

Stock Assessments Synopsis

Stock assessments are a key component of fishery management, especially when fisheries are required to be managed relative to maximum sustainable yield and where catch limits must be set for federally managed fisheries.

Under this topic area the CCC meeting will hear first the outcomes of the Fourth National SSC Meeting in Williamsburg in October 2011. The topic addressed at this meeting included Ecosystem Based Fishery Management (EBFM) and incorporation of social sciences in traditional single species stock assessments and EBFM. Some of the major outcomes of the National SSC Meeting were:

- The formation of a working group to build upon National SSC IV discussions on how social science can be incorporated into stock assessments, inclusion of social science issues in Stock Assessment and Fishery Evaluation (SAFE) reports, and consideration of social and economic effects when developing Acceptable Biological Catches
- The development of the concept of a system level Optimum Yield (OY) as opposed to a single species OY, the need to define forage species and approaches to estimating forage species biomass and demand by predators, and the need for better information on interactions among species and trophic levels

The CCC will also hear on progress in the evolution of new stock assessment approaches, as well as the consideration of the current stock assessment load. This includes consideration of environmental impacts on fish abundance and how these can be factored into stock assessments, and the use of advanced technology to provide information for stock assessments.

The CCC will also hear about work underway to prioritize stock assessments. This includes the challenges of using relatively data poor 'level 3' production model approaches versus higher level 4 or 5 age-based stock assessment that are able to evaluate stock size and age class abundance relative to fishing mortality. The goal for the Office of Science and Technology in 2012 will be to develop a draft stock assessment prioritization report, with input from the Councils and use these tools to inform stock assessment prioritization and the allocation of funds for stock assessments.

In the Western Pacific Region, stock assessment limitations result from difficulties recruiting staff for stock assessment modeling, the need for improved fishery monitoring data from the three US territories (Guam, Commonwealth of the Northern Mariana Islands and American Samoa) and the need for increased capacity to process the large volumes of data being generated by bio-sampling in the territories in support of stock assessments.