

SCIENTIFIC AND STATISTICAL COMMITTEE REPORT ON
STOCK ASSESSMENT PRIORITIZATION PROCESS FOR COASTAL PELAGIC SPECIES
MANAGEMENT

The Scientific and Statistical Committee (SSC) discussed two tasks assigned by the Council in November 2018: 1) develop a stock assessment prioritization process for coastal pelagic species (CPS) finfish stocks and 2) review and evaluate the quantity and quality of data available to conduct a stock assessment of the central subpopulation of northern anchovy (CSNA).

1. Process for Determining CPS Stock Assessment Priorities

Mr. Alan Sarich (CPSMT chair) presented a report from the CPSMT ([Agenda Item F.2.a, Supplemental Revised CPSMT Report 1](#)) on a proposed approach for determining CPS stock assessment priorities. The CPSMT's approach for CPS is broadly similar to the prioritization process currently used for groundfish species. The CPSMT's approach involves scoring each species with metrics that fall into four categories: fisheries importance, stock status, ecosystem importance, and assessment information. Metrics contributing to the prioritization score include qualitative metrics that require expert opinion as well as more quantitative metrics. The SSC supports this general approach for prioritization and suggests the CPSMT perform scoring to ensure that the scoring structure and weightings have desirable characteristics. For example, the scoring system should ensure that a single stock is not always prioritized. The SSC suggests potentially including additional ecosystem-level indicators in the scoring process and that the Integrated Ecosystem Assessment team at the Northwest and Southwest Fisheries Science Centers should be contacted as potential sources for CPS indicators.

The SSC agrees with the CPSMT on a biennial schedule for the stock prioritization process. However, the SSC suggests that the prioritization could be revised in the intervening year given new information because CPS are subject to rapid fluctuations in abundance and fisheries catch.

The CPSMT report suggests that currently implemented surveys may change in response to the stock assessment prioritization process. The SSC warns that changing the survey design in response to near-term stock assessment concerns may compromise the long-term integrity and value of resulting abundance indices. However, sustained improvements to survey design are encouraged (e.g., improving nearshore coverage).

2. Discuss the Quantity and Quality of Available Data for Conducting an Assessment for the Central Subpopulation of Northern Anchovy

The SSC reviewed potential data sources and concluded that there is likely sufficient fishery-dependent and fishery-independent information available to support an integrated stock assessment for the CSNA.

The SSC acknowledges that an assessment for the CSNA will have a range of data and modeling challenges; however, these do not preclude conducting a model-based assessment. The biology of the CSNA and available data suggest that alternative stock assessment approaches may be appropriate for the CSNA (e.g., a length-based assessment). Importantly, limited recent age

information does not preclude developing a model-based assessment. Therefore, if the Stock Assessment Team would benefit from feedback midway through developing the assessment, the SSC is willing to provide support in refining model structure and data prior to the STAR panel. The SWFSC has proposed developing a management approach using information on stock status directly derived from biomass calculated from the acoustic trawl (AT) survey. The SSC supports consideration of such a survey-based management approach but emphasizes that a management strategy evaluation would be necessary to evaluate such a management system (see the AT methodology review panel report - [Agenda Item C.3, Attachment 2, April 2018](#)).

PFMC
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