

SCIENTIFIC AND STATISTICAL COMMITTEE REPORT ON THE  
NATIONAL MARINE FISHERIES SERVICE GROUND FISH REPORT

At its September meeting, the Pacific Fishery Management Council (Council) dropped one of the Stock Assessment Review (STAR) Panels that had been planned for 2009. The April STAR Panel that had been scheduled to review stock assessments of spiny dogfish and either bronzespotted rockfish or greenspotted rockfish was cancelled due to concerns about data availability and Council workload. The Scientific and Statistical Committee's (SSC's) statement on this agenda item recommended that greenspotted rockfish was more likely to produce results useful to Council decision-making than bronzespotted rockfish.

At the start of its November meeting, the SSC was briefed by Dr. Donald McIsaac about these events and a discussion ensued among members of the SSC, who felt it important to comment on the situation. The SSC learned that the National Marine Fisheries Service is likely to pursue work on some or all of these stocks, even if they are not reviewed by one of the STAR Panels sponsored by the Council next year (Agenda Item F.2.b, Supplemental NMFS Report). Notably, greenspotted rockfish seems to be a good candidate for developing an analytical approach for data-poor species and significant time has already been devoted to that effort. Members of the SSC also noted that a considerable amount of data is available for a spiny dogfish assessment.

The accumulation of more and better information about groundfish stock status is desirable and would be beneficial to Council management. In particular, the SSC supports assessing new species, especially data-poor stocks, as a priority activity and encourages efforts to assess the stocks that were dropped. Moreover, the SSC is capable and prepared to assist in reviewing any results that may develop. Such a review could potentially occur in at least two different ways: by assignment to an SSC groundfish subcommittee meeting (e.g., the update or mop-up panels) or by a process akin to that which transpired for shortbelly rockfish, whereby a review that strictly adhered to the groundfish terms of reference was conducted by a panel external to the Council.