Agenda Item E.3.b
Supplemental GMT Report
March 2010

GROUNDFISH MANAGEMENT TEAM REPORT ON PACIFIC WHITING HARVEST SPECIFICATIONS FOR 2010

The Groundfish Management Team (GMT) reviewed documents under this agenda item and provides the following comments for Council consideration.

Adoption of 2010 Assessment and 2010 Optimum Yield (OY)

At the time of writing, the GMT understand that the Scientific and Statistical Committee (SSC) will present two models to use in setting the 2010 Pacific whiting harvest specifications: (1) the Stock Assessment Review (STAR) panel recommended TINSS model; and, (2) the Northwest Fisheries Science Center (NWFSC) stock assessment team preferred update of the 2009 stock synthesis model (NWFSC Model).

Without a recommendation from the SSC, the Council is faced with two alternative states of nature (i.e., two very different life histories and scales of biomass) with considerable differences in the estimates of stock abundance and productivity between them. When the Council is faced with such uncertainty in the scientific advice, the GMT recommends that the Council consider the risks posed by the competing models. Yearly stock assessments allow for frequent revisions to stock status in this highly dynamic species, thus hopefully decreasing long-term risk to the stock. However, as with last year, there is some risk that the stock could be declared overfished in the next assessment.

Under the TINSS model, the $F_{40\%}$ proxy harvest rate would result in a 40-10 adjusted optimum yield (OY) of over 600,000 mt. The TINSS model projects that this level of harvest would drive the stock below the overfished threshold in 2011. Catches of 550,000 mt are expected to drop the stock to the overfished threshold. This stock depletion occurs because the $F_{40\%}$ proxy is a higher mortality rate than the F_{MSY} ($F_{53\%}$) value.

The author of the TINSS model strongly recommended against using proxy harvest rate, much preferring the F_{MSY} harvest rate estimated by the model. This harvest rate, with the 40-10 adjustment, would result in a 2010 OY of 341,900 mt.

Under the NWFSC model, any catch above 186,000 is projected to drop the stock below the $B_{25\%}$ threshold in the next year. This catch level is 55 percent of the 2010 F_{MSY} yield from the TINSS model, and less than 30 percent of the yield under the $F_{40\%}$ proxy harvest rate.

Whiting Set-Asides

Prior to calculating the whiting sector allocations, tribal set-asides and whiting removals in other fisheries and research must be accounted. Information presented in the NWFSC Total Mortality reports from 2005 through 2008 are presented in Table 1 below. The Northwest Region anticipates approximately 15 mt will be needed for research in 2010. Because of the variability in catches of whiting in the limited entry non-whiting trawl fishery and because of the time lag in receiving the final impacts from these fisheries, the GMT recommends that 3,000 mt, which is

the average level of removals from 2007 and 2008, be deducted in 2010 prior to determining the non-tribal sector allocations.

Table 1. Catches of whiting in non-whiting fisheries from 2005 through 2008.

	2005	**2006**	**2007**	**2008**
Pink Shrimp + Bottom Trawl	826	942	3,963	1,934
Pink Shrimp Only	-	-	2,808	684
LE Non-whiting Bottom Trawl Only	-	-	1,155	1,251
Research	42	16	49	12
TOTAL	**868**	**958**	**4,012**	**1,946**

PFMC
03/07/10