

SCIENTIFIC AND STATISTICAL COMMITTEE REPORT ON INITIAL CONSIDERATION OF REVISIONS TO THE GROUND FISH BIENNIAL MANAGEMENT PROCESS

The Scientific and Statistical Committee (SSC) was briefed on this issue by Ms. Kelly Ames, who led the group through a white paper on possible revisions to the groundfish biennial specifications process. The workload associated with the biennial process has increased substantially, particularly in the 2011-2012 biennial cycle. In evaluating workload demands of the process, it will be important to distinguish between the demands that were due to the novel aspects of 2011-2012 biennial cycle, such as developing and implementing an overfishing limit (OFL)/ABC/annual catch limit (ACL) framework, and those which are likely to occur in every cycle.

The SSC is actively involved in the groundfish harvest specification process. Some issues of relevance to the SSC include: 1) how and when science is introduced into the process, 2) how stock assessments are reviewed and approved by the Council, 3) when in the process species complexes will be evaluated, and 4) how and when socio-economic analyses be reviewed. A primary recommendation of the white paper is that a task force should be created to review the advisory bodies' responsibilities and resources and to consider ways to improve the process. If requested by the Council, the SSC will nominate one or more individuals to participate in the task force, and the SSC is ready to contribute in other ways as needed.

The SSC also reviewed the Stock Assessment Review (STAR) panel schedule for the upcoming biennial cycle. It was noted that the STAR panel for data poor species will need additional attention at the planning stages to be fully successful. An agenda for this meeting should be developed that clearly identifies the objectives of the meeting. Analysts will need to be identified to prepare papers that address those objectives. The primary objective of the STAR panel is to review DCAC and DB-SRA methods used to derive OFLs and ACLs for data-poor stocks (Category 3 stocks). However, scientists at the Northwest Fisheries Science Center and the Southwest Fisheries Science Center have been working on improvements to those methodologies, and the SSC recommends that data-poor STAR panel devote part of the agenda to reviewing new methods for data-limited stocks. A workshop prior to the meeting may be useful to identify a few promising methods that can be thoroughly reviewed at the STAR panel.

Since the focus of the STAR panel is on methods and data inputs, application of approved methods to data-limited stocks will need to occur after the STAR panel, and be reviewed at a later meeting. The SSC recommends that the SSC groundfish subcommittee review these results during its meeting in June to review update assessments. The meeting may need to be extended by one or two days to accomplish this review.