**North Pacific Blue Shark (Isurus oxyrinchus)**

**Stock Status & Trends plus Management Advice and Implications**

Contents

[SC13 2017 (Assessment Conducted) 1](#_Toc514922806)

[Useful References 4](#_Toc514922807)

[Previous Assessments 4](#_Toc514922808)

# SC13 2017 (Assessment Conducted)

1. **Stock status and trends**
2. **SC13 noted that ISC provided the following conclusions on the stock status of North Pacific blue shark.**
3. The assessment uses a fully integrated approach in Stock Synthesis with model inputs that have been greatly improved since the previous assessment. The main differences between the present assessment and the 2014 assessment are: 1) use of SS with a thorough examination of the size composition data and the relative weighting of CPUE and composition data; 2) improved life history information, such as growth and reproductive biology, and their contribution to productivity assumptions; 3) an improved understanding and parametrization of the low fecundity stock recruit relationship (LFSR); 4) catch, CPUE and size time series updated through 2015; 5) a suite of model diagnostics including implementation of an Age Structured Production Model implemented in SS. There remain some uncertainties in the time series based on the quality (observer vs. logbook) and timespans of catch and relative abundance indices, limited size composition data for several fisheries, the potential for additional catch not accounted for in the assessment, and regarding life history parameters.
4. Extensive model explorations showed that the reference run had the best model performance and showed fits most consistent with the data. The CPUE indices used in the reference case were considered most representative of the North Pacific blue shark stock due to their broader spatial temporal coverage in the core distribution of the stock and the statistical soundness of the standardizations. Alternate CPUE series for the latter part of the time series produced different stock trajectories depending upon the index used, but in each case, median SSB during the last three years exceeded SSBMSY. Using alternate assumptions on stock productivity (i.e., form of the stock recruitment relationship) also resulted in variation in the stock trajectories; assuming stock productivity lower than supported by current biological studies, resulted in lowered spawning stock biomass relative to MSY.
5. Results of the reference case model showed that the spawning stock biomass was near a time-series high in the late 1970s, fell to its lowest level between 1990 to 1995, subsequently increased gradually to reach the time-series high again in 2005, and has since shown small fluctuations with no apparent trend (Figure NPBSH- 1B) close to the time-series high. Recruitment has fluctuated around 37,000,000 age-0 sharks annually with no apparent trend (Figure NPBSH-1A). Stock status is reported in relation to MSY based reference points.
6. Based on these findings, the following information on the status of the North Pacific blue shark stock is provided:
7. Female spawning biomass in 2015 (SSB2015) was 69% higher than at MSY and estimated to be 295,774 mt (Table NPBSH-1; Figure NPBSH-1B).
8. The recent annual fishing mortality (F2012-2014) was estimated to be well below FMSY at approximately 38% of FMSY (Table NPBSH-1; Figure NPBSH-1C).
9. The reference run produced terminal conditions that were predominately in the lower right quadrant of the Kobe plot (not overfished and overfishing not occurring) (Figure NPBSH-2).

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**Figure NPBSH- 1.** Results of the SS stock assessment reference case model: (A) estimated age-0 recruits (circles) and 95% confidence intervals (vertical bars); (B) estimated female spawning biomass and 95% confidence intervals (blue shaded area); (C) estimated fishing mortality (sum of F’s across all fishing fleets). Red solid lines indicate the estimates of SBMSY and FMSY in (B) and (C), respectively.

**Table NPBSH-1.** Estimates of key management quantities for the North Pacific blue shark SS stock assessment reference case model and the range of values for 13 sensitivity runs.

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| --- | --- | --- |
| **Management Quantity** | **Reference Case Model** | **Range for Sensitivity Runs** |
| SSB1971 | 301,739 mt | 174,381 - 980,878 mt |
| SSB2015 | 295,774 mt | 140,742 - 1,082,300 mt |
| SSBMSY | 175,401 mt | 100,984 - 482,638 mt |
| F1971 | 0.15 | 0.01 - 0.15 |
| F2012-2014 | 0.14 | 0.06 - 0.15 |
| FMSY | 0.36 | 0.26 - 0.66 |
| SSB2015/SSBMSY | 1.69 | 1.39 - 2.59 |
| F2012-2014/FMSY | 0.38 | 0.15 - 0.50 |



**Figure NPBSH- 2.** Kobe plot of the trends in estimates of relative fishing mortality and spawning biomass of North Pacific blue shark between 1971‐2015 for the reference case of the SS stock assessment model.

1. **Management advice and implications**
2. **SC13 noted the following conservation information from ISC.**
3. Target and limit reference points have not yet been established for pelagic sharks by the WCPFC and IATTC, the organizations responsible for management of pelagic sharks caught in international fisheries for tuna and tuna-like species in the Pacific Ocean.
4. The 2015 SSB exceeds SSBMSY and F2012-2014 is below FMSY. Future projections under different fishing mortality (F) harvest policies (status quo, +20%, -20%, FMSY) show that median BSH biomass in the North Pacific will likely remain above BMSY in the foreseeable future (Table NPBSH-2; Figure NPBSH-3). Other potential reference points were not considered in these evaluations.

**Table NPBSH-2.** Projected trajectory of spawning biomass (in metric tons) for alternative harvest scenarios.



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**Figure NPBSH-3.** Comparison of future projected blue shark spawning biomass under different F harvest policies (status quo, +20%, -20%, and FMSY) using the SS reference case model. Status quo fishing mortality was based on the average from 2012-2014.

# Useful References

SC13-SA-WP-10 Stock Assessment and Future Projections of Blue Shark in the North Pacific Ocean through 2015. <https://www.wcpfc.int/node/29523>

# Previous Assessments

SC10-SA-WP-14 Stock Assessment and Future Projections of Blue Shark in the North Pacific Ocean Rev 1. <https://wcpfc.int/node/19204>

SC9-SA-WP-02 Stock assessment of blue shark in the north Pacific Ocean using Stock Synthesis. <https://wcpfc.int/node/3668>

SC9-SA-WP11 Stock Assessment and Future Projections of Blue Shark in the North Pacific, plus reports from the associated ISC Shark WG Workshops. <https://wcpfc.int/node/4730>

SC3-SA-WP-07 North Pacific blue shark stock assessment. <https://wcpfc.int/node/2055>