

STOCK ASSESSMENT PLANNING FOR MANAGEMENT SPECIFICATIONS IN THE 2015-2016 FISHERIES

In the Council stock assessment process, there is a year in which assessments are done to inform decisions for the following biennial management cycle, followed by a year for deciding the new groundfish harvest specifications and management measures. This agenda item concerns planning for new groundfish stock assessments that are anticipated to be done in 2013, which will be used to decide the harvest specifications and management measures for 2015 and 2016 groundfish fisheries.

In the past, the Council has focused on overfished species and stocks experiencing directed fishing as priority candidates for stock assessment, and has shown interest in at least one new species as a stock assessment target.

The decision on which stocks to assess next year entails whether the assessment should be a full assessment that requires peer review by a stock assessment review (STAR) Panel or an update assessment that requires only a review by the Council's SSC. Council policy on this subject has been schedule no more than ten full assessments in a given year with no more than two full assessments reviewed at each STAR Panel. Therefore, a maximum of five STAR Panels should be considered for next year. Dr. Michelle McClure, Division Director at the National Marine Fisheries Service (NMFS) Northwest Fisheries Science Center (NWFSC), will report on proposed stock assessments and a proposed 2013 stock assessment review schedule for the next biennial fishery management cycle (Agenda Item F.5.b, NMFS Report).

There are three Terms of Reference that guide the stock assessment process; one which specifies how the next assessment process should occur and defines the roles and responsibilities of various entities contributing to this process, one which guides the development of rebuilding analyses that are used to develop harvest specifications and rebuilding plans for overfished species, and one that guides how new methods are reviewed and recommended for scientific activities that inform analyses used in management decision-making. These Terms of Reference have been reviewed by some members of the SSC and others and are included as Agenda Item F.5.a, Attachments 1, 2, and 3, respectively. The Council may want to modify these Terms of Reference for the next assessment cycle.

The Council is to consider the input from NMFS, the advisory bodies, and the public before providing a preliminary decision on 2013-2014 stock assessment priorities by species, type of assessment (full or update), and language for the three draft Terms of Reference. The Council is scheduled to make final decisions on stock assessment planning at their June meeting, although there has been some discussion about deferring some of these decisions for the September meeting so as to consider the results of a planned workshop on data-limited stocks.

Council Action:

1. **Adopt for Public Review the List of Stocks To Be Assessed in 2013.**
2. **Adopt for Public Review the Preliminary Terms of Reference for the Groundfish and Coastal Pelagic Species Stock Assessment and Review Process for 2013-2014.**
3. **Adopt for Public Review the Preliminary SSC Terms of Reference for Groundfish Rebuilding Analysis.**
4. **Adopt for Public Review the Preliminary Terms of Reference for the Methodology Review Process for Groundfish and Coastal Pelagic Species.**
5. **Adopt for Public Review the 2013 Groundfish Stock Assessment Review Schedule.**

Reference Materials:

1. Agenda Item F.5.a, Attachment 1: Draft Terms of Reference for the Groundfish and Coastal Pelagic Species Stock Assessment and Review Process for 2013-2014.
2. Agenda Item F.5.a, Attachment 2: Draft SSC Terms of Reference for Groundfish Rebuilding Analysis.
3. Agenda Item F.5.a, Attachment 3: Draft Terms of Reference for the Methodology Review Process for Groundfish and Coastal Pelagic Species.
4. Agenda Item F.5.b, NMFS Report: Considerations for Selecting Species for Assessment in 2013.

Agenda Order:

- a. Agenda Item Overview
- b. Reports and Comments of Advisory Bodies and Management Entities
- c. Public Comment
- d. **Council Action:** Adopt Preliminary Guidance for three Terms of Reference, a List of Stocks to be Assessed, and an Assessment Schedule

John DeVore

PFMC
02/10/12