

GROUND FISH ADVISORY SUBPANEL REPORT ON
STOCK ASSESSMENT PLANNING FOR MANAGEMENT SPECIFICATIONS IN THE
2015-2016 FISHERIES

The Groundfish Advisory Subpanel (GAP) received a presentation from Dr. Jim Hastie and Mr. John DeVore on Stock Assessment Planning for Management Specifications in the 2015-2016 Fisheries. The GAP has no comments at this time on the three Terms of Reference under review. The GAP focused their discussion on stock assessment priorities and offers the following comments and recommendations.

The GAP recommends full, benchmark assessments be conducted next year for petrale sole, cowcod, darkblotched rockfish, longspine thornyheads, shortspine thornyheads, yellowtail rockfish, Pacific sanddabs, and aurora rockfish. The GAP may later prioritize a bocaccio assessment be conducted as a full assessment, pending the evaluation of recent recruitment this spring. The GAP provides the following rationale for this recommended prioritization.

Petrale sole is an important driver stock for the trawl individual fishing quota (IFQ) fishery and on the verge of reaching the B_{MSY} target (the 2011 assessment estimates the stock would be rebuilt by 2013). Since the SSC recommends this change in stock status be confirmed with a full assessment, the GAP recommends a full petrale sole assessment. The Southwest Fisheries Science Center (SWFSC) is proposing new methods that can be applied to assess cowcod. Given the lack of information informing the status of cowcod and how the low harvestable surplus of the stock reduces access to healthy stocks south of 40°10' N. latitude, the GAP is recommending a new full cowcod assessment. The uncertainty associated with the darkblotched assessment and the importance of that stock to the trawl fishery, the GAP recommends a full assessment be conducted. The GAP would specifically like a robust exploration of the interannual variation in the trawl survey and methods that might be used to better survey this patchily distributed stock. The GAP recommends full assessments of the thornyhead species since the 2005 assessments are now considered out of date and these stocks are important targets in deepwater commercial fisheries. The GAP recommends a full assessment of yellowtail rockfish since this stock is an important target stock in both trawl and non-trawl fisheries. Trawl targeting of yellowtail increased in 2011 under the IFQ program and that targeting will likely increase now that widow rockfish is rebuilt. Further, the yellowtail rockfish stock has not had a full assessment since 2000 and is therefore grossly out of date. The GAP recommends a full assessment of Pacific sanddabs. This is a targeted stock, has never been assessed, and there is apparently a lot of data available to assess this stock. Lastly, the GAP recommends an assessment of aurora rockfish. This is one of our most vulnerable stocks and, of those most vulnerable stocks identified, apparently has the most data to inform an assessment. This stock could potentially serve as an indicator stock for managing the most vulnerable slope rockfish stocks (i.e., aurora, rougheye, and shortraker rockfish).

The GAP recommends update assessments for sablefish, Pacific ocean perch (POP), and bocaccio if the evaluation of strong recent recruitment does not compel consideration of a full assessment. Sablefish is one of the most important commercial groundfish stocks on the west

coast. The Scientific and Statistical Committee (SSC) recommends the next sablefish assessment be an update, and the GAP recommends an update in 2013 to confirm the uncertain estimate of strong recent recruitment that was identified in the 2011 assessment. Updated survey and fisheries data should provide a greater certainty of higher recent recruitment since many of the fishermen on the GAP report encounters with a significant amount of smaller sablefish. The GAP recommends an update of the 2011 POP assessment to track rebuilding performance. The SSC has recommended the next POP assessment should be an update.

PFMC
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