

## GROUND FISH MANAGEMENT TEAM REPORT ON OFF-YEAR SCIENCE IMPROVEMENTS

The Groundfish Management Team (GMT) has discussed several proposed off-year science workshops prior to the next assessment cycle, and believes that all of the workshops and efforts identified below are likely to increase the value and knowledge base of future assessments. The GMT recommends that Council guidance and support be provided in as rapid a time frame as possible, in order for such workshops to provide guidance in a timely fashion for the 2007 assessment cycle.

**Post-assessment Review:** The Northwest Fisheries Science Center (NWFSC) has raised the idea of facilitating a review in early in 2006 of the process and challenges that arose in the most recent assessment cycle, in order to evaluate realistic workloads and expectations prior to the next assessment cycle. The GMT strongly supports the idea of such a review.

The GMT recognizes that the formal list of species to be considered for the 2007 assessment cycle will not be forthcoming until March. This schedule leaves little more than a year between the time when potential species to be assessed will be identified, and the beginning of the assessment review process. In order for federal and state agencies to apportion age reading and port sampling resources appropriately, priorities should be identified as rapidly as possible. The GMT is interested in working with NMFS science centers and state agencies in an informal, collaborative process to better prioritize such resources, and believes this process should begin as early as possible. The GMT believes that it would be desirable for other Council advisory bodies to engage in this process as well.

**Recreational Fisheries Data Workshop:** Accounting for mortality in the recreational fishery has become increasingly important in rebuilding efforts for overfished species. To that end, the GMT strongly supports working closely with the RecFIN Statistical Subcommittee and other scientists and managers to ensure that we are basing recreational catch information on the best available science relative to catch estimation, average weight of catch, discard mortality and survival rates, and the filtering process for developing recreational catch per unit of effort (CPUE) time series. A recreational data workshop to address these, and other issues suggested by the RecFIN technical committee, would be valuable for the next assessment cycle. Issues regarding the availability of raw data to assessment authors, as discussed in at least one Stock Assessment Review (STAR) panel, should also be addressed.

**Juvenile Survey Workshop:** The Southwest Fisheries Science Center (SWFSC) juvenile rockfish survey has been ongoing since 1983, with a recent expansion of sea-time and spatial coverage, while the Pacific Whiting Conservation Cooperative (PWCC) and NWFSC survey for hake and juvenile rockfish has surveyed most of the west coast since 1999. The participants of these two surveys have cooperated considerably in recent years, and have begun to explore the potential for integrating results from the two surveys into a single, coastwide index. A workshop to explore this possibility, and to explore the advantages and drawbacks of these surveys more generally, would likely benefit the 2007-2008 assessment cycle and process considerably. This

workshop could also address the use of non-traditional juvenile surveys, such as the impingement surveys used in the cabezon stock assessment this year.

**$B_0/B_{msy}$  Workshop:** The Science and Statistical Committee (SSC) has in the past suggested a workshop to develop explicit guidance regarding how  $B_0$ , the equilibrium, unfished biomass of a population, is to be determined for assessments and rebuilding analyses. This issue continues to be extremely important, and the GMT supports the idea of such a workshop.

**Pre-assessment Data and Modeling Workshops:** The NWFSC hosted two important workshops prior to the engagement of this year's assessment cycle, which provided scientists with an integrated overview of the available data and methods. This is clearly a critical element of the assessment process, and both of these workshops will be important for clarifying future data and model specifications. Although these workshops will presumably be sponsored by the NWFSC, participation by members from the Council advisory bodies would be beneficial to facilitate the process for the next assessment cycle.

With the possible exception of the clearly critical need for pre-assessment data and modeling workshops, the GMT has not identified priorities for these proposals, and believes that all of these topics are equally important for both the next assessment cycle and the longer term scientific basis for managing west coast fisheries.

PFMC  
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