GROUNDFISH ADVISORY SUBPANEL REPORT ON BAROTRAUMA DEVICE MORTALITY RATES

Mr. John Budrick of the California Department of Fish and Wildlife (CDFW) addressed the Groundfish Advisory Subpanel (GAP) regarding barotrauma device mortality rates. He presented data and recommendations from the Groundfish Management Team (GMT) as well as information from the Scientific and Statistical Committee (SSC). The SSC favors the use of the Bayesian Hierarchical Method to analyze the data. The GAP concurs. The data continues to be supportive of the use of descending devices.

The inclusion of the newer data from the National Marine Fisheries Service Southwest Fisheries Science Center Hyde/Wegner studies further improves the data set for deeper water depth bins.

The GAP supports use of descending devices and, relative to mortality credits, agrees with the approach detailed by the GMT and the SSC.

The GAP is looking forward to seeing results from the Recreational Fishery Information Network Tech review and the application of credits for successful release in determining future management actions. The GAP had a short discussion about the use of these descending devices to facilitate recompression of live discards in hook-and-line commercial fisheries. However, there may be enforcement concerns with the use and standardization of these devices.

The GAP continues to encourage a moderate and progressive approach to confidence levels, reflecting existing favorable data. The consistent use of conservative buffers in the GMT analysis assures that the risk of underestimating mortality will remain low. There are buffers for short-term mortality, long-term mortality, and unaccounted-for mortality. The 10 percent buffer for uncertainty is applied to mortality estimates from the Hyde/Wegner study to account for uncertainty from the acoustic tagging results, while a 5 percent buffer is applied to estimates from cage studies. There is also a GMT revised confidence interval estimation method to account for the variance in results between proxy species and studied species. A long-term mortality estimate of 15 percent, reflecting mortality of fish between day 3 and day 10 in the Hyde/Wegner study, is applied to the two-day mortality estimates. The new confidence interval estimation methods appear to change the level of certainty.

Taking into consideration the above mentioned mortality buffers, the GAP favors the use of a 75 percent confidence level.

The GAP would like to comment that, as multiple buffers to minimize risk accumulate, there is the risk that resultant mortality rates would become so high that the value of using descending devices are minimized. If that occurs, it will be difficult to encourage anglers to see the value of using these devices.

PFMC
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