Draft SSC Report December 2024

Balance of SSC Report

C1/C2 Groundfish Harvest Specifications

General Groundfish Comments (cont.) - Spatial Management

- Biologically-based subarea ABCs - used to prevent localized depletion and maintain spatial population structure.

- There are cases where moderate adjustments to spatial allocation schemes do not pose significant conservation risks.

- The SSC has used different approaches aimed to provide greater flexibility in setting subarea ABCs/TACs when there was no imminent conservation concern. Recent examples:

  - delaying applying scientific recommendations to provide the Council the opportunity to change subarea apportionment (GOA shortraker)

  - recommending combining subareas (GOA other rockfish)

- These approaches required additional time and resources

C1/C2 Groundfish Harvest Specifications

- The SSC discussed potential approaches to develop biologically based subarea ABCs that can be implemented within an assessment cycle, while minimizing constraints on fisheries

- One approach - SSC could set biologically-based subarea limits that give the Council greater flexibility to allocate TACs among subareas, provided overall ABC constraints are maintained.

  - Example: subarea limits collectively exceed 100% of the total ABC, while the Council would ensure TAC allocations remain within these limits and under the total, area-wide ABC.

- Subarea limits would be informed by the best available science, including stock structure and risks of local depletion, while offering flexibility in TAC apportionment among subareas

C1/C2 Groundfish Harvest Specifications

<u>General Groundfish Comments (cont.) - Spatial Management</u>

- The SSC *notes* that simple methods for specifying appropriate subarea limits could be considered using existing data and models

- Methods would best be developed, compared, and reviewed by authors and Plan Teams, as well as the SSC.

- The SSC *seeks guidance* from the Council on whether it wishes to pursue this approach or consider other options for enhancing flexibility in the spatial apportionment process.

C1/C2 Groundfish Harvest Specifications

- GOA - 5 full; 2 update assessments; harvest projections and catch reports

- No stocks were subject to overfishing and, for Tier 1 - 3 stocks, none are overfished or approaching an overfished state

- SSC-recommended harvest specifications for the GOA <u>did not differ</u> from the GOA GPT recommendations.

C2 GOA Groundfish Harvest Specifications

<u>Pollock</u>

- Operational annual assessment
- Survey and model results show slight increases, ABC stable
- The SSC *recommends* Model 23.d in agreement with authors and PT
  - 4 stepwise improvements to the model
  - Better estimation of recruitment and survey catchability
- Spawning biomass is higher than last year and above $B_{40\%}$
- Tier 3a for in W/C/WYAK, Tier 5 in SEO

C2 GOA Groundfish Harvest Specifications

<u>Pollock</u>

- The SSC *agrees* with the PT and author recommended harvest specifications.
    - No reduction from from maxABC
- The SSC *agrees* with the previously accepted methodology for apportioning the ABC between areas and between the new A (formerly A&B) and B (formerly C&D) seasons

C2 GOA Groundfish Harvest Specifications

Pollock ESP

- An ESP indicated average to above average ecosystem condition and below average socioeconomic conditions
- The SSC *requests* development of euphausiid index
- The SSC *recommends* that continued evaluation of using DSEM approach to improve short term forecasting with ESP indicators
- The SSC *recommends* develop Chinook salmon indicators from an ecosystem context (related to recent trawl closure)

C2 GOA Groundfish Harvest Specifications

Pacific Cod

- An operational full assessment for the GOA Pacific cod stock was presented.

- Modeling efforts this year focused relatively modest changes to improve treatment of input data and improve model performance.

- The SSC *recommends* Model 24.0 be used for harvest specification, in agreement with assessment authors and PT

- Results from Model 24.1 indicate that the stock is in Tier 3b, at approximately 29% of unfished stock abundance

C2 GOA Groundfish Harvest Specifications

<u>Pacific Cod</u>

- The SSC *agrees* with the PT and assessment author that there should be no reduction from maxABC, and with their recommended harvest specifications.

- The SSC *agrees* with the PT and author on area apportionments.

C2 GOA Groundfish Harvest Specifications

Pacific Cod ESP

- A welcome addition to this year's report card was an indicator for age-1 natural mortality from the GOA CEATTLE model.

- The SSC *appreciates* the classification of indicators between those that inform ABC determination and those that inform the TAC setting process,

- The SSC *recommends* that additional indicators be included to explore how downward trends in the ESP socioeconomic indicators are affecting fisheries and fishing communities.

C2 GOA Groundfish Harvest Specifications

<u>Northern Rockfish</u>

- This was a full assessment, with the last full assessment in 2022

- Projected 2025 spawning stock biomass increased in 2024 and is above B40%

- Tier 3a

- The SSC *recommends* Model 24, in agreement with the author and PT

  - Improvements to model specification, including an updated maturity curve, specification of a lognormal survey biomass likelihood, VAST configuration on survey biomass

C2 GOA Groundfish Harvest Specifications

<u>Northern Rockfish</u>

- The SSC *agrees* with the PT and author recommended harvest specifications.
    - no reduction from maxABC
- The SSC *agrees* with the PT on area apportionments using the status-quo REMA method.

C2 GOA Groundfish Harvest Specifications

Dusky Rockfish

- This was a full assessment, with the last full assessment in 2022.

- Projected 2025 spawning stock biomass declined from 2024, but still well above B40%

- Tier 3a

- The SSC *agrees* the PT and author recommended model 22.5a

- The SSC *agrees* with the PT and author recommended harvest specifications.

  - no reduction from maxABC

- The SSC *agrees* with the PT on area apportionments using the status-quo REMA method.

C2 GOA Groundfish Harvest Specifications

<u>Other Rockfish</u>

- Operational Full, biennial cycle, prepared out of cycle due to species changes (7 DSR species moved to DSR assessment).

- No new data, No changes to methods

- Tier 4, 5 and 6

- Removal of 7 species = 7% reduction in GOA-wide ABC

- The SSC *recommends* 15.2 (Tier 4), 23.1 (Tier 5) and max catch (Tier 6) in agreement with authors and PT

C2 GOA Groundfish Harvest Specifications

<u>Other Rockfish</u>

- The SSC *agrees* with the PT and author recommended harvest specifications.

    - No reduction from maxABC

- The SSC *agrees* with the PT and author on area apportionments.

- The SSC *recommends* holding to assessment cycle (full in 2025)

    - Not a conservation concern if delayed to 2027 due to assessment prioritization

        - Catch is about 28% of ABC

C2 GOA Groundfish Harvest Specifications

Demersal Shelf Rockfish

- Update Assessment (first GOA-wide for DSR), biennial schedule; biomass increasing since 2016. 7 DSR species added to this assessment.

- Combines Tier 5 YE (SEO) and Tier 6 DSR (CG/WG/WY and SEO)

- The SSC *recommends* Model 22.2 (REMA) *with M = 0.02 and the new standardized IPHC CPUE index* for the Tier 5 YE in agreement with the PT, and max catch for Tier 6 in agreement with the PT and author.

- The SSC *agrees* with the PT recommended harvest specifications.
    - No reduction from maxABC

C2 GOA Groundfish Harvest Specifications

Demersal Shelf Rockfish

- The SSC appreciated the new author's work in incorporate the new DRS species and CIE advice.

- Due to substantial changes to both assessment inputs and methods the SSC *requests* a bridging analysis that addresses the impact of changing M and using the standardized IPHC CPUE index based on weight/ hook.

C2 GOA Groundfish Harvest Specifications

Thornyheads

- Full assessment, last full assessment was 2022

- Projected biomass for 2025 decreased from estimated biomass in 2024

- Tier 5

- The SSC *recommends* the PT and author recommended model 24.2, a REMA model that shares process error across areas

  - Simplifies model and improves stability

C2 GOA Groundfish Harvest Specifications

<u>Thornyheads</u>

- The SSC *agrees* with the PT and author recommended harvest specifications.

  - no reduction from maxABC

- The SSC *agrees* with the PT and author on area apportionments

- Given the decline in biomass in recent years, the SSC *recommends* bringing forward available survey indices for GPT review in September 2025.

C3 BSAI Crab Harvest Specifications

<u>NSRKC</u>

- Annual assessment; ADF&G trawl biomass increasing over the last few years (no NBS survey this year)

- MMB is above the Bmsy proxy

- Tier 4a; not overfished and no overfishing

- The SSC *recommends* Model 24.0 (GMACS) in agreement with the CPT

- 30% ABC buffer

  ○ Continued uncertainty in biological characteristics, lack of discard data, whether higher M at large sizes is appropriate, increased retrospective pattern

  ○ Same buffer as in 2023; in agreement with the CPT

C3 BSAI Crab Harvest Specifications

NSRKC

- The SSC *supports* resolution of two issues associated with the transition to GMACS (inclusion of total catch from winter subsistence fishery; calculator of OFL in GMACS)
- The SSC looks forward to the model-based survey index work to be presented next year
- The SSC supports the other CPT recommendations for this stock:
  - Development of presentation standard of jitter results
  - Investigating the retrospective pattern
  - Including fits to catch data
  - Investigating effect of shell condition on size composition fits