

Framework Adjustment 55 Witch Flounder

Northeast Multispecies (Groundfish) Fishery Management Plan

Jamie M. Cournane, PhD
Groundfish PDT Chair

**Groundfish Committee
Meeting**
January 14, 2016



December 2015 Council Motion

That the Council recommends a preliminary ABC for witch flounder of 394 mt (with associated ACL and sub-ACLs) described in Table 10, Option 2 (revised ACLs)/Section 4.1 (Annual Catch Limits). Request that the SSC develop an additional alternative for the 2016 ABC for witch flounder without being constrained by 75% F_{MSY} . The Council will accept the temporary risk level associated with an ABC up to the OFL for FY 2016. To expedite Framework 55 include a range for the witch flounder ABC of 394 to 513 mt in Section 4.1.1.4.

The motion carried (12/4/1).



SSC's DRAFT Terms of Reference

- 1) Characterize the range of risks and benefits of setting a 2016 ABC for witch flounder that is between the ABC calculated at 75% of F_{MSY} and the OFL. This discussion should, to the extent possible, identify the biological, economic, social impacts of the ABC.
- 2) Based on the analyses in TOR 1, consider identifying an ABC for witch flounder that is not bound by 75% of F_{MSY} . Provide a clear rationale that identifies the risks and benefits of such an ABC.
- 3) If an ABC that exceeds 75% of F_{MSY} is identified as considered by TOR 2, recommend any necessary adjustments to the OFLs and ABCs for FY 2017 and 2018.



Goal for the Committee Meeting Today

To receive an overview of the PDT's preliminary work to date for the SSC, for informational purposes only.



Timeline

2015	June	Council initiates FW ₅₅
	Jul-Oct	Develop specifications
	Sep	Council receives update on FW ₅₅
	Oct-Nov	Develop NEPA analysis
	Dec	Council takes final action on FW ₅₅
2016	Jan	Council takes final action on FW 55 – witch flounder specifications



PDT Work to Date

A sub-group of the PDT met with industry via webinar on January 6 to discuss if industry had information to bring forward for review by the PDT.

The PDT met twice by webinar on January 7 and 13 to discuss witch flounder. The PDT considered industry information at both webinars.

PDT webinars included opportunities for presentations by industry and for questions from the public.



2015 Witch Flounder Assessment

- The stock is overfished and overfishing is occurring.
- The stock is in a rebuilding plan with a rebuild by date of 2017.
- A retrospective adjustment was applied to the terminal year of the assessment.
- Compared to the 2012 assessment, the magnitude of the retrospective pattern has increased slightly for F and decreased slightly for SSB.
- In 2014, the stock was estimated to be at 22% of the rebuilding target SSB and 246% of its target F.



PDT's Revised CY 2015 Estimate of Catches

- The PDT updated the estimated CY 2015 catches for witch flounder, using data through November 2015 .
- The result is a revised catch estimate of 601 mt (reduced from the previous estimate of 637 mt).
- The PDT used the revised catch estimate for CY 2015 as the “bridge” year for catch projections.
- The revised catch assumption had relatively little effect on the $75\%F_{MSY}$ and F_{MSY} estimate in 2016.
 - *The $75\%F_{MSY}$ estimate increased from 394 mt to 399 mt and the F_{MSY} estimate increased from 513 mt to 521 mt in 2016.*



Rebuilding Projections

- The plan is a 7 year plan set to rebuild by 2017 with a 75% probability.
- Projections indicate that the stock cannot rebuild by 2017 with $F=0$.
- At $F=0$ the stock is projected to rebuild in 2020 with a 75% probability.
- At $75\%FMSY=0.209$ the stock is projected to rebuild in 2025 with a 76% probability and 2023 at a 61% probability.



Catch Projections

- The PDT developed four new catch projections at:
 - $75\%F_{MSY}$
 - $75\% F_{MSY}$ constant with the value for 2016 (399 mt)
 - Middle constant (between $75\% F_{MSY}$ and F_{MSY}) with the value for 2016 (460 mt)
 - F_{MSY} constant with the value for 2016 (521 mt)
- The constant candidate ABC projections cover the range from a low using the updated $75\%F_{MSY}$ (399 mt) to the F_{MSY} estimate (OFL = 521 mt) in 2016.
- The range of constant projections all meet the requirement that projected F in 2017 is below $75\%F_{MSY} = 0.209$.



Catch Projection Results

Possible OFLs and ABCs (mt) for FY 2016- FY 2018 for witch flounder, under 75%F_{MSY} projections. Projected F and SSB provided.

year	OFL	ABC	F	SSB
2016	521	399	0.209	3,253
2017	745	572	0.209	4,309
2018	945	724	0.209	5,466

Possible OFLs and ABCs (mt) for FY 2016- FY 2018 for witch flounder, holding the lowest value of 75% F_{MSY} for FY 2016- FY2018 projected catches constant for three years (i.e., 75%F_{MSY} constant 2016). Projected F and SSB provided.

year	OFL	ABC	F	SSB
2016	521	399	0.209	3,253
2017	745	399	0.142	4,342
2018	982	399	0.107	5,688



Catch Projection Results

Possible OFLs and ABCs (mt) for FY 2016- FY 2018 for witch flounder, holding the middle value for 75% F_{MSY} and F_{MSY} for 2016 projected catches constant for three years (i.e., 460 mt). Projected F and SSB provided.

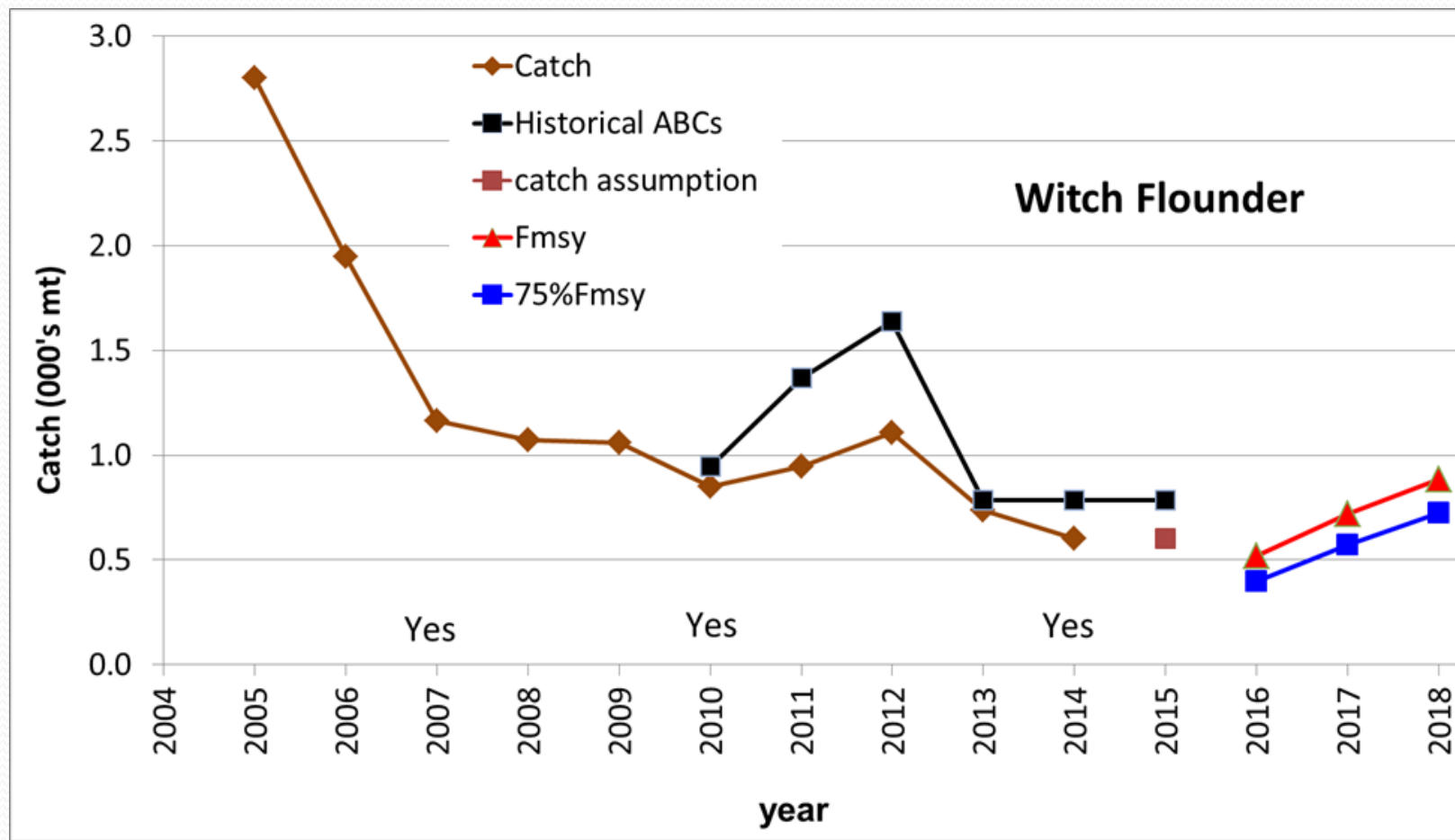
year	OFL	ABC	F	SSB
2016	521	460	0.244	3,244
2017	732	460	0.169	4,276
2018	954	460	0.128	5,562

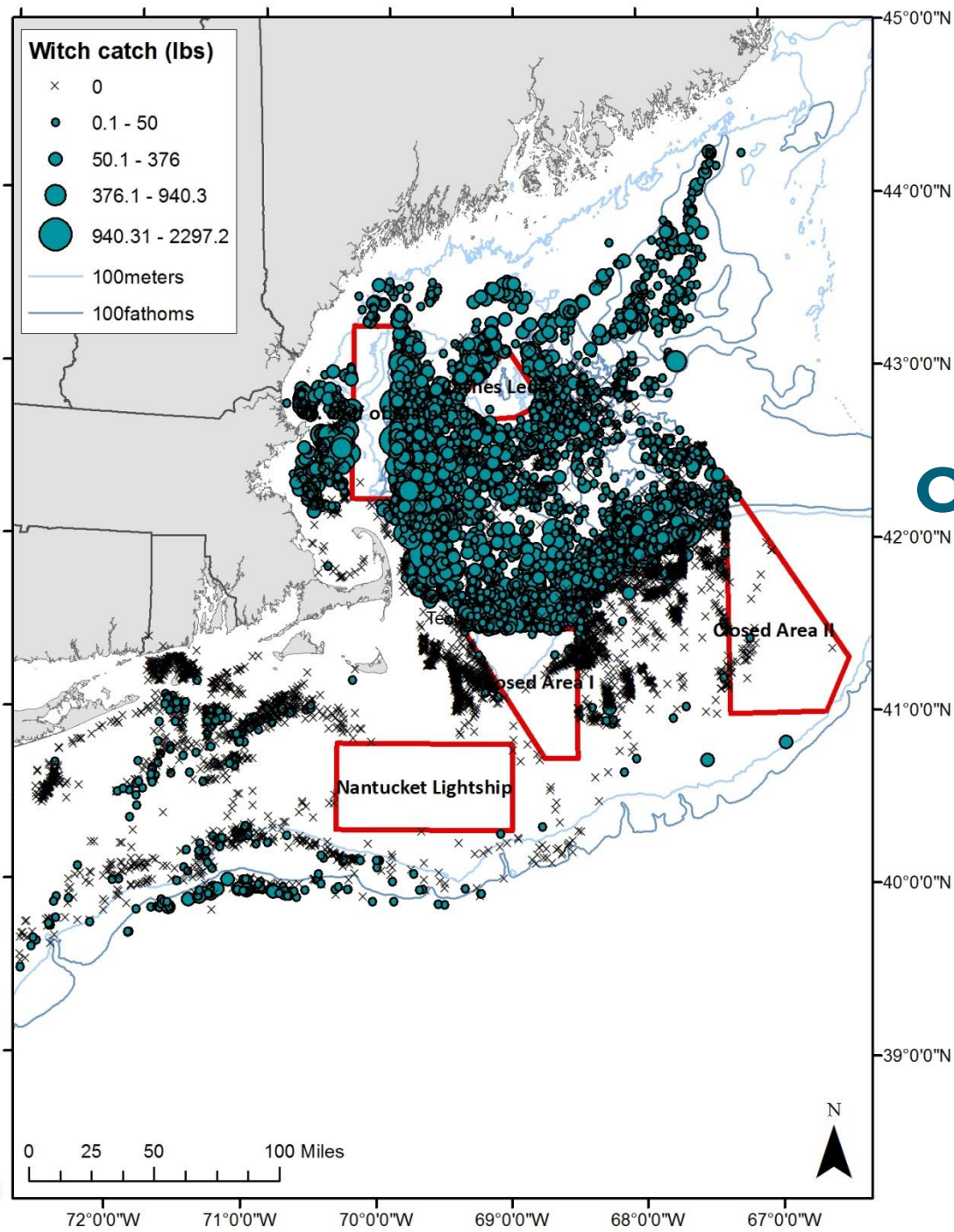
Possible OFLs and ABCs (mt) for FY 2016- FY 2018 for witch flounder, holding the 2016 F_{MSY} value constant for three years (i.e., 75% F_{MSY} for 2016). Projected F and SSB provided.

year	OFL	ABC	F	SSB
2016	521	521	0.279	3,234
2017	719	521	0.197	4,210
2018	927	521	0.150	5,437



Catch Performance





Observed Hauls Sector Trips: CY 2014

Work in Progress

- Analysis of the relative biological risk of setting a quota in 2016 to the stock in 2017
 - Using projections at various 2016 quotas
 - Calculating resulting SSB and F from projections in 2017
- Quota change model results for a range of quota for sectors:
 - 271 mt, 331 mt, and 388 mt – these corresponds to the range of catch projections for FY 2016
 - Early results indicate minimal differences between runs
- Evaluating observer data from sector trips
 - Early results indicate that some targeting of witch flounder occurs in the Gulf of Maine and to a lesser extent Georges Bank.
 - Also, the majority of witch flounder catches occur in the Gulf of Maine and parts of Georges Bank.
- Evaluation of social impacts of the range of quotas
- Discussion of biological, economic, and social trade-offs of the range of quotas



Next Steps

- PDT Webinar on Friday, January 15 at 9:30 AM
- PDT finalizes its memo to the SSC on Friday, January 15
- SSC convenes on Wednesday, January 20
- Council dicusses witch flounder on January 27

