

STOCK ASSESSMENTS FOR 2007-2008 GROUND FISH FISHERIES

The Council process for setting groundfish harvest levels and other specifications depends on periodic assessments of the status of groundfish stocks and a report from an established assessment review body or, in the Council parlance, a Stock Assessment Review (STAR) Panel. As appropriate, the Scientific and Statistical Committee (SSC) recommends the best available science for groundfish management decision-making in the Council process. The SSC reviews new assessments and STAR Panel reports and recommends the data and analyses that should be used to set groundfish harvest levels and other specifications for the following biennial management period.

Twenty-three groundfish stock assessments were recently prepared. Most of these have been reviewed by a STAR Panel and the SSC. Those assessments and STAR Panel reports under Council consideration at this meeting are included in a CD (Agenda Item F.8.a, Attachment 1). New assessments for English sole, starry flounder, vermilion rockfish, gopher rockfish, cowcod, California scorpionfish, Pacific ocean perch, darkblotched rockfish, and cabezon were reviewed by STAR Panels and then the SSC at their last meeting in June. The draft SSC report for these assessments is included as Agenda Item F.8.b, Attachment 1. The SSC will also review new assessments and STAR Panel reports for sablefish, Dover sole, shortspine thornyhead, longspine thornyhead, widow rockfish, bocaccio, blackgill rockfish, kelp greenling, canary rockfish, lingcod, yelloweye rockfish, and yellowtail rockfish at this meeting and will provide their recommendations for using these assessments in a supplemental report.

One legal question arising from the widow rockfish assessment the Council may wish to discuss is, if a new assessment for a stock under rebuilding indicates the stock was never overfished, but is not yet rebuilt to a biomass that can sustain a maximum yield, should the stock still be managed under the approved rebuilding plan? While the Council is not yet tasked with deciding harvest specifications based on these new assessments, guidance from NOAA General Counsel on this question will help the Groundfish Management Team and Groundfish Advisory Subpanel prepare their recommendations for the November Council meeting when this item is scheduled.

The Council should consider the new assessments and STAR Panel reports, as well as the advice of the SSC, other advisory bodies, and the public before adopting the new stock assessments for use in 2007-2008 groundfish management.

Council Action:

Approve Stock Assessments for 2007-2008 Groundfish Fisheries.

Reference Materials:

1. Agenda Item F.8.a, Attachment 1: CD copy of assessments and STAR Panel reports.
2. Agenda Item F.8.b, Attachment 1: Draft Scientific and Statistical Committee Report on Stock Assessments for 2007-2008 Groundfish Fisheries.
3. Agenda Item F.8.d, Public Comment: Canary Rockfish Project – Status Report from the Pacific Groundfish Conservation Trust, Inc.

Agenda Order:

- a. Agenda Item Overview
 - b. SSC Report
 - c. Reports and Comments of Advisory Bodies
 - d. Public Comment
 - e. **Council Action:** Approve Stock Assessments for 2007-2008 Groundfish Fisheries
- John DeVore
Kevin Hill

PFMC
09/01/05