

SCIENTIFIC AND STATISTICAL COMMITTEE REPORT ON OFF-YEAR SCIENCE IMPROVEMENTS

The Scientific and Statistical Committee (SSC) reviewed a number of off-year research proposals submitted by Council Staff, National Marine Fisheries Service (NMFS) Fisheries Science Centers, and Stock Assessment Review (STAR) Panels. The SSC found a significant degree of overlap between proposals and grouped them into categories for analysis and response.

The SSC did not find it necessary to conduct a review of the STAR process as proposed by Council Staff. The 2009 Panels worked well with a high degree of consistency and the overall quality of stock assessments was much improved, followed the Terms of Reference and promptly produced the analyses and information needed by the SSC.

The second Council Staff proposal suggests a harvest policy evaluation workshop to review the current groundfish management framework. The SSC supports this proposal and notes that the idea is repeated in the STAR Panel recommendations contained in Item E.3.a, Attachment 1. The SSC places a high priority on a harvest policy workshop to evaluate a range of harvest control rules and to develop a management strategy evaluation (MSE). One area of interest is establishment of a tiered system of control rules based on data quantity and quality.

There are several recommendations related to the use and potential modification of the Stock Synthesis model. The recommended research relates to instituting changes and additions to the SS3 model. The SSC supports this as a high to medium priority and suggests that the proposed work be brought forward through a series of mini workshops of assessment scientists actively engaged in the topics.

The SSC places a high priority on the establishment of a working group to assess alternative assessment methods for data poor stocks. The SSC is seeking simpler, robust assessment methods to track data poor stocks.

The SSC endorses the NMFS Science Center proposal for standardization of the triennial trawl survey calendar date effect, and the STAR Panel proposal for the same work and an examination of q priors as high priority items. The SSC hopes this may reduce some of the uncertainty in trawl survey estimates.

The recommendation for catch reconstruction in Washington and Oregon is a high priority for the SSC. Catch reconstruction worked well for California and the SSC encourages Oregon and Washington to complete their reconstructions. High quality catch data is a critical element for stock assessment.

The SSC places medium priority on STAR Panel recommendations related to model development, but encourages further evaluation. A STAR Panel recommendation to explore model parameters and data treatment via simulations methods is an item that ought to provide insights into model performance.

The SSC in its review of the recommendations determined that there is a need for additional high priority items:

A workshop or working group to evaluate the use of the International Pacific Halibut Commission (IHPC) survey in the yelloweye rockfish assessment and to develop recommendations on how to incorporate supplemental samples being collected by the States of Oregon and Washington.

A working group to explore the development of spatial modeling methods. The SSC notes that spatial modeling and data handling was handled in several different ways in the assessments completed this year. More guidance is needed on establishing criteria for developing spatially explicit models.

The SSC notes that both the cabezon and lingcod assessments reported results of indices of local abundance produced by small-scale monitoring programs distributed along the coast. While these monitoring programs have potential utility for stock assessment, at present it unclear how this information can be used in stock assessments, which typically are conducted at a larger scale than these local monitoring programs. A workshop to consider methods of incorporating this information in stock assessments, and promoting greater coordination of these monitoring programs would be valuable.

The SSC concurs with the STAR Panel recommendation regarding the need for a standardized repository of recreational data required for use by stock assessment analysts. These include catch per unit of effort (CPUE), age and length data, and total catch data. This is a long standing problem that once again should be brought to the attention of RecFIN and the contributing agencies

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