

Joint Plan Team Stock Assessment Prioritization Review
AFSC Seattle January 11-12, 2017

In September 2015, the National Marine Fisheries Service provided a report to the Joint Groundfish Plan Teams on a national stock assessment prioritization initiative (described in NOAA Tech Memo NMFS-F/SPO-152) which serves as a guide for how a Region's stock assessments could be prioritized in a given year. The guidelines for prioritization of stock assessments considered five themes: Fishery Importance, Stock Status, Ecosystem Importance, Assessment Information, and Stock Biology.

In September 2016, the Joint Plan Teams were provided with a joint AFSC and NMFS S&T discussion paper (included under separate cover) which applied the prioritization methods to assessments done in support of the NPFMC. From a Council perspective, the goal of any alternative to the Council's current stock assessment frequency would be to improve the efficiency of the stock assessment process while maintaining the high quality and timely information that has been the basis for successful, economically viable, sustainable and equitable fisheries within an ecosystem approach to fisheries management. The Joint Groundfish Plan teams are convening a special meeting in January 2017 to discuss the potential impacts of alternative assessment frequencies. The Council will receive reports on stock assessment prioritization from the Plan Teams as well from NMFS at the February 2017 Council meeting.

Objective: Provide recommendations to the Council on potential changes in assessment frequency that result from application of the stock assessment prioritization process to NPFMC-managed fish stocks.
Specifically:

1. evaluate the results of the prioritization process applied to N. Pacific groundfish;
2. develop a proposal for how to use those results to support planning;
3. discuss any recommended changes from status quo and whether those changes are supported/justified;
4. and for any proposed changes, discuss the implications, and where assessments may occur at lower frequency, discuss potential interim actions to support management.

Goals:

- 1) Discuss process of incorporating Council feedback.
 - a. Working from Scenario 4 (or other scenario) results discuss pros and cons of the recommended assessment cycle on a stock-by-stock basis.
 - b. Create a list of factors that might shift the prioritization for different species.
 - c. Develop a proposed assessment frequency and justification for all BSAI and GOA stocks
 - d. If no changes to assessment frequency discuss how results of prioritization can be used to guide future assessment reviews (i.e. CIE or otherwise)
 - e. Develop several options for how the Plan Team process will be combined with Council input to make final prioritization recommendations.
- 2) Identify off-cycle assessment options or plans
 - a. List of potential options for off-cycle assessments and pros/cons of each. End result is a recommended approach for off-cycle assessments (either status quo or modified)
- 3) Discuss the implications of lag time between assessments, as it may affect choke species, stock status issues, climate and forecasting issues on stock status, management response to uncertainty, trade-offs for assessment scientists