

SCIENTIFIC AND STATISTICAL COMMITTEE REPORT ON GROUND FISH FISHERY
MANAGEMENT PLAN AMENDMENT 23
ANNUAL CATCH LIMITS AND ACCOUNTABILITY MEASURES

The Scientific and Statistical Committee (SSC) reviewed the proposed amendment, the Preliminary Draft Environmental Assessment (Agenda Item B.2.a, Attachment 1), a letter from National Resources Defense Council (NRDC), Ocean Conservancy and Oceana (Agenda Item B.2.c, Public Comment), and a letter from Mr. Frank Lockhart, Assistant Regional Administrator, National Marine Fisheries Service (NMFS), Northwest Regional Office (Agenda Item B.2.b, Supplemental NMFS Report).

The SSC recommends that Amendment 23 be finalized at this Council meeting. We have several suggestions that need attention in the current version and other comments for the future.

Current Amendment

The SSC understands that the procedure for setting acceptable biological catch (ABC) will involve the sequence of the SSC determining the value of σ and the Council setting the value of P^* , then the SSC verifying the consequent value of the ABC. The SSC will provide a final endorsement of all ABCs.

Where optimum yield (OY) occurs in the Fishery Management Plan (FMP), for example in Section 5.4, it is meant in the sense that it is described in National Standard 1, (e) (3) (ii) and (iii), i.e., as a long-term average characteristic, not a value set annually. The SSC recommends Council staff revise wording accordingly. Also, the definition of overfishing on p. 10 of the proposed amendment to the FMP is in error. It should say, "Overfishing occurs when catch exceeds the OFL."

There is an error in Table 4-1 of the Draft Environmental Assessment; specifically the row describing the 2011 annual catch limits (ACLs) for sablefish under the option 2 40-10 adjustment is incorrect. The corrected table will appear in the GMT report.

Future Amendments

The SSC emphasizes that there remains more to do regarding the new approach to deal with uncertainty, beyond the current version of this framework. Several sources of uncertainty have been identified that deserve further consideration, and the estimate of overall uncertainty may increase.

The SSC notes the need to examine and possibly restructure the various complexes identified in the FMP.