

GROUND FISH ADVISORY SUBPANEL REPORT ON
APPROVE STOCK ASSESSMENTS

The Groundfish Advisory Subpanel (GAP) reviewed the latest stock assessments for aurora rockfish, rougheye/blackspotted rockfish, shortspine and longspine thornyhead, cowcod and Pacific sanddabs. The GAP also reviewed the stock assessment review (STAR) Panel reports documenting the review of these assessments. The GAP offers the following comments and recommendations.

The GAP supports the Scientific and Statistical Committee (SSC) recommendations to adopt the first full assessments for aurora rockfish and rougheye/blackspotted rockfish. Since these are the first assessments of these species, the GAP also supports the SSC recommendation that the next assessments be full assessments due to the fact that there will likely be more compositional data available for those reviews.

The GAP also supports the SSC endorsements of the shortspine thornyhead, longspine thornyhead, and cowcod assessments. We agree that the next assessment for cowcod should be a full assessment as there will be a new remotely operated vehicle (ROV) survey of cowcod habitat in the Southern California Bight available for that next review. The GAP wholeheartedly agrees with the SSC suggestion that extractive surveys within the Cowcod Conservation Areas (CCAs) be evaluated given the need for a better abundance index.

The GAP supports the use of these new assessments to inform management in 2015 and beyond.

The Pacific sanddab assessment was recommended by the STAR Panel and the SSC for determining stock status. It will not be used for management purposes though the GAP notes that all indications are that the stock is healthy and is lightly exploited.

Lastly, the GAP discussed the June Council motion that requested the three data-moderate nearshore species assessed this spring (brown, copper and China rockfish) be moved to the mop-up panel for further review to consider area stratification north and south of 42° N. latitude. The GAP supports the SSC recommendation to only move China rockfish to that panel for further review as the data, in particular catch per unit of effort (CPUE) data for brown rockfish and copper rockfish is sparse north of 42° N. latitude. It is the GAP's understanding that the revised assessment of China rockfish will result in three new assessments which will include the populations north of 40° 10' N. latitude, north of 42° N. latitude and south of 42° N. latitude. The SSC will review the results of these assessments and provide its recommendations at the November Council meeting.