

GROUND FISH MANAGEMENT TEAM REPORT ON METHODOLOGY REVIEW  
PROCESS COUNCIL OPERATING PROCEDURES (COP)

The Groundfish Management Team (GMT) reviewed the revised proposed Council Operating Procedure (COP) 25 to formalize the process and schedule for methodology reviews that inform groundfish management decision-making ([Agenda Item E.4, Attachment 1, April 2015](#)) and offers the following comments.

In November, the GMT's primary recommendations for the proposed COP 25 language were the need for: 1) flexibility to address emerging issues that might fall outside of the proposed methodology review schedule, and 2) a process that includes review of other methodologies that are not specifically designed for abundance and harvest projections, but that inform the impact analysis and are improved through review by the Scientific and Statistical Subcommittee (SSC). The GMT also recommended that reference to review of methodologies for Exempted Fishing Permits (EFPs) be removed from COP 25 language, as those reviews are covered in COP 19. The recommended revisions reflected the need for some formalization of the review process and some flexibility to address issues as they arise. The GMT believes that the revisions brought forward in [Attachment 1](#) accurately capture the GMT recommendations, which were adopted by the Council.

The GMT recommends additional language to the COP to provide the GMT with some latitude to apply and present analyses to the Council that have not been reviewed by the SSC, but may provide meaningful information to the Council. The intent with the addition is to utilize GMT expertise to develop additional analyses when needed, while informing the Council of the degree of review or lack thereof for consideration when using these analyses in decision-making.

The GMT supports participation by the Groundfish Advisory Subpanel (GAP) in the methodology review process. We often rely on the GAP to help us ground truth assumptions used in our models relative to issues like market conditions and pricing. We interpret this engagement as something similar to the input provided by the GAP in the stock assessment review panels.

The GMT recommends the Council consider the GMT's proposed additions to the COP language provided in the following attachment.

## COUNCIL OPERATING PROCEDURE

### Groundfish Estimation Methodology Updates and Review

Approved by Council:

#### PURPOSE

To establish procedures for the review and Council approval of groundfish ~~estimation methodologies~~impact analyses, utilizing the Scientific and Statistical Committee (SSC), ~~and the Groundfish Management Team (GMT), and the Groundfish Advisory Subpanel (GAP) in their role as industry advisors.~~ The review of current and proposed methodologies for abundance and harvest projection, ~~exempted fishing permits (EFPs)~~, and conservation objectives is intended to help clarify the technical basis for the Council's management actions in a scheduled manner that avoids ad hoc timing perplexities. The procedure is intended to provide peer review of the technical estimation and modeling procedures, to ensure the best and most objective technical analyses possible, to minimize confusion during the biennial management decision-making process, and to resolve disputes over methodology.

#### OBJECTIVES AND DUTIES

During the September and November meetings during even years or at other appropriate times, the SSC, in conjunction with the GMT, will identify methodology issues which need documentation and/or merit a full review. The SSC is responsible for reviewing new or changed methodology as opposed to specific applications of the methodology. Examples of issues that could merit a full review include new model algorithms, methods for incorporating base data into models, catch forecasting methods for major PFMC stocks, ~~experimental design of proposed experimental fisheries~~, and technical changes to stock complexes or conservation objectives. Examples of issues that do not merit full review include updating existing data sets in models, adding new stocks to models, and changing data ranges used to estimate parameters in models. Issues in this latter category will be reviewed within the GMT, and can be implemented without formal review by the SSC and approval of the Council; provided both the Council and SSC receive updates on such changes; however, if warranted, the Council may require additional review by the SSC. Stock assessment reviews would not be part of this COP, as they are governed by a specific stock assessment biennial Terms of Reference, which is established biennially. However, the review of new proposed methodologies that could inform stock assessments are part of this COP as described below.

At the November meeting during even years the SSC will inform the Council of the methodologies ready for review and recommend a review schedule. The SSC also will notify the Council of assistance needed from management entities and the GMT to accomplish the review. In rare cases, there may be a need to schedule a methodology review outside the schedule prescribed in this Council Operating Procedure if need arises. The SSC and GMT will notify the Council when such unanticipated reviews are recommended.

To provide additional flexibility, the GMT may apply and present analyses to the Council that use methods that haven't been reviewed by the SSC but that are within the expertise of those on the GMT. In such cases, the GMT will provide documentation that alerts the Council and the public that the methods presented have not been reviewed by the SSC.

A separate methodology review process will formally review new methodologies proposed for use in groundfish stock assessments. New stock assessment methodologies will be proposed to the SSC during September of odd years. The SSC will inform the Council of the type of review necessary to evaluate proposed new methodologies, whether the methodology review should include involvement of external reviewers such as the Center for Independent Experts (CIE) or whether the review will only be conducted by the SSC. The stock assessment methodology reviews will be conducted during even years and completed at least by March of odd years. If endorsed, these new methodologies would be available for use in that year's cycle of stock assessments.

The objectives, roles and responsibilities of participants, and the template for methodology review panel reports in the groundfish methodology process are outlined in the latest version of the Terms of Reference for the Methodology Review Process for Groundfish and Coastal Pelagic Species. The appropriate management entities, either themselves or with assistance from the GMT, are expected to provide background information on procedures and data bases for methodologies undergoing full review, as well as early notification and documentation of anticipated changes in procedures for methodologies not under full review in a particular year. Management entities who submit proposals for the Methodology Review, are responsible for ensuring that materials they provide to the SSC and Council are technically sound, clearly documented, and identified by author. Documents should receive internal entity review before being sent to the Council. To provide adequate review time for the SSC, materials must be received in the Council office at least two weeks before scheduled review meetings.

The SSC has the responsibility for determining whether any proposed methodology is acceptable for use in stock assessments and in analysis of harvest specifications. The SSC and GMT will report to the Council at the September meeting during odd years on the results of these reviews and provide recommendations for all proposed methodology changes. During the September meeting during odd years, the Council will adopt all proposed changes to be implemented in the coming biennial management cycle or will provide directions for handling any unresolved methodology problems.