

SCIENTIFIC AND STATISTICAL COMMITTEE REPORT ON STOCK ASSESSMENT
PLANNING FOR 2013-2014 FISHERY GUIDANCE

The Scientific and Statistical Committee (SSC) reviewed the revised version of the Terms of Reference (TOR) for the groundfish stock assessment (Agenda Item B.4.a, Attachment 1) and discussed comments provided by Council staff regarding the TOR (Agenda Item B.4.a, Attachment 3).

In response to specific comments raised by the Council staff, the SSC agreed that separate Pacific whiting assessment TOR should be developed jointly with Canada. This recommendation should be added to the TOR Introduction (currently the Pacific whiting review process is discussed in a footnote to Appendix A table, page 23). The SSC also concluded that no additional requirements for evaluating the effect of historical catches on the estimate of B_0 is necessary since the current TOR version already includes the requirement to evaluate model sensitivity to data set choice and model structure (TOR, Appendix 2, Section D.7). The SSC also noted that current TOR already emphasizes that the Stock Assessment Review (STAR) panels are not workshops (page 12), and that STAR panels should be very cautious about recommending large changes in data. No additional changes to the TOR are needed. Finally, the SSC agreed that three weeks prior to STAR panel is a reasonable deadline for a stock assessment draft; the text should be modified to remove “no less than” prior to “three full weeks” (page 15). The “harvest projections and decision tables” should be re-added to the list of elements exempt from a pre-STAR assessment document (page 15), as it was in the 2009-2010 TOR version.

The SSC reviewed the revised version of the TOR for groundfish rebuilding analysis (Agenda Item B.4.a, Attachment 2) and agreed that no additional changes were needed. Additional rebuilding runs may be needed to comply with recent judicial opinions, but these can be accommodated in the existing modeling framework.

The SSC agreed that the schedule for 2011 STAR panels with sablefish in a single-species STAR panel is preferable, given the anticipated changes in the assessment model as well as industry interest in the species.

Finally, the SSC again emphasizes that the timing of the assessment process for whiting is problematic (see SSC March minutes for details). To ensure full evaluation of data and successful collaboration of U.S. and Canadian Stock Assessment Teams, the timing of the whiting assessment process should be reconsidered.