

D. OPERATIONAL ASSESSMENT PROCESS – REVIEW PANEL SUMMARY

As a relatively new process for reviewing assessment updates the Panel and participants reflected on the process to offer guidance for future implementations. Feedback was provided on documentation, scope, and standard content of an operational update assessment.

Some clarification on documentation is needed. The Operational Update Process specifies that “two reports will be provided to the appropriate PDT/TC. One report will summarize the results of the Integrated Peer Review (and authored by the Chair of the Integrated Peer Review). The second report will be the assessment document, which will be an NEFSC Reference Document, and will serve as the basis for the stock status determination (and will be authored by the stock’s assessment scientist).” Full benchmark assessments include the detailed assessment document that explicitly addresses terms of reference, an assessment summary document that is completed during the meeting as a consensus of the entire workshop, and a review panel report that is completed after the open meeting.

In the spirit of an integrated review and transparency, the panel report for this operational update was completed at the meeting as a consensus of all participants and addressed each term of reference for each stock. Our approach deviates somewhat from the two previous operational updates. The 2012 groundfish updates included a chapter for each stock, and each chapter had an assessment document followed by a brief “Panel Discussion / Comments” that reported stock status and identified methodological changes since the last assessment (NEFSC 2012). The 2013 operational update of monkfish had a brief review panel report as one section of the frontmatter, followed by an executive summary that addressed each term of reference. For operational updates with more stocks (e.g., the 2015 groundfish updates), we suggest a brief Panel Report that addresses each term of reference for each stock.

The scope of operational updates was also considered. Although updating reference points increases the scope of an update, they may be appropriate in the context of recent changes in vital rates (weight-at-age, maturity-at-age) and possibly selectivity. If the update can document that there have been no such changes, updated reference points may not be necessary. We suggest that the Assessment Oversight Panel consider information on recent changes in vital rates and selectivity to determine if updated reference points are appropriate.

For the winter flounder stocks, the Panel identified several studies on maturity and stock structure that were published after the last benchmark assessment. The Panel concluded that reviewing recent studies are helpful for addressing the terms of reference. However, a comprehensive review of recent literature may not be feasible for operational updates of many stocks.

The Panel felt that the content provided in the draft assessment documents was sufficient to meet the terms of reference with few exceptions. The Panel recommends that geographic plots of

fishery and survey data be provided to assist in the interpretation of model results. These plots are particularly informative for stocks that have had recent shifts in distributions. The Panel also requested statistical distributions of survey data (e.g., number of stations, proportion of stations with no catch).

References Cited

NEFSC. 2012. Assessment or Data Updates of 13 Northeast Groundfish Stocks through 2010. NEFSC Ref Doc. 12-06.

NEFSC. 2013. 2013 monkfish operational assessment. NEFSC Ref Doc. 13-23.