

POSSIBLE SCHEDULE FOR WEST COAST GROUND FISH ASSESSMENTS IN 2011

At the Council's March meeting, the Northwest Fisheries Science Center (NWFSC) submitted an initial draft list of species for consideration in the upcoming assessment cycle, along with a potential schedule for STAR panels (Table 1). This draft list included benchmark, or full, assessments, which include STAR Panel review, for Pacific hake (whiting), Dover sole, Pacific ocean perch (POP), petrale sole, sablefish, spiny dogfish, blackgill rockfish, rex sole, greenspotted rockfish, and widow rockfish. The proposed lead for the first 6 species is the NWFSC, with the SWFSC leading the last 4. Three of these species have not previously been assessed. Spiny dogfish has been proposed previously and it received one of the highest vulnerability scores in the GMT's recently conducted analysis. The vulnerability score for greenspotted rockfish is at the high end of the GMT's precautionary range, and the SWFSC has already expended considerable effort in organizing and analyzing data for this species. Rex sole has a rather low vulnerability score; however, it is the prominent unassessed species in the Other Flatfish complex, for which considerable survey data are available. Blackgill rockfish is another highly vulnerable species, which is a major species in the Southern Slope Rockfish complex and has not been assessed since the first effort in 2005.

Both sablefish and Dover sole received low vulnerability scores from the GMT. However, they are critical species to the slope fisheries, and when last assessed in 2007 and 2005, respectively, their panels identified numerous modeling issues that should be addressed as early as possible. Additionally, the NWFSC shelf-slope survey data cannot be fully included for either species unless a full assessment is conducted. The three remaining proposed full assessments are for the rebuilding species petrale sole, Pacific ocean perch, and widow rockfish. Considerable interest was expressed during late 2009 in having another full assessment conducted for petrale sole in the next cycle, in order to address some unresolved data and modeling issues, as well as to explore the development of commercial CPUE indices. The last benchmark assessment for POP was conducted in 2003, and it is the only species with an individual ABC whose recent assessments have not been conducted using Stock Synthesis. A full assessment of widow rockfish was conducted in 2009, which indicated that the stock should be rebuilt soon. However the STAR panel identified further exploration of model properties and alternative formulations as a priority.

Aside from hake, only 9 species were proposed for the five available STAR panels. The Council's consideration of this agenda item in March, included discussion of the possibility of adding one of three nearshore species (copper, quillback, or China rockfish) to fill the remaining open slot. The GMT also noted that rougheye and shortraker rockfishes could warrant consideration, due to their high vulnerability ratings. Since then, the NWFSC requested information from the state agencies regarding the availability of data and assessment personnel for conducting an assessment for any of the three nearshore species. It appears that there may be sufficient data to develop a successful analysis of copper rockfish in California waters, though the other two species would be much more problematic. However, data sufficiency for any of the three for the remainder of the coast is relatively uncertain at this time.

Perhaps more importantly, California and Washington indicated that they would not be able to contribute assessment staff to next year's activities (and Oregon has not yet responded). As conveyed to the Council in March, the Northwest and Southwest Fishery Science Centers are not able to commit to leading any additional assessments, beyond those already identified. Therefore, the only apparent means of assessing one of these other rockfish in 2011 would be through substituting it for a species on the current draft list.

Given these full assessments, four assessment updates are anticipated, for the rebuilding species bocaccio, canary, darkblotched, and yelloweye rockfish. Since minimal new data will be available with which to assess cowcod status, the SWFSC will prepare a data report, in keeping with the SSC's recommendations in June 2009. Additionally, a NMFS Technical Memorandum addressing the status of bronzespotted rockfish is being prepared by the SWFSC.

There was discussion during the March Council meeting whether the species reviewed in single-species STAR Panel should be sablefish instead of Pacific ocean perch, given the complexity of the sablefish assessment and the range of issues raised during the 2007 STAR panel review. In response to this suggestion, Table 2 lays out an alternative schedule including a sablefish-only panel.

Table 1. Potential Dates, Species Groupings, and Locations for 2011 STAR Panels (as presented in March).

	Dates	Species 1	Species 2	Location
Whiting	Feb.	Pacific hake / Whiting	N/A	Seattle, WA
Panel 1	Early May	Widow rockfish	Spiny dogfish	Newport, OR
Panel 2	Late June	Pacific ocean perch	open	Seattle, WA
Panel 3	Mid-July	Petrable sole	Rex Sole	Santa Cruz, CA
Panel 4	Late July	Sablefish	Dover sole	Seattle, WA
Panel 5	Early August	Greenspotted rf	Blackgill rockfish	Santa Cruz, CA
Updates	mid-June	bocaccio, canary, cowcod (data report only), darkblotched, yelloweye rockfishes		TBD

Table 2. Alternative schedule for 2011 STAR Panels, with a sablefish-only panel.

	Dates	Species 1	Species 2	Location
Whiting	Feb.	Pacific hake / Whiting	N/A	Seattle, WA
Panel 1	Early May	Widow rockfish	Spiny dogfish	Newport, OR
Panel 2	Late June	Pacific ocean perch	Petrable sole	Seattle, WA
Panel 3	Mid-July	Dover sole	Rex Sole	Santa Cruz, CA
Panel 4	Late July	Sablefish	open	Seattle, WA
Panel 5	Early August	Greenspotted rf	Blackgill rockfish	Santa Cruz, CA
Updates	mid-June	bocaccio, canary, cowcod (data report only), darkblotched, yelloweye rockfishes		TBD