

GROUND FISH ADVISORY SUBPANEL REPORT ON INITIAL
STOCK ASSESSMENT PLANS & TERMS OF REFERENCE (TOR) FOR GROUND FISH
AND COASTAL PELAGIC SPECIES

The Groundfish Advisory Subpanel (GAP) discussed with Dr. Ian Taylor stock assessment planning for 2015 and wishes to recommend the following for Council consideration.

Full Assessments

The GAP agrees with the Science and Statistical Committee's (SSC) recommendations and supports doing full assessments for the following stocks in 2015:

Black rockfish
Bocaccio
Canary rockfish
Darkblotched rockfish
Widow rockfish
China rockfish

Black rockfish is a very important stock for the nearshore sectors and the 2007 assessment is now considered out of date.

The 2013 bocaccio assessment projected the stock would be rebuilt at the start of 2015. The SSC recommends a full assessment be conducted in 2015 to confirm that prediction.

Canary rockfish is a very important stock coastwide for all groundfish sectors, and the last full assessment was conducted in 2007. The Northwest Fisheries Science Center also invested a considerable amount of effort this winter organizing the data that would inform a new assessment.

The 2013 darkblotched assessment projected the stock would be rebuilt at the start of 2015. The SSC recommends a full assessment be conducted in 2015 to confirm that prediction.

The 2011 widow rockfish assessment was highly uncertain and there were many issues that could not be resolved in the 2011 assessment review process (the 2011 assessment was further reviewed at the September 2011 mop-up panel). The GAP supports increasing midwater trawl fishing opportunities for widow and yellowtail rockfish and a new, fully vetted assessment will reduce risks and likely increase available yields for future fishing opportunities.

The GAP recommends conducting a full assessment of China rockfish in 2015. There were many issues in the data-moderate assessment for the population north of 40°10' N. lat. and the GAP recommends a full assessment that would allow the incorporation of composition data and a more thorough vetting of data and modeling issues than could be done in a very busy 2013 data-moderate assessment review panel.

The GAP also recommends conducting a new full assessment for cowcod. There is great uncertainty in the recent 2013 assessment and new data, including a new remotely operated vehicle (ROV) survey in the Cowcod Conservation Areas, may better inform a cowcod assessment.

The GAP recommends conducting a full assessment for kelp greenling. This is an important species for the nearshore fishing sectors. Further, the 2005 assessment of the Oregon population of kelp greenling is now considered flawed, given the Marine Recreational Fisheries Statistical Survey catch data informing the assessment and other data issues discussed during the 2005 assessment review process.

Data-Moderate Assessments

The GAP recommends conducting data-moderate stock assessments for the following four species:

Arrowtooth flounder
Bank rockfish
Quillback rockfish
Blue rockfish

Arrowtooth flounder was last assessed in 2007 and that assessment is now considered out of date. The biomass projections from that assessment, which were largely influenced by the strong 1999 year class, predicted a steep decline despite evidence in the trawl survey and in trawl catches that stock abundance is increasing at a great rate. Projected overfishing limits (OFLs) from the 2007 assessment are now getting so low that annual quotas for arrowtooth are changing trawl fishery distribution to avoid arrowtooth effectively turning this abundant stock into a constraining species.

Bank rockfish was last assessed in 2000 and is so out of date that data-poor methods (DB-SRA) are used to determine OFLs. With the Council action to reduce targeting of blackgill rockfish in southern California, this is an increasingly important target stock and should use more robust methods to determine status and OFLs.

Quillback rockfish is now one of the most vulnerable unassessed stocks to potential overfishing according to the Groundfish Management Team's Productivity and Susceptibility Assessment. This is an important stock for nearshore fisheries north of 40°10' N lat. and should be assessed.

Blue rockfish was last assessed in 2007, and that assessment is now considered out of date. The stock is an important one for nearshore fisheries off California and Oregon, and should be assessed.

Update Assessments

The GAP recommends conducting update assessments for the following species:

Petrale sole
Sablefish
Chilipepper rockfish

The 2013 petrale sole assessment projected the stock would be rebuilt by the start of 2014. The SSC recommends a 2015 assessment to confirm that result. Further, full assessments have been conducted in the last three consecutive assessment cycles for petrale sole, and the SSC recommends an update assessment to confirm its rebuilt status.

Sablefish is the most valuable stock to the west coast groundfish fishery on a per pound basis. The 2011 assessment was a very thorough one that predicted the 2008 and 2010 year classes recruiting into the fishery were above average. The SSC recommends the next assessment of sablefish could be an update, and the GAP recommends one be conducted to better estimate these incoming year classes.

The GAP recommends an update assessment of chilipepper rockfish be done since the 2007 assessment is now considered out of date. Further, the Southwest Fisheries Science Center expressed an interest in doing an update assessment of chilipepper and the GAP agrees.

Catch Reports

Lastly, the GAP is recommending providing catch reports for Pacific ocean perch and yelloweye rockfish in 2015 to evaluate management performance relative to staying within prescribed annual catch limits for these overfished stocks. The SSC recommended continuing to produce catch reports for these two stocks until data that can inform new assessments for these slow-growing stocks becomes available.

Summary of GAP Recommendations:

Full assessments:

- 1) **Black rockfish**
- 2) **Bocaccio**
- 3) **Canary rockfish**
- 4) **Darkblotched Rockfish**
- 5) **Widow rockfish**
- 6) **China rockfish**
- 7) **Cowcod**
- 8) **Kelp greenling**

Data moderate assessments:

- 1) **Arrowtooth flounder**
- 2) **Bank rockfish**
- 3) **Quillback rockfish**
- 4) **Blue rockfish**

Update assessments:

- 1) **Petrале sole**
- 2) **Sablefish**
- 3) **Chilipepper rockfish**

Catch reports:

- 1) POP**
- 2) Yelloweye rockfish**

PFMC
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