

## STOCK ASSESSMENT OF CANARY ROCKFISH

Situation: The Council recently adopted a canary rockfish rebuilding plan under the auspices of fishery management plan amendment 16-2. The rebuilding plan specifies conservative harvest levels to rebuild the stock within the required time with the consequence of significantly constrained fishing opportunities on the West Coast continental shelf to reduce canary rockfish bycatch. These constraints come at a high cost of foregone harvest of healthy marine stocks and difficult allocation decisions to equitably bear the burden of rebuilding canary rockfish. Canary rockfish are often viewed as the single most constraining stock in management of the groundfish fishery.

As the Council embarks on a new multi-year groundfish management process, where new assessments and management specifications are adopted every other year for the subsequent two year management cycle, concern was expressed the existing canary rockfish stock assessment would be used for 2004 as well as the first multi-year management cycle in 2005-2006. The next canary rockfish assessment would be contemplated for delivery in November 2005 when 2007-2008 management measures would first be deliberated. Because of the constraining nature of the stock and the length of time until the next assessment, the Council scheduled consideration of a new canary rockfish stock assessment for use in the 2005-2006 biennial management period.

There are a number of issues to consider before scheduling a new assessment. This assessment would have to be conducted, reviewed, and adopted by the April 2004 Council meeting to be available for use in 2005-2006 management decision-making. The Council should first explore whether the necessary resources are available to conduct a new assessment and what a re-prioritization of those resources might cost. Secondly, there are apparently significant data issues to consider before deciding whether there is enough new useable data available to be informative. These include: 1) how the recent change in the NMFS West Coast trawl survey methodology would affect a new assessment, 2) the availability of other data sources such as the Delta submersible survey that would be useful, 3) the availability of new fishery-dependent data given the non-retention regulations and/or small limits that were specified for canary rockfish in 2003, and 4) the availability of new data from the federal groundfish observer program and their effect on assessment data inputs. The advice of NOAA scientists, the Scientific and Statistical Committee, and Groundfish Management Team will be particularly useful in sorting out these data issues.

The Council task is to decide whether to recommend conducting a new canary rockfish stock assessment in time for the 2005-2006 management period.

### **Council Action:**

- 1. Consider establishing a new stock assessment process for canary rockfish for use in the 2005-2006 biennial management period.**

### **Reference Materials:**

1. None.

Agenda Order:

- a. Agendum Overview
- b. NMFS Report
- c. Reports and Comments of Advisory Bodies
- d. Public Comment
- e. **Council Action:** Consider Establishing a New Stock Assessment Process for Canary Rockfish for use in the 2005-2006 Biennial Management Period

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