

SCIENTIFIC AND STATISTICAL COMMITTEE REPORT ON
CONSIDERATIONS FOR A SABLEFISH UPDATE

The Scientific and Statistical Committee (SSC) received an overview from Dr. Owen Hamel (Northwest Fisheries Science Center) regarding strong recent sablefish recruitment detected in the 2021 and 2022 West Coast Groundfish Bottom Trawl Surveys and the proposed limited sablefish stock assessment update in 2023. The update would incorporate the trawl survey index and age data from the 2021 and 2022 surveys to provide harvest specifications for 2025-2026 that account for evidence of strong recent recruitment. The SSC discussed the proposed scope of the update, workload implications, and whether to proceed.

The SSC discussed the need to update the 2021 full stock assessment considering review capacity, other ageing priorities, and assessment workload for the 2023 biennium. The limited scope of the update focusing on ageing of only samples from the Trawl Survey should prevent disruption to other ongoing assessment activities previously prioritized for 2023 (Agenda Item G.6.a, Supplemental NMFS Report 1). The SSC is supportive of the approach that is being proposed.

The SSC also discussed the potential trade-offs associated with doing the update now, and if that would affect future prioritization of a full or update assessment in 2025. The next few years of surveys will continue to track the recent strong cohorts providing additional information where the selectivity of the gear is greater, better informing recent year class strength in future assessments. Assuming the limited update will not preclude consideration of a full assessment in 2025, the SSC is supportive of the limited update this year.

The SSC Groundfish Subcommittee can review the update assessment at the second of the two Subcommittee meetings planned to review 2023 assessments, which is scheduled for August 28-29, 2023. This will provide additional time for ageing the over 3,900 samples collected from the survey during 2021 and 2022. Attendance of the Groundfish Management Team and Groundfish Advisory Subpanel is highly recommended to provide input.

PFMC
04/04/23