



**NOAA
FISHERIES**

Northeast
Fisheries
Science
Center

Operational Assessments

TOR III Peer Review Process

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NOAA FISHERIES

Term of Reference III

Does the Center, in conjunction with other entities such as the Councils' Scientific and Statistical Committees, have an adequate peer review process?

What is an Operational Assessment?

Developed by a working group for the Northeast Regional Coordinating Council

Distinguishes between development of new models to accommodate changing data or hypotheses (**Research Track**) vs application of existing models with updated data (**Operational Assessment**)

Similar to approach by hurricane forecast models used by Weather Service. Work with the “tried and true”

Key Features

Oversight Panel guides TOR and scope of work for lead scientist

Reduced terms of reference

Major changes not included because timelines don't allow for adequate review

Less extensive peer-review (e.g. no CIE reviewers, fewer number)

Limited changes in model configuration

Involvement of Science and Statistical Committee as the primary reviewers

Experimental/Test applications thus far

Examples

- Update of 12 groundfish stocks, Feb 2012.

<http://nefsc.noaa.gov/publications/crd/crd1206/>

- Monkfish Operational Assessment, Nov 2013

<http://www.nefsc.noaa.gov/publications/crd/crd1323/>

- Pollock, Georges Bank winter flounder, Gulf of Maine winter flounder. (August 2014).



Why do we need Operational Assessments?

Current process can not keep up with new legal demands

Need to increase number of assessments/ year (but ~50 stocks does not necessarily imply 50 assessments/yr!)

Current process involves a great amount of time per assessment, over taxing current resources

Need “up to date” assessments for decision-making. Long time gaps between data and implementation increase assessment uncertainty and management buffers

Strengths

Potential to provide more timely information for management

Capitalize on results of benchmark assessments

Suitable bridge while efforts to improve data or models continue without need for immediate catch advice

Challenges

Experimental application of approach thus far and no formal application in MAFMC

Securing SSC reviewers can be difficult especially if assessment timing cannot be shifted

Results of Feb. 2012 update were not considered by SSC and Council until late in year

Risk of fossilizing imperfect methods and reducing opportunities for improvements

Solutions

Continue experimentation with format and scope of TORs

Evaluate “receiving capacity” of SSC and Councils

Get into more routine schedule of updating annual information routinely

Questions

Fish with rightward leaning tendencies