPTs.

C3 BSAI Crab Harvest Specifications

Risk Tables

- The SSC *suggests* the CPT consider evaluating buffers relative to the maxABC, rather than relative to the previous year, as a comprehensive assessment of risk is challenging when considering only year-over-year changes

- Finally, the SSC is also concerned that renaming aspects of the risk tables might be confusing, given the stated goal of transparency

C3 BSAI Crab Harvest Specifications

Update vs Full Assessments

- The SSC *appreciates* consideration of defining different assessment types and the current level of annual monitoring to track off-cycle assessments

- The SSC *agrees* with the CPT's recommendation to continue with the status quo of bringing forward full assessments on a stock's individual assessment cycle

C3 BSAI Crab Harvest Specifications

Skipper Surveys

- The SSC *appreciates* the inclusion of skipper survey data and notes the high participation rates

- The SSC *looks forward* to continued inclusion of the skipper survey data and supports the CPT move to add additional survey questions

- The SSC notes that the incorporation of the skipper survey *represents* an important milestone in the Council's stated goal of including local knowledge where appropriate

Draft SSC Report
October 2025

SSC Report

C5 BSAI/GOA Groundfish Harvest Specifications

C5 BSAI/GOA Groundfish Harvest Specifications

Preliminary Groundfish Harvest Specifications and Halibut DMRs

- For <u>both the BSAI and the GOA</u> in 2026/2027:

- The SSC *recommends* approval of the preliminary groundfish specifications and apportionments and *supports* the GPT's recommendations to approve the Halibut DMR Working Group recommendation for proposed halibut DMRs

C5 BSAI/GOA Groundfish Harvest Specifications

<u>Joint GPT - Other</u>

- Data-Limited Methods Working Group (DLMWG):

  - The SSC *recommends* further exploration of the decision-tree framework for GOA octopus and emphasizes the need to evaluate how these tools may eventually provide defensible and transparent stock status indicators for poorly sampled species.

- Ecosystem Status Report (ESR) Climate Update

  - The SSC *appreciates* efforts to link climate indicators to recruitment and phenology across multiple species encourages testing of multivariate indices to synthesize ecosystem signals.

C5 BSAI/GOA Groundfish Harvest Specifications

Joint GPT - Other

- ESPs and Dynamic Structural Equation Models (DSEM)
  - The SSC *recognizes* progress in embedding DSEM into stock assessments (e.g., GOA pollock) through the RCEATTLE platform and encourages exploration with other stocks.

C5 BSAI/GOA Groundfish Harvest Specifications

- Surveys in BSAI and GOA

  - *Ecosystem:* The SSC **notes** the importance of indices of early life stages for pollock and Pacific cod in the GOA and **recommends** their inclusion in future presentations

  - *Longline:* The SSC **recommends** exploring approaches to better integrate un-surveyed regions, including model-based indices

  - *Trawl:* The SSC **agrees** with public testimony that the co-occurrence of guild-level biomass trends with changes in the GOA trawls survey design is concerning - see GOA GPT Plan Team section below.

C5 BSAI/GOA Groundfish Harvest Specifications

Joint GPT - Other

- Harvest Control Rules:

    ○ The SSC **supports** adding POP to the list of species sensitive to environmental change and incorporating demographic processes beyond recruitment (e.g., growth).

- Sablefish Management Strategy Evaluation (MSE)

    ○ The SSC **supports** expanded testing of hybrid HCRs, prioritizing conservation metrics over economic performance, development of spatial MSE, and continued stakeholder engagement.

C5 BSAI/GOA Groundfish Harvest Specifications

- Spatial Stock Assessment Model for Sablefish
  - The SSC *supports* continued development of the spatial model with expanded tagging and ageing data, exploration of environmental and climate drivers of recruitment and movement, and developing MSE frameworks to test apportionment strategies and evaluate local depletion risk.

- In-season Management
  - The SSC *notes* delays in in-season actions and *encourages* continued communication between NMFS and industry.

C5 BSAI/GOA Groundfish Harvest Specifications

Joint GPT - Sablefish

- The SSC *concurs* with the JGPT and assessment authors that Model 25.12 (removing the GOA trawl survey, using the revised M prior) and the continuity model (25.0) be brought forward in November

- The SSC *recommends* including the impacts of biennial survey extrapolation in the 2026 CIE review and in risk tables

- The SSC *recommends* other technical model development as listed in the report

C5 BSAI/GOA Groundfish Harvest Specifications

Joint GPT - Spatial Apportionment

- The SSC *thanks* Council staff for the presentation on the role and process of spatial apportionments, covering:
  - The change in terminology from sub-area ABC to BRD (Biologically-informed Recommended Distribution)
  - The clarification that area specific TACs may exceed individual BRDs
  - That in the December harvest specification tables, ABCs and BRDs will be in different columns and the BRDs will sum to 100% of the ABC.
  - That for stocks identified by the Council in October, the SSC will describe the risk of exceeding BRDs in a qualitative or quantitative way

C5 BSAI/GOA Groundfish Harvest Specifications

Joint GPT - Spatial Apportionment

- The SSC *supports* the proposed terminology change to BRDs from sub-area ABCs

- The SSC *agrees* that socioeconomic factors should not be included in BRD calculations

C5 BSAI/GOA Groundfish Harvest Specifications

Joint GPT - Spatial Apportionment

- The SSC *advises* that harvest should generally reflect stock distribution, especially when stock structure and spatial ecology are uncertain.
    - Helps to maintain biocomplexity, reproductive potential, and fishing opportunities.

- While limited flexibility in spatial apportionment is unlikely to threaten groundfish sustainability, the SSC *cautions* against broadly applying it to all stocks.

- The SSC *advises* that any new flexibilities be applied selectively, focusing on stocks with highly variable or uncertain survey estimates that can cause unstable apportionments.

- The SSC *recommends* that setting subarea TACs over BRDs should be for addressing temporary fishery constraints and should not cumulatively shift sub-area apportionments over time.

C5 BSAI/GOA Groundfish Harvest Specifications

Joint GPT - Spatial Apportionment

- The SSC *highlights* that the appropriate role of the SSC is to quantify, or at least characterize, the associated risk of exceeding a specific BRD.
  - This risk is a combination of the risk of local depletion related to potential stock structure and uncertainty in the area apportionments.
- The SSC *recommends* that the GPT and SSC work toward developing general guidance using metrics of conservation concern to help provide transparent and more consistent advice as stocks are evaluated on a case-by-case basis.
  - The SSC *highlights* that this approach will not be developed by this December

C5 BSAI/GOA Groundfish Harvest Specifications

Joint GPT - Spatial Apportionment

- The SSC *notes* that there are unresolved questions about how the BRD/subarea TAC process will work in this cycle.

- Nevertheless, the SSC *considers* the process to be sufficiently well developed and supports moving forward.

- The SSC *recommends* that the process this year be considered as a trial run that can be used to improve and refine the process in future years.

- The SSC *recommends* a suite of long-term research objectives (as documented in their report) towards improving standardization, efficiency, and transparency in the BRD estimation and application processes.

C5 BSAI/GOA Groundfish Harvest Specifications

Joint GPT - Spatial Apportionment

- The SSC **_requests_** the survey teams provide survey information for all FMP stocks (GOA and BSAI) at the September GPT next year in order to more fully inform the Council regarding potential change in BRDs.

- The SSC identified two groups of stocks: those identified by the SSC as having potential changes in apportionment methods that could result in changes to the BRDs between 2024 and 2025, and those for which the SSC received public testimony that may be relevant to the Council.

C5 BSAI/GOA Groundfish Harvest Specifications

Joint GPT - Spatial Apportionment

- ***Stocks flagged by the SSC:***

  - BSAI Greenland turbot: a new spatial apportionment method will be brought forward in December as a recommended way to estimate BRDs.

  - GOA shortraker rockfish: a new spatial apportionment method will be brought forward in December as a recommended way to estimate BRDs. Also, there was public testimony about potential for changes in subarea TACs to constrain target fisheries for other stocks.

C5 BSAI/GOA Groundfish Harvest Specifications

Joint GPT - Spatial Apportionment

- ***Stocks flagged during public comment*** (SSC did not discuss the merits of these suggestions):
  - GOA Skates Complex: There was public testimony about potential for subarea TACs to constrain target fisheries for other stocks.
  - GOA thornyheads: There was public testimony about potential for subarea TACs to constrain target fisheries for other stocks.
  - GOA Pacific ocean perch: There was public testimony to increase harvest in the areas of the GOA open to bottom trawling to balance underharvest of the resource in the Eastern GOA.

C5 BSAI Groundfish Harvest Specifications

BSAI GPT Report

- The SSC received public testimony that it would have been valuable for the SSC to have reviewed C5d BSAI Blackspotted Rougheye Rockfish Accountability measures. The SSC did not speak to matters of schedule prioritization, but *recommends* the Council refer to past December SSC reports on BSAI Blackspotted rougheye stock assessments as they apply to their decision making at this meeting

C5 BSAI Groundfish Harvest Specifications

<u>BSAI GPT - Bottom Trawl Survey</u>

- The SSC received a report of the 2025 BSAI bottom trawl survey covering both the EBS and NBS

- The SSC *commends* the AFSC on the rapid turnaround of data products after the survey was complete and the work to continually improve current and developing products.

C5 BSAI Groundfish Harvest Specifications

BSAI GPT - EBS Pollock

- The SSC *recommends* the 2024 base model, as implemented in RTMB, including:
    - Updated estimates of survey biomass and age compositions based on new spatial models.
    - 2025 fishery and survey age compositions based on new age estimation method (FT-NIRS)
- The SSC *requests* accessible documentation of the impacts of transitioning from traditional microscope to FT-NIRS aging methods
- The SSC *recommends* development of a long-term strategy for transitioning to a new modeling platform that best meets the needs for future development (e.g. including Russian data, climate readiness)

C5 BSAI Groundfish Harvest Specifications

BSAI GPT - Yellowfin Sole

- The SSC *concurs* with the BSAI GPT recommendation to provide in November 3 models:
  - Model 23.0: previous model
  - Model 25.0: previous model but in SS3, removes temperature as covariate of q, and a slight change in data weighting of survey age-comps based on haul numbers.
  - Model 25.0a: slightly different data weighting for survey age-comps based on input sample size methods.
- The SSC *concurs* with BSAI GPT on moving from Tier 1 to Tier 3, the transition to SS3, and the inclusion of the bridging analysis as an appendix

C5 BSAI Groundfish Harvest Specifications

BSAI GPT - Greenland Turbot

- The SSC *endorsed* several cumulative changes made to the Greenland turbot assessment model, each representing improvements consistent with best practices.

- The SSC *concurs* with the GPT recommendation to bring forward the bring forward the base model, 16.4c, plus models 25.3 and 25.4

- The SSC *supported* models that start in 1977 models as a stronger foundation for future management advice

- The SSC *endorsed* the new REMA approach to spatial apportionment.

C5 BSAI Groundfish Harvest Specifications

BSAI GPT - Skates

- The SSC *agrees* with the GPT to bring forward the base model (Model 14_2d) and Model 25_2 or Model 25_3, in agreement with the authors' preference for Model 25_2

- The SSC **concurs** with the GPT that Tier 4 (with selectivities if available) and Tier 5 options be brought forward

- The SSC *supports* the research priorities list recommended by the authors as a high priority.

- The SSC *recommends* that the authors consider exploring a Bayesian framework to estimate growth parameters externally to better account for and quantify uncertainty in these parameters.

C5 BSAI Groundfish Harvest Specifications

BSAI GPT - Northern Rockfish

- The SSC *concurs* with the GPT to bring forward both the 2023 base model (Model 21) and the split-sex model (Model 25.2) in November

- The SSC *highlights* that recent genetic work by the NMFS indicates high stock structure in northern rockfish relative to other rockfish species.

- Continued concern remains over potential risks to stock biomass and productivity from disproportionate harvesting.

- The SSC *recommends* northern rockfish stock structure information be included in the risk table for November and to continue to monitor its effects.

C5 BSAI Groundfish Harvest Specifications

BSAI GPT - Atka Mackerel ESP

- The SSC *suggests:*

    - That additional metrics that capture socioeconomic impacts at the community level be incorporated

    - That socioeconomic measures that consider the participation of non-AM 80 catcher processors be considered

    - That multivariate ecosystem indicators be developed to better contextual time series data

- The SSC looks forward to receiving a more completely realized draft ESP in late 2026.

C5 GOA Groundfish Harvest Specifications

GOA GPT - Bottom Trawl Survey

- The SSC received the GOA GPT report on the 2025 GOA bottom trawl survey.

- Survey consisted of 437 stations (17% fewer than previous survey)

- 2025 was the first year of a new stratified design

- Large biomass trends, both positive or negative, were observed for several species

- Rockfish species as a group generally showed declining trends, but there were consistent increases for roundfish (except for sablefish) and flatfish.

C5 GOA Groundfish Harvest Specifications

GOA GPT - Bottom Trawl Survey

- The SSC discussed with the survey team whether changes to the survey design impacted survey results.

- The SSC *recommends* further investigation into the impacts on the redistributed survey effort, particularly with regard to depth and areas survey compared with historic results.

- As noted under the JGPT comments, the SSC *recommends* comparison of rockfish trends in the GOA bottom trawl survey and the longline survey for species captured by both.

- The SSC *highlights* the importance of this survey and notes it is also used to conduct a variety of special projects and data collections.

C5 GOA Groundfish Harvest Specifications

GOA GPT - Acoustic Trawl Survey

- The SSC received a report on results from winter 2025 acoustic-trawl survey work in the Shumagin Islands, Shelikof Strait, and Kenai Peninsula areas
  - Mechanical issues limited the effort to Shelikof Strait, which was surveyed March 16–31, about a week later than planned.
- The length distribution of pollock was similar to that observed in 2024, although an age 1 year-class was present.
- Shelikof biomass in 2025 was slightly higher than that observed in 2024 (13%), and Chirikof biomass decreased from 2024 (16%).
- Shumagin and Shelikof areas are scheduled to be surveyed in winter 2026

C5 GOA Groundfish Harvest Specifications

GOA GPT - Deepwater Flatfish Harvest Projection

- The deepwater flatfish complex is managed in Tier 3a for Dover sole and Tier 6 for the remaining species in the complex.

- Harvest projections produced for Dover sole using updated 2024 catch, and estimated 2025–2026 catches, resulted in small updates in specifications.

- The SSC *concurs* with the GOA GPT and the author recommended ABC and OFL for 2026 and 2027, with no reduction from the maxABC.

- No changes were made to the area apportionment method and resulting proportions.

C5 GOA Groundfish Harvest Specifications

GOA GPT - GOA Pollock

- The SSC *recommends* Model 23e, in addition to last year's accepted model (23d) for the 2025 assessment, in agreement with the GPT
  - Including updated input data series (acoustic surveys) and several technical improvements
- The SSC **recommends** several explorations for next year's assessment, including:
  - Assess availability of immature pollock to the Shelikof Strait winter acoustic survey
  - Incorporate acoustic survey data from spawning areas other than Shelikof Strait

C5 GOA Groundfish Harvest Specifications

GOA GPT - Rougheye/Blackspotted Rockfish

- The SSC *concurs* with GOA GPT recommendation of 4 models to be brought forward in November
  - Model 23.1b – Base SCAA model
  - Model 25.1a – Tier 4 model species-specific biological-based maturity
  - Model 25.1b – Tier 4 model species-specific functional maturity
  - Model 25.2 – Tier 5 calculations based on trawl survey biomass combined complex
- The SSC *concurs* with GOA GPT support of complex-level fishing mortality rate based on blackspotted rockfish estimate
- The SSC *requests* author provide evaluation of uncertainty in species ID and age estimation and potential impact on assessment

C5 GOA Groundfish Harvest Specifications

GOA GPT - Pacific Ocean Perch

- The SSC *supports* model transition from ADMB to RTMB

- The SSC *concurs* with GOA GPT recommendation of 2 models to be brought forward in November:

    - base model in RTMB (Model 25.0), and

    - Model 25.2a including cumulative shanges to the likelihood, fishery selectivity, and data weighting

- The SSC *agrees* with GOA GPT recommendation to include more information on the input sample sizes

C5 GOA Groundfish Harvest Specifications

GOA GPT - Pacific Ocean Perch

- The SSC *supports* supports GOA GPT recommendation to investigate CV differences in recent model-based survey estimates and bring forward model using model-based estimate, if time permits
- The SSC *notes* public testimony referencing GOA POP in Spatial Apportionment Plan agenda item

C5 GOA Groundfish Harvest Specifications

GOA GPT - GOA Arrowtooth Flounder

- The SSC *concurs* with GOA GPT recommendation for 2 models to be brought forward:

    ○ Model 25.0 (the 2024 accepted model), which is a single-species TMB based RCEATTLE model with male fixed M, and

    ○ Model 25.1, which is Model 25.0 with estimates of sex-specific M rather than fixing M

C5 GOA Groundfish Harvest Specifications

GOA GPT - GOA Arrowtooth Flounder ESP

- The SSC *supports* the ESP team's approach to categorizing indicators as predictive/contextual/monitoring

- The SSC *supports* the DSEM causal approach to explain variation in recruitment as part of the new ESP

- The SSC *endorses* the GPT's recommendation to develop guidance on evaluating DSEM fits and for guidance on a framework for how these causal models can best be used in a management context.

C5 GOA Groundfish Harvest Specifications

GOA GPT - Rex Sole

- The SSC *notes* that this assessment was reviewed by a CIE panel earlier this year
- The SSC *concurs* with GOA GPT recommendation for 2 models to be brought forward:
  - the updated base model (Model 25.0), and
  - the alternative model (Model 25.1), that incorporates an updated ageing error matrix
- The SSC *supports* the research priorities list provided by the author
- The SSC *agrees* with the GPT that the bridging exercise should be included as an appendix to the main document in November

C5 GOA Groundfish Harvest Specifications

GOA GPT - Shallow Water Flatfish

- The SSC *concurs* with GOA GPT recommendation of the following models to be brought forward:

    - for northern rock sole, Model 21.2c, along with the previous base model, and

    - for southern rock sole, Models 25.1c and 25.1d, along with the base model.

- The SSC *requests* that the authors clarify how uncertainty was considered in the historical catch partitioning (pre-1997) and how much the historical data might affect the final model assessment.

C5 GOA Groundfish Harvest Specifications

GOA GPT - Shallow Water Flatfish

- The SSC *supports* the GPT request for the stock assessment authors to explain how, and if, a reweighting approach was done.

- The SSC *supports* the GPT recommendation to evaluate model sensitivity to selectivity and the model's ability to estimate M for both sexes, investigate inconsistencies in survey length compositions, and explore the possibility of including ages in the models.