

SCIENTIFIC AND STATISTICAL COMMITTEE REPORT ONGROUND FISH MULTI-YEAR MANAGEMENT CYCLE

The Scientific and Statistical Committee (SSC) discussed the implications of multi-year management for the science that underlies the advice provided to the Council, if the assessment process involves “on” and “off” years. Under one scenario, assessments would be conducted during “on” years and more strategic issues, such as model development, would occur during “off” years. The SSC re-iterates the importance of basing management advice on the most recent data, to the extent possible.

Changing to a multi-year management process may have unanticipated impacts. However, many of the identified disadvantages of multi-year management (e.g., the use in management of assessments not based on the most recent survey data) are common to the *status-quo* management process. The SSC recommends, however, that an analysis of the implications of setting acceptable biological catches (ABCs) for several years (3 to 4 years at present for some species) be conducted. The SSC also highlights the need to develop a process for selecting the assessments to be conducted during an “on” year and how each assessment is to be reviewed (through a full or expedited stock assessment review process).

The SSC identifies the following issues related to providing management advice for groundfish. It notes that these issues relate both to the *status-quo* and a multi-year management process.

- There is currently a lack of sufficient agency staff to conduct assessments. The ability to conduct many assessments during an “on” year would be increased if the data used commonly for assessment purposes were stored in a standardized database. Extracting the basic data needed for assessments could be accomplished by support staff allowing analysts additional time to conduct assessments. There remains, however, a need for constant contact between analysts and data support staff to ensure that assessments consider the key uncertainties related to the data.
- The use of standardized models would simplify the process of reviewing assessments.
- A two-year assessment process would be consistent with the schedule for updating rebuilding analyses.
- There will be a need for adequate resources (e.g., funds for travel and workshops) and co-ordination of activities, to maximize the benefits from research during the “off” year.

The recreational data used for assessment purposes are summarized in two waves while the commercial data are summarized by quarter. The SSC notes that changing the start of the fishing year to other than July 1 would, therefore, lead to a mismatch with the time strata for the commercial and recreational data.