Tab #10
SSC report to MAFMC

Summary of Science and Statistical Committee Meeting on September 8-9, 2020
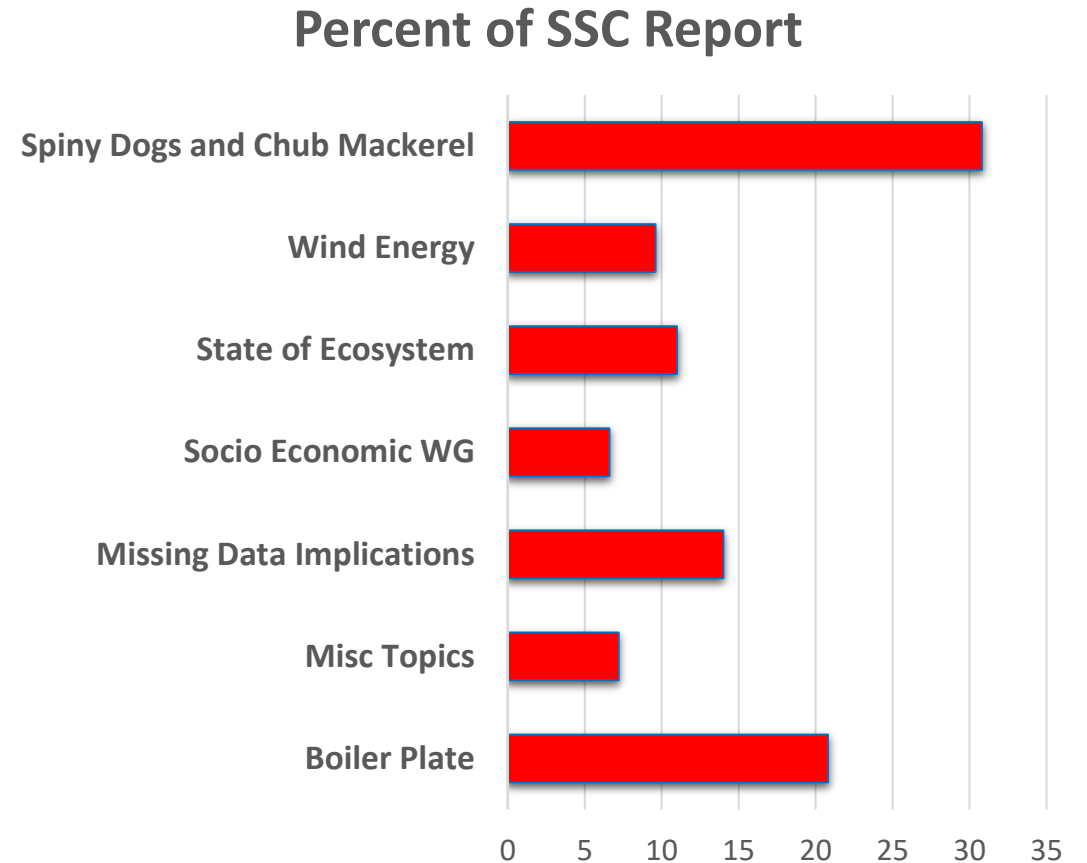
Presentation

to

Mid-Atlantic Fishery Management Council

October 8, 2020

Primary Topics (word count, %)

- Spiny Dogfish and Chub Mackerel (1,342, 30.8%)
- Wind Energy (419, 9.6%)
- State of the Ecosystem (479, 11%)
- Socio-Economic WG (286, 6.6%)
- Missing Data Issues (611, 14%)
- Misc Topics (313, 7.2%)
- Boiler Plate (908, 20.8%)

Percent of SSC Report

Wind Energy—Presentations

- Led by Dave Secor
- Presentations by BOEM, RODA, ROSA, NEFSC
- Current and future developments (BOEM)
- Key issues of stakeholders (RODA)
- Efforts to coordinate regional research and monitoring (ROSA)
- Implications for Surveys (NEFSC)

Wind—SSC Discussion

- Regulating a rapidly expanding industry while soliciting input from key stakeholders

- Overlap of fishing grounds, survey strata, and lease areas

- Need for regional scale science and monitoring

Wind—Possible SSC Roles

- Input and review of NEFSC efforts on survey alternatives

- Socio economic aspects of development

- Review and endorsement of metrics of wind energy-fisheries interactions in State of Ecosystem

State of the Ecosystem

- Presentation by Sarah Gaichas and Geret DePiper

- Dual Audience
  - Public—value of the big picture overview
  - Scientists—detailed methodology and data

- Appreciated responsiveness of Ecosystem Team

State of the Ecosystem—SSC discussion

- Cumulative effects hard to predict and even harder to detect

- Tipping points more likely than continuous change

- Examples
  - Overall productivity cap to help evaluate sum of individual quotas
  - Risk scores for marine heat waves; incorporation into OFL CV matrix
  - Combined metrics for quantitative indicators and prediction

- Economic considerations—e. g., markets amplify changes

- Discussion of condition factors and fat content of Atlantic herring and other species

Misc Topics: 2021-2025 Assessment Schedule

- 2021 Management Track {Atlantic Mackerel, Black Sea Bass, Bluefish, Golden Tilefish, Scup, Summer Flounder}

- 2021 Research Track {Butterfish, Illex squid}

- Flexibility of Schedule?
  - Longfin squid might merit earlier benchmark if changes recommended by most recent Management Track Review are implemented
  - E.g., swap with Golden Tilefish

- Clarification of role of Illex Working Group in the 2021 Research Track Assessment

Misc Topics: MAFMC Research Priorities

- Commended Council staff for inclusion of SSC inputs

- Responsive to evolving needs

- Helps fund critical studies for decision making

Spiny Dogfish

- The SSC is concerned about the uncertainty caused by the lack of the 2020 NEFSC spring trawl survey and reliance on the longer-term projection from the 2018 assessment.

- However, projections for 2022 from the 2018 assessment are 20,660 which is ~3000 mt greater than approved ABC.

- However, based on the stock projection from the 2018 benchmark assessment the SSB is expected to continue to increase given the estimated MSY proxy level.

- Biology and model structure.   Slow growth, late age of maturity, low fecundity, and high age of recruitment create inertia in the stock dynamics and therefore reduce interannual fluctuations in forecasts. Coupled with the way the index information is used in the assessment, reliance on a projection may then be less sensitive for Spiny Dogfish than for some other stocks.

- If index data from the 2021 NEFSC spring trawl survey becomes available these could provide an opportunity for revision if needed.

- Research recommendations include revisions to model structure, revised methods for estimating relative abundance, use of tagging data, revision to aging, influence of climatic factors on distribution.

Chub Mackerel

- The SSC recommends continuing the ABC recommendation of 2,300 mt for Chub Mackerel.

- Given the paucity of data it is impossible to refine this estimate further or to distinguish whether the high catches were the result of

  - opportunistic fishing,

  - increased availability or

  - presence of a strong year class in the stock area.

  - The SSC noted the high concentration of catch by statistical area and the limited numbers of vessels and processors in the reported landings.

- The ongoing initiatives by industry and the Council to collect biological information were commended. Members noted that these data are the primary sources of information, and although sparse should allow for improved understanding of this resource. Changes in the size composition over the past 12 years will be valuable inputs to any future stock assessments.

- The SSC suggested coordinating data with fishing companies and throughout the South Atlantic and Gulf of Mexico where possible.