

## **The 35th Northeast Regional Stock Assessment Workshop**

The Northeast Stock Assessment Workshop (SAW) is a process for preparing, peer reviewing and presenting stock assessment information. A SAW cycle is six months, thus, twice a year, a number of fishery stock assessments are prepared and presented to a panel of assessment experts. The panel, the Stock Assessment Review Committee (SARC), prepares two reports. The first is the SAW Advisory Report; a brief summary of the stock status, management advice, short term stock forecasts, and other relevant assessment information for each stock assessed and reviewed.. The second report, the SARC Consensus Summary of Assessments, is more detailed, containing specific assessment data, results and SARC discussion and research recommendations.

The Advisory report is presented to the public in a series of Public Review Workshops, described below. Subsequent to the Workshops, the draft Advisory Report is finalized and folded into a larger document known as the Public Review Workshop Report. The Public Review Workshop (PRW) Report also includes a summary of any meetings of the Northeast Coordinating Council (consisting of the Region's executives and responsible for establishing SAW policy and scheduling assessments for review) that may have occurred during the SAW cycle.

This is the Public Review Workshop Report for SAW 35 and the 35th SARC and includes the final version of the Advisory Report and a report from the April 24, 2002

meeting of the Northeast Regional Coordinating Council.

The 35th SARC reviewed assessments for summer flounder (fluke), and scup (porgy). The panel also reviewed a report from the SAW Methods Working Group describing some new tools for stock assessments for stocks which have index-based assessments. Finally, the SARC heard a report on research in progress concerning stock identification of silver hake (whiting). The panel provided comments to the researchers and suggestions for future work.

Assessments, working papers and research reports were peer reviewed by the SARC panel at its June 24-28, 2002 meeting in Woods Hole, MA. The Public Review Workshop of the 35th Northeast Regional Stock Assessment Workshop (SAW 34) was held jointly with the Mid-Atlantic Fishery Management Council and the Atlantic States Marine Fisheries Commission on August 6, 2002 in Philadelphia.

Copies of the 35th SAW Draft Advisory Report on Stock Status and the 35th SAW Draft Consensus Summary of Assessments had been distributed to members of the Commission and the New England and Mid-Atlantic Regional Fishery Management Councils prior to the Workshop.

The SAW Chairman, Dr. Terry Smith of the Northeast Fisheries Science Center (NEFSC), NMFS, conducted the Public Review Workshop.

## Status Summaries

### Summer flounder

The stock is overfished and overfishing is occurring relative to current biological reference points (see glossary and Advisory Report Introduction for definitions of these terms). The fishing mortality rate in 2001 is marginally above the current overfishing definition reference point but may underestimate the actual fishing mortality rate because of a tendency for the assessment model to underestimate recent F. Total stock biomass has increased substantially since 1989 and, in 2001, is estimated to be 19% below the current biomass threshold. The age structure of the stock has expanded with further expansion expected as biomass increases to biomass target levels. In terms of recruitment, the 2001 year class is below average, the 2000 year class was about average. As with fishing mortality, the current assessment model tends to underestimate actual recruitment.

### Scup

The scup stock is not overfished but stock status with respect to overfishing cannot currently be evaluated. The 2001 estimate of spawning stock biomass, based on the 3-year moving average of the NEFSC spring survey, exceeds the biomass index threshold value. The 2002 spring survey index from the trawl survey is the highest on record. Although relative exploitation rates have declined in recent years, the absolute value of F cannot be determined. Survey data indicate strong recent recruitment and some rebuilding of age structure.