

UNITED STATES DEPARTMENT OF COMMERCE
National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration
National Marine Fisheries Service
Alaska Fisheries Science Center
7600 Sand Point Way N.E., Bin C15700
Seattle, Washington 98115-0070



Mr. Chris Oliver
Executive Director
North Pacific Fishery Management Council
Anchorage, AK

March 30, 2017

Dear Mr. Oliver,

Recently the North Pacific Fishery Management Council (NPFMC) and the Scientific and Statistical Committee (SSC) reviewed the recommendations from the Joint Groundfish Plan Teams (GPT) on Stock Assessment Prioritization. The GPT recommended a few changes to the assessment frequency for some stocks that were long-lived and had stable abundance, or had catches that were far below their respective Acceptable Biological Catches. The SSC generally agreed with these recommendations with a few notable exceptions. Based on the recommendations of the Joint GPT and SSC, the NPFMC approved the adoption of a revised assessment frequency. In response to these recommendations, the Alaska Fisheries Science Center's stock assessment programs have revised their assessment schedule to incorporate changes in assessment frequency. The purpose of this letter is to propose our implementation of the approved revised assessment schedule. This revised assessment schedule is shown in Tables 1 and 2.

Some Gulf of Alaska groundfish stocks will be assessed the year after the biennial trawl survey. The scheduling changes balance the number of assessments reviewed each year; allowing for more thorough development and review of full stock assessments. In addition, for most stocks, data on the age composition from the survey is unavailable until a year after the survey is completed. Therefore, we have aligned the assessment timing to allow full assessments to have the most complete information on age structure and abundance.

As AFSC's assessment scientists reviewed the minutes of the NPFMC Groundfish Plan Teams they identified an apparent error in the proposed assessment frequency for Gulf of Alaska rex sole. They contacted the GPT co-chairs and confirmed that the GPT had intended to recommend a 4-year assessment frequency for GOA rex sole. The revised assessment schedule reflects this change.

The GPT discussed how to proceed during full stock assessment "off-years" to ensure that stocks would be appropriately monitored. The GPT recommended partial assessments to be conducted in some of the intervening years depending on the Tier level for the stock and the assessment frequency. Partial assessments will be an expanded version of the current off-year executive summaries. For Tiers 1-3, partial assessments will include catch/biomass ratios in addition to re-running the projection model with updated catch information, and also including updated survey biomass trends when available. For Tiers 4-6, partial assessments will include catch/biomass ratios in addition to re-running the random effects model. Authors will be expected to respond to Plan Team/SSC comments during full assessments only, unless the comments pertain to features that are normally included in partial assessments.

Thank you for considering this implementation schedule; we believe this change will help streamline the review process and lead to better assessments in the future.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Douglas DeMaster".

Douglas DeMaster



03/30/17

Table 1. Proposed schedule for GOA groundfish stock assessments for 2017/2018 and subsequent years. Changes from status quo are shaded.

2017 (on GOA survey year, odd years)	2018 (off GOA survey year, even years)
W/C GOA pollock	W/C GOA pollock
EGOA pollock	
GOA Atka mackerel	
GOA Pacific cod	GOA Pacific cod
GOA Octopus	
GOA Pacific ocean perch	
GOA Roughey/Blackspotted	GOA Thornyhead
GOA Other Rockfish	GOA Northern Rockfish
GOA Shortraker	GOA Dusky Rockfish
Alaska Sablefish	GOA Sharks
GOA Skates	Alaska Sablefish
GOA Squid	
GOA Arrowtooth flounder	
GOA Shallow water flatfish ¹	
GOA Northern and Southern rock sole ¹	
GOA Rex sole ¹	
GOA Flathead sole ¹	
GOA Sculpins ¹	
	GOA Forage Fish

¹ Moved to 4-year cycle, will be assessed in 2017 and next in 2021.

Dover sole (deepwater flatfish) moved to a 4-year cycle, next assessment in 2019, previously assessed in 2015.

Grenadiers (Alaska wide) moved to a 4-year cycle, next assessment in 2020.

03/30/17

Table 2. Proposed schedule for **BSAI** groundfish stock assessments for 2017/2018 and subsequent years. Changes from status quo are shaded.

2017	2018
(on Bering Sea shelf survey year, annual; off Aleutian Islands survey year, even years)	(on Bering Sea shelf survey year, annual; on Aleutian Islands survey year, even years)
AI Pacific cod	AI Pacific cod
Bering Sea Pacific cod	Bering Sea Pacific cod
EBS pollock	EBS pollock
	Bogoslof pollock
	AI pollock ¹
BSAI Atka mackerel	BSAI Atka mackerel
Forage Fish	
Alaska Sablefish	Alaska Sablefish
BSAI Yellowfin sole	BSAI Yellowfin sole
BSAI Alaska plaice	
	BSAI Northern rock sole ¹
	BSAI Kamchatka flounder
	BSAI Octopus
	BSAI Other Rockfish
	BSAI Skates
	BSAI Squid
	BSAI Arrowtooth flounder
	BSAI Sharks
	BSAI Shortraker rockfish ²
	BSAI POP ²
	BSAI Blackspotted/Rougheye rockfish
	BSAI Greenland turbot ¹
	BSAI Flathead sole

¹ AI pollock, northern rock sole, and Greenland turbot moved from an annual cycle to a 2-year (biennial) cycle. Will be assessed in 2018 and next in 2020.

² BSAI POP and blackspotted/rougheye rockfish cycle being staggered to occur on off years with Northern rockfish assessed every 2 years starting in 2019.

BSAI Sculpins moved to 4-year cycle, will be assessed in 2019 and next in 2023.

BSAI Other flatfish moved to 4-year cycle, next assessment 2020 (previously assessed in 2016)

Grenadiers (Alaska wide) moved to a 4-year cycle, next assessment in 2020.