Dr. Paul Crone from the Southwest Fisheries Science Center (SWFSC) presented the results of the Pacific mackerel stock assessment for the 2011-12 fishing year, and Dr. Ray Conser of the Scientific and Statistical Committee (SSC) presented a report on the Pacific mackerel Stock Assessment Review Panel that convened at the SWFSC in La Jolla, CA on May 2-5, 2011.

The assessment model was a modification of the Stock Synthesis-based model used in the previous assessment in 2009. It used commercial fishery age composition data and abundance indices developed from Commercial Passenger Fishing Vessel (CPFV) logbooks and the California Recreational Fishery Survey (CRFS) catch and effort data. The current model shows a strong retrospective pattern, which could be indicative of model overestimation of biomass.

The SSC endorses the updated assessment as best scientific information available for management of Pacific mackerel. The SSC further endorses the overfishing limit (44,336 mt), and ABC alternatives outlined in the assessment for the upcoming fishing season. The acceptable biological catch (ABC) alternatives depend on the Council’s risk policy as reflected in the choice of P*.

The SSC highlights several critical data and research needs. Both the SSC and the Stock Assessment Team emphasize the importance of a fishery-independent survey, preferably as part of a multi-species coastal pelagic survey. There was general consensus that the acoustic trawl methodology is well-suited for such a survey, but would need to be expanded to encompass Mexican waters, and ideally Canadian waters as well, to be useful for Pacific mackerel assessment.

The current $F_{MSY}$ value used for Pacific mackerel has not been recently updated and appears to be based at least partly on qualitative considerations. The SSC recommends that $F_{MSY}$ be reevaluated using more current information and analytical approaches.

PFMC
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