

Joint BSAI/GOA Plan Team Minutes

The meeting of the Bering Sea and Aleutian Islands and Gulf of Alaska Groundfish Plan Teams convened on November 13th at 9am at the Alaska Fishery Science Center, Seattle, WA.

Members of the Plan Teams in attendance included:

Loh-Lee Low	AFSC REFM(BSAI chair)	Jim Ianelli	AFSC REFM (GOA co-chair)
Kerim Aydin	AFSC REFM	Diana Stram	NPFMC (GOA co-chair)
David Carlile	ADF&G	Sandra Lowe	AFSC REFM
Steve Hare	IPHC	Jeff Fujioka	AFSC ABL
Jane DiCosimo	NPFMC	Jon Heifetz	AFSC ABL
Theresa Tsou	WDFW	Robert Foy	AFSC RACE
Brenda Norcross	UAF	Nick Sagalkin	ADF&G
Andy Smoker	NMFS AKRO	Cleo Brylinsky	ADF&G
Grant Thompson	AFSC REFM	Tom Pearson	NMFS AKRO
Dan Lew	AFSC	Sarah Gaichas	AFSC REFM
Kathy Kuletz	USFWS	Steve Hare	IPHC
Lowell Fritz	NMML	Kathy Kuletz	USFWS

Ken Goldman (ADF&G, member of the GOA Team) and Ward Testa (NMML, GOA Team) were absent. Mike Sigler (AFSC ABL, BSAI Vice-Chair) was absent for the Joint Team meeting but participated by phone for some BSAI specific assessment reviews. Approximately 40 members of the public and State and Agency staff attended the meeting.

Introductions

Changes were made to the agenda as attached. It was noted that the Pacific cod assessments for the BSAI and GOA would be available during the week. The review of GOA Pacific cod was rescheduled for Friday morning (GOA Team only) while the previously scheduled Joint Team review of Pacific cod for Thursday was changed to be a review of the BSAI assessment only. Minutes for Pacific cod assessments in both areas are thus contained in the separate team minutes and not within the Joint Team minutes as previously scheduled.

The Teams discussed membership issues noting that several Team members were absent. Ivan Vining has taken a position outside of ADF&G and can no longer continue on the BSAI Plan Team. The Teams noted his years of valuable contribution to the assessment review process as a member of the BSAI Plan Team and wish him well in his future endeavors. When his position is filled by ADF&G that person may be appointed to the BSAI Plan Team. Mike Sigler was unable to attend but indicated he would participate for the reviews of Pacific cod and Pollock (BSAI) via telephone. The GOA Team again noted Ward Testa's (NMML) absence as one that limits the ability to comment on marine mammal issues facing fisheries. The Teams expressed concern about this issue and urged the Council to appoint marine mammal experts who will participate on a regular basis.

The Teams discussed the possibility of having alternates appointed that could fill in as added expertise for meetings. It was noted that such alternates may lack the desired institutional knowledge and commitment to the review process. The Teams reiterated their desire that the Council stress the importance that members be allotted time in their work schedules to allow for adequate participation. Regular communications from the Council chair to Plan Team member agencies to this effect are strongly encouraged.

The Teams noted some revisions to the SAFE report this year. First, an attempt to have a consistent summary structure between the GOA and BSAI was made. Also, at the request of the SSC, the addition of a phase plane-type diagram to give a summary status report of fishing mortalities and relative biomass level information for each region.

Sablefish

Dana Hanselman presented an overview of the sablefish assessment. Three models were presented: one based on the model used in 2006, and two alternative configurations (model 2 and model 3) incorporating updated growth parameters and updated growth parameters with informative priors on catchability coefficients respectively. These changes were presented to the Teams and encouraged at the September 2007 meeting.

Survey estimates for sablefish abundance were generally lower this year. The fishery RPW was lower. Longline survey RPW by area shows an overall decline in all three areas. Biomass estimates from 2005 to 2007 in the GOA trawl survey also declined. A comparison of the observer data with logbook data indicates a relatively stable trend in both datasets, but a consistent decline in the Central GOA. The IPHC survey data indicate an increase since 2006. Steven Hare noted that the IPHC data also show an increase in smaller, younger fish (note not necessarily juveniles).

The author reviewed model 3 results in detail, and showed results from retrospective analyses. The author noted that the retrospective pattern suggests that recent abundances tend to be biased high. In response to discussions, the author noted that model configuration issues and parameter assumptions are likely the cause but plans to investigate sources for this bias will continue.

The Teams discussed the differences between models 2 and 3. The author noted the main distinction is the addition of informative prior distributions on catchability for each abundance index in model 3 which performs as a stabilizer to the model. This is the main argument for choice of model 3 over model 2 as otherwise the objective function was slightly higher, mainly due to the addition of the prior distributions.

The treatment of whale depredation by the longline survey was discussed and a question on how IPHC surveys compare was raised. Steve Hare noted that the IPHC has more stations and thus can drop stations due to whale depredation issues but they do use all stations regardless of fishing issues. The issue of fishery/survey interactions was discussed, particularly relative to how the IPHC surveys are conducted differently. This has been addressed in previous assessments and it was noted that in recent years the survey timing and fishing fleet effort have little overlap. It was noted that some of the actual survey station locations were known to be good fishing spots that are well known to fishermen. Hence the potential for direct interaction was thought to be a possible concern.

The author noted that pre-IFQ, the fishery and survey trends were similar while post-IFQ the fishery trend is flat while the other surveys are variable or declining. This imparts stability (modeling-wise) but is a concern regarding the contrasting trend. The author noted that fishery catchability is divided into pre and post-IFQ parameters. The author also noted that the 2006 longline survey increase compared with trends previously and in conjunction with the 2007 values. No length data is currently available from the IPHC survey. It was suggested that an evaluation of the length-composition from the bottom trawl survey be compared with the halibut survey due to similar timing and sampling areas. Some smaller fish were observed in the 2007 IPHC data. Cleo Brylinsky noted that it might be possible to add another person to the survey

(she is pursuing this for additional yelloweye information collection) and if possible ADF&G could work with someone to share costs and duties to obtain additional length data for sablefish. Some problems were discussed with respect to the relative workload for the additional person in times of high yelloweye density (and the difficulty of taking sablefish length samples at that time) and the necessity of releasing sablefish immediately (rather than the ability to sample as time and workload allows).

Apportionment:

The Teams reiterated that the current apportionment scheme approved by the Council could be modified subject to Team review. Currently the survey is weighted twice as much as the fishery data due to general concerns about using fishery data as a relative abundance index. This was re-evaluated given that fishery data are more comprehensive throughout the year compared to the survey "snapshot" which occurs during summer months. An even weighting scheme (survey and fishery) was presented and the authors indicated no strong preference related to conservation concerns.

The Teams discussed the variable ages of fish by area in fishery catches. The Teams discussed means by which the author could better model the spatial dynamics and to what extent a change in apportionment could be incorporated into the assessment. There could be spatial differences in selectivity by region that could feed back into the assessment. It was noted that a movement model could be used to help inform spatial allocation issues in the future using updated tag-recapture information. It was suggested that the movement model could form a reasonable operating model to use in the context of a MSE.

The future of the logbook reporting program and the need for funding support was highlighted. The precision of estimates in recent years is related to the increased data reporting through logbooks, especially the voluntary logbook program. Cooperative research funds have covered the cost of paying IPHC to collect and provide the logbook data. Availability of these funds are subject to Center priorities for this money. Logbooks from observed and non-observed vessels are used together to comprise the logbook fishery data. Catch by hook is recorded on the logbook by the vessel. All logbook data is confidential and vessel identification is stripped from these data. The Teams strongly recommended that continued funding be secured for this important data collection program noting that these data are critical to the assessment.

The Teams discussed the use of the default apportionment scheme to report numbers for area apportionments. The author included a table using the even weighting scheme as an alternative. The Teams and authors noted that either apportionment scheme was acceptable. However, given the potential for bias in the use of fishery data would argue for the continuation of the current weighting scheme.

The Teams agreed with the author in selecting model 3. The Teams suggested additional analyses (e.g., time-varying selectivity) for future assessments. Time varying changes in the catchability could also be evaluated, particularly if there have been changes in the fishery since the implementation of the IFQ system. The Teams discussed changes in the fishery since the IFQ were instituted, with members of the public noting that the fishery has spread out in time. Members of the public also noted minor changes in the fishery since the IFQ. Some changes included more auto-baiters in the fishery, which is easier but less efficient than hand-baiting. They also noted that there was some time lag in the spreading out of the fishery since the IFQ as the fisherman became accustomed to the changes and there has been consolidation of boats within the first 3 years of the IFQ program. Clarification on the degree to which mixed sets are targeted

(halibut and sablefish) was requested and it was noted that this practice was relatively uncommon.

It was noted that pot fishing is increasing in the BSAI area but is prohibited in the GOA. To date, data are too spotty to allow for modeling this as a separate fishery but the authors continue to report on changes.

The Team supports more investigation into the retrospective analysis to ascertain why this has shown the observed decreasing trend. The Team approves the ABCs as recommended by the author based upon the use of model 3. Tom Pearson noted some rounding error in the area apportionments in the GOA that need to be fixed in the assessment. The author indicated these will be revised for the final assessment. The Team commended the authors on improvements to the assessment and the responsiveness of authors to requests made in previous years.

The meeting adjourned at 12:00pm.

NPFMC GROUND FISH PLAN TEAMS

DRAFT AGENDA

November 13th-16th, 2007

A. Joint Plan Team Meetings

Tuesday November 13 th		Room 2076 (Traynor room)
9:00 am	Introductions, Adoption of Agenda, Council Actions, Review of report summaries, minutes, assignments etc...	
9:30 am	Sablefish	
12:00 pm	Lunch	
<i>Reconvene in separate BSAI/GOA teams till Thursday AM</i>		
Thursday November 15 th		
9:00 am	Pacific cod (with BSAI and GOA spec discussions)	
12:00	Lunch (<i>reconvene in separate teams for Thursday afternoon</i>)	

B. Bering Sea/Aleutian Islands Groundfish Plan Team

Tuesday November 13 th		Room 2076 (Traynor room)
1:00 pm	EBS Pollock, AI Pollock, Bogoslof Pollock	
Wednesday November 14 th		
9:00 am	Yellowfin sole, Rock sole, Flathead sole, Alaska Plaice, Arrowtooth flounder, Other flatfish	
12:00 pm	Lunch	
1:00 pm	Skates, other species	
3:00 pm	Atka mackerel	
Thursday November 15 th		
1:00 pm	Greenland turbot	
2:00 pm	Off year report for POP, Northern rockfish, Red rockfish, other rockfish	
3:30 pm	Table preparation, Report writing/finalizing, other business	
Friday November 16 th		
9:00 am	Table preparation, Report writing, other business	
1:00 pm	Report finalization	
5:00 pm	Adjourn	

C. Gulf of Alaska Groundfish Plan Team

Tuesday November 13 th		Room 1055 (Observer training room)
1:00 pm	Other species, sharks	
2:00 pm	Forage fish, Grenadiers	
2:45 pm	Arrowtooth flounder, Flathead sole, SWF, DWF (Dover sole), rex sole	
Wednesday November 14 th		
9:00 am	GOA pollock	
12:00 pm	Lunch	
1:00 pm	Pacific ocean perch, northern rockfish	
3:00 pm	shortraker, rougheye, other slope rockfish	
Thursday November 15 th		
1:00 pm	PSR, demersal shelf rockfish, thornyheads	
3:00 pm	Atka mackerel, Skates, mop up	
Friday November 16 th		
9:00 am	Table preparation, Report writing, other business	
1:00 pm	Report finalization	
5:00 pm	Adjourn	
