

## INITIAL STOCK ASSESSMENT PLANS AND TERMS OF REFERENCE (TOR) FOR GROUNDFISH AND COASTAL PELAGIC SPECIES

This agenda item concerns planning for new groundfish stock assessments that are anticipated to be completed in 2017, which will be used to inform the harvest specifications and management measures decisions for groundfish fisheries in 2019 and beyond.

The decision on which stocks to assess next year entails whether the assessment should be a full assessment that requires peer review by a Stock Assessment Review (STAR) Panel, a data-moderate assessment, or an update assessment that requires only a review by the Council's Scientific and Statistical Committee (SSC). Council policy on this subject has been to schedule no more than ten full assessments in a given year with no more than two full assessments reviewed at each STAR Panel. A maximum of five STAR Panels should be considered for next year.

Drs. Michelle McClure and Jim Hastie, National Marine Fisheries Service Northwest Fisheries Science Center (NWFSC), will report on proposed stock assessment priorities (Agenda Item F.7.a, Attachments 1-4). A new national initiative for providing and evaluating information relative to prioritizing stock assessments was presented to the Council last November (Attachment 4). This information for West Coast groundfish stocks has been summarized by the NWFSC in Attachments 1-3 (all the factors and their proposed weightings are available electronically in an Excel workbook in Attachment 2). While the proposed stock assessment priorities are helpful in deciding which stocks are assessed next year, it is important to note these "priorities" are informative, not prescriptive.

There are three Terms of Reference (TOR) that guide the stock assessment process; one specifies how the next assessment process should occur and defines the roles and responsibilities of various entities contributing to this process, one guides the development of rebuilding analyses used to develop harvest specifications and rebuilding plans for overfished species, and one guides how new methods are reviewed and recommended for scientific activities that inform analyses used in management decision-making. These TOR have been reviewed by some members of the SSC and others, and are included as Agenda Item F.7, Attachments 5, 6, and 7, respectively. Recommendations on the stock assessment process are provided in draft summary minutes from the December 2015 Groundfish Stock Assessment Process Review Workshop in Attachment 8. The Council may want to modify these TOR for the upcoming assessment cycle.

The Council will consider the input from NMFS, state and Tribal agencies, the advisory bodies, and the public before providing a preliminary decision on 2017-2018 stock assessment priorities by species, type of assessment (full, data-moderate, or update), and language for the three draft TOR. The Council is scheduled to make final decisions on stock assessment planning at their June meeting.

**Council Action:**

1. **Adopt for Public Review the List of Stocks to be Assessed in 2017;**
2. **Adopt for Public Review the Preliminary TOR for the Groundfish and Coastal Pelagic Species Stock Assessment and Review Process for 2017-2018;**
3. **Adopt for Public Review the Preliminary SSC Terms of Reference for Groundfish Rebuilding Analysis;**
4. **Adopt for Public Review the Preliminary TOR for the Methodology Review Process for Groundfish and Coastal Pelagic Species; and**
5. **Adopt for Public Review the 2017 Groundfish Stock Assessment Review Schedule.**

**Reference Materials:**

1. Agenda Item F.7, Attachment 1: Prioritization of Species for Stock Assessments in 2017 and Beyond.
2. Agenda Item F.7, Attachment 2: Excel Workbook of Data Informing Stock Assessment Prioritization (*Available Electronically Only*).
3. Agenda Item F.7, Attachment 3: Stock Assessment Prioritization for West Coast Groundfish.
4. Agenda Item F.7, Attachment 4: Prioritizing Fish Stock Assessments. NOAA Technical Memorandum NMFS-F/SPO-152, August 2015.
5. Agenda Item F.7, Attachment 5: Draft Terms of Reference for the Groundfish and Coastal Pelagic Species Stock Assessment and Review Process for 2017-2018.
6. Agenda Item F.7, Attachment 6: Draft Terms of Reference for the Groundfish Rebuilding Analysis for 2017-2018.
7. Agenda Item F.7, Attachment 7: Draft Terms of Reference for the Methodology Review Process for Groundfish and Coastal Pelagic Species for 2017-2018.
8. Agenda Item F.7, Attachment 8: Draft Minutes of the Groundfish Stock Assessment Process Review Workshop.

**Agenda Order:**

- F.7 Initial Stock Assessment Plans and Terms of Reference (TOR) For Groundfish and Coastal Pelagic Species John DeVore
- a. Overview of Stock Assessment Prioritization Jim Hastie, Michelle McClure
  - b. Reports and Comments of Advisory Bodies and Management Entities
  - c. Public Comment
  - d. **Council Action:** Adopt for Public Review a Preliminary List and Schedule of Stocks for Assessment in 2017, the Stock Assessment and Methodology Review TOR for Groundfish and Coastal Pelagic Species, and the Rebuilding TOR for Groundfish

PFMC  
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