

SCIENTIFIC AND STATISTICAL COMMITTEE REPORT ON TENTATIVE ADOPTION
OF HARVEST SPECIFICATIONS, REBUILDING PLAN REVISIONS, AND
MANAGEMENT MEASURES FOR 2011-2012 FISHERIES

The Scientific and Statistical Committee (SSC) reviewed proposed management for 2011-2012 groundfish fisheries. Mr. John DeVore of the Council staff presented the harvest specification alternatives.

The SSC endorses the acceptable biological catch (ABCs) in the proposed specifications with the following caveats: overfishing limits (OFLs) and ABCs should be set for the minor rockfish sub-complexes. These sub-complexes are functionally equivalent to complexes. According to National Standard 1 (NS1) Guidelines, OFLs and ABCs must be set for actively managed complexes. The SSC notes that once a group of species is identified which requires an aggregate annual catch limit (ACL), then an OFL and ABC should also be set for that group, since the grouping represents an independent unit for management and is actively managed.

The SSC recommends that OFLs and ABCs be set at the smallest groupings practicable. OFLs cannot reasonably be set at the species level within the sub-complexes as these species lack status determination criteria (SDC), are infrequently caught, and currently are not monitored adequately to identify catch to species. In each of the two geographic areas, the species within each sub-complex are caught together at similar depths (near-shore, shelf or slope), largely to the exclusion of species in the other sub-complexes. Therefore, managing at the larger minor rockfish complex level is not recommended. The SSC notes that the question of which species should be grouped together in complexes ought to be revisited before the next management cycle within a workshop or Stock Assessment Review-panel-like review that would also address vulnerability analyses and methods for identifying OFLs for tier 2 and 3 stocks.

Ideally, ABCs for complexes should be set by using the σ from the assigned category for each species along with a single P^* for the entire complex. However, the current preferred alternative for setting ABCs, i.e. assuming that all species in a complex are in category 3, is acceptable. NS1 guidelines suggest that complexes be managed to the most vulnerable species within the complex. The SSC recommends that this should be achieved by adjusting P^* to achieve the appropriate level of risk. Additionally, uncertainty in the actual distribution of species within the catch can be addressed by adjusting ACLs.

For rebuilding plans, there is no compelling constraint that requires a constant fishing mortality rate (F). However, a constant F policy is intended to allow for constant effort and therefore stability in the catch of species which co-occur with rebuilding species. The SSC also notes that economic analysis would be useful in the discussion of rebuilding plans in future annual specification documents. Such analysis would help clarify the short term costs and long term benefits of alternative rebuilding options.