The Groundfish Advisory Subpanel (GAP) reviewed the stock assessments and stock assessment review (STAR) panel reports provided for this meeting and offers the following comments and recommendations. In general, the GAP supports the Scientific and Statistical Committee (SSC) recommendations to adopt the new assessments for Pacific ocean perch (POP), petrale sole, spiny dogfish, sablefish, Dover sole, blackgill, and greenspotted rockfish. We also support the SSC’s recommendation to send the widow rockfish assessment to the mop-up panel. The GAP discussed the management implications of some of these assessments and offers the following comments for Council consideration.

As the GAP has stated many times before, the POP assessment results and the rebuilding plan are untenable until the entire stock within its range is assessed. POP are at the southern end of their distribution on the west coast with the center of distribution north of the U.S.-Canada border. It is unreasonable to expect that rebuilding objectives can be attained when only west coast fisheries are subjected to restrictions to enhance rebuilding of the stock. The GAP notes that POP have been under rebuilding since the Fishery Management Plan (FMP) was first implemented in the early 1980s and trip limits for this species were the first imposed on federally-managed west coast groundfish species. However, despite the significant loss of fishing opportunities to achieve POP rebuilding in the last 30 years, there is very little positive population response achieved with each successive assessment. The GAP believes this will continue to be the result until the stock is assessed across its entire range and a comprehensive management strategy is implemented that affects a sustainable fishery.

Uncertain catch history for spiny dogfish is a critical uncertainty in the new assessment and results in great uncertainty in estimated maximum sustainable yield (MSY) for the stock. The proxy spawn per recruit (SPR) harvest rate of 45 percent for spiny dogfish is “expected to severely reduce the spawning output of spiny dogfish over the long term” according to the assessment. The GAP questions this result knowing that it is dependent on the historical catch assumed in the base model in the assessment. Regardless, the GAP recommends an evaluation of the appropriate SPR harvest rate for spiny dogfish be carefully done in a deliberate way and not rushed in time for the 2013-14 harvest specifications decision. It would be more appropriate to prepare a meta-analysis to evaluate MSY for spiny dogfish next year in time for the 2015-16 harvest specifications process. The GAP notes that the current SPR is not projected to deplete spiny dogfish within the next ten years and a two-year delay to make this change will not have negative biological consequences for the stock.

The more pessimistic sablefish assessment result is apparently due to reduced recruitment to the spawning biomass within the last ten years. However, there is a strong indication in the survey and in the fishery of an above-average 2008 year class and an early indication of an above-average 2010 year class. These results corroborate fishermen’s observations of a high abundance of juvenile sablefish in recent years. Given the importance of the sablefish stock to west coast groundfish fisheries, the GAP recommends that the proxy SPR harvest rate used to establish the
sablefish overfishing limit be re-evaluated. A meta-analysis of sablefish SPR harvest rates to estimate MSY should therefore be conducted as early as possible.

PFMC
09/15/11