

WPRFMC SSC and Stock assessments



Role of SSC has changed

- SSC now had statutory responsibility to establish the Acceptable Biological Catch (ABC) from which Annual Catch Limits are generated
- SSCs may have much greater power over people's livelihoods than in the past
- SSC is aware that their decisions can have major social impacts, e.g. first TACs for bottomfish and then more generous ABC/ACL

WPRFMC has reviewed mainly NMFS PIFSC nearshore fishery stock assessments

- NWHI Lobster: SSC reviewed the annual stock assessment until 1999, last year of the fishery
- SSC reviews MHI and Territory bottomfish stock assessments
- SSC participated in WPSAR review of MHI stock assessment
- SSC has seen many of its recommendations incorporated into bottomfish stock assessments
- Most other assessments involving PIFSC are on pelagics which are driven by tuna-RFMOs

WPR is the data poor capital of the World but that might be about to change

- The inclusion of coral reef fish in the MUS list means that we have literally hundreds of candidate species for ABCs and ACLs
- Council and SSC have had to explore approaches to data poor reef and nearshore species
- Problem becomes opportunity: use of biomass data never intended for fishery use explored with Martell/Froese catch model
- Upcoming WPSAR of M/F biomass modified model
- Hawaii and WPR may become a center for reef fish stock assessment

The Ugly Bits: SSC and protected species

- ‘Stock assessments’ and population models used in Biological Opinions continue to be opaque and trouble the SSC
- Marine mammal stock assessments continue to be problematic for SSC, since they receive nowhere near the scrutiny and depth of review as finfish stock assessments
- NMFS is using different standards of review and scrutiny for populations dynamics and stock assessments of protected species and ‘hiding’ behind the ESA and MMPA
- These stock assessments and pop-dynamics models also have the potential to affect people’s livelihoods
- MSA National Standard 2 states that for Council purposes the SSC can serve as a peer review process and should be used to review protected species population science
- And why not WPSAR for protected species stocks?