

SCIENTIFIC AND STATISTICAL COMMITTEE REPORT ON
STOCK COMPLEX ASSEMBLAGES

Mr. John DeVore and Dr. Jason Cope gave a summary of "Initial Proposal (Proposed Action, Alternatives, and Considerations) for Restructuring Groundfish Stock Complexes" (Agenda Item D.3.a Attachment 1). The report describes a proposed action to restructure the current groundfish stock complexes into groupings that comprise species of more equivalent ecological distributions, of more equivalent vulnerabilities to overfishing, and that are caught together in the fishery. The Scientific and Statistical Committee (SSC) appreciates the efforts of the authors of the report, agrees that restructuring stock complexes is important, and anticipates reviewing a revised document in June.

The SSC focused on methodology for identifying stock complexes that could be restructured and for evaluating the performance of proposed stock complexes.

The SSC supports approaches that group similar stocks on the basis of their productivity and spatial distribution. The distribution data used were not described in sufficient detail to fully evaluate. The SSC recommends developing and presenting explicit measures of the concordance between spatial groupings and the groupings of stocks into stock complexes.

Several potential metrics for evaluating proposed stock complexes were discussed. All proposed metrics depend to some degree on predicting future fishing behavior. It is very difficult to evaluate whether a new stock complex structure will achieve the desired goals without actually implementing changes in an iterative, adaptive-management approach.

The SSC recommends refining the metrics used to evaluate current stock complexes to focus on the ratio of total cumulative catch to total cumulative component overfishing limit (OFL) and the mean difference between total catch and total component OFL. Plots of trends over time in catch relative to component OFL provide a useful graphical summary of potential concerns with current stock complexes.

The SSC also raised concerns about the reliability of species composition data used in retrospective analyses, an issue often encountered in groundfish management. Some stock restructurings may provide benefits by aligning species complexes with market categories, e.g. grenadier and greenlings. However, increasing the number of market categories could create data quality issues, and the SSC recommends this be evaluated more thoroughly in the next version of this analysis.

The current report contains adequate information for the SSC to reiterate its endorsement of reorganizing the present "other fish" stock complex.

PFMC
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