

## GROUND FISH MANAGEMENT TEAM REPORT ON STOCK ASSESSMENT PLANNING

The Groundfish Management Team (GMT) reviewed the materials contained in the briefing book under this agenda item and received a briefing from Dr. Jim Hastie of the National Marine Fisheries Service (NMFS) Northwest Fisheries Science Center (NWFSC) and Mr. John DeVore, Council staff, and provide the following thoughts.

### **Terms of References**

The GMT reviewed the three draft Terms of Reference (ToR) documents that will be used to guide the stock assessment process for 2015. These documents include the ToR for groundfish and coastal pelagic species (CPS) stock assessments ([Agenda Item J.2.a., Attachment 1](#)), the ToR for rebuilding analysis ([Agenda Item J.2.a., Attachment 2](#)), and the ToR for methodology reviews ([Agenda Item J.2.a., Attachment 3](#)). The GMT did not have any suggestions for Attachment 2 or 3, as the edits appeared to be minor in content.

The GMT has a recommendation for [Attachment 1](#) Draft ToR for Groundfish and CPS Stock Assessment Review Process for 2015-2016. On page 7 in the Introduction, the draft language suggests that data-moderate assessments may be reviewed by the relevant Scientific and Statistical Committee (SSC) Subcommittee, rather than go through the full stock assessment review (STAR) process. Past data-moderate assessments have raised issues that may best be dealt with in the STAR Panel process (e.g., geographic stratifications). Therefore, the GMT recommends that data-moderate assessments undergo a STAR process review.

### **List of Species to be Assessed in 2015**

The GMT discussed the Council's initial list of stocks to be assessed in 2015. At the June 2014 Council meeting, the Council recommended black rockfish (coastwide), bocaccio rockfish, canary rockfish, China rockfish (coastwide), cowcod, darkblotched rockfish, kelp greenling (coastwide, potentially only Oregon), and widow rockfish as full assessments, with petrale sole and sablefish as assessment updates.

The GMT also discussed the NMFS report ([Agenda Item J.2.b., NMFS Report](#)) with Dr. Hastie and Mr. DeVore and suggests the following: defer a cowcod assessment until 2017, change the kelp greenling from a coastwide assessment to an Oregon-only full assessment, add an update for chilipepper, and consider the addition of arrowtooth flounder as a data-moderate assessment. Reasons for these suggestions are detailed below.

#### **Cowcod**

The GMT agrees that efficiencies may be gained, along with improvements in assessment outcomes, by delaying the cowcod assessment until 2017 when further refinements in remotely operated vehicle (ROV) and hook-and-line survey methodologies are scheduled to occur, and a more complete data set may be available.

### **Kelp Greenling (OR)**

The GMT agrees with the NMFS rationale in proposing a full assessment for kelp greenling in Oregon only. The available data for kelp greenling (and other nearshore stocks) differs between states, and currently the State of Oregon has the most complete data set for this species. However, Dr. Hastie indicated that if there is available time during the STAR panel, then data-poor methods could be explored for Washington and California in order to derive contribution overfishing limit (OFL) estimates for each state. The GMT did not reach consensus on the proposal to expand the analysis for Washington and California.

### **Arrowtooth Flounder**

The GMT understands the concerns from the NWFSC that sufficient time may not be available to conduct an update for arrowtooth flounder, given the backlog of age and length composition data that would need to be processed in time for an update. The GMT supports a data-moderate assessment for arrowtooth flounder, provided that it could be folded into the STAR Panel schedule.

## **Update assessments**

### **Chilipepper**

The GMT was made aware that Dr. John Field from the Southwest Fisheries Science Center (SWFSC) has been updating chilipepper age and length compositions, and that the addition of a chilipepper update would be a relatively light task. The GMT also notes that the current chilipepper assessment is currently considered outdated, because the most recent assessment was conducted in 2007. Given industry interest in increasing chilipepper attainment by fixed gear and trawl sectors, increased effort in non-trawl midwater IFQ effort, and the availability of Dr. Field to conduct the update, the GMT thinks the addition of a chilipepper update presents an opportunity that should be taken advantage of.

### **Petrals Sole and Sablefish**

The GMT supports the NWFSC and Council-recommended updates for sablefish and petrale sole. An updated assessment for petrale sole would be needed to confirm its rebuilt stock status, and given the importance of this stock for non-whiting trawl fisheries; this is an important task. The sablefish update would be useful as well, given the importance of this stock to West Coast groundfish fisheries.

## **Catch Report**

Since Pacific ocean perch, yelloweye rockfish, and potentially cowcod, may not be prioritized for full, updated assessments, catch reports of these species should be completed.

## **Nearshore Species Workshop**

The GMT discussed with Dr. Hastie the utility of an advance nearshore species workshop for black rockfish, China rockfish, and kelp greenling in advance of their subsequent STAR panels. The GMT notes that, given some of the area stratification concerns that were raised in the data moderate assessments for nearshore species in 2013, and lessons learned from that process, such frontloading is crucial to insure a productive STAR Panel process for these

nearshore stocks. The GMT also recommends that a representative from each state participate, if such a workshop is to occur. In addition, during off-year science activities (e.g., odd years), the GMT recommends consideration of a follow-up workshop for nearshore species assessments in order to improve and develop best practices for nearshore stocks in the future.

## **Recommendations:**

- 1. The GMT recommends data-moderate assessments follow the stock assessment review (STAR) process, and that the ToR be updated to reflect this recommendation.**
- 2. Consider revising 2015 stock assessments to: delay a full cowcod assessment until 2017; add prioritization for a chilipepper rockfish update; and conduct a kelp greenling assessment only in Oregon waters.**
- 3. If a data-moderate assessment for arrowtooth flounder is conducted, that it only be conducted if it can be folded into a STAR panel.**
- 4. Catch reports be conducted for Pacific ocean perch, yelloweye rockfish, and cowcod.**
- 5. A nearshore assessment workshop is conducted for black rockfish, China rockfish, and kelp greenling as early in 2015 as possible.**

PFMC  
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