

## **Draft Terms of Reference for TRAC Georges Bank Yellowtail Flounder Diagnostic Benchmark 2014**

In the 2013 TRAC Status Report (TSR) the following Special Comments were provided:

*The TRAC acknowledges that the assumptions made about population dynamics in the model do not fully capture the trends in the data. However, the model's conclusion that stock conditions are poor is valid.*

*There is a continued need to conduct research to limit the possible causes for the retrospective bias exhibited in this assessment.*

In response to these comments, the 2014 benchmark meeting is designed to explore all the data available for Georges Bank yellowtail flounder, including data that cannot easily or feasibly be incorporated in a stock assessment model. The purpose of this exploration is to evaluate possible sources of the poor diagnostics exhibited by the current Virtual Population Analysis (VPA). The work to be reviewed during this 2014 benchmark extends the 2005 benchmark assessment which recommended consideration of “trends in relative abundance and relative mortality rates derived from survey and fishery data” (Gavaris et al. 2005). The 2014 diagnostic benchmark will not examine alternative stock assessment models. Such an examination was conducted during the ICES World Conference on Stock Assessment Methods (July 2013, Boston, MA) where no model was found that performed well relative to all the data. As such, the following terms of reference are strictly limited to exploration of the data.

### Terms of Reference

- 1) Summarize all available data for Georges Bank yellowtail flounder which can be used to explore possible causes of the poor diagnostics in the current VPA for this stock.
- 2) Determine which pieces of information are consistent with alternative hypotheses regarding current stock status (e.g., current population is near carrying capacity, current population is near a desired amount, and current population is well below a desired amount).
- 3) If possible, describe how catch advice could be provided based only on the data (e.g. without relying on a stock assessment model). If feasible, identify and estimate appropriate fishing mortality reference points.

Date of the benchmark meeting: April 14-18, 2014.

All individuals interested in presenting a working paper for this meeting must contact the US and Canada Co-Chairs no later than February 18, 2014 to indicate their intention to present and to identify their intended topic. Working papers will be due 2 weeks prior to the meeting, so the deadline to submit working papers will be March 28, 2014. Authors must be present at the meeting or via webex to present their working papers. Failure to adhere to these TRAC protocols will result in the working paper being excluded from the meeting agenda. These

protocols are designed to allow sufficient time for meeting participants to review the material and to ask questions of the authors during the meeting.

Gavaris, S., R. O'Boyle, and W. Overholtz. 2005. Proceedings of the Transboundary Resources Assessment Committee (TRAC) Benchmark Review of Stock Assessment Models for the Georges Bank Yellowtail Flounder Stock. TRAC Proceedings 2005/01. 36 p.