

COASTAL PELAGIC SPECIES MANAGEMENT TEAM REPORT ON PROCESS FOR REVIEW OF REFERENCE POINTS FOR MONITORED STOCKS

The Coastal Pelagic Species Management Team (CPSMT) attended the Scientific and Statistical Committee (SSC) meeting to hear deliberations on this agenda item. The SSC considered various alternatives for setting reference points for monitored stocks, but largely focused on the central subpopulation of Northern Anchovy (CSNA). The SSC endorsed the use of the acoustic trawl method (ATM) survey as a relative index of abundance for CSNA but conditioned this use on inclusion of a correction factor to account for inshore biomass.

In April 2017, the Council received a joint SSC-CPSMT report (Agenda Item G.2.a Joint SSC/CPSMT Report, April, 2017) that presented various options for revising the CSNA overfishing limit (OFL):

- A) OFL based on status quo,
- B) OFL based on an F_{MSY} and biomass estimate from a stock assessment,
- C) OFL based on F_{MSY} multiplied by an estimate of absolute abundance,
- D) OFL based on F_{MSY} multiplied by an estimate of biomass obtained by applying a statistical smoother to recent estimates of absolute abundance.

Use of options C-D require estimates of absolute abundance. The ATM review panel concluded that the ATM survey could not be used to produce absolute abundance estimates for CSNA. Except for status quo, the remaining options from April 2017 and the methods in the current SSC report likely require multiple years to complete. The CPSMT concurs with the SSC that there are concerns with the method used for computing the current OFL and the outdated data upon which it is based, and although the current acceptable biological catch (ABC) buffer may mitigate for this, we support a process that will reexamine the reference points for CSNA.

Until this process is completed, the CPSMT does not envision a change to the reference points as necessary. Current management is conservative and the CSNA is not at a critically low level, based on survey indications of enhanced spawning and recruitment to the fishery (Agenda Item G.4.a, Southwest Fisheries Science Center (SWFSC) Report and Supplemental SWFSC Report 2, November 2016) and the results of the summer 2016 ATM survey (Agenda Item G.1.b, Supplemental SWFSC Report, April 2017). We understand from preliminary information presented at the January 2018 ATM review that the 2017 estimate for CSNA could be higher than the 2016 biomass estimate of 151,000 mt. The California Current Ecosystem (CCE) Report presents trends in regional forage availability and for the CSNA. Between 2015-2017 relative abundance of larval anchovy increased in the Southern CCE region (Agenda Item F.1.a NMFS Report 2, March 2018).

Management of Monitored finfish stocks involves tracking landings against the precautionary ACLs and qualitative comparison to available abundance data, or other available scientific information. However, categorization as Monitored does not preclude changes to harvest specifications when new scientific information becomes available (CPS Fishery Management Plan Sections 2.1.5 and 4.6.4). Unlike Pacific sardine and Pacific mackerel where regular stock assessments enable annual changes to harvest specifications through routine management

measures, reference points for stocks in the Monitored category are not regularly changed. At its October 2017 meeting, the CPSMT considered various approaches that could facilitate CPSMT and Council review of the available data informing the reference points on a more regular or defined basis and schedule. To that end, the CPSMT plans to develop a standardized way of periodically reviewing the available information and current data streams available for reviewing and/or revising the existing reference points. For example, the Council could hold a workshop at regular intervals (e.g. every four years) where the CPSMT and the CPS subcommittee of the SSC review available information to adjust or revise existing reference points for monitored stocks.

PFMC
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