

Stock Assessment and Fishery Evaluation of Thornyhead species (*Sebastolobus*) in the Gulf of Alaska (Executive Summary)

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Introduction

For 2005, GOA thornyheads have been moved to a biennial stock assessment to coincide with new survey data. On alternate (even) years we will present an executive summary in this format. In this document, we update fishery information on thornyheads in the GOA, and refer the reader to the full GOA thornyhead assessment (<http://www.afsc.noaa.gov/refm/docs/2003/GOAthornyheads.pdf>). The next full assessment will occur in 2005.

Summary of Major Changes

There are no changes to ABC or OFL recommendations from last year's assessment. We present the author's recommendations, and review last year's specifications, which are also this year's proposed specifications and area apportionments. The authors recommend the following Tier 5 ABC and OFL: The average of the two most recent complete GOA trawl survey biomass estimates (1999 and 2003), 86,200 t, was multiplied by $M=0.03$ times 0.75 for an **ABC recommendation of 1,940 t** and times 1 for an **OFL recommendation of 2,586 t**.

species	area	OFL 2004	ABC 2004	TAC 2004	catch 2004	OFL 2005	ABC 2005	OFL 2006	ABC 2006
Thornyheads	W		410	410	270		410		410
	C		1,010	1,010	400		1,010		1,010
	E		520	520	135		520		520
	Gulfwide	2,586	1,940	1,940	805	2,586	1,940	2,586	1,940

Response to SSC comments

In their December 2003 minutes, the SSC supported moving Thornyhead species to Tier 5 given the lack of age information to support age structured modeling. We will continue to assess Thornyheads using the Tier 5 approach until age composition data become available.

The SSC made comments to stock assessment authors in general at the December 2003 meeting to explore spawner recruit relationships and to differentiate species at the periphery of their range. We do not have adequate information to estimate thornyhead spawner recruit relationships. The primary species in the Thornyhead group, shortspine thornyhead (*Sebastolobus alascanus*), is not at the periphery of its range in the Gulf of Alaska. However, the longspine thornyhead (*Sebastolobus altivelis*) is only an occasional visitor to the Gulf of Alaska, and is therefore at the periphery of its range. Because we consider only the biomass of shortspine thornyheads in setting ABC and OFL for the complex, we effectively ignore the presence (or absence) of longspine thornyheads in the GOA in the assessment.

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