



D3 Stock Prioritization

February 2023

Action Memo

Council Staff: Sara Cleaver
Other Presenters: Chris Lunsford (AFSC), Melissa Haltuch (AFSC)
Action Required:

1. Review NMFS recommendations on stock prioritization
2. Review Groundfish Plan Team meeting report
3. Provide recommendations as necessary

BACKGROUND

In February 2017, NMFS and the Council developed an approach for applying the National Stock Assessment Prioritization Plan in the North Pacific. The national plan envisions a common approach for all regions to determine how often their stock assessments would be conducted. Under the approach, assessments for some stocks with consistently low catches relative to harvest limits, and no ongoing management concerns, were reduced in frequency such that formerly annual assessments were switched to a longer (2-4 year) cycle. At the time, the Council defined success for the amended assessment frequencies as providing “an increased opportunity for stock assessment authors to address analytical priorities [...] while avoiding any significant decrease in the precision of assessment-based products such as OFL and ABC.”

As part of the February 2017 discussion, the Council requested a review be conducted after one complete cycle (five years) of the revised assessment frequencies. At the October 2022 Council meeting, NMFS AFSC staff provided an update on the stock assessment process and additional recommendations to continue to improve efficiency while maintaining the ability to meet the need for timely and high-quality assessments. The Council endorsed the NMFS AFSC recommendations on SAFE guidelines and best practices for producing stock assessments. The Council also supported NMFS/AFSC providing recommendations on the frequency of specific stock assessments for SSC and Council review in early 2023.

At this meeting, AFSC is providing recommendations for moving forward on stock assessment prioritization. Thirteen groundfish stocks are being considered for reduced stock assessment frequency. The AFSC has also provided updated definitions for types of stock assessment products, and new SAFE guidelines are being developed to provide authors with detailed guidance. The BSAI and GOA Groundfish Plan Teams jointly reviewed these recommendations at their February 2nd meeting and the report from that meeting is included under this agenda item.