

SCIENTIFIC AND STATISTICAL COMMITTEE COMMENTS ON  
STOCK ASSESSMENT PRIORITIES FOR 2000

An ambitious plan for conducting and reviewing Council groundfish stock assessments in the year 2000 was presented to the Scientific and Statistical Committee (SSC) by Ms. Cyreis Schmitt. The tentative plan included assessments of coastwide lingcod, yellowtail rockfish, widow rockfish, bank rockfish, darkblotched rockfish, splitnose rockfish, English sole, Dover sole, and the California nearshore rockfish complex. It was proposed that the assessments be critically examined and evaluated by either solicited external review or by stock assessment review (STAR) panel. In addition to these nine stock assessments, the SSC recommends that, because of its over-arching importance, the groundfish harvest rate policy issue should be subjected to STAR panel review no later than the first quarter of next year.

Given the current stock assessment workload before the Council and the limited resources available to accomplish this important task, the SSC discussed ways to reduce the number of assessments scheduled for completion next year to something more tractable. In particular, the assessments of English and Dover soles in the year 2000 were not viewed as critical, and these could reasonably wait one year. In addition, the SSC concluded the coastwide lingcod assessment should be conducted by a single consolidated stock assessment team (STAT) team, which would integrate the information available from both the northern and southern areas. Carrying this one step further, at some point in the future, a joint U.S.-Canada lingcod assessment would allow consideration of impacts to the lingcod stock over a broader portion of its range. Also, because work next year on the California nearshore rockfish complex will only explore methodological issues, a full STAR panel review of that topic isn't warranted. Instead, a meeting held in a workshop format may be less onerous and more productive. Lastly, with respect to the two forms of review procedures, soliciting external reviews of stock assessments in lieu of a STAR panel review (e.g., widow rockfish) is likely to result in a less comprehensive review without reducing the workload of STAT teams.

Based on these considerations the SSC suggests that for the year 2000 the Council review the results of six stock assessments (coastwide lingcod, yellowtail rockfish, widow rockfish, bank rockfish, darkblotched rockfish, and splitnose rockfish), as well as the default groundfish harvest rate policy through formal STAR panel proceedings. In addition, a workshop on the nearshore rockfish assemblage is recommended.

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