

SCIENTIFIC AND STATISTICAL COMMITTEE REPORT ON
STOCK ASSESSMENTS AND COWCOD REBUILDING ANALYSIS

Data-moderate Stock Assessments

The Scientific and Statistical Committee (SSC) reviewed the results of revised stock assessments for brown, China, and copper rockfish conducted by Dr. E.J. Dick (SWFSC). The revised assessments considered alternative spatial stratifications and included a revised catch time series from the Oregon Recreational Boat Survey (ORBS). The revised assessments for all three species showed very minor differences in spawning biomass trajectories under the alternative spatial stratifications. In cases where assessment boundaries do not align with management boundaries, the overfishing limit (OFL) should be apportioned based on historical catch data.

For brown rockfish, the Stock Assessment Review (STAR) Panel approved a coastwide model. A revised model was presented for California only. The SSC concluded that insufficient data were available to assess the area north of California separately and recommends using the original STAR Panel-approved coastwide model to obtain the OFL. Any spatial allocations of the coastwide OFL should be done using historical catch proportions by area.

For China rockfish, the STAR Panel approved two models (northern and southern) split at 40°10' N. lat. A revised stratification was presented with the northern-southern split moved to 42° N. lat. The SSC finds no scientific basis to recommend choosing between these two alternatives. The models used to provide the OFL should reflect the management boundaries selected by the Council.

For copper rockfish, the STAR Panel approved two models; one for south of Point Conception and another covering the area from Point Conception to the U.S-Canada border. A revised stratification was presented for the area north of Point Conception, yielding two models with a split at 42° N. lat. Based on an evaluation of model diagnostics, the SSC does not have confidence in the results of the Oregon-Washington model. The SSC recommends using the STAR Panel-approved models and applying historical catch data to apportion the OFL, either at 40°10' N. lat., or at 42° N. lat.

The SSC discussed how requests for changes in stock assessment boundaries late in the process could be avoided in the future, since these requests were disruptive in this year's stock assessment process. Issues concerning stock boundaries should be addressed early in the stock assessment process. One possibility is to strengthen the recommendations in the Stock Assessment Terms of Reference for the stock assessment team (STAT) to consult early in the process with the GMT and fisheries managers about spatial management issues associated with the stock being assessed. The SSC emphasizes that biological and scientific considerations must take precedence in developing stock assessments.

Cowcod Rebuilding Analysis

The SSC reviewed a draft rebuilding analysis for cowcod (Agenda Item H.5.a., Supplemental Attachment 2), based upon the 2013 assessment. Progress towards rebuilding was reviewed in relation to the current median time to rebuild (T_{TARGET}) for cowcod of 2068. The current spawners per recruit (SPR) harvest rate ($F_{82.7\%}$) implies that the stock will rebuild by 2020 with a 50 percent probability, so rebuilding is ahead of schedule. The catches of cowcod have been lower than the cumulative annual catch limit (ACL) during the period of rebuilding. The SSC concludes that progress towards rebuilding is ahead of schedule.

The rebuilding analysis for cowcod was conducted using Extended Depletion-Based Stock Reduction Analysis (XDB-SRA) rather than the rebuilding software used for assessments conducted in Stock Synthesis (i.e., the Puntalyzer). There was limited time to conduct all the required model runs, and thus the analyses shown to the SSC were preliminary. However, successful runs providing projections of zero catch, catch given the current ACL, and catch under the current SPR rate (Runs 1-3) may provide sufficient basis for Council decision-making. The run needed for the SSC to set an OFL was not available to the SSC. The rebuilding analysis will be completed in time for an SSC Groundfish Subcommittee call in late 2013. Any requests for additional model runs (besides the appropriate OFL run) should be communicated to the STAT.

PFMC

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