

GROUND FISH ADVISORY SUBPANEL REPORT ON OFF-YEAR SCIENCE IMPROVEMENTS

The Groundfish Advisory Subpanel (GAP) received a presentation from Mr. John DeVore on off-year science improvements and offers the following recommendations and considerations for improving groundfish science.

The GAP believes convening a second harvest policy evaluation workshop is a high priority off-year science activity and is needed to seek improved harvest control rules that are more responsive to the life history characteristics of our groundfish stocks. In particular, the GAP believes it would be helpful to complete management strategy evaluations (MSEs) for a number of species in advance of a harvest policy workshop to facilitate progress. The GAP notes that recent Stock Assessment Review (STAR) panels, including the one that reviewed the new petrale sole assessment, have recommended MSEs to better understand the sensitivity of stocks to different management reference points and harvest control rules. A suite of MSEs prepared for the recommended workshop should also help to critically evaluate current harvest policies and decide refinements tailored to the diverse stocks managed under the groundfish FMP. While the first workshop held in December 2006 was an interesting investigation of current harvest policies, the GAP strongly encourages the objective of the next workshop to be to derive new policies that can be implemented as soon as possible.

Pacific whiting is another stock recommended for an MSE by STAR panels, stock assessment teams, and the SSC. The stock's dependence on dramatically episodic recruitments make the current harvest control rules particularly ineffective strategies for managing the stock. Given the stock's extreme life history patterns, it may be a challenge to develop effective harvest control rules. Therefore, the GAP recommends a separate harvest policy evaluation workshop for Pacific whiting.

Finally the GAP recommends reinstating data modeling workshops in advance of the next round of assessments. The quality of assessments is often limited by the exclusion of available data and data treatments that could be solicited, discussed, and vetted more thoroughly prior to assembling data and developing the assessment model. As thorough and conscientious as many stock assessment teams are in preparing their assessments, data modeling workshops could only benefit data explorations that would improve assessment quality.