

SCIENTIFIC AND STATISTICAL COMMITTEE COMMENTS ON  
PACIFIC SARDINE HARVEST GUIDELINE

A summary of the Pacific sardine stock assessment for 2001 was presented to the Scientific and Statistical Committee (SSC) by Dr. Ray Conser. The SSC finds the assessment and recommendations to be adequate for setting harvest levels at this stage of the fishery. Future assessments may be inadequate for the northern range of the stock if appropriate time series data for the northern areas are not incorporated into the assessment.

The discussion that followed was a good update on the status of Pacific sardines and the assessment methodology, but was not an in-depth peer review. The data sources for sardine are limited to geographic areas off Baja California, Mexico, and the State of California (particularly the area from San Diego to Monterey Bay). A migration model parameterized with historical estimates of sardine migration rates is used to extrapolate the stock assessment to the northern areas of the sardine distribution. With the recent expansion of the sardine population off Oregon, Washington, and British Columbia, there is an urgent need to incorporate fishery-dependent data for northern areas into the stock assessment and to initiate resource surveys to establish a fishery-independent time series for those areas. It will be very important that monitoring be coordinated, consistent, and compatible between northern and southern areas.

In response to an earlier SSC request, the Coastal Pelagic Species Management Team (CPSMT) has recommended a peer review process for the coastal pelagic species similar to the groundfish STAR process. The CPSMT suggests that full sardine and Pacific mackerel stock assessments and reviews be conducted on a triennial cycle, with a less formal review by the CPSMT and SSC during interim years. Full stock assessment reports would be developed and distributed following each STAR panel review. Details from interim-year assessments could be documented in executive summaries similar to the one produced for this year's sardine assessment. As entirely new assessments are developed, a STAR panel would be convened to review the assessment prior to implementation of results for setting harvest guidelines. The SSC supports the CPSMT's proposal. The SSC Coastal Pelagic Subcommittee is willing to work with the CPSMT to develop the terms of reference for a STAR process and guidelines for stock assessment documents. The SSC suggests that the first such review be scheduled for 2002, given that a major review of squid assessment methodology is scheduled for 2001. A 2002 CPS review should be scheduled to avoid overlap with the groundfish STAR review process.

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