

SCIENTIFIC AND STATISTICAL COMMITTEE REPORT ON
CONSIDER STOCK COMPLEX AGGREGATIONS

Mr. Dan Erickson provided an overview of the methods the Groundfish Management Team (GMT) plans to use to identify stocks which may be at risk of overfishing and hence which the Council may choose to manage individually, and Mr. Corey Niles outlined how the GMT plans to summarize information which can be used to determine which stocks are “in the fishery”.

The summary table developed by the GMT to identify stocks which may be at risk of overfishing included the Productivity-Susceptibility Analysis (PSA) score, the recent average catches for three groups of years relative to the 2013 Acceptable Biological Catch (ABC) and the 2013 Overfishing Limit (OFL), the fraction of years during which the recent average catches have exceeded the 2013 ABC and OFL, and the fraction of the coastwide catch north of 40°10' N. Latitude. The latter statistic provides guidance on the weight which should be assigned to the other statistics for areas north and south of 40°10' N. Latitude. The GMT plans to aggregate the statistics on a coastwide basis for final decision-making. The Scientific and Statistical Committee (SSC) supports the methods selected by the GMT, but recommends that the fractions north and south of 40°10' N. Latitude should be updated using recent data. The SSC also notes that statistics based on the most recent catch level may be more informative, particularly if there is a change in catch over time, given changes in the fishery in recent years.

The GMT highlighted the situation of tiger rockfish. The OFL for this species is 1 mt and has been exceeded frequently. The GMT requested the SSC provide advice on whether a stock such as this should be removed from the complex. The SSC is unable to provide definitive advice in this case, but notes that complexes are intended to account for species whose catches are small and variable. It recommends that focus should be on long-term average catches rather than recent catches for species whose catches are small. For tiger rockfish in particular, knowledge of the range of the stock and its relative density spatially could inform a decision on its treatment.

In relation to deciding which species should be “in the fishery”, the GMT plans to categorize species in terms of catch (less or greater than 1 mt), the PSA score, and the percentage retained, and to develop options for selecting species. The GMT is planning to consider a large number of species (approximately 500). The SSC agrees that the factors the GMT plan to consider are useful and appropriate, and suggests that where possible, catches should be compared to survey estimates of abundance, as this may provide some measure of relative risk. However, survey data may not be informative for many of the species under consideration.