



**NOAA  
FISHERIES**

# Implementing an Assessment Prioritization Process

**Briefing for CCC**

**Feb 19, 2014**



**NOAA FISHERIES**

# Assessment Goal

- **Assessment goal is to provide scientific information needed to prevent overfishing (through forecast of annual catch limits), rebuild overfished stocks and achieve optimum yield**
- **How good does each stock's assessment need to be to achieve this goal?**
- **How frequently must it be updated?**
- **These stock-specific assessment objectives allow us to consider priorities among stocks to achieve the overall goal of the assessment enterprise**



# Assessment Prioritization History

- **Currently, stock assessment scheduling is region-specific under a national umbrella. Each region has a process (e.g. Southeast's SEDAR) involving the local NMFS Science Center(s) and Fishery Management Council(s);**
- **OMB requested that NMFS develop a prioritization system for fish stock assessments**
- **Some regions, particularly NE and SE, have worked on assessment scheduling and prioritization in recent years**
- **A NMFS working group was formed in 2011 to develop a prioritization system**
- **In 2013, call for prioritization appeared in Congressionally requested GAO review of stock assessments, and in an introduced bill on improved science for MSA**



# Prioritization Overview

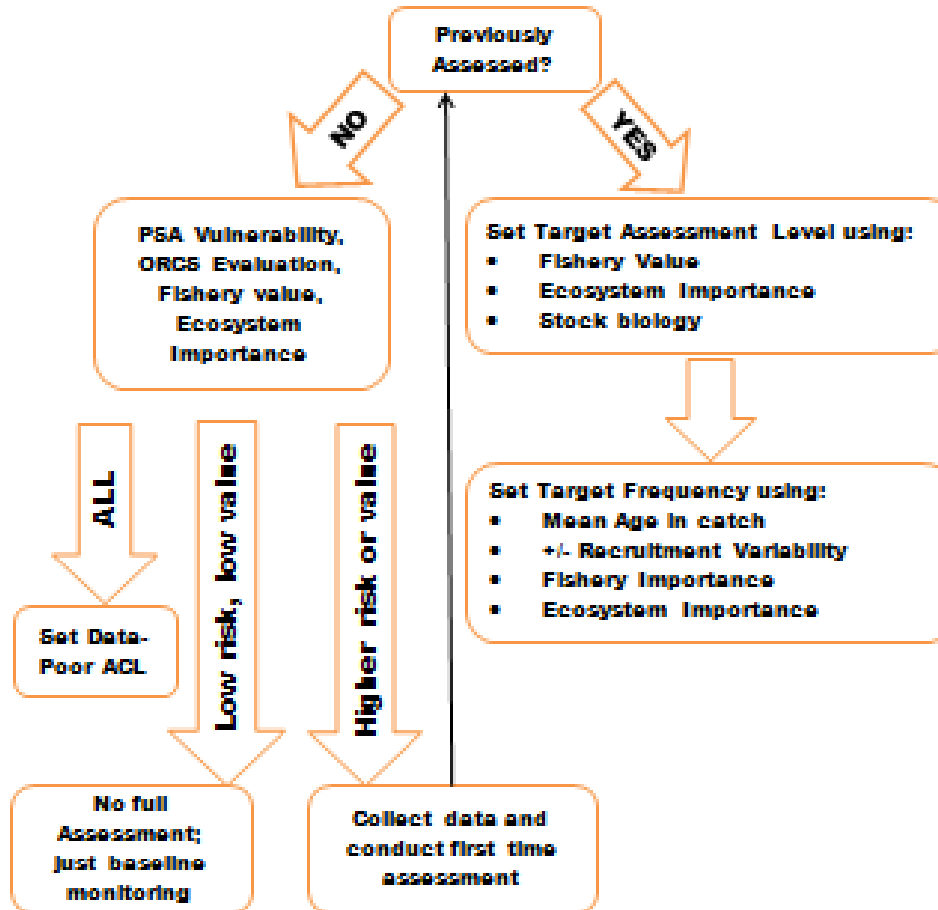
- Among stocks that never have been assessed:
  - *Identify those OK with baseline monitoring, and*
  - *Those needing priority for first-time assessment*
- Among previously assessed stocks, set medium-term assessment goals
  - *target assessment level for each stock; this drives the data requirements*
  - *Set target assessment update frequency for each stock*
- Annually update priorities for conducting assessments
  - *Do benchmark assessments for stocks for which new data or methods will allow resolving uncertainties or advancing to higher level*
  - *Do update assessments for stocks that are at or exceed their target update period.*



# Data Needed for Prioritization

- **Commercial Fishery Importance**
- **Recreational Fishery Importance**
- **Ecosystem Importance**
- **Stock biology (principally: natural mortality rate and recruitment variability)**
- **Stock Status info from previous assessments**
- **Assessment history, unresolved uncertainties**

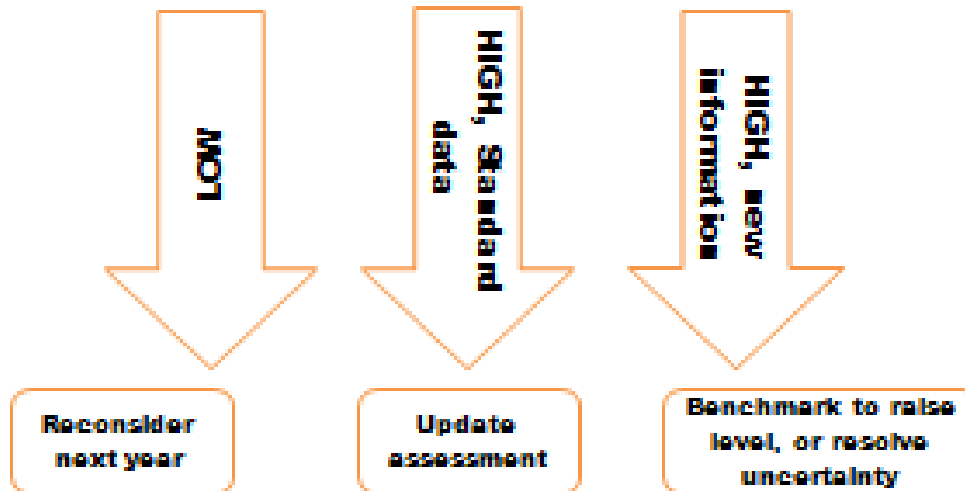
# Flowchart of Prioritization Process



# Setting Priorities

## Calculate Annual Priority Score:

- Years overdue - primary
- Stock status
- Fishery Importance
- New information indicates change
- Assessment capacity



# Prioritization Outcome

- **The whole portfolio of assessment needs will be transparent to all participants in assessment process;**
- **Important assessments will get done when they need to get done, not sooner and not a lot later;**
- **This “right-sizing” of the assessment frequency for important tocks may help release some assessment effort for currently under-assessed stocks.**



# Implementation Steps

- 1. Distribute draft to Fishery Management Councils, NMFS Regional Offices, Fishery Commissions and to public via website – February 2014;**
- 2. Create database of needed information as an added table in the Species Information System – begin winter 2014;**
- 3. Receive comments from Council by May 1, 2014 and summarize to the May CCC;**
- 4. Each region begins work on comprehensive Productivity-Susceptibility Analysis and Only Reliable Catch Analysis to serve as baseline for determining which stocks need assessments – begin spring 2014;**
- 5. Test prioritization system to determine if adjustments to scaling factors are needed to achieve reasonable results – summer 2014;**
- 6. Make database available to regional coordinating committees charged with setting priorities for regional assessments – fall 2014; Create access through SIS public portal;**
- 7. Commission Management Strategy Evaluations to test the expected performance of this prioritization system over time – 2015;**
- 8. Explore Decision Support System facilitators to guide regional coordinating committees through application of the prioritization process – 2016.**

# Challenges for Prioritization

1. **Workload in getting initial information generated and organized;**
2. **Unsure that system will result in good balance of baseline monitoring for all and highest quality assessments for some;**
3. **Does not address prioritization of surveys and expanded scope to include ecosystem considerations;**
4. **May not get more assessments done, but can help identify needs;**
5. **Some constituents may be expecting a between region prioritization, rather than a national facilitation of within region prioritization;**
6. **Review processes and fishery management systems may also need tweaking to take best advantage of prioritized assessments.**