

# SSC Report to NEFMC

Mystic, CT  
April 22, 2014

Jake Kritzer, SSC Chair

# SSC Agenda

## March 27, Providence

- 8:30 Welcome, introductions, agenda review
- 8:45 Update on New England Council's Risk Policy Working Group (Georgianna)
- 9:15 Discussion about the role of social scientists on SSC (Thunberg)
- 10:15 Break
- 10:30 Discussion of fishermen's participation on the SSC
- 11:00 Review and comment on proposed NOAA stock assessment prioritization process
- 12:00 Lunch
- 1:30 Discuss use of multiple models in assessment and catch advice (O'Boyle, Hoenig, Cadrin)
- 3:30 Briefing on National Academy of Sciences report on stock rebuilding (Sullivan)
- 4:15 SSC work plan for 2014
- 5:00 Other business

# Role of Social Scientists

## Three issues:

1. Social science TORs are rare.
2. Social scientists can enable quorum for decisions that lie primarily within natural sciences.
3. When social science issues come before SSC, critical mass of social scientists is lacking.

# Role of Social Scientists

## Three possible courses of action:

1. Revisit past SSC recommendations that social science factors be included to inform ABC advice.
2. More social science TORs and quorum standard.
3. Develop and utilize corps of social science experts not serving on SSC for short-term appointment as needed.

# 1. Social Science Factors to Inform ABCs

- Distinct from consideration of social science factors in developing risk policy, which precedes ABC-setting.
- Use indicators and analyses to complement biological information and lend insight into status and trends.
- Initial red crab ABC cited as an example.
- MAFMC fishery performance reports might be a useful model, depending upon staff ability to prepare them.
- SSC social scientists to work with Council staff and AP Chairs to define appropriate indicators and plan for producing them.

## 2. Social Science TORs & Quorum Standard

- Do not support 'token' TORs.
- Also do not support quorum standard.
- Social scientists have offered valuable insights into both natural and social science aspects, but...
- ...better information needed to do so most effectively (see preceding proposal).
- SSC members should use their discretion about when and how to contribute.
- Should scrutinize meeting composition in light of agenda and determine whether adequate expertise are present.

# 3. Develop & Utilize Corps of Experts

- Strong support for this proposal.
- Employed effectively in the past when Dr. Whitlach of UConn joined SSC for SASI review.

# Summary of Recommendations

- Provide and utilize social science information alongside biological and ecological information in ABC-setting.
- ‘Token’ TORs and quorum standard not warranted.
- Roster of external experts for short-term appointment should be developed and utilized.



# Fishermen Participation: Benefits

- Fishermen have unique insights into biological, ecological and socio-economic trends.
- These can change perceptions of risk; e.g., impacts of skate abundance on monkfish catch.
- Fishermen insights can offset issues with lags in incorporation of 'formal' scientific data.
- Insights especially important in a time of rapid ecosystem change and transition toward EBFM.

# Fishermen Participation: Concerns

- Concerns about conflict of interest.
- Perspective likely restricted to narrow set of gears, fishing grounds, target species, years, times of year, etc.
- Involvement at SSC stage might be too late for insights to be adequately synthesized and reviewed.

# Recommendations

- Fishermen encouraged to participate in overall science process as much as possible, from research and data collection to assessment to development of catch advice.
- Dedicated seat(s) on SSC not warranted, but...
- ...fishermen are welcome to apply for open seats like anyone else, and appointment should be based on individual experience and credentials, and SSC needs.
- Fishery performance reports, esp. with AP input, can be another vehicle for involvement → AP Chair presents with PDT Chair?

# Overview of NOAA Proposed Assessment Prioritization Process

- Possible shift from region-by-region to national prioritization, per OMB request.
- Develops plan for first-time assessment of unassessed stocks, and plan for improving assessment of assessed stocks.
- Develops target frequency for each stock.
- Benchmarks when new data allow new models; updates for stocks at or beyond target frequency.

# Overview of NOAA Proposed Assessment Prioritization Process

- Considerations for prioritization:
  - Commercial importance.
  - Recreational importance.
  - Ecosystem importance.
  - Stock biology.
  - Stock status.
  - Assessment history, esp. unresolved uncertainties.

# Comments on NOAA Proposed Assessment Prioritization Process

- Perhaps overly formalized and even naïve given complexity of factors to be considered; flexibility and judgment remain important.
- Clearer and more transparent process could counteract unproductive effects of political interference.
- Spec. cycles and other management & regulatory deadlines likely to remain overriding factor.
- Disconnect between call for more timely incorporation of new information and move to multi-year assessment cycles?

# Comments on NOAA Proposed Assessment Prioritization Process

- Fishermen investments (ship time, funding, etc.) should see a return in frequency of assessments.
- Differences in time required for benchmark (research track) and update (operational) assessments will determine number that can be performed.
- Differences in cost-effectiveness of different approaches will also determine number possible.
- Whatever approach is utilized, important to manage expectations about number of assessments possible per year.

# Use of Multiple Models: Considerations

- Previous SSC advice has recommended use of multiple models (e.g., comments on GOM haddock TORs), but without adequate detail.
- SSC has been presented outputs of multiple models to develop catch advice (e.g., GOM cod).
- Advantage is that more information is provided; different but plausible models are not discarded.
- Disadvantage is uncertainty about how to handle competing perspectives from different models.



# Use of Multiple Models: Recommendations

- Assessments should strive for single consensus model per the current approach, but should not be obligated if unwarranted.
- Outcomes of models considered but rejected can be better conveyed to SSC, providing requested information without undue additional burden on assessment process.
- Ad hoc SSC sub-group to continue meeting and developing more detailed guidance based on SSC discussion for later review.

**THANKS!**  
**QUESTIONS?**