

SCIENTIFIC AND STATISTICAL COMMITTEE REPORT ON CPS TERMS OF  
REFERENCE FOR STOCK ASSESSMENT AND METHODOLOGY REVIEW PANELS

The SSC reviewed two documents pertaining to Terms of Reference (TOR) for CPS review meetings: a revised TOR for CPS Stock Assessment Reviews, and new TOR for CPS Methodology Reviews.

Dr. André Punt provided an overview of the major changes made in the stock assessment review document. They included new language related to overfishing limits, acceptable biological catches and annual catch limits, and changes with respect to guidelines for peer review, selection of panelists, and how to deal with contested assessments. The SSC endorsed these changes, which closely follow the changes adopted in the groundfish TOR. Additional editorial changes to the document were discussed and recorded in the SSC minutes (in italics, below). In relation to the criteria for selection of reviewers, the SSC recommends changing "... a candidate's familiarity with ... the ecological role of CPS in the California Current" to "Expertise in the ecological role of CPS in the California Current is desirable for reviewers."

Concerning the new document on Methodology Reviews, the SSC discussed 1) what types of topics could be covered in such reviews (e.g. is review of the CPS control rule permissible), and 2) the proper scope for the responsibilities of the panel (e.g. should the panel make a recommendation regarding whether a particular methodology under review should be used in the next stock assessment).

The SSC agreed that Methodology Reviews should focus on candidate data sources and methods for stock assessments (including the use of alternative modeling platforms) and should not be used as a forum to address possible revisions to the CPS control rule. The SSC also concluded that panels should aim to provide explicit recommendations on whether methodologies are ready for use in the next stock assessment.

The SSC emphasizes that the methodology review process is not meant to constrain the Stock Assessment Team from making incremental changes and improvements in routine methods; rather, it is intended to be used to address substantial and novel methodologies that require more scrutiny than can be afforded during a routine Stock Assessment Review Panel meeting. The general process envisioned is: 1) topics for Methodology Reviews will be brought to the SSC for consideration (the SSC will serve as a "first filter" to vet topics appropriate for methodology reviews), and 2) the SSC will recommend candidate topics for methodology reviews to the Council.

The SSC also noted that, in the longer term, it could be useful to craft a single document containing Terms of Reference for Methodology Reviews in general, which could apply to both CPS and groundfish. Similarly, the TOR for CPS stock assessments are quite similar to the groundfish TOR, and could potentially be combined into a single document.