Alaska Crab Stock Assessment Workshop

When: Wednesday, May 13, and Thursday, May 14, 2009
Where: NMFS Alaska Fisheries Science Center in Seattle, WA

Determining the status of the crab stocks under the Fishery Management Plan for Bering Sea and Aleutian Islands King and Tanner Crabs and developing and implementing Annual Catch Limits (ACLs) requires that stock assessment models are consistent and use the best available modeling techniques and scientific information. Preventing overfishing and rebuilding overfished fisheries greatly relies on understanding the status of the crab stocks through the stock assessments.

The North Pacific Fishery Management Council's Scientific and Statistical Committee (SSC) and Crab Plan Team (CPT) identified that a workshop would be useful to improve the crab stock assessments and resolve outstanding issues identified by the SSC and CPT. Specifically, the workshop should establish a set of standards for use in all modeling efforts and resolve issues related to the weighting of data sources, such as appropriate weights for different likelihood components and the most appropriate ways to estimate effective sample sizes for length and size composition data. A workshop report will be produced that is prescriptive and provides guidance to assessment authors and ensures that the stock assessments approach these issues in a similar way.

This workshop will contribute to national and regional efforts to achieve conservation and management goals by accurately determining the status of the crab stocks under the federal Fishery Management Plan for Bering Sea/Aleutian Islands King and Tanner Crabs. Workshop participants would include crab assessment authors, groundfish stock assessment authors, other stock assessment experts, Crab Plan Team members, and general public.

The workshop objectives are:

(1) To standardize the crab stock assessments and assessment reporting to the extent possible given the inherent differences in the crab stocks and available data.

(2) To improve the crab stock assessments by resolving issues related to how data sources are weighted when an assessment includes several data sources (including the issues of diagnostics, residuals, and lambda weighting).

(3) To determine how to calculate overfishing levels for Tier 4 stocks, including how to estimate gamma.

(4) To produce a workshop report that provides guidance to assessment authors to improve existing assessment models (snow crab, Bristol Bay red king crab, St. Matthew blue king crab, Norton Sound red king crab) and to develop assessment models for stocks with sufficient data (Tanner crab, Aleutian Islands Golden king crab).