

## SCIENTIFIC AND STATISTICAL COMMITTEE REPORT ON STOCK ASSESSMENT TERMS OF REFERENCE FOR 2027-28

The SSC reviewed and discussed the outline of proposed changes to the Terms of Reference for groundfish stock assessments ([Agenda Item E.7 Attachment 1](#)).

### **At-A-Glance One Pagers**

The SSC is supportive of the continued production of the at-a-glance one page summaries, which are helpful for stakeholders, but does not recommend including them in the TOR. The at-a-glance summaries are an outreach tool and are not appropriate for inclusion in the TOR for assessment reviews. These summaries should be provided to the Council prior to decision-making and ultimately archived with the final version of the stock assessment document on the Council website.

### **On Ramps/Off Ramps**

The TOR should include criteria for changes in stock assessment type (e.g., update to benchmark assessment, referred to as “on ramps”) and when such changes should occur. There needs to be clear criteria guiding this process. In particular, the decision to change the assessment approach should ideally take place prior to the pre-assessment workshops. In addition, arrangements would need to be made for a STAR Panel and scheduling of CIE reviewers when an update changes to a benchmark assessment. An off ramp may also re-scope an assessment to a research assessment.

### **Assessment Executive Summary Content**

There may need to be rearrangement of information already contained in the stock assessment document to align with the NMFS guidance ([Agenda Item, E.7, Attachment 3](#)). Some sections of the Executive Summary may need to be reduced, as [Agenda Item, E.7, Attachment 3](#) notes it is expected to be fewer than 5 pages in length. A longer Executive Summary may be needed to meet stakeholder needs.

### **GAP Appendix**

Developing a GAP-led report on the state of the fishery before the pre-assessment workshop would provide maximum benefits to the STAT and promote a more-informed assessment process. The GAP-led report would add value by capturing the perspectives and opinions of stakeholders and collecting Local Ecological Knowledge (LEK) of the fishery. The GAP-led report could include on-the-water observations and factors that relate to fishery dynamics (e.g., when selectivity may have changed) that the STAT could consider during the development of an assessment. The contents of the appendix and how they have been addressed could be discussed during the STAR Panel. The end-of-cycle assessment process review is a final opportunity for the GAP to identify unaddressed issues.

**Risk Tables**

The SSC recommends that risk tables be added to the TOR. The risk tables provide a way to identify sources of scientific uncertainty that are not captured in the statistical model and transparently define sigma values. The TOR should be clear that the risk tables do not add an additional buffer between the OFL and ABC; instead, they adjust the sigma (upwards or downwards) used to characterize uncertainty in the existing ABC buffer.. The SSC recommends renaming the "risk tables" with a name that better reflects that the method is used to characterize scientific uncertainty.

**Other TOR Considerations**

The roles and responsibilities should be in a Council Operating Procedure (COP) rather than the TOR.

A section governing research track assessments outside the biennium would be beneficial. Research assessments may take time from the management track assessments and present an opportunity for detailed exploration and methods development. Research track assessments should be integrated in assessment prioritization. Further guidance from the Council and Science Centers may prove useful in scoping this section.

PFMC

06/14/26