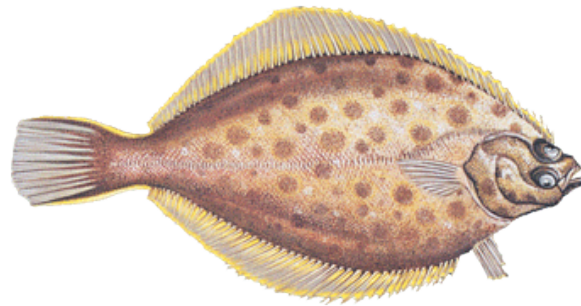




12. SSC (Sept. 29-Oct. 1, 2020)

SSC Report to NEFMC

#1h



September 30, 2020

Jason McNamee, SSC Chair

Topics

- Georges Bank Yellowtail Flounder OFLs & ABCs 2021-2022
- Comments on White Hake Draft Rebuilding Plan Options



Terms of Reference

- For Georges Bank (GB) Yellowtail Flounder: Considering the Council's Risk Policy Statement, provide an OFL and an ABC recommendation for fishing years 2021 and 2022 that will prevent overfishing and meet the management objective to rebuild the stock, and that are consistent with the Council's ABC control rule for groundfish stocks.
 - a. The Council requests that the SSC provide a "Summary of Recommendations" section of the SSC's report by the end of the SSC meeting on August 24 so that it can be considered in developing recommendations for the US/Canada Transboundary Management Guidance Committee meeting.



Terms of Reference

- For White Hake: Comment on the technical basis (i.e., is it technically sound and reasonable?) of the draft rebuilding plan options developed by the PDT for white hake.

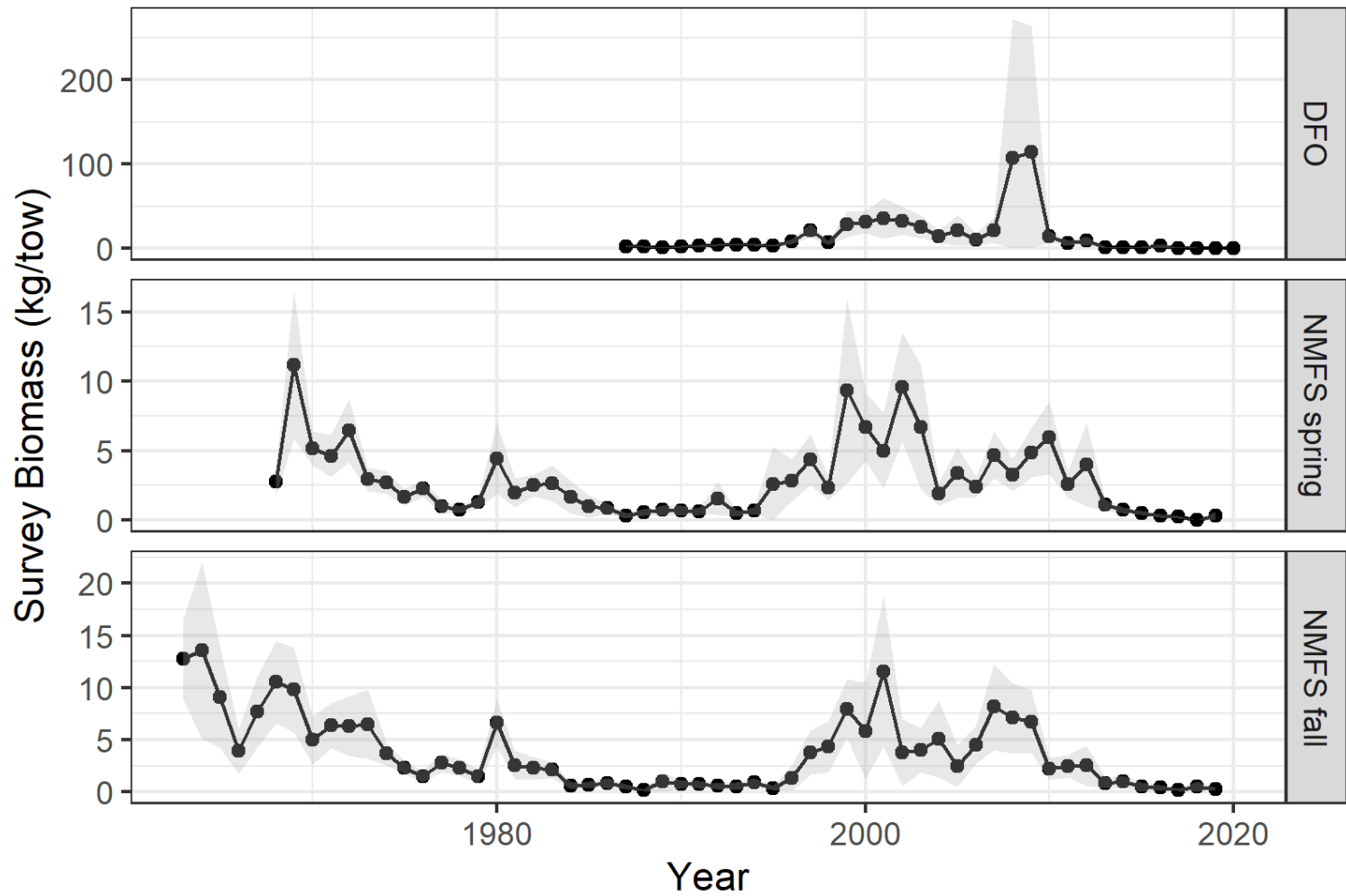


GB Yellowtail: Background

- GB yellowtail was reviewed by the TRAC in July 2020
- TRAC continued use of empirical approach for GB yellowtail flounder for catch advice
- GB yellowtail “empirical approach” is based on swept-area biomass informed by fishery-independent surveys: DFO (winter) and NOAA (spring and fall)
 - COVID 19 impacted available surveys, so missing Spring 2020
- TRAC recommended upper bound for exploitation rate of 6% (result = 125 mt 2021)



GB Yellowtail: Surveys



GB Yellowtail: OFL and ABC Summary

- OFL and ABC values (expressed in metric tons)

Year	OFL	ABC
2021	Unknown	125
2022	Unknown	125



GB Yellowtail: SSC Comments

- The SSC notes that its recommendation is consistent with the recommendations from the TRAC integrated peer review
 - Catch advice is consistent with SSC's previous advice of not increasing catch, and lowering it in current advice
- Stock conditions based on survey information, and market conditions based on the quota change model presented by the PDT do not appear to have changed from 2019
- SSC's catch advice is at the upper bound from the TRAC
 - Represents a decrease from previous advice, reasonable given most of the survey information continues to indicate a downward trend with little sign of recovery



GB Yellowtail: SSC Comments

- There are new uncertainties due to COVID 19 pandemic with regard to missing the spring survey in 2020
- Based on realized quota utilization rates and outcomes of the quota change model, SSC believes socioeconomic impact of this ABC reduction to the industry is minimal
- SSC considered potential changes in market for this species from previous year, concluding that conditions were unchanged based on predictions of quota change model
 - Whether these conditions would persist is unknown
- Given this additional source of uncertainty, the SSC felt the change in catch advice was warranted



GB Yellowtail: SSC Comments

- Another source of uncertainty is the relationship between the quota and subsequent annual total catch
 - Catches have been below the ABCs in recent years, if the relationship between quota and catch changes, ABC advice may need to be reevaluated as there is uncertainty in how much of the ABC will be caught and what effect that realized catch will have on the stock
- However, the quota change model indicated a low probability of increasing utilization; therefore, the SSC had some evidence that the current catch to quota relationship will hold for the next fishing year



GB Yellowtail: SSC Comments

- The interaction of the yellowtail flounder fishery with other fisheries (other groundfish stocks, sea scallops, whiting, and squid) was also considered
 - Given bycatch estimates for scallop fishery and accountability measures for scallops, as well as groundfish fisheries ability to avoid yellowtail flounder in recent years, the SSC felt the catch advice recommended would not constrain either fishery any more than they are currently constrained
 - Unclear how setting catch advice at the level chosen would quantitatively affect these other fisheries beyond this



GB Yellowtail: Additional Comments

- The SSC reaffirms its previous recommendations to continue to work toward the development of a control rule for Georges Bank yellowtail flounder (and other “empirical approach” stocks as an extension)
 - SSC recognizes that some work will be forthcoming from the index-based stocks research track assessment process and is encouraged by the development of additional potential tools by the NEFSC towards this goal



GB Yellowtail: Additional Comments

- There will be more uncertainties to contend with in 2021 due to missing survey and fisheries dependent datasets stemming from the COVID-19 restrictions in 2020
 - Thought should be given to these uncertainties early in the process
- SSC recommends continuing to investigate the environmental drivers effecting this species at both the juvenile and adult stages



GB Yellowtail: Additional Comments

- SSC appreciated the work done on the quota change model and continues to encourage the inclusion of socioeconomic information, with an emphasis on information regarding the interaction of Georges Bank yellowtail flounder and sea scallops



White Hake: SSC Comments

- SSC agrees with the assumptions and set-up proposed by the Groundfish PDT (documented in the PDT memo)
 - These were all reasonable assumptions to make for projections and covered a reasonable set of possibilities for this species
- SSC recommended developing an additional set of sensitivity runs regarding recent (1995-2016) low recruitment for comparison purposes
 - Recommended running these simulations through to an updated set of BRPs w/ consistent recruitment assumptions



Questions?

