

# Draft SSC Report October 2023



**Balance of SSC Report**

# SSC General Comments

- The SSC discussed how to best bring socioeconomic information into the Council process to meet National Standard 2 (as well as NS1, NS4, NS8)
- To effectively inform OFL/ABC determinations (if indicators provide information on population dynamics or distributions), and TAC setting, such data needs to be reviewed and provided to the SSC and Council
- The SSC ***recommends*** that a schedule be developed for when and where socioeconomic information should be presented to the SSC and Council, which should consider:
  - Efficiency
  - Requirements under National Standards
  - Alignment with annual specification schedule

# SSC Administrative Discussion

- Council staff provided the SSC with an overview of the amended NEPA statute now in effect, and new time limits for completing EA and EIS
- The SSC **recognizes** the advantages of faster turnaround times. Slower management policies can undermine goals.
- Recognizing there may be refinements to the Council process needed to support this expedited timeline, the SSC is concerned that the truncated EA/EIS timeline has the potential to constrain the scientific review process
- Coordination with the SSC prior to formal initiation of EA/EIS may help maintain the quality of scientific review
- The SSC **considers** the robustness of the scientific review process as paramount

# SSC Admin - IRA Funding

- Council staff provided an excellent overview of potential proposal topics to improve climate readiness based on 1) projects already underway (eg. CCTF and Programmatic EIS), 2) projects discussed but not started, and 3) projects arising from SSC Feb 2023 Workshop report.
- The SSC ***finds*** this list of potential projects suitable for further development of a proposal.
- The SSC ***highlights*** the need for increased staff capacity so as to not impact current responsibilities.
- The SSC ***suggests*** that the proposal integrate/coordinate with other IRA funding (e.g. AFSC, other Regional Councils) and with ongoing Council activities as best as possible.

# SSC Admin - IRA Funding

- SSC *supports* development of a strategic goal for what to achieve by the end of the funding period to help focus the proposal
- The SSC did not prioritize among the many project ideas, but highlighted several potential themes:
  - review and revision of harvest control rules & consideration of dynamic reference points
  - review and revision of the Tier system
  - re-examination of closure areas and how they could be more dynamic if needed
  - how to make the TAC setting process more flexible
  - metrics needed to modify (add or remove) FMP species as species distributions continue to change.

# SSC Admin - IRA Funding

- SSC *supports* consideration of a project to examine how the management process, and its scientific inputs could be modified to better react to abrupt rather than gradual changes
  - consider other fields that specifically deal with emergency preparedness and disaster planning/preparedness for appropriate processes and procedures that may help the Council prepare for disruptions.
- The SSC generally *supports* the use of workshops when appropriate (depending on project) to engage stakeholders / public

# C3 Groundfish Harvest Specifications

## Proposed Specifications (1 of 1)

- For both the BSAI and the GOA
  - The SSC **recommends** approval of the proposed 2024/2025 groundfish specifications as provided by the BSAI/GOA GPT
  - The SSC **supports** the BSAI/GOA GPT's recommendation to approve the Halibut DMR Working Group recommendation for proposed halibut DMRs for 2024/2025

## C3 General Groundfish Comments (1 of 1)

- The SSC recognizes the transition of models from ADMB to TMB is likely to become common
  - The SSC provided a minimal list of model elements for the Plan Team to review for any proposed transition to TMB
  - The SSC notes that this transition is an opportunity to refine and improve models
- The SSC **suggests** that assessment authors coordinate with researchers on new analyses of rockfish stock structure that could have implications for their stock
- For future Plan Team reports, the SSC **requests** that a table be included that shows what is recommended to be brought forward in Nov/Dec (tier, type of assessment, alternative models) to facilitate SSC review



## C3 Joint Groundfish Plan Team Report (1 of 3)

- The SSC received a presentation on the September JGPT meeting, including discussion of new/ongoing research
  - The SSC **appreciates** these updates on new research, given the potential for these methods to be used in the future
- The SSC **supports** continued ESP development and consideration of ways to offset ESP development timing from the standard stock assessment cycle to ease burden on authors
- The SSC highlights its appreciation to the ESR team and **supports** efforts to make ecosystem indicator time series (that are not confidential) available via the AKFIN portal to facilitate uptake
- The SSC **encourages** ESP and ESR authors to consider collaboration on future climate readiness initiatives

## C3 Joint Groundfish Plan Team Report (2 of 3)

- The SSC appreciates efforts by the NMFS RACE survey group to evaluate methods for modernizing both EBS bottom trawl survey design and gear
- The SSC *requests* opportunity for periodic review of planned changes in survey methodology as they move forward including
  - Planning for field-based gear intercalibration experiments
  - Statistical methods for intercalibration
  - Survey gear design changes
- The SSC looks forward to a summary report describing outcomes from the public workshop planned for October 2023

## C3 Joint Groundfish Plan Team Report (3 of 3)

- The SSC **highlights** findings from the NOAA-AFSC Genetics Program showing limited genetic stock structure for demersal and offshore rockfish, when compared with pelagic and slope.
  - The SSC encourages stock authors to assess whether these stock structure analyses have implications for their assessments.
- The SSC **supports** further research by the NMFS Longline Survey team to evaluate the impact of slinky pot escape ring size on gear selectivity.
- The SSC **reiterates** its recommendation from December 2022 that the Alaska Sablefish assessment attempt to incorporate additional sources of mortality including sport and survey or research removals.

# C3 BSAI Plan Team

## BSAI PT report (1 of 2)

- The SSC ***supports*** the BSAI GPT recommendations for models and analyses for the 2023 assessment cycle, including:
  - Yellowfin Sole: Previous model, replace split-sex with single time-varying selectivity.
  - AI Pacific cod: Three model variants (Tier 5 base model and two Tier 3 models under development).
  - EBS pollock: Adopt the new full AVO index and two other exploratory modifications

# C3 BSAI Plan Team

## BSAI PT report (2 of 2)

- The SSC ***supports*** the BSAI GPT recommendations for models and analyses for the 2023 assessment cycle, including:
  - Pacific cod: The SSC ***supports*** the BSAI-GPT recommendation to not pursue the ensemble modeling approach at this point but to further develop a simpler modeling option and adding features in a stepwise approach
  - Northern rockfish: The SSC ***supports*** the BSAI-GPT recommendation on Northern rockfish to include stock structure information in the risk table and to continue to monitor stock for potential spatial concerns.

# C3 GOA Plan Team

## GOA PT report (1 of 2)

- The SSC ***supports*** the GOA PT recommendations for models and analyses for the 2023 assessment cycle, except for shortraker rockfish for which the SSC requests a full assessment
- The SSC ***supports*** the GOA-GPT recommendation to use a new software platform (TMB) for the GOA pollock base model and to explore alternative flexible fisheries selectivity for the 2023 assessment cycle
- The SSC ***supports*** the GPT recommendation for GOA pollock, and reiterates its general 2021 recommendation, to prioritize research on best practices for projecting near term trends in Tier 1-3 assessments when selectivities vary over time
  - The SST encourages the GPTs to develop general guidance to assessment authors based on performance evaluations

# C3 GOA Plan Team

## GOA PT report (2 of 2)

- The SSC **supports** moving DSR species out of the other rockfish category to a GOA-wide assessment in 2024 (when there is a full assessment for DSR) for implementation for the 2025 fisheries
- The SSC **supports** basing apportionment for shorttraker and rougheye-blackspotted rockfishes on both the bottom trawl survey and the longline survey
- The SSC **supports** moving 12 Tier 5 species in the other rockfish complex to Tier 6.
- The SSC **supports** using the most recent 3-year average survey biomass for estimating M to mitigate large changes in survey biomass for poorly sampled other rockfish, which has caused large changes in OFLs in the past

# C4 Chum Salmon Bycatch – Preliminary Review

- Preliminary analysis of potential new management measures to minimize chum salmon bycatch, particularly bycatch of Western Alaska-origin chum salmon in the Bering Sea Pollock fishery.
- The SSC was asked to provide advice on considerations about relative scientific uncertainty of proposed management options the Council could take into account in selecting alternatives for analysis. Specifically:
  - What measure of ocean temperature to use and implications of linking levels of chum PSC to ocean temperature?
  - ADF&G's recommendation on what is feasible for developing an index of Western Alaska chum abundance for three management areas – the Yukon, Kuskokwim, and Norton Sound.
  - The level of uncertainty of incorporating escapement goals and ANS alongside estimates of historical abundance.



# C4 Chum Salmon Bycatch – Preliminary Review

Ocean temperatures and linking to levels of chum salmon PSC

- The SSC ***cautions*** against relying upon coarse, broad-scale environmental relationships that are likely influenced by complex biophysical processes that may break down in the future.
- The SSC ***suggests*** examining finer scale interactions over a longer time series as well as other metrics (e.g. bycatch rate), if pursued.
- Specific recommendations on what temperature measure to use, and analysis to conduct, depend on knowing how this information will be used (i.e., as a predictive tool or as a means of helping to set a PSC limits during warm vs. cold ocean conditions).

# C4 Chum Salmon Bycatch – Preliminary Review

Western Alaska chum abundance – three area indices

- The SSC **concurrs** that the indices are the best scientific information currently available for understanding abundance of chum salmon in these three areas.
- The SSC **concurrs** with treating each area as an ‘independent’ test for low abundance.
- The SSC **recommends** that all further analysis include variance estimates for each of these indices, if available, to permit evaluation of how meaningful observed interannual differences are and how sensitive a management approach relying on these indices may be to observation error versus actual change in the populations.

# C4 Chum Salmon Bycatch – Preliminary Review

Western Alaska chum abundance – three area indices (cont.)

- The SSC *suggests* that it is important to consider how to address missing data should data to inform the indexes are not consistently available.
- The SSC *recommends* using the full time series available, including 2023 estimates to the extent possible.

# C4 Chum Salmon Bycatch – Preliminary Review

ANS and meeting escapement goals to help define low abundance

- The SSC *agrees* that these metrics should not be used independently from measures of abundance but are critical for providing context to the options being considered.
- The SSC *recommends* including:
  - details about the ANS determinations and guidance on how to interpret not meeting the lower end of the ANS range relative to subsistence harvest, falling within the range, or exceeding the range.
  - information on management actions (specifically fishing restrictions or liberalizations) for each year to help provide additional context to the ANS met/not met and percentage of escapement goals met metrics.

# C4 Chum Salmon Bycatch – Preliminary Review

ANS and meeting escapement goals to help define low abundance (cont.)

- The SSC ***recommends*** including (cont.):
  - estimated subsistence removals in context with the ANS status (met or not met) in the analysis tables, as appropriate.
- The SSC ***recommends*** that when setting a threshold for what constitutes low abundance the objectives are clearly stated (i.e., are the objectives for sustaining salmon, or communities, or both)

# C4 Chum Salmon Bycatch – Preliminary Review

- Additional considerations
  - The SSC ***recommends*** that individual vessel and operational constraints under various cap scenarios be considered for this analysis (an important feature under Amendment 91 Chinook PSC management).
  - The SSC ***recommends*** consideration of a broader suite of variables beyond ocean temperature (e.g., juvenile chum abundance index from surface trawl surveys) to explore what might be possible in the future, particularly in terms of providing forecasts that could be used to inform management actions preseason.

# C4 Chum Salmon Bycatch – Preliminary Review

- Additional considerations (cont.)
  - The SSC **encourages** the analysts to use the genetic and other information available to explore estimates of maximum thresholds (i.e., know that AEQ is below a certain maximum number).
  - The SSC **recommends** future actions should include specific, measurable, and objective metrics that could be used to measure results and success of outcomes, which in turn can be used as a learning tool to help inform any future actions.

# D2 BSAI Crab Review Workplan

- The SSC *appreciates* this opportunity to review the workplan for the 17 year program review
- The SSC *recommends* following the format of the rockfish review.
  - Identifying metrics for each element of original Purpose & Need
  - Reporting dashboard of those metrics
  - Characterizing significant current and emerging issues
- The SSC *recommends* including distributional effects of quota leasing
  - New information on quota holders is available in the Economic SAFE
  - Crew pay has evolved in its consideration of leasing costs



# D2 BSAI Crab Review Workplan

- The SSC ***recommends*** reviewing how program elements exacerbate or mitigate effects of recent fishery closure
  - Distinguish effects of collapse from effects of program (& interactions)
  - Identify non-fishery community-level measures to reflect loss of fishing
    - Demographic and institutional summary indicators like in halibut ABM analysis
  - Consider role of fishery specialization as a result of rationalization
  - Consider role of CDQ groups in conferring community resilience
- The SSC ***suggests*** including key social indicators within the body of the review

# D3 IFQ Program Review Workplan

- The SSC ***appreciates*** this opportunity to review the workplan for the Pacific Halibut and Sablefish Individual Fishing Quota (IFQ) Management Program.
- The SSC ***recommends*** following the format of the GOA Rockfish Program Review.
  - Identifying metrics for each element of original Purpose & Need
  - Reporting dashboard of those metrics
  - Characterizing significant current and emerging issues

# D3 IFQ Program Review Workplan

- The SSC *recommends* including analyses specific to:
  - How program elements have supported or inhibited intergenerational transfer of quota and new entry into the fishery.
  - Identification of communities formerly substantially engaged in or dependent on the fisheries that have experienced declines in local ownership of IFQ since program inception.
  - How IFQ and CDQ programs have interacted in Bering Sea halibut management areas with varying levels of CDQ reserves.
  - How Community Quota Entity (CQE) formation and acquisition of IFQ has varied across communities with different demographics and institutional characteristics.

# D3 IFQ Program Review Workplan

- The SSC ***recommends*** incorporation of:
  - Community demographic and institutional summary indicators similar to those developed for the recent Halibut ABM Social Impact Assessment.
  - A literature review focused the beneficial and adverse social, cultural, and economic impacts of the IFQ program on sectors and communities.
- The SSC ***suggests*** including key social indicators within the body of the review