

SCIENTIFIC AND STATISTICAL COMMITTEE REPORT ON
PLANNING OF "OFF-YEAR" NON-REGULATORY SCIENCE ACTIVITIES

Dr. Elizabeth Clarke presented a draft proposal (Exhibit D.9.b, Supplemental NMFS Report) for "off-year" (2004) science workshops and other non-regulatory activities to the Scientific and Statistical Committee (SSC). In order to motivate activities proposed in 2004, Dr. Clarke's presentation included a description of stock assessments and supporting activities (stock assessment review [STAR] panels, etc.) that would be conducted during 2005 (the "on-year").

Table 1 of the draft proposal lists 27 stock assessments (16 full assessments and 11 expedited). Proposed workshops for 2004 are listed in Table 3, and these are intended to alleviate the workload burden of the full assessment schedule in 2005. The first suggestion for streamlining the 2005 process, which the SSC endorses, is to divide the stock assessments among different work groups based on species type (Dover sole/thornyhead/trawl-caught sablefish complex [DTS], flatfish, rockfish, etc.). The second suggestion is to use data "stewards" for facilitating data acquisition by the stock assessment authors. The SSC highly recommends the use of data stewards in this role.

Dr. Clarke's proposal recommends a data workshop for 2004 to find new ways to improve the efficiency and implementation of different data sources to be used in the 2005 stock assessment process. The SSC considers this data workshop to be a high priority. The SSC also considers the development of standards and methodologies for incorporating new observer-based data to construct catch histories to be an important component of the proposed data workshop.

A second workshop proposed for 2004 is a stock assessment modeling workshop that could include, for example, a review of the new version of the Stock Synthesis Model ("Isabelle") as a standardized analysis tool for the 2005 assessments. The SSC also considers this workshop to be a high priority. While the Recreational Catch Per Unit Effort (CPUE) Workshop was not discussed in detail, the SSC also considers it to be a useful objective. Dr. Clarke indicated that three workshops in 2004 would likely be a maximum for administrative time and effort. Terms of Reference for the workshops will be needed, and the SSC is willing to participate in the drafting of these.

The SSC also discussed the possibility of a B_0/B_{MSY} workshop and also considers this to be worthwhile. Suggestions included coordinating a B_0 workshop with the North Pacific Council, or through the National Marine Fisheries Service (NMFS). Currently, NMFS is involved in an effort to develop environmentally explicit stock assessments, which may have a major impact on the calculation of reference points like B_0 . Ecosystem-based management could be another area for coordination with the North Pacific Fishery Management Council.

The main obstacle for completing all the stock assessment objectives for 2005 appears to be scheduling and personnel for the stock assessment and review (STAR) panels that will be required for the full assessments (Table 4). The administrative maximum here is likely to be five full meetings. For logistical reasons, it appears these meetings would need to occur during the spring and fall of 2005. Even under this schedule, the SSC is concerned that all of the objectives listed in the proposal for 2005 cannot be satisfactorily completed under the current STAR process. The only alternatives appear to be conducting fewer assessments or revising the current STAR process, moving towards lighter reviews or more expedited assessments.