The Groundfish Advisory Subpanel (GAP) reviewed the stock assessment updates provided in the advance briefing book. In general, the GAP supports the Scientific and Statistical Committee (SSC) recommendations regarding the yelloweye, cowcod, and canary assessment updates, taking into account corrections made to the canary rockfish assessment update during the SSC meeting. We also support the SSC’s recommendation to send the bocaccio assessment update to the mop-up stock assessment review (STAR) Panel given the need to further explore use of the Northwest Fisheries Science Center (NWFSC) bottom trawl survey and impingement recruitment indices and their influence on the assessment results. The SSC has previously identified concerns about the ability of the NWFSC bottom trawl survey to sample rockfish because of the difficulty of using bottom trawl gear in rocky habitat inhabited by many rockfish species (see Agenda Item E.6.c, Supplemental SSC Report, June 2009).

The GAP notes the NWFSC bottom trawl survey was also identified as the primary driver affecting the darkblotched rockfish assessment update results. The GAP is concerned about the apparent disparity in how two stock assessment updates were dramatically impacted by use of the NWFSC bottom trawl survey data – the appearance of numerous young bocaccio appeared to produce a much larger than expected stock size, whereas the appearance of numerous young darkblotched rockfish appeared to produce a much smaller than expected stock size. This effect confuses the GAP. In line with the SSC’s recommendation to send bocaccio to the mop-up STAR Panel and their previous statements about the NWFSC bottom trawl survey (e.g., “adult darkblotched rockfish association with rock ledges may affect the ability of the survey to monitor this component of the population.” [Agenda Item E.6.c, Supplemental SSC Report, June 2009]), the GAP recommends the darkblotched rockfish assessment update also go to the mop-up Panel to further explore what is driving assessment results. The GAP notes that similar effects are evident in the draft Pacific ocean perch stock assessment, which adds to the importance of understanding the effects of the NWFSC bottom trawl survey on rockfish stock assessments.

The GAP is also concerned by use of the reconstructed historical catch estimates. We understand that these reconstructions were undertaken to provide a more standardized set of historical catch estimates. However, given the influence of these reconstructed catch estimates on the stock assessment results, they should be formally reviewed to ensure they provide the best available information.

The GAP also agrees with the SSC’s recommendations on which data-limited methods should be used for estimating overfishing limits for unassessed stocks. The potential use of “enhanced” data-limited methods that incorporate data other than catch to assess these stocks is problematic in that it increases uncertainty and produces highly variable results that cannot be addressed in an expedited review process. If there is data that could be used in an “enhanced” data-limited assessment, it would be better to provide a full assessment where the data and methods are fully vetted in a STAR Panel.
Summary of GAP recommendations:
  1. Send bocaccio and darkblotched rockfish assessment updates to the mop-up STAR Panel;
  2. Consider scheduling a formal review of the reconstructed historical catch estimates.

PFMC
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