

BIENNIAL MANAGEMENT PROCESS FOR 2013-2014 GROUND FISH FISHERIES –
PART 1

At this meeting, the initial development of management recommendations for 2013-2014 groundfish fisheries has been divided into two parts. The tasks under this agenda item (Part I) are to adopt for public review and analysis (1) final 2013-2014 overfishing limits (OFLs) for groundfish stocks and stock complexes recommended by the Scientific and Statistical Committee (SSC); (2) final overfishing probabilities (P*s)/acceptable biological catches (ABCs) for groundfish stocks and stock complexes; and (3) preliminary preferred annual catch limits (ACLs) for groundfish stocks and stock complexes.

In June, the Council adopted a process and schedule for deciding 2013-2014 groundfish harvest specifications and management measures that requires timely, step-wise decision-making and expeditious preparation of a National Environmental Policy Act (NEPA) document. This schedule is more front-loaded than past biennial processes in order to better ensure implementation of new regulations on January 1, 2013. The Council also decided in June and reaffirmed in September that they intended to specify 2013-2014 harvest specifications and management measures with limited changes relative to those specified under 2012 regulations, to further ensure a January 1, 2013 start to the fishery. Council and NMFS staff will convene a teleconference on Wednesday, October 26 to scope the 2013-2014 specifications issues and the requisite NEPA analysis; NMFS will thereafter reach a decision on whether the appropriate NEPA document is an Environmental Assessment or an Environmental Impact Statement. This decision will impact the likelihood of implementing new regulations by January 1, 2013; therefore, the Council should receive an update on this issue under this agenda item.

The Council is tasked with adopting final SSC-recommended OFLs for 2013-2014 fisheries at this meeting. The Council expressed intent to minimize change in catch levels from the 2011-2012 cycle; however, some modification to 2012 OFLs needs to be considered to accommodate best available science (Attachment 1). Overfishing limits are provided for stocks that are newly assessed this year using proxy spawning potential ratio (SPR) harvest rates applied to estimates of exploitable biomass. Projected 2013-14 OFLs are also provided in Attachment 1 from past assessments for those category 1 and 2 stocks that were not assessed this year. The Council decided the OFLs for most of the stocks and stock complexes in September. However, OFLs for those stocks that were reviewed at this year's "mop-up" panel (i.e., bocaccio, darkblotched rockfish, and widow rockfish) need to be adopted under this agenda item. Revisions to the canary rockfish OFLs were also made at the "mop-up" panel, thus requiring reconsideration by the SSC and Council at this meeting. Finally, the Other Fish OFLs in Attachment 1 reflect the SSC recommendation in September that, "(t)he values for the Other Fish complex should equal the summed values of the component species." The OFL contribution of some of the species (e.g., skate species) is unknown; therefore, the summed "known" OFL contributions of component stocks in the Other Fish complex represent a likely underestimate of the true OFL. The SSC will review the OFLs provided in Attachment 1 and make their recommendations to the Council at this meeting.

The Council is also tasked with deciding final preferred ABCs at this meeting. As in the past process, the Council will select an overfishing probability (P^*) value as a policy judgment on scientific uncertainty for each stock and stock complex. The P^* decision determines the ABC based on the P^*/σ relationship depicted in Attachment 2. A σ value, or estimated variance about the current biomass estimate, has been calculated by the SSC for each stock category. Note that a new σ value was calculated for widow rockfish since the SSC Groundfish Subcommittee and the widow stock assessment team determined there was greater uncertainty in the assessment than determined for other category 1 stocks. The buffer amount determined in the P^*/σ relationship is subtracted from the OFL to determine the ABC. Attachment 3 provides 2013 and 2014 ABC values presuming the Council decides to maintain their P^* choices decided in September for each stock and stock complex.

The Council is also tasked with deciding preliminary preferred 2013 and 2014 annual catch limits (ACLs) for groundfish stocks and stock complexes. Final ACLs cannot exceed the final ABCs in our management framework (see Attachment 3 for the preliminary ABCs decided in September and the proposed ABCs for other stocks and complexes (i.e., bocaccio, canary, darkblotched, widow, and the Other Fish complex) assuming status quo P^* values are chosen). ACL alternatives for overfished species are provided (Attachment 4) based on the draft rebuilding analyses considered for adoption under Agenda Item E.1. Attachment 4 shows the estimated time to rebuild each stock under each alternative ACL – an important consideration in deciding overfished species' ACLs. The GMT provides their recommended range of alternative overfished species ACLs for detailed analysis under Agenda Item E.4.b, GMT Report.

Attachment 5 provides draft information on historical groundfish landings and revenue. This information is intended to support the description/analysis in the 2013-2014 groundfish harvest specifications and management measures EIS. Since these data are draft, Council staff is requesting comments before these data are used in analysis.

The GMT has provided questions to the SSC regarding analysis that will potentially aid our understanding of rebuilding alternative tradeoffs; these questions are provided under Agenda Item J.4. The SSC is being asked to provide their answers to these questions next March, when the Council and its advisors are scheduled to begin discussion on an FMP amendment that considers long term improvements to the groundfish harvest management framework and specifications decision-making process. The Council has decided this amendment will potentially affect the 2015-2016 specifications process at the earliest.

The Council should consider the advice of the SSC, GMT, other Council advisory bodies, and the general public before adopting final OFLs, final ABCs, and preliminary ACLs for public review and analysis. The Council is scheduled to decide a range of 2013-2014 groundfish management measures for analysis under Agenda Item E.9. In the event the Council cannot complete all the tasks under this agenda item or if additional analysis is requested before deciding these harvest specifications, the remainder of these decisions should be made under Agenda Item E.9.

Council Action

- 1. Adopt final OFLs recommended by the SSC;**
- 2. Adopt final P*s/ABCs for groundfish stocks and stock complexes;**
- 3. Adopt a preliminary preferred ACL for each groundfish stock and stock complex.**

Reference Materials:

1. Agenda Item E.4.a, Attachment 1: 2012 OFLs (mt) and recommended 2013 and 2014 OFLs (mt) for west coast groundfish stocks.
2. Agenda Item E.4.a, Attachment 2: Relationship between P* and the percent reduction of the OFL for deciding the 2013 and 2014 ABCs for category 1, widow rockfish, category 2, and category 3 stocks based on sigma values of 0.36, 0.41, 0.72, and 1.44, respectively.
3. Agenda Item E.4.a, Attachment 3: 2012 ABCs and ACLs (mt) and presumptive 2013 and 2014 ABCs (mt) for west coast groundfish stocks assuming the status quo P* and stock category values do not change.
4. Agenda Item E.4.a, Attachment 4: Estimated time to rebuild and spawning potential ratio (SPR) harvest rate relative to alternative 2013-2014 ACLs for overfished west coast groundfish stocks.
5. Agenda Item E.4.a, Attachment 5: Historical Landings and Revenue in Groundfish Fisheries.
6. Agenda Item E.4.a, Attachment 6: Landings and Revenue Tables.
7. Agenda Item E.4.b, GMT Report: The Groundfish Management Team Report on the Suggested Range of Annual Catch Limit and Annual Catch Target Alternatives for Rebuilding Stocks.

Agenda Order:

- a. Agenda Item Overview John DeVore and Kelly Ames
- b. Reports and Comments of Advisory Bodies and Management Entities
- c. Public Comment
- d. Council Action: Adopt Final Preferred Overfishing Limits and P*/Allowable Biological Catches, and a Preliminary Preferred Alternative Annual Catch Limit for each Stock and Stock Complex

PFMC
10/17/11