

SCOPING OF MULTI-YEAR AVERAGE CATCH POLICY

The Council is initiating scoping on a possible Groundfish Fishery Management Plan (FMP) amendment that considers changing the management framework to allow a multi-year average catch policy. In effect, this policy would allow exceedance of annual catch limits (ACLs) in some years as long as the average catch over a prescribed number of years does not exceed the average of specified ACLs during that period. This concept was considered after the last reauthorization of the Magnuson-Stevens Act in 2006 during initial scoping for Amendment 23 (see [Agenda Item C.2.a, Attachment 2, April 2007](#) – this attachment starts on page 16 of that compilation of briefing book attachments). This staff white paper explored potential mechanisms designed to avoid overharvest and optimize sector fishing opportunities. Such mechanisms include managing with buffers, bycatch caps, sideboards (i.e., a harvest guideline (HG) with a prescribed automatic action if the HG is attained), carryover provisions, and multi-year optimum yields (OYs). Considerations for deciding a multi-year OY or ACL framework include stock life history traits (mean generation time of the stock is important in considering the duration of the multi-year management period), the frequency of assessments for a stock managed in such a framework, and how such a mechanism would prevent overfishing.

In 2009, the National Marine Fisheries Service published revised National Standard 1 (NS1) guidelines that created the general management framework of managing with overfishing limits, acceptable biological catches, and ACLs. The revised NS1 guidelines informed FMP Amendment 23, which did not incorporate a multi-year average catch policy. Specifically, the NS1 guidelines stipulate, “A ‘multiyear plan’ as referenced in section 303(a)(15) of the Magnuson-Stevens Act is a plan that establishes harvest specifications or harvest guidelines for each year of a time period greater than 1 year. A multiyear plan must include a mechanism for specifying ACLs for each year with appropriate accountability measures (AMs) to prevent overfishing and maintain an appropriate rate of rebuilding if the stock or stock complex is in a rebuilding plan. A multiyear plan must provide that, if an ACL is exceeded for a year, then AMs are implemented for the next year consistent with paragraph (g)(3) of this section.”

The Council task at this meeting is to scope the issues associated with a new multi-year catch policy and provide guidance on future analyses and a schedule for proceeding with an FMP amendment should the Council decide to pursue this course of action.

Council Action:

Scope issues for multi-year average catch policy and provide guidance on future analyses and schedule.

Reference Materials:

None.

Agenda Order:

- F.5 Scoping of Multi-year Average Catch Policy John DeVore
- a. Reports and Comments of Advisory Bodies and Management Entities
 - b. Public Comment
 - c. **Council Action:** Scope Issues for Multi-year Average Catch Policy and Provide Guidance on Future Analyses and Schedule

PFMC
05/12/17