

SCIENTIFIC AND STATISTICAL COMMITTEE REPORT ON
STOCK ASSESSMENT PLANNING FOR 2007-2008 MANAGEMENT

Dr. Elizabeth Clarke presented a revised groundfish stock assessment schedule for 2005 to the SSC, which included changes to the previous list of species (March 2004, Exhibit E.3.b, Attachment 1, Table 1) resulting from recommendations by the Council's advisory bodies. The current proposal identifies a lead agency for 23 species, of which assessment authors have been identified for all but blackgill rockfish. A full assessment would be required for 17 species; six species would be updated assessments, one of which (yelloweye rockfish) would be carried forward as an update with provision to accommodate it as a full assessment, if so warranted.

A few of the proposed species have not been assessed previously, and the SSC notes that it will not be possible to determine whether sufficient data are available to support a full assessment for them until after the assessment work is started. If the available data were not adequate to carry out the planned assessment, a useful alternative outcome would likely be a comprehensive data summary, which would still require stock assessment review (STAR). New information provided by Dr. Clarke included useful criteria for prioritizing the species to be assessed, and the resulting classification of each species. The SSC requested the assessment list for the next assessment cycle be expanded to include those species that have been previously assessed, but are not scheduled for the current cycle, in order to provide a full assessment history of all stocks.

After discussing the stock assessment review workload associated with the proposed assessment schedule, it is apparent the existing STAR process and Terms of Reference cannot adequately accommodate the number of assessments without structural change. The planned update of the Terms of Reference by the SSC Groundfish Subcommittee will allow changes to be made that will match the new process and workload. Expanded roles for the data workshop and modeling workshop should help address some time consuming issues that were formerly examined during STAR panel meetings. Focused subgroups for species with similar data or modeling issues may benefit from additional follow-up workshops. However, the proposed workload of four species per STAR Panel is a considerable increase from the two (or three) species per panel approach that has previously served the review needs of the Council. This raises a concern that an effective review of four species may exceed allotted meeting time. In order to make efficient use of available review time, it may be necessary to require that STAT Teams provide results four to six weeks prior to the STAR meeting, so that some issues may be resolved through STAR/STAT interaction prior to the meeting, including requests for additional model runs. Despite these changes the level of review may be reduced under the proposed schedule.

The proposed schedule would require five full STAR panels and two update STAR panels. In addition, as a result of discussions with Dr. Clarke, the SSC recommends an 8th panel may be created to deal with any assessments where unresolved issues may remain at the conclusion of the regular STAR panel. This "mop-up" STAR panel would be composed of agency representatives and SSC Groundfish Subcommittee members, but not the outside or Center for

Independent Experts (CIE) reviewers. Revised Terms of Reference would specify conditions that would trigger the need for further review by the “mop-up” STAR panel.

Since the 2005 process will be a major change from the framework that has worked adequately in the past, the SSC recommends the SSC Groundfish Subcommittee carry out an evaluation at the conclusion. An account of how well the new process functioned would serve to identify any additional changes that might be needed for the next assessment cycle.

PFMC

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