

GROUND FISH ADVISORY SUBPANEL REPORT ON
STOCK ASSESSMENT PLANNING FOR 2015

The Groundfish Advisory Subpanel (GAP) discussed stock assessment planning for 2015 with Dr. Jim Hastie and Mr. John DeVore and wishes to recommend the following for Council consideration.

Full Assessments

The GAP agrees with the Scientific and Statistical Committee's (SSC) recommendations and supports doing full assessments for the following stocks in 2015:

Black rockfish
Bocaccio
Canary rockfish
Darkblotched rockfish
Widow rockfish
China rockfish

Black rockfish is a very important stock for the nearshore sectors and the 2007 assessment is now considered out of date.

The 2013 bocaccio assessment projected the stock would be rebuilt at the start of 2015. The SSC recommends a full assessment be conducted in 2015 to better inform that prediction.

Canary rockfish is a very important stock coastwide for all groundfish sectors and the last full assessment was conducted in 2007. The Northwest Fisheries Science Center also invested a considerable amount of time and effort this winter organizing the data that would inform a new assessment.

The 2013 darkblotched assessment projected the stock would be rebuilt at the start of 2015. The SSC recommends a full assessment be conducted in 2015 to inform that prediction.

The 2011 widow rockfish assessment was highly uncertain and there were many issues that could not be resolved in the 2011 assessment review process (widow was further reviewed at the September 2011 mop-up panel). The GAP supports increasing midwater trawl fishing opportunities for widow and yellowtail rockfish and a new, fully vetted assessment will reduce risks and likely increase available yields for future fishing opportunities.

The GAP recommends conducting a full assessment of China rockfish in 2015. There were many issues in the data-moderate assessment for the population north of 40°10' N lat. and the GAP recommends a full assessment that would allow the incorporation of composition data and a more thorough vetting of data and modeling issues than could be done in a very busy 2013 data-moderate assessment review panel.

The GAP is also recommending doing a full assessment for kelp greenling in Oregon. This is an important species for the nearshore fishing sectors. Further, the 2005 assessment of the Oregon population of kelp greenling is now considered flawed given the Marine Recreational Fisheries Statistical Survey catch data informing the assessment and other data issues discussed during the 2005 assessment review process.

Cowcod

In our June stock assessment statement the GAP had recommended conducting a new full assessment for cowcod. There was uncertainty in the recent 2013 assessment and new data, including a new ROV survey in the Cowcod Conservation Areas (CCAs) as well as the Harms hook-and-line survey effort in the CCAs, may better inform a new cowcod assessment. It is our understanding that the ROV survey data would not yet be available for use in a new cowcod assessment. Any new data from the Harms hook and line survey would also not be available to inform that new assessment so the GAP now believes we should wait until the next stock assessment cycle in 2017 to pursue a new cowcod stock assessment.

Data-Moderate Assessments

The GAP suggests that a data-moderate stock assessment for arrowtooth flounder be considered. If that cannot be accomplished then perhaps a catch-only projection from the last assessment be considered to better inform management of that species.

Arrowtooth flounder was last assessed in 2007 and that assessment is now considered out of date. The biomass projections from that assessment, which were largely influenced by the strong 1999 year class, predicted a steep decline despite evidence in trawl catches that stock abundance is rapidly increasing. Projected overfishing limits (OFLs) from the 2007 assessment are now getting so low that annual quotas for arrowtooth are changing trawl fishery distribution to avoid arrowtooth effectively turning this abundant stock into a constraining species. Should the science centers not have the capacity to conduct a data-moderate assessment due to other workload issues, the GAP recommends a catch-only projection of the 2007 assessment be conducted to inform OFLs in 2017 and beyond. This would address the current projections which have assumed OFL removals since 2007. Updating OFL projections in the 2007 assessment by inputting the actual catches of arrowtooth since 2007 should provide more reasonable OFL projections.

Update Assessments

The GAP recommends conducting update assessments for the following species:

Petrale sole
Sablefish
Chilipepper rockfish

The 2013 petrale sole assessment projected the stock would be rebuilt by the start of 2014. The SSC recommends a 2015 assessment to confirm that result. Further, full assessments have been conducted in the last three consecutive assessment cycles for petrale sole and the SSC recommends an update assessment to confirm its rebuilt status.

Sablefish is the most valuable stock to the west coast groundfish fishery on a per pound basis. The 2011 assessment was a very thorough one that predicted the 2008 and 2010 year classes recruiting into the fishery were above average. The SSC recommends the next assessment of sablefish should be an update and the GAP recommends one be conducted to better estimate these incoming year classes.

The GAP recommends an update assessment of chilipepper rockfish be done since the 2007 assessment is now considered out of date. Further, the Southwest Fisheries Science Center expressed an interest in doing an update assessment of chilipepper and the GAP agrees.

Catch Reports

The GAP recommends catch reports be developed for Pacific ocean perch (POP), yelloweye rockfish, and cowcod since these stocks are not recommended for assessment in 2015. Catch reports are needed to evaluate the performance of the fishery to stay within the ACLs prescribed in rebuilding plans for these stocks.

Summary of GAP Recommendations:

Full assessments:

- 1) **Black rockfish**
- 2) **Bocaccio**
- 3) **Canary rockfish**
- 4) **China rockfish**
- 5) **Darkblotched Rockfish**
- 6) **Kelp greenling (Oregon only)**
- 7) **Widow rockfish**

Data moderate assessments:

- 1) **Arrowtooth flounder**

Update assessments:

- 1) **Petrале sole**
- 2) **Sablefish**
- 3) **Chilipepper rockfish**

Catch reports:

- 1) **POP**
- 2) **Yelloweye rockfish**
- 3) **Cowcod**

PFMC
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