

SCIENTIFIC AND STATISTICAL COMMITTEE REPORT ON STOCK ASSESSMENT  
PLANNING FOR 2011-2012 GROUND FISH FISHERY DECISION MAKING

The Scientific and Statistical Committee (SSC) reviewed the proposed list of assessments for 2009, the draft terms of reference (TOR) for groundfish stock assessments, and TOR for groundfish rebuilding analysis. All three draft documents were reviewed by the SSC and adopted by the Council for public review during the March 2008 Council meeting. Since then, the SSC has reviewed and revised the TORs, and the Northwest and Southwest Fisheries Science Centers have reviewed and commented on the proposed list.

Dr. Jim Hastie (NWFSC) presented the proposed schedule for groundfish assessments in 2009. The SSC notes that splitnose, greenstriped, bronzespotted, and greenspotted rockfishes are listed as potential candidates for full assessments. It was reported that good data are available for splitnose and greenstriped rockfish, including survey and age composition data. Greenstriped rockfish is a non-targeted species and assessment results may provide good contrast to other targeted species. Also, splitnose rockfish and greenstriped rockfish are important components of the southern slope and northern shelf species complexes, respectively, and full assessments will enhance our understanding of their responses to exploitation or will serve as indicator species associated with those complexes. Therefore, the SSC concurs with the recommendation of the Science Centers that splitnose and greenstriped rockfishes be full assessments in 2009. In the case of bronzespotted and greenspotted rockfishes, it was recommended that, over the coming fall, data for these two species be evaluated for their suitability in conducting a full assessment and that the Groundfish Subcommittee will recommend to the Council in November which of these species to assign to a Stock Assessment Review (STAR) Panel (i.e., only one of these stocks would be fully assessed and reviewed).

The SSC recommends that the next full Pacific ocean perch assessment be conducted in 2011 because the current assessment model is stable and there is a large number of un-aged historical otoliths, which will be aged during 2010. This schedule will also allow a full assessment to be conducted during the year when the Pacific ocean perch is currently expected to be rebuilt, based on the most recent assessment. As for lingcod, the SSC recommends it to be elevated to a full assessment in 2009 due to concerns regarding differences in regional status that were evident in the last assessment.

Table 1 summarizes the SSC's recommendations for stock assessments to be conducted in the next cycle. The SSC anticipates that reviews of the ten full assessments for the species discussed above will be conducted by five STAR Panels, each covering two species. Members of the SSC Groundfish Subcommittee are prepared to chair and participate in these five STAR Panels as specified under the TOR. The SSC recommends that the Groundfish Subcommittee chair, Council staff, and the stock assessment coordinator at the Northwest Fisheries Science Center develop specific dates, species to be reviewed, and STAR Panel membership for the five proposed panels for consideration at the September Council meeting. In addition, depending on how the Pacific whiting stock assessment is handled next year, the SSC is prepared to assist in its review.

Table 1. Summary of SSC Recommended Stock Assessments for 2011-2012 Decision Making

	<b>Full Assessments</b>	<b>Updated Assessments</b>
1	Bocaccio rockfish	Pacific ocean perch
2	Widow rockfish	Canary rockfish
3	Yelloweye rockfish	Cowcod rockfish
4	Petrале sole	Darkblotched rockfish
5	Cabezon	
6	Lingcod	
7	Spiny dogfish	
8	Splitnose rockfish	
9	Greenstriped rockfish	
10	Bronzespotted rockfish or Greenspotted rockfish	
*	Pacific whiting	

The SSC next reviewed the updated TOR for groundfish stock assessments and, in response to an edit made to the document by the Council in March, the SSC emphasizes the importance of having two more reviewers than the number of assessments being reviewed. Based on the combined experience of members of the SSC and STAT teams,  $n+2$  is the number of reviewers needed to adequately review full groundfish stock assessments. Thus, the SSC requests that the third full paragraph on page 6 of the TOR be replaced with the following text:

“STAR Panels will include a Chair (appointed from the SSC) and other members with experience gained from having conducted stock assessments. The total number of STAR Panel members (including the chair) should be  $n+2$  (where  $n$  is the number of assessments being reviewed) unless extenuating circumstances preclude this. More specifically, of these other members, one should have a thorough familiarity with West Coast groundfish stock assessment practices, data sources, and modeling methods, and one should be a qualified independent reviewer, such as a reviewer from the Center for Independent Experts (CIE). In addition, individuals with a supervisory relationship with a STAT Team member are disqualified from serving on the STAR Panel. The same exclusion applies to individuals who contributed significantly to the development of an assessment. For example, a significant contribution might include the provision of input data (e.g., an index of abundance), but only if the use of the index is new and had not been subject to a previous STAR Panel review. In addition to Panel members, STAR meetings will include GMT and GAP advisors with responsibilities described in their terms of reference. STAR Panels normally meet for four full days.”

The current TOR for groundfish stock assessments is not explicit about the requirements for data-poor assessments, especially in the definition of an annual catch limit (ACL). Amendments or modifications to the current TOR may be necessary after the national standard guidelines become available. The SSC also identifies the need to establish management control rules for assessments based on limited data.

Regarding the TOR for rebuilding analysis, the SSC notes that the directive that  $0.4B_0$  be used to define the rebuilding target in all cases (the first paragraph on page 5, the last sentence) should be treated as a general guideline. The intent is to be consistent with the threshold used in the assessment that led to the overfished declaration.