SCIENTIFIC AND STATISTICAL COMMITTEE REPORT ON ADOPT PRELIMINARY STOCK COMPLEX AGGREGATIONS

Mr. John DeVore gave an overview of the preliminary alternative stock complexes and the basis for those alternatives to the Scientific and Statistical Committee (SSC), and Mr. Dan Erickson summarized the Groundfish Management Team (GMT) Report on this matter. The document has been modified since the April 2013 meeting by adding alternatives, adding figures highlighting species for which catches exceed their contribution to the overfishing limit (OFL), and by adding figures to summarize how species overlap in fishery catches.

In general, the alternatives are sufficiently well developed for public review. However, the SSC recommends removing the version of alternative 2 for the proposed Roundfish complex in which California scorpionfish is treated as an indicator stock because this species does not overlap greatly with the remaining members of the proposed complex.

The GMT is making progress towards developing effective metrics to quantify overlap among species. These metrics should help to select among the alternatives. The SSC recommends that plots and tables be developed based on catch or catch per unit of effort (CPUE) in addition to probability of occurrence. The SSC provided the GMT with an alternative approach for constructing tables quantifying overlap, which compares the results to a random distribution. A cluster analysis approach (Figures 4 and 5 of the GMT Report) is also presented as a way to quantify overlap. However, this approach can lead to clustering by rarity regardless of co-occurrence. Consequently, the SSC recommends against this approach. The SSC recommends that the GMT conduct its analyses using catch-based (e.g., observer) data because these data provide the best appraisal of co-occurrence in the fishery and likely fishery impacts and because the trawl surveys are limited temporally. The SSC recommends that separate tables and figures be produced summarizing overlap north and south of 40°10’ N. lat.

The SSC reiterates its recommendation from the April meeting that the metrics used to evaluate current stock complexes be refined to focus on the ratio of total cumulative catch to total cumulative component OFL and the mean difference between total catch and total component OFL.

There are some species which are found primarily north of 40°10’ N. lat., but are caught in very small quantities south of 40°10’ N. lat. and vice versa. The SSC recommends that such components should not be designated as ecosystem component (EC) species because they do not satisfy the requirements for EC species as the catches are landed. If a catch has exceeded its associated component OFL, the fraction of the coastwide species OFL assigned as component OFL in the complex should be taken into account before triggering a management response.

There needs to be a way to determine the status of stocks within complexes, or complexes as a whole, relative to being in an overfished state. The SSC identified three approaches: (a) using stock assessments for indicator stocks which are members of the complexes, (b) using the results of data-moderate assessments, and (c) using stock assessments for indicator stocks which are not members of the complexes but have similar vulnerability and co-occur with the species in the complex. Adding a stock to a complex simply to have an indicator stock could lead to the indicator stock becoming an inflator stock.