

SCIENTIFIC AND STATISTICAL COMMITTEE REPORT ON SPECIFICATIONS AND MANAGEMENT MEASURES PROCESS FOR 2019-2020 FISHERIES

Mr. John DeVore briefed the Scientific and Statistical Committee (SSC) on the proposed process and schedule for 2019-2020 harvest specifications for groundfish. The SSC discussed the additional analyses that will be needed for the 2019-2020 cycle, and the plans for review of these additional analyses.

Errors in historical (pre-1968) catches for California in the CalCOM database were recently discovered and corrected. After examination of all potentially affected stock assessments, the historical catch time series was found to be incorrect for two 2015 assessments, chilipepper rockfish and canary rockfish. Because the errors are too large to disregard, these assessments will need to be rerun with the corrected catch time series, and new overfishing limits (OFLs) and acceptable biological catches (ABCs) specified. The SSC recommends that these corrected assessments be reviewed at the mop-up panel in September.

New rebuilding analyses will be needed for stocks assessed in this cycle that remain overfished, unless the stock is projected to be rebuilt within two years. If the base model from STAR panel review indicates that the stock remains overfished, work on a new rebuilding analysis should begin as soon as possible, even though the SSC will not formally endorse the assessments until the September Council meeting. These rebuilding analyses will need to be reviewed at the mop-up panel.

The Groundfish Management Team (GMT) proposed a review of the yelloweye rockfish projection model. The SSC recommends that this review be scheduled as a webinar in August or September with participation by the SSC's Groundfish and Economics Subcommittees.

Due to their age, several stock assessments no longer provide useful information for management advice, and a new approach is advised for the 2019-2020 harvest specifications. Both starry flounder and gopher rockfish were last assessed in 2005, and both of these assessments are considered highly uncertain by the SSC. During the last assessment cycle, a rollover approach was used to set the OFL and the ABC, but, if possible, this approach should not be used again. The SSC recommends that these stocks be assessed using depletion-based stock reduction analysis with a depletion prior informed by stock vulnerability. These assessments should be reviewed at the mop-up panel in September.

Work is progressing on two research projects that may inform the SSC's recommendations on sigma (σ), used to establish the uncertainty buffer for the ABC. One project underway at the University of Washington is directly evaluating the uncertainty in the estimate of OFL, rather than uncertainty in ending biomass, which is how the current σ for category 1 stocks was determined. The other research project is being conducted by the Northwest Fisheries Science Center, and is evaluating how uncertainty in abundance and OFL estimates increase in the years after the assessment is conducted, and could potentially lead to a procedure where σ gradually increases as stock assessments become older. The SSC recommends that this work be reviewed at the mop-up panel in September. It is uncertain whether these projects will be sufficiently complete for the SSC to use a new approach for the 2019-2020 harvest specifications.

Based on the SSC's review recommendations, the agenda for the mop-up review panel appears to be relatively full. Most of these tasks are straightforward, and can be dealt with quickly. Stock assessments that are referred to the mop-up should take priority over other agenda items, including review of analyses to support the choice of σ . In the event that multiple assessments are referred to the mop-up panel, it may be advisable to move some of the items currently scheduled for review at the mop-up panel meeting to a webinar meeting of the SSC groundfish subcommittee.

PFMC
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