SCIENTIFIC AND STATISTICAL COMMITTEE REPORT ON METHODOLOGY REVIEW: FINAL FISHERY IMPACT MODEL REVIEW TOPICS AND STOCK ASSESSMENT METHODOLOGIES

Impact Projection Methodologies

The Scientific and Statistical Committee (SSC) received an overview of the California Department of Fish and Wildlife (CDFW) report (Agenda Item G.3, Attachment 1) on the California Cooperative Groundfish Survey (COOP) sampling design and the California Commercial Fishery Data (CALCOM) expansion methodology from John Budrick and Thompson Banez (CDFW). The SSC also received an overview of proposed changes to the fishery projection models (Agenda Item G.3.a, Supplemental GMT Report 1) from Katlyn Lockhart (Oregon Department of Fish and Wildlife).

The SSC acknowledged that the CDFW proposal raises important and legitimate questions about whether current port sampling and catch estimation methodologies remain appropriate given recent changes to fisheries management and implementation of the Pacific Coast Groundfish Fishery Management Plan (FMP). Revisiting these methods could provide substantial benefits and help ensure that sampling programs continue to provide accurate information for stock assessments. The Northwest and Southwest Fisheries Science Centers would be required to engage in the methodological development and the SSC would be responsible for conducting the methodology review. Given considerable capacity constraints and that the proposed review is unlikely to substantially affect any of the planned 2027 assessments, the SSC concludes that a methodology review is not appropriate at this time due to the timing of stock assessment reviews. The SSC also notes that because these are not "new" methodologies, a workshop may be an appropriate alternative.

The SSC further notes that the issues raised in the CDFW report affect sampling programs in Oregon and Washington, making a state-specific review less efficient than a coordinated regional effort. The SSC supports future consideration of these issues but recommends that any workshop or methodology review reflect a coastwide perspective that promotes consistency, collaboration, and efficiency across state sampling programs.

Regarding the Groundfish Management Team's proposed changes to fishery projection models, the SSC reiterates its September 2024 recommendation to review this topic (Agenda Item I.2.a, Supplemental SSC Report 1, September 2024). Given other stock assessment-related commitments, an SSC Groundfish Subcommittee (GFSC) review will not be feasible during 2027. A full SSC review may be possible if it can be accommodated within the existing SSC 2027 agenda.

Revisions to Council Operating Procedure (COP) 25

The SSC recommends revising COP 25 to reflect ongoing increases in workloads associated with the stock assessment cycle. The SSC also requests additional edits to COP 25 to better align review expectations with workload capacity. All workshops and methodology reviews that cannot be accommodated as part of regular SSC workload should be proposed in odd years and reviewed in even years. The SSC supports the COP 25 revisions related to the "groundfish light" meetings proposed for September meetings of even years by moving all methodology agenda items to November meetings.

Review of Fishery-dependent Catch Per Unit Effort (CPUE) and eDNA Indices of Abundance

The SSC GFSC conducted a review of "Suitability of Fishery-dependent CPUE and eDNA Abundance Indices in Groundfish Stock Assessments" on October 6-8, 2026. The SSC reviewed the GFSC report and endorsed its general conclusion that indices of abundance derived from fishery-dependent CPUE and eDNA can be scientifically valid and may be useful data inputs to assessments for some stocks, though each is subject to different caveats. The SSC concurs with the key research recommendations in the GFSC report, encourages continued work on both methodologies, and supports a pathway for their use in stock assessments when the Stock Assessors Team can sufficiently address the caveats raised. Stock assessment review (STAR) panels and the SSC should evaluate the utility of these indices on a case-by-case basis. In the longer term, eDNA indices could also be used to monitor ecosystem component (EC) species,

Improvements in eDNA methods and experience using them are likely to increase the utility of eDNA for assessments and address identified caveats over time. It may be less feasible to evaluate and address caveats with fishery-dependent CPUE indices in a generalizable and repeatable way as they are dependent on the idiosyncrasies of each fishery and may change with changes in technology, markets, and regulations. Knowledge of industry fishing practices and how they have changed over time will generally be necessary to evaluate and correct for potential bias in fishery-dependent CPUE indices.

PFMC
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