



New England Fishery Management Council

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To: Groundfish Plan Development Team
From: Scientific and Statistical Committee
Date: September 13, 2011

Subject: **Projection methodology for setting groundfish ABCs**

Terms of reference

The Scientific and Statistical Committee (SSC) was asked the following:

- a. What methods should be used to calculate recommended ABCs for FY 2012 – 2014 for groundfish stocks that were last assessed using analytic assessments in GARM III?
 - (1) One alternative recommended by the Augmented Groundfish Plan Development Team for setting FY 2012 -2014 ABCs is to use the FY 2012 ABC that has already been established as the ABC for FY 2012 – 2014. Does the SSC recommend this method?
 - (2) One alternative recommended by the Augmented Groundfish Plan Development Team for setting FY 2012 -2014 ABCs is to use a decision rule based on the trend in the aggregated NEFSC survey biomass index (weight/tow) to choose between the FY 2010 ABC and FY 2012 ABC for use as the FY 2012 – 2014 ABC. Does the SSC recommend this method?
 - (3) If the SSC does not recommend either (1) or (2), what approach does the SSC recommend for setting FY 2012 -2014 ABCs for groundfish stocks?
- b. Does the SSC agree with the APDT's recommendations for setting ABCs for stocks that have either been assessed since GARM III or use index-based assessments?

In order to meet this term of reference, the SSC considered the following:

1. SSC report dated June 20, 2011
2. Groundfish APDT conference call summary dated July 13, 2011
3. Groundfish APDT conference call summary dated August 2, 2011
4. 52nd Northeast Regional Stock Assessment Workshop Summary Report. 2011. NEFSC Reference Document 11-11
5. Presentation by PDT Chair Tom Nies, NEFMC staff.
6. Presentation on projection analyses by Liz Brooks, NEFSC.

The SSC heard a report on work conducted by the Augmented Groundfish PDT (APDT) since the SSC provided advice to the APDT in June 2011. The outcomes of the SSC discussion of those analyses and their implications for setting ABCs are as follows:

The SSC recommends:

1. **FY 2012 ABCs for stocks last assessed during GARM III should be set to the values approved in Amendment 16 to the Northeast Multispecies FMP based on projections from the terminal year of those assessments.**

2. For FY 2013 and 2014, projections from the GARM III assessments are not reliable as a basis for catch advice. In the absence of new assessments, possible scenarios for FY 2013 and 2014 ABCs include:

- Retain the FY 2012 ABCs for FY 2013 and 2014 in the absence of information that justifies a change to status quo catch.**
- Apply data-poor approaches, such as recent average catch.**
- Actively pursue other approaches not yet discussed by the PDT and/or SSC.**

However, the SSC strongly endorsed conducting new assessment for those stocks last assessed during GARM III given the lack of confidence in continued projections and the limitations of the options outlined above. Since the August 2011 SSC meeting, NEFSC has decided to go ahead with those new assessments, the outcomes of which will presumably form the basis of FY 2013 and FY2014 ABCs.

3. For stocks that have been assessed since GARM III, and therefore for which shorter term projections are available, and those for which index-based methods are used, the existing ABC control rule should be applied as proposed by the PDT.