

COASTAL PELAGIC SPECIES MANAGEMENT TEAM REPORT ON  
FINAL APPROVAL OF AERIAL SURVEY METHODOLOGY

At its November 2016 meeting, the Council approved a methodology review for the Southern California Coastal Pelagic Species Survey (SCCPSS). The SCCPSS is an aerial survey for CPS covering nearshore waters of the Southern California Bight (SCB) conducted since 2012. The survey principals (California Department of Fish and Wildlife [CDFW] and California Wetfish Producers Association [CWPA]) proposed the review and consideration of whether the SCCPSS can be used to inform CPS stock assessments. A methodology review panel conducted the review at the Southwest Fisheries Science Center in La Jolla, California, April 17-18, 2017. Survey goals as well as field and analytical methods were described, and the panel's report is included in advanced briefing book materials (Agenda Item D.2 Attachment 1). On May 31, 2017, the CPS Management Team (CPSMT) and the CPS Advisory Subpanel received an update by Dr. André Punt, Chair of the Scientific and Statistical Committee (SSC) CPS Sub-Committee, on the methodology review.

Both the CPSMT and the SSC in recent years have highlighted the need for survey information that covers nearshore areas not covered by existing California Cooperative Oceanic Fisheries Investigations and Acoustic-Trawl Method (ATM) surveys. The CPSMT greatly appreciates the efforts by CDFW and CWPA over the last five years to survey these areas within the SCB and to develop approaches to incorporate this new information into CPS stock assessments. Although the panel report points out areas that would need additional work, such as a variance estimator that would be necessary before use in future CPS stock assessments, the report also states that the SCCPSS methodology in the near future could provide nearshore biomass estimates to be added to offshore acoustic-trawl biomass estimates to account for nearshore CPS abundance not included in current assessments. The CPSMT strongly supports the use of the SCCPSS methodology for use in future CPS stock assessments at the earliest possible opportunity after the necessary additional work has been completed.

The CPSMT supports the option of an informal review or similar evaluation to provide survey proponents feedback and further guidance as an opportunity to refine survey methodology or analyses. This can be useful should the SCCPSS be considered for use in the sardine assessment prior to the next full stock assessment review in 2020.

Proponents of any future methodologies could also benefit from a pre-review, perhaps by the SSC or SSC CPS subcommittee, to address potential concerns prior to investing significant time and resources before a formal methodology review. This could be incorporated into either the Council Operating Procedures 26 or the CPS Methodology Review Terms of Reference.