Progress through Assessment Webinar III was reviewed. No prior has been imposed on steepness, and profiling has shown support for the model estimate of R0. However, steepness and sigmaR are not estimable in the Stock Synthesis (SS) base model. As such, steepness will be fixed at the model-estimated value of 0.78, and sigmaR at 0.52. Diagnostics using retrospective analyses and jackknife analyses were rerun to determine model sensitivity to these changes. Removing four years of data does show some effect on terminal spawning stock biomass (SSB); however, no real change is detected from the removal of the most recent one, two, or three years of data. Removing individual indices of abundance shows little to no terminal year change in SSB for any of the indices.

The secondary model run was completed using ASPIC. Three fleets were used: commercial handline, commercial longline, and recreational headboat. Removals were configured as landings plus 20% in dead discards. The results based on status determination criteria for the ASPIC run were very similar to those produced by the SS base model. The Panel asked for a table comparing the numerical results of the ASPIC sensitivity run against the SS base model. The ASPIC model described considerable uncertainty around some parameters compared to the SS base model, and the Panel noted that the initialization value of virgin biomass could have a marked effect on the ASPIC results.

Further diagnostics showed that recruitment deviations are substantial in the last five years of the time series compared to the 15 years prior to that. Recruitment in general remains below the mean of the time series for approximately the last ten years. Recreational fishing mortality has increased consistently, while both commercial fleets and the headboat fleet have decreased since about 1995. Headboat and commercial longline harvest make up the smallest amounts of fishing mortality, followed by the commercial handline fleet and then the recreational fleet with the greatest amount of fishing mortality.

For stock projections, the average of 2016–2018 landings were used for 2019 and 2020. The Panel recommended using finalized 2019 landings, and mean of most recent three years of finalized landings (2017 – 2019) for 2020, when presenting projections to the SSC in January 2020 for the formal review of SEDAR 70. When considering the effect of transitioning from the Marine Recreational Information Program’s Coastal Household Telephone Survey to the Fishing Effort Survey, the change in data currency results in an increase in the equilibrium yield for SEDAR 33 Update from 3.706 million pounds whole weight (mp ww) to 5.968 mp ww. SEDAR 70, by comparison, generates an estimated equilibrium yield of 4.709 in mp ww, which indicates the stock is further depleted since the completion of the SEDAR 33 Update in 2016. Council staff noted that the current rebuilding plan projects that greater amberjack should be rebuilt by 2027. At present, greater amberjack remains overfished and undergoing overfishing.
The Panel discussed the appropriateness of constant catch projections, given that the stock is still overfished. *Projecting out to the point of rebuilding in 2027 was recommended.* However, constant catch projections may not afford the annual precision needed to avoid continued overfishing. The Panel agreed that there was wisdom in seeing the rebuilding timeline at F=0 to see how far the stock has to go to rebuild. Setting projections using constant catch may be a risky move, given the uncertainty about the ability to monitor landings and close the season on time to prevent overfishing. If F is too high under a constant catch scenario, then overfishing would continue. *The Panel recommended not producing projections using three- or five-year constant catch scenarios, given the stock condition and management history of greater amberjack.*

The Panel discussed whether it was appropriate to recommend simulation testing or other approaches to improve quota monitoring. In many cases, greater amberjack can be a rare-event species, and may be a candidate for a specialized survey that specifically targets the species. The analysts encouraged the Panel to contribute their thoughts to the Research Recommendations section during the editing of the stock assessment report draft.

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