PRELIMINARY STOCK ASSESSMENT PRIORITIES FOR 2007

At the Council's request, the Northwest Fisheries Science Center (NWFSC) has prepared a draft schedule for conducting full and updated assessments, to help initiate Council discussion of future assessment priorities. A common theme at January's Council-sponsored review of the last stock assessment cycle was that that fewer assessments, particularly full assessments, should be conducted in future cycles. If fewer assessments are to be conducted during each cycle, selection of species to be assessed in 2007 should include consideration of the implications for future assessment cycles. Table 1 summarizes the 2005 assessment activity and presents a possible schedule for full and updated assessments from 2007 to 2011. Based on discussion at the review workshop, we propose that full assessments be reviewed through the normal STAR panel process, with a goal that no more than 2 species will be reviewed by any panel. Attainment of this goal will, in turn, require that no more than 8-10 full be conducted each cycle. For updated assessments, where model structure is unchanged, we propose a more expedited review by the SSC only.

Several factors were considered in developing the schedule presented in Table 1. Most assessments of shelf species have utilized the NMFS Triennial shelf survey as an index of abundance. This survey was last conducted in 2004, by the NWFSC. It will not be continued in the future, due to the availability of annual shelf data since 2003 from the NWFSC shelf-slope trawl survey and the insufficiency of resources to conduct two bottom trawl surveys. No assessments currently include the shelf data from the NWFSC survey. Further, under the current Terms of Reference, new data series cannot be introduced as part of an updated assessment. The Table 1 schedule provides for full assessments of all these species by 2009, with higher 2007 priority for species that are under rebuilding plans. If the Terms of Reference can be modified or a protocol for incorporating shelf data from the NWFSC shelf-slope survey agreed upon at a workshop this year, it may be possible to conduct as updates some assessments that are designated as full in the table.

Another consideration for setting priorities is that previous assessments for a few species are now outdated. This group includes chilipepper (south of $40^{o}10'$), arrowtooth flounder, and the portion of the black rockfish stock off Washington. NOAA Fisheries guidance is that assessments older than 5 years are not considered current, and each of these species was last assessed prior to 2000. In addition to these species, the 5-year guideline is an important consideration for scheduling future assessments for all species. Finally, higher short-term priority for full assessments was given to species whose most recent assessment was conducted with modeling software other than Stock Synthesis 2 (SS2). Although use of SS2 is not required, it provides tools for enhanced exploration and description of parameter uncertainty, relative to many earlier platforms such as Stock Synthesis 1. Perhaps just as importantly, establishing a common platform for west coast assessments will improve the transparency, comparability, and portability of the models. Table 1 also includes first-time assessments for longnose skate and dogfish in 2007.

Based on discussions with the Southwest Fisheries Science Center and Washington Department of Fish and Wildlife, preliminary designations of lead responsibility for 2007 assessments are also indicated in Table 1.

Table 1.--Possible schedule for west coast groundfish assessments in 2007 and beyond

Species	2005 Assessment		Assessment cycle							3-cycle total
			2007			2009		2011		
	Full / Update	Model	Full	Update	Lead	Full	Update	Full	Update	
Number of assessments			9	6		9	9	9	9	
P. hake (Whiting)	2006 Full	SS2	Subject to international treaty process							
Bocaccio rockfish	Update	SS1	X		SWC		X		X	3
Canary rockfish	Full	SS2	X		NWC		X	X		3
Chilipepper rockfish	* 1998	SS1	X		SWC				X	2
Cowcod	Full	SS2		X	SWC		X	X		3
Widow rockfish	Full	ADMB		X	SWC	X			X	3
Yelloweye rockfish	Full (2006)	SS2		X	NWC		X		X	3
Yellowtail rockfish	Update	SS1				X				1
Lingcod	Full	SS2				X				1
Arrowtooth	* 1993	other	X		NWC				X	2
English sole	Full	SS2				X				1
Petrale sole	Full	SS2	X		NWC ?			X		2
Starry flounder	Full	SS2					X	X		2
Pacific ocean perch	Update	ADMB		X	NWC	X			X	3
Darkblotched rockfish	Full	SS2	X		NWC		X		X	3
Blackgill rockfish	Full	SS2		X	NWC			X		2
Shortspine thornyhead	Full	SS2					X	X		2
Longspine thornyhead	Full	SS2					X	X		2
Sablefish	Full	SS2		X	NWC	X			X	3
Dover sole	Full	SS2				X				1
Black rockfish	* 2003/1999	SS1	X		NWC				X	2
Cabezon	Full	SS2				X				1
Cal. Scorpionfish	Full	SS2						X		1
Gopher rockfish	Full	SS2					X	X		2
Kelp greenling	Full	SS2				X				1
Longnose skate	Unassessed		X		NWC					1
Dogfish	Unassessed		X		WDFW					1
Blue rockfish			?			?		?		0
Vermilion			?			?		?		
Sanddabs			?			?		?		
Splitnose			?			?		?		

Highlighted cells indicate species with assessments that 1) are outdated, 2) have not been updated to SS2, and/or 3) require inclusion of NWFSC shelf-slope survey data from shelf depths for there to be new abundance indices beyond 2004.