

SCIENTIFIC AND STATISTICAL COMMITTEE REPORT ON  
BIENNIAL HARVEST SPECIFICATIONS AND MANAGEMENT MEASURES –  
PRELIMINARY ACTION

In September, the Council tasked the Scientific and Statistical Committee (SSC) with reviewing the suitability of the estimates and selected proxies for the status determination criteria used for highly migratory species (HMS). Members from the SSC's Highly Migratory Species Subcommittee (HMSS), prior to the full SSC review, attempted to confirm the reference points and current status for most of the stocks listed in Tables 13-2 (overfishing status) and 13-3 (overfished status) of the report "Excerpted Review Draft from Status of the U.S. West Coast Fisheries for Highly Migratory Species through 2018" ([Agenda Item J.3.a, HMSMT Report 1](#)). Dr. Aaron Berger (SSC HMSS Chair) presented findings from the HMSS review to the full SSC. Ms. Sarah Shoffler (Southwest Fisheries Science Center (SWFSC)), Ms. Amber Rhodes (West Coast Region (WCR)), and Dr. Kit Dahl (Council staff) were at the presentation and provided comments and answered questions.

The HMS stock assessment reports, which are produced by three regional fishery management organizations, do not follow a standard template for reporting information and do not always report all the information needed to evaluate status based on the status determination criteria in the HMS Fishery Management Plan. For example, benchmark values reported in the assessment documents for some stocks were based on estimates averaged over a set of recent years instead of just the last year. For other stocks there were issues regarding the calculation of the minimum stock size threshold (MSST) because the MSST is calculated using a single value for the rate of natural mortality (M) whereas the assessments for these stocks used age-dependent values for M. Nonetheless, for most stocks, the HMSS review was able to confirm the values presented in Tables 13-2 and 13-3. The discrepancies that were identified by the HMSS were generally small and none of them seemed likely to impact the status determinations.

The SSC recommends that the Council request that SWFSC and WCR staff provide detailed descriptions of the data interpretation and technical steps used for calculating the HMS status determination criteria. If such information was available, the SSC would be willing to evaluate the process, recommend alterations (if any are needed) and thereby avoid future discrepancies in how to apply the HMS status determination criteria. It should not be necessary for the SSC to routinely review the HMS status determinations.