

SCIENTIFIC AND STATISTICAL COMMITTEE REPORT ON
FINAL ACTION ON STOCK ASSESSMENT PLANS AND TERMS OF REFERENCE (TOR)
FOR GROUND FISH AND COASTAL PELAGIC SPECIES

Dr. Jim Hastie and Ms. Kristan Blackhart briefed the Scientific and Statistical Committee (SSC) at the March, April, and June meetings on progress toward implementation of a stock assessment prioritization process for Pacific Coast Groundfish (Agenda Item G.8, Attachment 1). The June discussion focused on the addition of survey trends within the prioritization process, the quantity/quality of data available for priority species, and the recommendation of species for and timing of 2017 Stock Assessment Review (STAR) Panels.

Final Stock Assessment Prioritization for West Coast Groundfish

The SSC agreed that blue/deacon rockfish (for OR and CA waters), lingcod, yelloweye rockfish, yellowtail rockfish, California scorpionfish, and Pacific ocean perch (POP) are good candidates for full assessments in the 2017 cycle. In discussion with Dr. Hastie, six full assessments were deemed to be feasible given current resources. These assessments could best be organized into three STAR panels as follows:

- blue/deacon rockfish and CA scorpionfish;
- lingcod and yelloweye rockfish; and
- yellowtail rockfish and Pacific ocean perch.

The three STAR panels were suggested to occur the weeks of June 26, July 10 and July 24 to balance considerations of data availability, internal review deadlines, STAR panel distribution deadlines, and the briefing book deadline for the September 2017 Council meeting.

Dr. Hastie indicated that a maximum of three update assessments would be possible with the selection of six full assessments. The SSC agreed that bocaccio and darkblotched rockfish should be update assessments in the 2017 cycle. In addition, the SSC suggested that either arrowtooth flounder or blackgill rockfish could also be an update assessment in 2017. Revisions to catch and an extension of the survey time-series are available for both species and both fit the criteria for update assessments. Although the most recent SSC recommendation for arrowtooth flounder was to conduct a full assessment, this new catch and survey data address two major uncertainties highlighted in the 2007 STAR panel report. There are data issues that remain (e.g., challenges with ageing and ageing methods) for a blackgill rockfish update.

A catch report should be produced for cowcod.

Revisions to the Terms of Reference

The SSC continued discussions on necessary revisions to the groundfish and coastal pelagic species terms of reference (TOR) for stock assessments and methodology reviews (Agenda Item G.8, Attachments 3 and 5) and rebuilding analyses (groundfish only; Agenda Item G.8, Attachment 4). The SSC endorses the changes in these attachments, bringing the following changes to the Council's attention:

- general housekeeping language in the stock assessment TOR, including the removal of the appendix for best practice stock assessment guidelines (these guidelines will now be a standalone document, applicable to groundfish, completed by the groundfish sub-committee for review at the November 2016 meeting);
- an explicit framework for proposing new methodologies for SSC review; and
- additional criteria relevant to methodology review proponents.

The SSC made three additional modifications to the stock assessment TOR not reflected in Attachment 3 (inserted text quoted below). They are:

- criteria for selecting STAR panel chairs;

“Groundfish and Coastal Pelagic Species (CPS) STAR panels include a chair appointed by the SSC and three other experienced stock assessment analysts knowledgeable of the specific modeling approaches being reviewed.” [Section 4.2]

- discussion of the benefits of and potential need for data workshops, particularly when new stocks are assessed or new data sources are used;

“STATs should coordinate early in the process with state representatives and other data stewards to ensure timely availability of data. For some assessments it may be beneficial for the STAT to hold a data workshop with state representatives and other data stewards and interested parties to discuss which data will be used and which will be excluded, and how the assessment model will use the data. Data workshops might be needed for assessments of stocks that had not previously been assessed or stocks for which the STAT planned to use a data source not used in a previous assessment. The relevant SSC Subcommittee will recommend whether a data workshop will be needed for a stock assessment.” [Section 4.3]

- Clarification of the responsibilities for Groundfish Management Team (GMT) representatives and Council staff during the development of projections for groundfish assessments.

“For reviews of groundfish assessments Council staff is responsible for providing the STAT with the information needed to conduct projections, including the default harvest control rules and the multipliers needed to buffer for scientific uncertainty for the default projections.” [Section 4.5]

“For reviews of groundfish assessments the GMT representative is responsible for providing the STAT with catch streams needed to conduct projections.” [Section 4.6]