

SCIENTIFIC AND STATISTICAL COMMITTEE REPORT ON PRIORITIES FOR
MAGNUSON-STEVENSON REAUTHORIZATION

The Scientific and Statistical Committee (SSC) considered issues which could be addressed during the upcoming reauthorization of the Magnuson-Stevens Fishery Conservation and Management Act. It identified the following issues (in no particular order) which relate to the provision of scientific management advice, Council fisheries, and Council decision-making:

- The discontinuity of current control rules between rebuilding and non-rebuilding stocks is problematic due to the scientific uncertainty inherent in stock assessment. Establishing continuous control rules across the minimum stock size threshold (MSST) would limit large changes in regulation due to minor variations in assessment results.
- The rule that defines the maximum time for overfished stocks to rebuild, T_{MAX} , is discontinuous at 10 years. It should be replaced by a rule that is not discontinuous, such as “ T_{MAX} is the larger of 10 years or the sum of T_{MIN} and one mean generation time.”
- Guidance should be developed on how results from new assessments should be used to change fishing mortality rates for overfished and rebuilding stocks and target times to rebuild to B_{MSY} (Rebuilding Revision Rules).
- The mixed stock exemption should be made operational, and guidelines provided for the biological and economic analyses needed for justifying its application.
- “Overfished” and “overfishing” are currently defined to be the same in the Act. The definitions of these terms should be changed to reflect actual practice when applying status determination criteria. “Overfished” is related to population size relative to the Minimum Stock Size Threshold (MSST) and “overfishing” is related to exploitation rate relative to the Maximum Fishing Mortality Threshold.
- Information which would normally be considered confidential should be made available to those tasked with reviewing analyses which use that information, and which will form the basis for Council decision-making.
- The term “Ecosystem Component” should be defined more clearly.
- The term “overfished” gives the impression that a stock is below the MSST because of excessive fishing. This is often not the case, so the term “overfished” should be replaced by one such as “depleted.”
- Allowance should be made for fishers to be compensated with quota for research conducted in support of fisheries management.