

WASHINGTON DEPARTMENT OF FISH AND WILDLIFE REPORT ON
STOCK ASSESSMENT PLANNING FOR 2011-2012 MANAGEMENT MEASURES

In a letter to Dr. Elizabeth Clarke, Northwest Fisheries Science Center (NWFSC), dated July 26, 2006, and a subsequent report to the Council in September 2006, the Washington Department of Fish and Wildlife (WDFW) noted that future yelloweye rockfish assessments were scheduled as “updates” for 2007, 2009, and 2011. At that time, we also explained that we were planning additional research activities for yelloweye in 2007 and 2008 and that we would like the results of those activities considered in a full assessment in 2009.

Specifically: 1) We have partnered with the International Pacific Halibut Commission to add stations to their halibut survey to collect additional yelloweye rockfish data off the northern Washington coast; 2) we began an acoustic tagging program for yelloweye off Westport in 2007, and plan to expand that off the northern coast in 2008; and 3) we plan to conduct a yelloweye survey using a remotely operated vehicle (ROV) in 2008. These surveys would provide additional information regarding yelloweye abundance and distribution and would help ground-truth densities observed in our previous ROV survey in 2002.

There is increasing science that rockfish species, such as yelloweye, have a more discrete population structure than the current coastwide stock assumption, and differences in biological parameters along the coast may demonstrate this. Spatial differences in the stock could be used to support regional management; however, an update assessment would not allow for this consideration.

In addition to the consideration of including the new data sources and potential spatial differences, WDFW also advocates a comprehensive review by NWFSC staff of the data included in the 2006 full assessment. There was considerable uncertainty in the previous full assessment with regard to key parameters. Given that yelloweye rockfish are assessed and studied in Alaska and British Columbia, it may be prudent to review whether the values for the parameters specified in the 2005 assessment still hold.

There was also a discrepancy in the recreational data used as indices of abundance from the different states (e.g., Washington recreational catch-per-unit-of-effort (CPUE) data from halibut trips were excluded whereas Oregon recreational CPUE data from halibut trips were included). It is our understanding that inclusion of certain data would not allow the model to “converge.” Recent discussions with NWFSC staff indicate that the cause of this may have been resolved, given that the 2006 assessment was completed with the earliest version of the Stock Synthesis 2 model and there have been several iterations of that model developed since then.

In conclusion, we would strongly recommend that yelloweye rockfish be scheduled for a full assessment in 2009.