

SCIENTIFIC AND STATISTICAL COMMITTEE REPORT ON
FUTURE COUNCIL MEETING AGENDA AND WORKLOAD PLANNING

MSC review request

The Scientific and Statistical Committee (SSC) discussed the request to review the document "Recent Trends in Three Selected West Coast Groundfish Species" ([Agenda Item C.4.b, Supplemental Public Comment, April 2017](#)). The SSC requires clarification on the specific questions to be addressed and the associated review standards, and recommends that Council staff coordinate with the certification team on clarifying the proper scope of the review. The SSC would then be able to identify an appropriate review process and timeline. It may be possible to review this document during the groundfish subcommittee meeting scheduled for late September (i.e., the mop-up panel), depending on the depth of review required and the number of assessments requiring follow-up review.

Ecosystem subcommittee meetings

For the last three years, the SSC Ecosystem Subcommittee (SSCES) has scheduled a meeting with members of California Current Integrated Ecosystem Assessment (CCIEA) team in the fall of the year, usually immediately before the meeting of the full SSC at the September Council meeting. The primary objective of this meeting has been to conduct technical review of selected indicators in the annual ecosystem status report. Occasionally other aspects of the CCIEA effort have been reviewed if CCIEA team considers them sufficiently developed to benefit from SSC review, and if there is potential for the topics to be useful to the Council process. The timing of the review allows the CCIEA team sufficient time to incorporate SSC recommendations in the next iteration of the ecosystem status report that is delivered to the Council in March.

The SSC has found that a regular schedule of technical review has improved the usefulness and scientific quality of the annual ecosystem report, and recommends that these reviews continue. An annual review process for ecosystem topics could be similar to the methodology review processes already in place for salmon, groundfish, and coastal pelagic species. In previous years, the SSCES and the CCIEA jointly developed the list of topics to be reviewed during the September meeting, and the SSC notified the Council of an initial list in its statement on the ecosystem report in March.

Given the strong engagement of Council advisory bodies in the Council's recently concluded ecosystem indicator initiative, a more formal approach could be considered for identifying the list of ecosystem topics to be reviewed. The SSC recommends, as one possibility, that an agenda item be scheduled for the March Council meeting that would identify the list of ecosystem-related topics to be reviewed during the September meeting. This agenda item would follow, but be separate from, the ecosystem report agenda item. This approach would allow for advisory body input, National Marine Fisheries Service input, and Council guidance on the list of review topics. The SSCES still expects to coordinate with the CCIEA team to develop an initial list of topics for Council approval, but the decision on the list of topics for review would be up to the Council.

The SSCES and CCIEA team already discussed components in the IEA that would be appropriate for technical review at this year's meeting, scheduled for September 14-15, 2017. An initial list was provided to the Council at the March 2017 meeting, but there have been some additions and deletions. The current list of topics relative to the annual ecosystem report includes:

- New habitat indicators, particularly those based on salmon life cycle stages.
- The development of a marine heatwave index, a.k.a. "blob index", that quantifies the physical conditions that we now associate with the anomalous marine heat wave of 2014-2016.
- Definition and identification of biologically meaningful thresholds in indicators for risk assessment.
- An early warning index of ecosystem changes that identifies spatio-temporal changes in different biological indicators, and evaluates their ability to predict ecosystem state shifts.

Additional topics that are not part of the annual ecosystem report, but may benefit from SSCES review, include:

- A preliminary management strategy evaluation (MSE) for sablefish based on current assessment assumptions that includes an environmental driver of recruitment.
- Models of fishery participation choices under a variable climate.

The SSC notes that given the current scheduling of the ecosystem subcommittee meeting (during the September Council meeting, after the full SSC meets), a subcommittee report on the sablefish MSE would not be available to the Council until the November meeting.