

GROUND FISH ADVISORY SUBPANEL REPORT ON CONSIDERATIONS FOR A
SABLEFISH ASSESSMENT UPDATE

Dr. Chantel Wetzel, National Marine Fisheries Service (NMFS), and Ms. Marlene Bellman, Pacific Fishery Management Council (Council) staff, briefed the Groundfish Advisory Subpanel (GAP) on consideration for a sablefish assessment update. The GAP offers the following recommendations and comments on consideration of a sablefish assessment update, which are consistent with the Scientific and Statistical Committee (SSC) recommendations.

The GAP received an overview from Dr. Wetzel, which detailed the very strong recruitment of sablefish that were seen in the recent 2021/2022 West Coast Groundfish Bottom Trawl Surveys. This strong recruitment has led to the recommendation to consider conducting a limited sablefish stock assessment update in 2023 that could be used to inform the 2025/2026 biennial harvest specifications and management measures cycle. The GAP notes we previously commented in [September 2022](#) under Stock Assessment Planning (Agenda Item G.7.a) as to the industry concerns of huge influxes of both juvenile and adult sablefish showing up in trawl fisheries, squid fisheries, charter boat fisheries as far south as Santa Barbara as well as even pier-based sport fisheries. The GAP is concerned management may very well start to become affected by increased bycatch in all sectors.

The GAP fully supports going forward with conducting this limited sablefish update provided it does not impact any of the planned ageing work associated with the other already scheduled assessments and reviews this year. The SSC report 1 ([Agenda Item G.6.a](#)) suggests that the limited nature of this update that will focus only on age samples from the Trawl Survey, should not disrupt any of the other scheduled assessments. The GAP agrees with the SSC.

The GAP also agrees with the SSC that the results of this limited update should in no way preclude the planned 2025 full assessment where we would be looking at data in much greater depth and detail.

Lastly, the GAP concurs with the SSC suggestion that a GAP member attend the SSC Groundfish Subcommittee review of the sablefish update assessment, currently proposed for August 28-29, 2023.

PFMC
04/05/23