

GROUND FISH ADVISORY SUBPANEL REPORT ON  
FINAL STOCK ASSESSMENTS AND CATCH REPORTS

The Groundfish Advisory Subpanel (GAP) was briefed by Dr. James Hastie and Mr. John DeVore on the new full stock assessments for canary and darkblotched rockfish. The GAP also received information about a data-moderate assessment for arrowtooth flounder; three update assessments for chilipepper rockfish, Petrale sole, and sablefish; and catch reports for yelloweye rockfish, Pacific ocean perch, and cowcod. The GAP offers the following comments and recommendations. In general, the GAP supports the Scientific and Statistical Committee (SSC) recommendations. However, relative to SSC recommendations for full or update assessments, the GAP has no recommendations at this time.

For the catch reports, the GAP agrees with the SSC that the catch reports indicate rebuilding progress for yelloweye rockfish, POP, and cowcod based on data through 2014. Total catch for all three species in recent years has been below the annual catch limits (ACLs) and has declined since the start of the catch share program.

For the update assessments (chilipepper rockfish, Petrale sole, sablefish), the GAP agrees with the SSC's findings and recommendations that all three updates reflect the best available science and that Petrale sole has achieved the rebuilding target.

For the arrowtooth flounder data-moderate assessment, the GAP agrees with the SSC that the assessment should not be used for management decision making. However, as stated by the SSC, there is no evidence that the stock is below the management target. The GAP agrees with the SSC that the 2007 assessment could be used as the basis for projecting overfishing limits by using actual catch amounts to develop new projections. The SSC notes that this will provide the best available science to support management decision making for 2017-18 fisheries.

For the full canary rockfish assessment, the GAP agrees with the SSC that the assessment is the best scientific information available for status determination and management as a category 1 assessment. Based on the new assessment, canary rockfish has achieved the rebuilding target.

For the full darkblotched rockfish assessment, it appears that there are issues that were not explored in the assessment. In addition to the shrimp trawl size composition data issue that is highlighted in the SSC report, the Groundfish Management Team noted two additional issues that merit further consideration. It was noted that data from the Oregon Department of Fish and Wildlife Enhanced Data Collection Program were not used in the assessment. It was also suggested that discard assumptions used in the assessment might not be historically accurate. The GAP thinks these issues warrant further exploration.

Finally, the GAP is extremely concerned that there is no mechanism for changing ACLs during a biennial management period, especially in light of the current dilemma presented by the Council's successful rebuilding of canary rockfish. In addition, the GAP strongly believes that we should not constrain fisheries to rebuilding-schedule harvest levels when a stock is making clear progress toward B<sub>40</sub>%, especially when the stock is mere percentage points from being rebuilt, for example, darkblotched rockfish. The GAP believes it is imperative that the Council address these shortcomings.