

GROUND FISH MANAGEMENT TEAM REPORT ON STOCK ASSESSMENT PLANNING
FOR THE 2009-2010 FISHING SEASON

The Groundfish Management Team (GMT) reviewed the summary minutes from the January 13 Groundfish Stock Assessment Review Workshop (Agenda Item F.2.b Attachment 1). Relative to the summary minutes, the GMT supports all of the recommendations contained in the two-page list of recommendations for improving the stock assessment process. The GMT intends to thoroughly review the draft Terms of Reference and make recommendations in time for final action at the April Council meeting. However, the GMT recommends that these be incorporated into the Terms of Reference prior to public review.

The GMT also discussed stock assessment priorities, based on the NWFSC Report (Agenda Item F.2.c, NWFSC Report), and has several comments and suggestions at this point in time.

With respect to sablefish, the GMT recognizes that the declining trends in OY have been perceived by some to be inconsistent with the increasing trends observed in the survey data. The GMT recommends a full assessment in 2007 to provide more opportunity to investigate and better understand these results. The GMT also recommends that yelloweye rockfish be considered for a full assessment in 2007, to address concerns raised at both the STAR Panel and SSC review in recent weeks. With respect to blackgill rockfish, the GMT suggests that an update in the next cycle is preliminary, as there may only be one year of new survey data to inform the assessment in 2007. Additionally, several key research priorities identified in the STAR Panel report, such as conducting a contemporary age and growth study, should be pursued prior to revisiting the blackgill rockfish assessment. With respect to chilipepper rockfish, the GMT recognizes that this stock is a low priority with respect to management needs, but may be informative with respect to ecosystem trends and how certain types of data are used in models. The GMT supports the recommendations for other stocks and species listed in the NWFSC report for 2007. The GMT also recommends that blue rockfish be considered a potential candidate for a full assessment, to be done by CDFG (in collaboration with the SWFSC).

Although it is premature to make extensive comments regarding the assessment cycle beyond 2007, the GMT has discussed issues related to longer term planning for stock assessments, and has several comments. Most importantly, the GMT recommends that a more strategic planning for the assessment cycles that will follow 2007 be conducted before 2008, in order to more appropriately initiate data collection, port sampling, ageing and other biological studies. This should include reviews (perhaps in a workshop format) that would evaluate economic and biological criteria, as well as the availability of data, for unassessed stocks that may be candidates in the longer term. In addition to those listed in the NWFSC report, candidates for longer-term assessments include copper rockfish, brown rockfish, shortraker rockfish, and rougheye rockfish. Some stocks in which full assessments were proposed in 2009, such as lingcod and yellowtail, could be postponed or converted to updates to allow for new assessments to continue to be performed.

Finally, the GMT would like the Council community to more explicitly consider the extent to which the five-year criteria for evaluating stock status must be adhered to for all stocks and species. Given that this infers that stock status be assessed every four years (two cycles) under the current management regime, it is worth investigating the extent to which there may be some latitude for presumably healthy stocks to be assessed or updated every six years (three cycles) or longer, to address the assessment workload

GMT Recommendations:

1. Incorporate workshop recommendations into the Terms of Reference prior to public review.
2. Approve the NWFSC list of candidate species for 2007, with the following changes. Sablefish as a full assessment in 2007, remove blackgill rockfish, consider blue rockfish as a candidate (to be determined in April pending CDFG agreement) for a full assessment.
3. Provide the direction for constructing criteria, such as economic, biological, and data availability, that could be used to more formally consider future assessment cycles more strategically at the April Council meeting.

PFMC
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