Appendix: Stock Assessment Terms of Reference for SAW/SARC55, December 3-7, 2012
(To be carried out by SAW Working Groups) (v. 5/30/2012)

A. Gulf of Maine cod stock

1. Estimate catch from all sources including landings and discards. Characterize the uncertainty in these sources of data and take into account the recommendations and subsequent work from the March 2012 MRIP workshop. Evaluate available information on discard mortality and, if appropriate, update mortality rates applied to discard components of the catch.

2. Present the survey data and calibration information being used in the assessment (e.g., indices of abundance, recruitment, state surveys, age-length data, etc.). Consider model-based (e.g. GLM) as well as design-based analyses of the survey data in developing trends in relative abundance. Investigate the utility of commercial or recreational LPUE as a measure of relative abundance. Characterize the uncertainty and any bias in these sources of data.

3. Summarize the findings of recent workshops on stock structure of cod of the Northeastern US and Atlantic Canada.

4. Investigate the evidence for natural mortality rates which are time- and/or age-specific. If appropriate, integrate these into the stock assessment (TOR 5).

5. Estimate annual fishing mortality, recruitment and stock biomass (both total and spawning stock) for the time series, and estimate their uncertainty. Consider feasibility of survey catchability estimates, the starting year for the assessment, estimation of the stock recruitment curve, inclusion of multiple fleets, and whether to use domed or flat selectivity-at–age for the NEFSC surveys. Provide a summary of steps in the model building process. Include a historical retrospective analysis to allow a comparison with previous assessment results. Review the performance of historical projections with respect to stock size, catch recruitment and fishing mortality.

6. State the existing stock status definitions for "overfished" and "overfishing". Then update or redefine biological reference points (BRPs; point estimates or proxies for B_{MSY}, $B_{THRESHOLD}$, F_{MSY} , and MSY) and provide estimates of their uncertainty. Consider alternative parametric models of the stock recruitment relationship. If analytic model-based estimates are unavailable, consider recommending alternative measurable proxies for BRPs. Comment on the appropriateness of existing BRPs and any "new" (i.e., updated, redefined, or alternative) BRPs.
7. Evaluate stock status with respect to the existing model (from the most recent accepted peer reviewed assessment) and with respect to a new model developed for this peer review. In both cases, evaluate whether the stock is rebuilt.
    a. When working with the existing model, update it with new data and evaluate stock status (overfished and overfishing) with respect to the existing BRP estimates.
    b. Then use the newly proposed model and evaluate stock status with respect to

"new" BRPs (from Cod TOR-6).

8. Develop and apply analytical approaches to conduct single and multi-year stock projections to compute the pdf (probability density function) of the OFL (overfishing level) and candidate ABCs (Acceptable Biological Catch; see Appendix to the SAW TORs).
    a. Provide numerical annual projections (3-5 years). Each projection should estimate and report annual probabilities of exceeding threshold BRPs for F, and probabilities of falling below threshold BRPs for biomass. Use a sensitivity analysis approach in which a range of assumptions about the most important uncertainties in the assessment are considered (e.g., terminal year abundance, variability in recruitment).
    b. Comment on which projections seem most realistic. Consider the major uncertainties in the assessment as well as sensitivity of the projections to various assumptions.
    c. Describe this stock's vulnerability (see "Appendix to the SAW TORs") to becoming overfished, and how this could affect the choice of ABC.

9. Review, evaluate and report on the status of the SARC and Working Group research recommendations listed in recent SARC reviewed assessments and review panel reports. Identify new research recommendations.

B. Georges Bank cod stock

1. Estimate catch from all sources including landings and discards. Characterize the uncertainty in these sources of data and take into account the recommendations and subsequent work from the March 2012 MRIP workshop. Evaluate available information on discard mortality and, if appropriate, update mortality rates applied to discard components of the catch.

2. Present the survey data and calibration information being used in the assessment (e.g., indices of abundance, recruitment, state surveys, age-length data, etc.). Consider model-based (e.g. GLM) as well as design-based analyses of the survey data in developing trends in relative abundance. Investigate the utility of commercial or recreational LPUE as a measure of relative abundance. Characterize the uncertainty and any bias in these sources of data.

3. Summarize the findings of recent workshops on stock structure of cod of the Northeastern US and Atlantic Canada.

4. Investigate the evidence for natural mortality rates which are time- and/or age-specific. If appropriate, integrate these into the stock assessment (TOR 5).

5. Estimate annual fishing mortality, recruitment and stock biomass (both total and spawning stock) for the time series, and estimate their uncertainty. Consider feasibility of survey catchability estimates, the starting year for the assessment, estimation of the stock recruitment curve, inclusion of multiple fleets, and whether to use domed or flat selectivity-at–age for the NEFSC surveys. Provide a summary of steps in the model building process. Include a historical retrospective analysis to allow a comparison with previous assessment results. Review the performance of historical projections with respect to stock size, catch recruitment and fishing mortality.

6. State the existing stock status definitions for "overfished" and "overfishing". Then update or redefine biological reference points (BRPs; point estimates or proxies for B_{MSY}, $B_{THRESHOLD}$, $F_{MSY,}$ and MSY) and provide estimates of their uncertainty. Consider alternative parametric models of the stock recruitment relationship. If analytic model-based estimates are unavailable, consider recommending alternative measurable proxies for BRPs. Comment on the appropriateness of existing BRPs and any "new" (i.e., updated, redefined, or alternative) BRPs.
7. Evaluate stock status with respect to the existing model (from the most recent accepted peer reviewed assessment) and with respect to a new model developed for this peer review. In both cases, evaluate whether the stock is rebuilt.
    a. When working with the existing model, update it with new data and evaluate stock status (overfished and overfishing) with respect to the existing BRP estimates.
    b. Then use the newly proposed model and evaluate stock status with respect to "new" BRPs (from Cod TOR-6).
8. Develop and apply analytical approaches to conduct single and multi-year stock

projections to compute the pdf (probability density function) of the OFL (overfishing level) and candidate ABCs (Acceptable Biological Catch; see Appendix to the SAW TORs).

a. Provide numerical annual projections (3-5 years). Each projection should estimate and report annual probabilities of exceeding threshold BRPs for F, and probabilities of falling below threshold BRPs for biomass. Use a sensitivity analysis approach in which a range of assumptions about the most important uncertainties in the assessment are considered (e.g., terminal year abundance, variability in recruitment).
b. Comment on which projections seem most realistic. Consider the major uncertainties in the assessment as well as sensitivity of the projections to various assumptions.
c. Describe this stock's vulnerability (see "Appendix to the SAW TORs") to becoming overfished, and how this could affect the choice of ABC.

9. Review, evaluate and report on the status of the SARC and Working Group research recommendations listed in recent SARC reviewed assessments and review panel reports. Identify new research recommendations.

Appendix to the SAW Assessment TORs:

Clarification of Terms used in the SAW/SARC Terms of Reference

On "Acceptable Biological Catch" (DOC Nat. Stand. Guidel. Fed. Reg., v. 74, no. 11, 1-16-2009):

> *Acceptable biological catch (ABC)* is a level of a stock or stock complex's annual catch that accounts for the scientific uncertainty in the estimate of [overfishing limit] OFL and any other scientific uncertainty…" *(p. 3208) [In other words, OFL ≥ ABC.]*
>
> *ABC for overfished stocks.* For overfished stocks and stock complexes, a rebuilding ABC must be set to reflect the annual catch that is consistent with the schedule of fishing mortality rates in the rebuilding plan. *(p. 3209)*
>
> NMFS expects that in most cases ABC will be reduced from OFL to reduce the probability that overfishing might occur in a year. (p. 3180)
>
> ABC refers to a level of ''catch'' that is ''acceptable'' given the ''biological'' characteristics of the stock or stock complex. As such, [optimal yield] OY does not equate with ABC. The specification of OY is required to consider a variety of factors, including social and economic factors, and the protection of marine ecosystems, which are not part of the ABC concept. (p. 3189)

On "Vulnerability" (DOC Natl. Stand. Guidelines. Fed. Reg., v. 74, no. 11, 1-16-2009):

> *"Vulnerability.* A stock's vulnerability is a combination of its productivity, which depends upon its life history characteristics, and its susceptibility to the fishery. Productivity refers to the capacity of the stock to produce MSY and to recover if the population is depleted, and susceptibility is the potential for the stock to be impacted by the fishery, which includes direct captures, as well as indirect impacts to the fishery (e.g., loss of habitat quality)." (p. 3205)

Rules of Engagement among members of a SAW Assessment Working Group:

> Anyone participating in SAW assessment working group meetings that will be running or presenting results from an assessment model is expected to supply the source code, a compiled executable, an input file with the proposed configuration, and a detailed model description in advance of the model meeting. Source code for NOAA Toolbox programs is available on request. These measures allow transparency and a fair evaluation of differences that emerge between models.