

SCIENTIFIC AND STATISTICAL COMMITTEE REPORT ON STOCK ASSESSMENT  
PLANNING FOR 2013-2014 MANAGEMENT MEASURES

*Proposed list of stocks for review*

The Scientific and Statistical Committee (SSC) reviewed the list of stock assessments proposed by NMFS for the 2013-14 management cycle. While generally supportive of the proposed list, the SSC has a number of comments as follows.

A status report is being recommended for cowcod, as there is no new information that would affect the stock assessment or the rebuilding analysis. A status report would compare estimates of discard with projections from the model as a way to evaluate rebuilding progress, and is considered different than an update (which incorporates new data without changing the model). A status report would require no new model runs, unlike an update, and is appropriate given the uniquely data-poor situation for cowcod.

The SSC agrees that an assessment of spiny dogfish is a priority. The productivity-susceptibility analysis (PSA) suggests that spiny dogfish is a highly vulnerable species, which reinforces the need for an assessment. However it should be confirmed that critical data sets from all involved agencies will be available to conduct the assessment.

The SSC encourages an assessment of rex sole, which has not been assessed previously. The SSC recommends that the scope of the rex sole assessment be expanded to include the remaining members of the other flatfish complex (e.g., Pacific sanddabs). The rex sole assessment would likely use a full age-structured model, while the other flatfish would likely need to be assessed using simpler trend analyses. There are advantages of bundling a full assessment with related species: 1) data extracts and analysis of survey data can be done with little additional effort, 2) issues related to species identification of landings in the complex can be addressed comprehensively, rather than on a species-by-species basis, and 3) if done properly, information on the relatively data-rich species can help inform the assessments of the data-poor species.

The SSC discussed the potential for adding an assessment of kelp greenling to the list. The 2005 assessment of kelp greenling in Oregon was accepted by the Stock Assessment Review (STAR) Panel, but was considered highly uncertain. The assessment of kelp greenling in California was not accepted for management purposes. New data sets available for kelp greenling may increase the likelihood of useful assessment results, but further investigation into available information is needed before making a decision.

Due to the major data and modeling issues identified in recent STAR Panel review, a full assessment is recommended for whiting in the next assessment cycle. Some problems encountered during the whiting STAR Panel review could potentially be avoided if a separate Terms of Reference (TOR) were developed with Canada specifically for the whiting review.

### *Terms of reference for stock assessments and rebuilding analyses*

Revised drafts of the TOR for the STAR process and rebuilding analyses were developed by the SSC groundfish subcommittee for Council consideration. Revisions to the rebuilding TOR were all editorial. Additions to the STAR process terms of reference in the appended document include:

- 1) a section on the history of the STAR process,
- 2) a section on conflict of interest for STAR Panel members reflecting guidance in the proposed National Standard Two guidelines,
- 3) additional advice on bracketing runs for decision tables,
- 4) recommendations for better (and earlier) communication between the STAT and data stewards,
- 5) a paragraph clarifying potential points of agreement/disagreement between STAR Panels and the STAT, and ensuring the STAR Panel report is viewed by the STAT,
- 6) requirements for reporting overfishing levels (OFLs) and acceptable biological catch (ABC).

The SSC endorsed these proposed changes. Several further revisions are needed to deal with issues that arose in the previous management cycle. First, while STAR Panels should evaluate the appropriateness of the  $F_{MSY}$  proxies used for calculating OFL and ABC, supporting analyses are needed for recommendations on changes in target harvest rates. The TOR will be updated on guidance on how this will be done. Secondly, a more comprehensive discussion is needed to advise the STAR Panels on the merits of removing data from the assessment model. While removal of inappropriate data sets should remain an option for STAR Panels, the decision to do this should not be made lightly, and should be fully evaluated. These revisions will be incorporated into the draft document for adoption at the June Council meeting.

PFMC  
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