

GROUND FISH ADVISORY SUBPANEL REPORT ON
SABLEFISH ECOSYSTEM INDICATORS: MANAGEMENT STRATEGY EVALUATION

The Groundfish Advisory Subpanel (GAP) received a report from Dr. Melissa Haltuch of the Northwest Fisheries Science Center (NWFSC), on progress made in evaluating potential ecosystem indicators that influence sablefish production and stock status and the potential use of Management Strategy Evaluation (MSE) for sablefish.

The GAP appreciates the progress made on the project. We also see value in continuing this kind of work. Sablefish is one of the most important stocks in the Pacific Groundfish Fishery Management Plan (FMP) and thus, it is very important to have stakeholder buy-in for any consideration of MSE, especially if it's being considered for eventual use in management of the fishery. Dr. Haltuch noted that some of the long-term projections are pessimistic. The GAP appreciates this analytical introspection and cautions that unrealistic MSE outputs could discourage the seafood industry's participation because they do not see an obvious benefit from the work. That is, the industry may reject the use of this work solely on those pessimistic projections instead of considering the broader, potential range of inputs that could help inform this work and shape future policy – especially if the Council decides to incorporate this for management use. More discussion is necessary and the GAP hopes the Council proceeds to facilitate a meaningful way for industry and advisory bodies to actively participate.

The GAP generally agrees with the [Scientific and Statistical Committee's statement](#) under this agenda item that an MSE may provide a useful tool to explore inconsistencies in current sablefish policies – some of which show sablefish hovering near the precautionary zone for years to come. Inclusion of potential environmental drivers in examinations about why this is happening could provide better management. In addition, key questions – such as, would industry and managers prefer long-term stability or are they comfortable with uncertainty from year to year? – should be examined. An MSE could inform these discussions.

In [March 2017, the GAP recommended](#) the team work with Canada's Department of Fisheries and Oceans and the Alaska Fisheries Science Center. We are pleased to see this kind of cooperative work and funding being considered for this project, as this kind of research may provide insight for other transboundary groundfish stocks.