

SCIENTIFIC AND STATISTICAL COMMITTEE REPORT ON
PROPOSED PROCEDURES FOR ESTIMATING PACIFIC HALIBUT BYCATCH
IN THE GROUND FISH FISHERIES

Ms. Eliza Heery briefed the Scientific and Statistical Committee (SSC) on the methods for estimating Pacific halibut bycatch in all fishery sectors observed by the West Coast Groundfish Observer Program (WCGOP). Methods presented in this report, in general, are similar to those used in previous reports. The three main changes made in this report for estimating bycatch in the limited entry (LE) bottom trawl sector are: 1) inclusion of California data, 2) modification of the method for adjusting trawl logbook tow time, and 3) simplified stratification. Bycatch estimates for other fishery sectors were also presented. Data sources used in this analysis include the WCGOP, trawl logbook, and fish ticket data.

The SSC reviewed the methods used for estimating halibut bycatch in the LE bottom trawl, non-nearshore fixed gear, and other fishery sectors. For the LE bottom trawl sector, the SSC recommends that the diagnostics from the generalized linear model and tree-based regression model be included in future reports. Design based estimates for the WCGOP data should also be included for evaluating possible biases caused by post stratification. The SSC notes that Pacific halibut bycatch estimates for California LE bottom trawl sector have increased in recent years.

For non-nearshore fixed gear, the SSC notes estimators based on total catch may not be appropriate and recommends the development of an effort-based estimator for future reports.

The SSC recommends updating mortality rates for discarded Pacific halibut by the LE bottom trawl sector, and including area specific consideration due to temperature effect on mortality. Viability information for fixed gear sector should also be collected so that mortality rates can be estimated in a similar manner.

The SSC commends the authors on the quality and timeliness of the report, endorses the methodology, and agrees that the estimates are the best available science. The SSC notes that estimates of halibut bycatch for non-nearshore fixed gear open access sector are not available before 2007. The assessment authors at the International Pacific Halibut Commission should collaborate with WCGOP staff to develop estimates for this sector for use in future halibut assessments.