

COUNCIL OPERATING PROCEDURE

Groundfish Methodology Reviews

Approved by Council: April 13, 2015

PURPOSE

To establish procedures for the review and Council approval of groundfish impact analyses and new methodologies that inform stock assessments, utilizing the Scientific and Statistical Committee (SSC), the Groundfish Management Team (GMT), and the Groundfish Advisory Subpanel (GAP). The SSC will review new methodologies proposed in the Council process and 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 SSC will also recommend whether the methodology review would benefit from GMT and GAP participation and advice. Two types of methodology reviews are described in this process: methods used to predict impacts, both biological and socioeconomic, in the biennial specifications process and methodologies proposed to inform stock assessments. The review of proposed methodologies 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

New Methodologies for Impact Analyses Proposed to Inform Decisions in the Biennial Specifications Process

During the September meeting 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, 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. 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 COP. 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.

New Methodologies Proposed to Inform Stock Assessments

Stock assessment reviews are not part of this COP as they are governed by a specific stock assessment Terms of Reference, which is established biennially. However, 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 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 the GMT and the GAP, if involved in a particular methodology review, 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.