

COASTAL PELAGIC SPECIES MANAGEMENT TEAM REPORT ON COASTAL PELAGIC SPECIES STAR PANEL REPORT

The Coastal Pelagic Species Management Team (CPSMT) reviewed draft reports from the coastal pelagic species (CPS) Stock Assessment Review (STAR). The STAR Panel provided CPS Stock Assessment Teams (comprised of National Marine Fisheries Service-Southwest Fisheries Science Center staff) useful technical advice and, ultimately, supported new modeling methods for the assessments of Pacific sardine (in November 2004) and Pacific mackerel (in June 2005). The CPSMT agrees with the general findings from the STAR Panel and, further, echoes the Panel's recommendations regarding additional data, surveys, and harvest control rule analysis, which collectively, will greatly strengthen the ongoing stock assessments conducted on these species. These recommendations are briefly discussed below.

A primary area of uncertainty applicable to many transboundary fish stocks, including sardine and mackerel populations off the Pacific coast of North America, is better understanding of stock distribution, both spatially and temporally. Information that is needed includes complete fishery-dependent and -independent data from Mexico, coastwide catch-at-age data, and a synoptic Pacific coast research survey. Some of these data are currently available, but remain inaccessible (e.g., Mexico data) or have yet to be incorporated into population analyses, given limited resources to process, summarize, and incorporate relatively newly acquired information (e.g., Pacific Northwest fishery and research survey samples). This is not a trivial recommendation, given current monitoring programs should be considered minimum (at best), and are in critical need of additional research attention, staff, and dedicated funds to meet present objectives regarding the status of exploited fish stocks.

Related to future CPS STAR Panels, the CPSMT discussed the review of fishery management plan harvest guideline formulae for Pacific mackerel and Pacific sardine. The CPSMT considers the current formulae the best available method for determining annual harvest guidelines. However, it would be prudent to plan for a comprehensive review of the formulae at some point in the near future. The CPSMT notes that review of the harvest guideline formulae would be a major undertaking, larger than what could be accomplished during a week long STAR Panel meeting. For example, several elements of the Pacific sardine harvest guideline formula could be reviewed—sea surface temperature, stock distribution (notably percent in U.S. waters), and stock structure. Therefore, the CPSMT does not recommend scheduling a CPS STAR during 2005 to review the harvest guideline formulae, but rather, suggests that the Council coordinate with NMFS to develop a formal research outline (timetable) to address (re-examine) the harvest guidelines currently in place for these species.

PFMC
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