

RE: Amendment 31 Stock Definitions - Final Action

Council members, I am Merit McCrea representing the Sportfishing Association of California. • We support the Amendment 31 stock definitions statement presented to you by the GAP at this meeting and the PPAs you selected in March. • For vermilion rockfish the Council had not yet selected a PPA and we understand you may select an FPA directly at this meeting. We support the GAP and GMT with alternative 3 as your FPA. This is an Oregon, and a Washington vermilion stock, and a California sunset-vermilion stock. In California there is evidence both species are present in number far north of Pt. Conception, which was previously considered the northern extreme of the sunset rockfish's primary range. • Stocks should be defined on the basis of mixing populations. These are likely best defined on the basis of shared genetics. However, states should also have the latitude to differentiate their own perspectives on management within waters offshore of their state. Therefore we would support the GAP and GMT with alternative 3 for copper as well. • As a southern fleet we note that both the 2021 data-moderate copper assessment and the full copper assessment now being worked on indicate near target populations north of Pt. Conception (34° 27' N. Lat.) and for the state as a whole. But south of that point copper populations model low. o A state-wide stock definition leaves the Council with greater flexibility in management measure selection. However, we recognize conservation measures will be needed for copper rockfish in the south, while areas north of Pt. Conception, less so. o We expect this Council's management measures for northern management regions not to penalize those fisheries for the additional conservation of copper rockfish needed in the south. o Irrespective of a stock definition's geographic range, management measures should reflect the specific areas of conservation need and not penalize other's access. • This Council has already effectively implemented painful conservation measures for copper rockfish, demonstrating your willingness to make the hard choices. • In addition in 2022, as you are aware, we implemented a fleet-wide and angler-wide effort to avoid, and release copper rockfish using descending devices. That has already proven highly successful in reducing fisheries mortality of copper rockfish. Thank You