

WASHINGTON DEPARTMENT OF FISH AND WILDLIFE REPORT ON  
GROUNDFISH STOCK ASSESSMENTS FOR 2007

The Washington Department of Fish and Wildlife (WDFW) is scheduled to participate in two stock assessment activities in 2007, for black rockfish and spiny dogfish. WDFW has the following comments and recommendations relative to these two assessments:

Black Rockfish

In April, when the 2007 assessment schedule was finalized, we did not realize that the proposed geographic area of the scheduled black rockfish assessment was West Coast-wide, nor did we evaluate whether we had staff resources to contribute to the black rockfish assessment. With regard to the coastwide application, a genetic study conducted in 1995-97 reinforced findings from a major tagging study that there are two separate black rockfish stocks, north and south of Cape Falcon, Oregon. As a reminder, the Council's Groundfish Management Team, estimated the amount of the stock located between Cape Falcon and the Oregon/Washington border and, for ease of management, transferred that amount from the northern assessment area to the south. Based on the results of this genetic study and, as supported by the last Stock Assessment and Review (STAR) panel, WDFW strongly believes that Washington should remain a separate assessment area.

In addition, the present northern black rockfish assessment model incorporates a unique, direct approach to using the available tagging data, which cannot be easily incorporated in the current stock synthesis 2 (SS2) model. WDFW has invested significant resources into our black rockfish tagging program since the last assessment was completed. These tagging data have not yet been collated and summarized into a usable format. However, we believe that it is imperative that the next northern black rockfish assessment includes these tagging data. We also feel strongly that WDFW staff lead the Stock Assessment Team that develops the next northern assessment.

Spiny Dogfish

WDFW staff have contacted representatives from the University of Washington, Alaska Department of Fish and Game, and the Canada Department of Fisheries and Oceans to share and review dogfish biological and fishery data. As dogfish are migratory and we are not aware of any genetic stock differences, we need to develop an assessment that takes into account the transboundary nature of this stock. Further, we believe that the assessment would benefit if we took the time needed to assemble and review all of the data, and cooperatively work with Canada and Alaska representatives, as well as Oregon and California, rather than rush the assessment through the process. Therefore, we would continue to develop a statistical model in the interim, and support rescheduling the spiny dogfish assessment for the 2009 cycle.

If the Council decides to reschedule spiny dogfish for 2009, then we could re-prioritize WDFW staff workloads to work on the northern black rockfish assessment in 2007. However, in order to have time to summarize the Washington tagging data, we would request that the black rockfish Stock Assessment Review (STAR) panel be delayed until the week of June 25.