

## GROUND FISH MANAGEMENT TEAM REPORT ON STOCK ASSESSMENT PLANNING FOR 2013

The Groundfish Management Team (GMT) considered issues pertaining to the planning of 2013 stock assessments to inform the 2015-2016 management cycle. The GMT thanks Dr. Jim Hastie of the Northwest Fisheries Science Center (NWFSC) for his helpful and informative overview of this topic.

The NWFSC provided a tentative list of species and two schedules in Agenda Item [D.3.b](#). This list includes a mix of rebuilding species, species in need of updated assessments, and species never assessed. The species list acknowledges resource limitations at both Science Centers, and the schedule attempts to balance the resource-intensive review panels with data availability and Council needs.

### *Commercial catches used in assessments*

There are instances where data-limited methods or stock assessments use the California Commercial (CALCOM) database to source California commercial landings instead of Pacific Fisheries Information Network (PacFIN). The GMT recommends that PacFIN rather than CALCOM be the consistent and standard source of commercial catches in California.

### *Data-limited methods*

The GMT is encouraged by the potential of the “data-moderate” panel to identify and approve methods for category 2 stocks. These methods should provide better informed catch limits with lower discounted allowable biological catch (ABCs) relative to overfishing level (OFLs), determined using catch-only methods.

Assuming category 2 methods are approved, the number of species to be considered in next year’s data-moderate Stock Assessment Review Panel is still to be determined, but will rely heavily on identifying appropriate indices of abundance. In the event that the number of species for which index of abundance data is available exceeds the 6 to 12 slots available for data moderate stock assessments, the productivity susceptibility analysis (PSA) score, total mortality over the last three years, and the annual catch limit (ACLs) from previously applied data-poor methods, would be useful in prioritizing species. The Science Centers could provide this information as well as the quality and availability of fishery independent indices of abundance for Council consideration in the September briefing book.

The GMT encourages this workshop, and the Scientific and Statistical Committee (SSC) in its review of the workshop’s findings, to consider the question of imprecision in catch estimates. Catch history is uncertain for several species, including those managed as part of complexes because the estimates are based on statistical sampling. Many if not all of the methods we use now calculate the OFL as if catch history is known with certainty. The GMT also sees need to pay attention to methods that do not rely on catch history (e.g., swept area biomass, length-based methods). There will be more and more species for which our information about catch is highly uncertain.

### *Stock assessments*

The remaining species proposed for stock assessments would benefit from Council attention before a list of species is finalized. The GMT offers the following comments regarding those species:

#### 1) Bocaccio: Full or updated assessment?

Dr. John Field (SWFSC) provided new information (the “refreshed” analysis) that the bocaccio assessment has stabilized. The large recruitment demonstrated in the last assessment was supported by new length data, but the variance around that estimate decreased substantially. Given no new data or expectation of altering of model structure, **the GMT concurs with the bocaccio STAT that an update is sufficient for bocaccio in 2013.**

#### 2) Sablefish: Update or no new assessment?

Significant uncertainty was captured in the most recent sablefish assessment. The magnitude of uncertainty makes it difficult to gauge how an updated assessment may respond to new data. Dr. Hastie presented 2011 survey data indicating a steady trend of selected biomass, noting that spawning biomass is likely still decreasing given relatively recent poor recruitment, so any increase in the population is unlikely. A large recruitment in 2008, 2010 and possibly 2011 gives hope for future increases in the population, but these year classes are unlikely to be reflected in the survey data available for the 2013 stock assessment cycle. More information from the NWFSC may be forthcoming and ready for the September Council meeting to provide greater insight into these recruitments and the need of a sablefish update. **The GMT recommends waiting for additional information before determining whether a sablefish update is warranted.**

#### 3) Pacific Ocean Perch (POP): Update or data report?

The 2011 POP STAT does not expect any significantly new data for a proposed POP update. **Given science center resource constraints, the Council may consider a data report instead of an update.**

#### 4) Rougheye rockfish or rex sole full assessment?

If bocaccio goes forward as an update an open spot for a full assessment will be created. This spot is suggested to be filled by either rougheye rockfish or rex sole. A rougheye rockfish assessment is desirable because the high vulnerability score of rougheye makes its status relative to overfishing and/or being overfished a concern. Rougheye rockfish data is very limited though, leaving the possibility of a viable assessment questionable. Further, it is the GMT’s understanding that the lack of catch data makes data-poor methodologies less informative for this species. Management based on such a data-poor assessment is likely to be misspecified and new data to better inform any future assessments unless a concerted effort were made to collect data on this species, thus a full assessment may offer the best chance of mitigating poor catch histories. Rex sole, on the other hand, has low vulnerability to overfishing or being overfished, but has substantial data for a stock assessment. While the results of an assessment may not require major management considerations, the assessment would increase the number of category 1 stocks informing Council management. **The GMT does not offer a recommendation on one species over the other.**

*Stock assessment planning scenarios:*

Scenario A) IF bocaccio is a full assessment, rougheye rockfish, rex sole, or another assessments will not be considered. No additional full assessment is added to the NWFSC workload, thus sablefish and POP updates could reasonably be done.

Scenario B) IF bocaccio is an update, rougheye rockfish, rex sole or another species can be assessed. This adds another full assessment to the NWFSC workload, constraining the ability to do both a sablefish and POP update. It is not clear whether making POP a data report would provide the resources for a sablefish update.

**The GMT recommends scenario B.**

**Rebuilding Terms of Reference**

We are expecting the SSC to update the Draft Terms of Reference (TOR) for the Groundfish Rebuilding Analysis for 2013-2014 ([Agenda Item D.3.a, Attachment 3](#)) based on the questions we have raised on rebuilding analyses and related analysis of rebuilding and the discussion we had with the SSC economics and groundfish subcommittees in April. We hope to have a joint session with the SSC to discuss the proposed changes to the TOR and related issues at the September meeting.

PFMC  
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