

OBSERVER DATA FLOW FOR FISHERY YEARS 2004-2006

Situation: While there have been many positive aspects about the new, highly anticipated data from the West Coast Observer Program, there have also been concerns about the orderly use of this new information for active fishery management decision making. At the April Council meeting, despite concern expressed about adequate notice to the public, the Council reviewed and adopted observer-based bycatch rates for overfished species for use in April formulating inseason adjustments to commercial trawl fisheries. At the September Council meeting, observer-based discard rates for trawl non-overfished, target species were presented to the Council. However, in response to concerns about the limited opportunity to fully analyze all implications about the use of this new information, the Council elected to not use this new information for inseason management. Nevertheless, these target species discard rates, as well as the bycatch rates for overfished species that were adopted in April, were incorporated for modeling preliminary trawl management measures for the 2004 annual specifications.

To help gain a higher degree of order and stability in the use of new observer information, the Council requested a presentation, at the November Council Meeting, of a proposed long-term schedule showing when new observer data will be available for decision-making during the first multi-year management cycle. Further, in response to concerns about a proliferation of new information presented at Council meetings, the Council requested an ad hoc committee prepare a report for the March 2004 Council meeting on policy regarding the use of new information from the observer program (and other sources) for fisheries management.

Under this agendum, Dr. Elizabeth Clarke will present current thinking about a proposed schedule of when new observer data will be available for modeling and management decision making over the next several Council meetings (Exhibit D.4.b, NMFS Report).

The Council should consider the timing of new data releases from the observer program in synchrony with inseason fisheries management in 2004, the preseason 2005-2006 multi-year management schedule, and the expected 2007-2008 management schedule. (Exhibit D.8, Supplemental Attachment 3, shows a draft preseason multi-year management schedule and process.)

Council Task:

- 1. Review proposed schedule of new information from the Groundfish Observer Program and provide guidance regarding implementation for multi-year management.**

Reference Materials:

1. Exhibit D.4.b, NMFS Report: Proposed Observer Data Flow for Fishery Years 2004-2006.
2. Exhibit D.8, Supplemental Attachment 3: Proposed Preseason Management Schedule for Setting 2005-2006 Groundfish Fishery Specifications and Management Measures.

Agenda Order:

- a. Agendum Overview
- b. NMFS Report
- c. Reports and Comments of Advisory Bodies
- d. Public Comment
- e. Council Discussion: Provide Guidance for Integrating New Data into the Management Process

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***Proposed Observer Data Flow For Fishery Years 2004-2006
Northwest Fisheries Science Center
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The Northwest Fisheries Science Center (NWFSC) is currently in the process of reconciling observer data from the period September 2002 through August 2003 with fishticket data. This will be followed by a period of data and model review that will be initiated in November and will likely continue through February. This review will include possible revisions to the existing trawl bycatch model—including the stratification used for incorporating bycatch data into the model—and also the development of a new model for evaluating bycatch and discard in the limited-entry primary fixed-gear sablefish fishery.

A report summarizing the second year of observer data will be made available by the end of January, 2004. This will be followed, in February, by presentations to the Groundfish Management Team that provide 1) an overview of bycatch ratios from the first and second years of the program, utilizing the same stratification as the Fall 2003 model, and 2) an overview of developments in modeling the fixed-gear sablefish fishery.

At the March Council meeting, the Scientific and Statistical Committee (SSC) will be briefed on changes to the trawl model, and on changes in bycatch ratios that result from pooling the first two years of observer data. Preliminary recommendations and analysis for stratification of trawl bycatch ratios would also be presented. The SSC would also be presented with recommendations for estimating sablefish discard within the LE fixed-gear fishery, for purposes of finalizing 2004 tier-limit recommendations at the March meeting.

At the April Council meeting, final recommendations for data stratification and modeling that will be used in evaluating 2005-06 management measures will be presented to the SSC. These recommendations will underlie preliminary analysis of 2005-06 management measures that will be presented to the GMT and the Groundfish Advisory Panel by staff from the NWFSC and the NW Region. The SSC may also elect to consider whether to recommend use of the updated data and model in managing the 2004 trawl fishery.

Based on feedback from the SSC, the model may be revised further before it is used in developing the NEPA analysis of management measures for 2005-06 during April and May. At its June meeting, the Council and advisory bodies would be presented with a final analysis of 2005-06 measures, based on the updated model.

The process of de-briefing observer data for the 12-month period ending in August, 2004, will commence in September, with evaluation of data and models continuing into early 2005. If sufficient data are available, development of a model for estimating bycatch and discard in the open-access fisheries may be feasible by the spring of 2005. If it is not, this task will be a very high priority for completion by March, 2006, for inclusion in the analysis of management options for the 2007-08 fishery.

The remaining schedule for 2005, will be similar to 2004, except that biennial specifications will not be addressed. The schedule during 2006 will be very similar to that outlined for 2004. However, it is expected that by that time, modeling changes will focus more on routine updating of data sources than on structural issues.