

Monkfish Assessment Analysis and Peer Review Plan for 2016

(v. 2/26/2016)

Analyses/Research Plan

Plan A – Under the Operational Assessment process, Plan A typically involves running an updated analytical assessment model. However, for the upcoming 2016 monkfish assessment, it is recommended to not run the updated analytical stock assessment model that was used in the previous monkfish stock assessment. The justification for not running it now is that sufficient new research has been conducted which suggests that the vertebral ageing method is not valid, which further suggests that the growth curve used in previous assessments is not valid. However, because the new research has not yet progressed to the stage of developing a new growth curve that has been peer reviewed and published, there is no new growth curve to use in place of the older curve. This was explained to the NEFMC SSC at its Jan 20, 2016 meeting and the SSC supports this approach/decision. We also reported this to the full NEFMC at its Jan 26, 2016 meeting and they are briefed on our intentions.

Plan B (there are 2 parts)–

i. Carry out a monkfish data update. The data update should include:

-- updated time series of total landings and discards, and these same series broken out by size class. Are changes taking place in size frequency of the catch over time?

--time series of fishery independent surveys (total abundance and weight per tow, as well as for a small size class which can serve as a proxy recruit index). Are changes taking place in size frequency in survey tows over time? Are there recruits on the horizon?

--report any temporal trends in length/weight relationship. Point out if condition is poor or declining.

--report the spatial distribution of the stock. Is there any evidence of a change in distribution?

--compare estimated annual catches to ACLs over time to examine whether the fishery has been staying within the catch limits.

ii. Carry out some analyses that will support the SSC in making its ABC recommendation. These analyses may be similar to the index-based methods

recently applied to GB cod, but if that approach is inappropriate consider other approaches. Stop short of making a catch recommendation, as that is the role of the SSC.

Given the new analytical work described in Plan B - Part ii. , it is appropriate to form a working group. The Assessment Oversight Panel (AOP) should be convened to confirm the decision not to run the updated assessment model (as described above) and to approve the TORs for the WG (as described in Plan B). The Integrated Peer Review is needed to review the final analytical products and approve them for use by managers.

Working Group- Form a WG with Mark Terceiro (chair), Anne Richards (lead scientist), additional PopDy as needed, Council staff lead for monkfish, and external fishery scientists with expertise in monkfish. No one is required to fill out the application form for SAW WG membership because that more formal process is only intended for SAW benchmark stock assessment WGs.

Public outreach – Schedule a meeting for input from the public prior to late May WG meeting. Perhaps a meeting with NEFMC monkfish Industry Advisors would achieve this. Goals of the meeting are to (a) share with them information and analyses being prepared for the data update and see if they think the approach makes sense, and (b) solicit their perspectives regarding the condition of the stock and any quantitative or qualitative information they can provide to support the assessment directly or by providing context.

Timeline and Peer Review --

Late February 2016 – Schedule Assessment Oversight Panel (AOP) meeting to review/approve the decision not to run an updated analytical assessment model (as described above in the Plan A section) and to approve TORs consistent with Plan B. Chris Legault to serve as the AOP chair. Other AOP members include the SSC chairs or their appointees. Staff from the partner agencies may advise the AOP members.

Public Outreach Meeting

Late May 2016 –schedule a monkfish WG meeting to complete analyses and prepare report for peer review.

Late June 2016 –conduct a 1-day “Integrated Peer Review” of the TORs. At a minimum, Peer Review team to be comprised of the SSC member with the lead for the stock, the lead assessment scientist, and an assessment scientist either from outside of NMFS or if from within NMFS, from outside of the lead assessor’s working group. This review is open to the public and should include Council staff.

Mid-Late July 2016 --Deliver final results/written report to the public. Report should include comments written by the Integrated Peer Review Panel about the Plan B work they reviewed.