

SCIENTIFIC AND STATISTICAL COMMITTEE REPORT ON TENTATIVE ADOPTION OF
2007-2008 GROUND FISH FISHERY SPECIFICATIONS/MANAGEMENT MEASURES
AND AMENDMENT 16-4

Mr. John DeVore met with the Scientific and Statistical Committee (SSC), and provided an overview of important issues contained in the reference documents under this agenda item. Most of the analytical methods and technical issues associated with the impacts analyses presented in these documents have previously been reviewed by the SSC. Therefore, SSC discussion of the documents focused on a few topics under consideration for 2007 which were either newly developed, required further clarification, or have become of higher importance than in past years.

The SSC notes that among the management proposals in Draft Amendment 16-4 (Agenda Item F.2a, Attachment 3), there is an option on page 27 where "...the Council may establish a research reserve for any stock, that is within the ABC but above and separate from the OY for that stock." If adopted, this would represent a significant change from the way that mortality associated with research activities has been previously accounted for in groundfish management. Potential advantages to this approach are that the fishery would not be subject to early closure due to unexpectedly high research catches, and research could continue unhindered under most situations, thus providing crucial information that is not otherwise available when stocks are under rebuilding constraints. Total catch accounting means that the catch series used for assessment and rebuilding analyses includes research catches.

The evaluation of action alternatives for cowcod (Agenda Item F.2a, Attachment 3, pages 72-73) raises the issue that modifying the current Cowcod Conservation Area (CCA) boundaries could undermine the ability to replicate the recent submersible survey within the CCA. The SSC notes that the methodology used in conjunction with the previous survey to extrapolate the findings over other habitats outside the CCA would not be appropriate for future surveys, and therefore CCA management consistency would not be an issue with respect to future survey work. Of greater importance is that fishing mortality is no longer distributed across all areas, and hence future surveys should be conducted both inside and outside the CCAs, so that the abundance extrapolations may be stratified accordingly. While there may be good reasons to consider not changing the CCA boundaries, possible impacts to future survey work is not one of them.

The economic impact analyses take into consideration current economic effects, but not how these effects may change through time. For example, it is not clear how an economic sacrifice today may be mitigated by increased revenue due to higher abundances at a future date, or how loss of current fishing opportunities may result in loss of port infrastructure that reduces future fishing opportunities. A dynamic benefit-cost analysis would help inform the Council on these trade-offs. However, such an analysis would need to project forward for all fisheries and sectors impacted by overfished species, which would be a complex undertaking.

Notes from SSC to John DeVore:

Clarifications and recommendations for reference documents

- *The analyses that report time to rebuild in fractional years imply greater precision than is appropriate. Round rebuilding times to nearest whole year.*
- *Care should be taken to not make value judgments in the analyses. For example, the risk associated with canary rebuilding is not much different among alternatives, and therefore the expected duration of rebuilding should be highlighted among alternatives, rather than risk of not rebuilding.*
- *It would be useful to present the difference in rebuilding times in both absolute years and as percent change. For example, a hypothetical one year increase is negligible if the rebuilding time is 70y, but it is a 50% increase if the rebuilding time is 2Y.*
- *Table 1 in Supplemental Report 5 should be appended to include community impacts.*
- *In Draft Amendment 16-4, it should be clarified that the year that a stock is expected to be rebuilt is not an absolute. Statements such as “the year in which the stock would be rebuilt...(page 39)” should be revised to convey less certainty.*
- *It would be desirable to clarify the notion of a stock. In particular, for a situation such as lingcod where it has a continuous latitudinal distribution but clear geographic differences in progress toward rebuilding, it may be appropriate to have an established mechanism or process to identify a “unit to conserve” that is smaller than the overall stock.*