

SCIENTIFIC AND STATISTICAL COMMITTEE REPORT ON STOCK ASSESSMENT
PLANNING FOR 2011-2012 MANAGEMENT MEASURES

The Scientific and Statistical Committee (SSC) reviewed the draft Terms of Reference (TORs) for Groundfish Stock Assessments and Rebuilding Analyses. These documents have been updated by the SSC groundfish sub-committee based on the process used during the 2007 assessment cycle and the recommendations from the December 2007 Groundfish Assessment Review Workshop. The TOR for Rebuilding Analyses do not reflect changes in analyses that may be required to calculate annual catch limits (ACLs) for overfished stocks because the ACL guidance document has not been completed by NOAA Fisheries. Although the SSC has suggestions for how both of these documents should be updated, they are sufficiently complete that they can be made available for Public Review. The SSC groundfish sub-committee will provide updated versions of both documents for adoption at the June Council meeting based on the comments received.

The TORs for Groundfish Stock Assessments were updated to (a) reflect that simple assessment methods can be applied to data-poor stocks and that the results of these methods may not provide the same information as full assessments, but could be used for decision making, (b) expand on the responsibilities of the Stock Assessment Review (STAR) Panel chair and the expectations for STAR Panel members, (c) provide guidelines for how disagreements between a STAR Panel and a Stock Assessment team (STAT) should be documented and handled by the SSC, and (d) identify the requirements for draft assessments and a process to decide whether an assessment is sufficiently complete to warrant review by a STAR Panel.

The SSC has the following suggestions for further modifications to the TOR:

- The introduction should provide the expectations for an assessment; in particular that an assessment should identify and quantify major uncertainties, balance realism and parsimony, and make good use of the available data.
- The document needs to reflect that it takes additional time to review contested assessments and assessments for species that are made up of several stocks.
- The number of STAR Panel members should ideally be $n+2$ where n is the number of stock assessments being reviewed.
- The description of how requests are made to STAT teams needs to reflect that requests for additional analyses may lead to suggested changes to the base model, and that it would not be unusual for the base model in the draft assessment document to change during a STAR Panel.
- It needs to be clearer that STAR Panel reports are not minutes, but rather summary documents.
- The SSC groundfish sub-committee should consider whether items in Appendix B that are not required of a draft assessment document should be annotated.

The TORs for Rebuilding Analyses have been modified substantially to reflect how rebuilding analyses were conducted in 2007, how progress towards rebuilding was evaluated by the SSC groundfish sub-committee in 2007, and the information provided to the Groundfish Management Team by assessment authors.

The SSC has the following suggestions for further modifications to the TOR:

- The discussion of the benefits of the two empirical methods for generating future recruitment should be deleted or updated to reflect a lower priority for these methods.
- When selecting an empirical method for generating future recruitment, analysts should examine the consistency between historical recruitments and projected recruitments during the period of rebuilding. Projected recruitment should be consistent with historical recruitment between the current stock size and the rebuilding target.

Ms Stacey Miller (Northwest Fisheries Science Center) presented the proposed list of assessments for 2009. The SSC notes that there may be new abundance data for yelloweye rockfish based on underwater visual surveys which might warrant a new full assessment of this species. If such data are available and an assessment lead can be identified, completing a full assessment of yelloweye rockfish should be preferred to a full assessment of Pacific Ocean perch. Pacific Ocean perch is predicted to recover to the B_{MSY} proxy by 2011 and so a full assessment of Pacific Ocean perch could be delayed until in 2011 when it will be a high priority. Washington Department of Fish and Wildlife will conduct a full assessment of spiny dogfish unless the Council recommends that a full assessment of lingcod be conducted in 2009. Efforts should be made to ensure that research on spiny dogfish population dynamics and life history at the University of Washington can be used in the Council process.

Three of the ten full assessments will be for the minor shelf, slope and nearshore complexes. These assessments will be based on assessment methods for data-poor species, and it is anticipated that all analysts will collaborate extensively. The SSC notes that the standard STAR review process is not likely to be ideal for the assessments of these complexes. Moreover, the SSC notes that although the development of assessments of data-poor species is encouraged, there are at present no control rules for such species. Moreover, there is no process to devise and evaluate the performance of alternative control rules, even though this will be important given the need to develop ACLs and accountability measures for all stocks. The SSC therefore recommends that these assessments be reviewed through a workshop process involving several reviewers, including some from the SSC groundfish sub-committee and the committee of independent experts. Ideally, a first workshop would identify potential analysis methods and control rules, and a second workshop would review the results and evaluate alternative control rules. The SSC notes that California Department of Fish and Game (CDFG) and California Sea Grant are organizing a workshop on assessment and management of data-poor stocks. This workshop may provide a forum for evaluating assessment results and evaluations of harvest control rules for data-poor species, although this would benefit from involvement by the SSC groundfish sub-committee in its planning.