

## GROUND FISH MANAGEMENT TEAM REPORT ON ADOPT FINAL STOCK ASSESSMENTS

Members of the Groundfish Management Team (GMT) attended the pre-assessment workshops, the stock assessment review (STAR) panel for Dover sole and Pacific spiny dogfish, and the June 2021 meeting of the Groundfish Subcommittee of the Scientific and Statistical Committee (SSC GFSC) that reviewed all the assessments considered at this meeting. The GMT believes that all assessments have no major technical deficiencies, per the Terms of Reference, and incorporate improvements from previous iterations. The team offers the following comments on Pacific spiny dogfish and data-moderate assessments.

### **Historical discards of Pacific spiny dogfish**

Historical discards for stocks with high encounter rates but low retention rates (e.g., Pacific spiny dogfish, big skate) are difficult to estimate. Annual discards of these stocks may not correlate with their annual landings. Discard practices remain largely unknown prior to the establishment of the West Coast Groundfish Observer Program in 2002. The authors of the Pacific spiny dogfish assessment used the Groundfish Expanded Multi-Year Mortality report to calculate a linear relationship between the annual total catch of Pacific spiny dogfish and that of sablefish. This ratio was then applied to historical landings of sablefish to estimate total catch of Pacific spiny dogfish. During the STAR panel and the SSC GFSC meetings, concerns were raised regarding this assumed relationship and the predictive power of sablefish catch on spiny dogfish catch (landings and discards), particularly given seasonal differences in haul-level co-occurrence rates. STAR panel participants recommended that historical discards should be re-evaluated for the next assessment ([Agenda Item G.5, Attachment 4, June 2021](#)). Members of the GMT are willing to assist in the development of an alternative methodology as appropriate.

### **Data-moderate catch and length assessments**

Data-moderate assessment methods prioritize the use of limited resources (ageing, assessor(s), and review capacity, etc.) in order to assess stocks that may not have enough data to support a full assessment or to analyze stock trajectories between full assessments. However, the GMT agrees that the SSC should review how best to assess nearshore species, particularly those largely harvested by recreational fisheries, involve strong spatial management (e.g., marine protected areas, rockfish closures), and/or typically see higher effort shoreward of the rockfish conservation areas ([Agenda Item G.5.a, Supplemental SSC Report 1, June 2021](#)). Assessments of stocks with potentially strong spatial variation could be better informed with data representative of all spatial areas.

The GMT encourages further discussion about the application of best scientific information available to management. The Council may benefit in organizing an interdisciplinary look, including advice from the SSC, on how to crosswalk the modeling of “stocks” in a stock assessment (i.e., area stratification of assessment models) and how the Council describes a “stock” for policy and management recommendations.

The GMT notes that reviews conducted through the SSC GFSC do not provide explicit roles for members of other advisory bodies to participate in, unlike in the STAR panel review process for full stock assessments. **If future data-moderate reviews are conducted through the SSC GFSC, the GMT recommends creating avenues for advisory body participation.** Members of the GMT anticipate participating in the post-assessment process review later this year to further discuss the above recommendation.

PFMC  
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