

FISHERY MANAGEMENT PLAN AMENDMENT 23:
ANNUAL CATCH LIMITS AND ACCOUNTABILITY MEASURES

Fishery Management Plan Amendment 23 concerns incorporating a new framework for deciding groundfish harvest specifications consistent with new National Standard 1 (NS1) guidelines. Agenda Item E.4.a, Attachment 1 provides a brief overview of the new fishery management concepts and harvest specifications contemplated under Amendment 23. The Council is tasked at this meeting with adopting a preliminary preferred alternative Fishery Management Plan (FMP) framework for Amendment 23 and providing guidance to the Scientific and Statistical Committee (SSC) and the Groundfish Management Team (GMT) on 2011-2012 biennial harvest specifications analyses to make the Council's April decision on this subject easier.

Amendment 23 FMP Framework Considerations

The Council's guidance on Amendment 23 at the November 2009 meeting was to provide a simple FMP framework that was not overly prescriptive. Council staff, in consultation with staff from the National Marine Fisheries Service (NMFS) Northwest Region office and National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration (NOAA) General Counsel, revised the proposed FMP language under Amendment 23 in accordance with this guidance (Agenda Item E.4.a, Attachment 2). The Council and its advisors should review this FMP language and decide whether it meets the purpose and need of Amendment 23 to incorporate new NS1 guidelines while maintaining the Council's preference to keep the framework relatively simple. It is anticipated that most of the specific decisions under the contemplated Amendment 23 framework (e.g., the size of scientific uncertainty and/or management uncertainty buffers for specifying acceptable biological catch [ABC] and annual catch limits [ACLs]) will be made in the Council process for deciding biennial harvest specifications.

Three other specific Amendment 23 framework issues have been identified for Council consideration: 1) translating the current 40-10 rule under the new framework, 2) consideration for adding an annual catch target (ACT) specification, and categorizing some species as Ecosystem Component species (see text in the next section). The 40-10 control rule is the current default precautionary adjustment of the optimum yield (OY) from the ABC when a stock's biomass is below the target (i.e., $<B_{MSY}$). It can be considered a default rebuilding strategy designed to rebuild the stock to target levels and is typically used when a stock's biomass is below B_{MSY} but above the overfished threshold (i.e., the precautionary zone). Two options for translating the current 40-10 control rule under the Amendment 23 framework are presented in Agenda Item E.4.a, Attachment 3. The decision on which option to include under Amendment 23 is a Council policy decision. The SSC and other advisors will offer their considerations and recommendations for this decision in supplemental reports at this meeting.

The ACT is an optional accountability measure (AM) intended for the management of fisheries without effective inseason monitoring and harvest controls. Agenda Item E.4.a, Attachment 4 evaluates the current groundfish management system and AMs in consideration for adding an

ACT as an additional AM. Other considerations for managing some stocks with an ACT are also provided in Attachment 4.

2011-2012 Biennial Specifications Considerations

The new ABC in the NS1 guidelines and contemplated under Amendment 23 considers scientific uncertainty for specifying a buffer below the overfishing limit (OFL). The SSC has provided a conceptual framework for factoring scientific uncertainty in the new ABC rule for stocks with a history of multiple, relatively data-rich assessments (i.e., category 1 stocks). They recommended quantifying assessment variability as a basis for evaluating the size of a scientific uncertainty buffer and the risk of overfishing the stock due to this scientific uncertainty. Those stocks with data-poor assessments (i.e., category 2 stocks) would have a larger scientific uncertainty buffer than category 1 stocks, and those stocks without an assessment and sparse data to inform harvest specifications (i.e., category 3 stocks) would have a scientific uncertainty buffer that is larger still. The SSC will provide the documentation and results of the analysis for category 1 stocks and their recommendations for scientific uncertainty buffers for category 2 and 3 stocks in their supplemental report at this meeting.

There is also the consideration for classifying some FMP species as Ecosystem Component (EC) species where, according to the new NS1 guidelines, there is no requirement to specify reference points (i.e., OFLs, ABCs, and ACLs). To aid the Council and its advisors, column 5 in Agenda Item E.4.a, Attachment 5 provides a preliminary categorization of FMP species as category 1, 2, 3, or EC species that was done by Council staff. Additionally, the species vulnerability scores produced by the GMT using the Productivity and Susceptibility Assessment (Agenda Item E.2.b, GMT Report) may be useful in deciding species categorizations. Council advisors will critically review this categorization and may recommend changes to the initial categorization of FMP species.

Ultimately, as described above, species categorizations will be used to decide scientific uncertainty buffers for FMP stocks. The SSC will decide the detailed approach for quantifying scientific uncertainty and will define the relationship between the variance in stock biomass estimates (the SSC-preferred metric for defining scientific uncertainty) and the probability of overfishing the stock based on this scientific uncertainty (denoted P^*). The SSC is recommending the choice of P^* is a policy decision that the Council should make. A P^* of 50 percent represents a point estimate with a 50 percent probability of being too high and a 50 percent probability of being too low, and infers there is no scientific uncertainty buffer. That is, a P^* of 50 percent equates to the ABC being set equal to the OFL. The Council is asked to provide general guidance at this meeting on the P^* decision, such as defining a maximum P^* for category 1 stocks (a P^* -biomass variance metric cannot be calculated for category 2 and 3 stocks; scientific uncertainty buffers larger than that for category 1 stocks defines the ABC) that will be specifically made at the April meeting. Any further instructions to Council staff on the analyses and data the Council would like to review in April for making decisions on 2011-2012 harvest specifications would also be timely.

The specific Council tasks under this agenda item are to adopt draft FMP language describing the Amendment 23 framework for public review and to provide guidance on scientific

uncertainty buffers and other data and analyses the Council would like to review before making a decision on biennial harvest specifications. The Council is scheduled to decide their preferred 2011-12 harvest specifications at the April meeting and a final preferred alternative for the Amendment 23 framework at the June meeting.

Council Action:

- 1. Adopt preliminary preferred FMP amendatory language for Amendment 23 for public review.**
- 2. Provide guidance on data and analyses needed to decide biennial harvest specifications at the April meeting.**

Reference Materials:

1. Agenda Item E.4.a, Attachment 1: A Brief Overview of Harvest Specifications Under the Current FMP Framework Compared With Those Contemplated Under Amendment 23.
2. Agenda Item E.4.a, Attachment 2: Draft Groundfish Fishery Management Plan Amendatory Language Proposed Under Amendment 23.
3. Agenda Item E.4.a, Attachment 3: Options For Defining The 40-10 Control Rule Under The Amendment 23 Framework.
4. Agenda Item E.4.a, Attachment 4: Evaluation of the Effectiveness of the Current Groundfish Management System To Prevent Overfishing in Consideration of the Annual Catch Target Specification Under Amendment 23.
5. Agenda Item E.4.a, Attachment 5: Table 2-1. Specified 2009 and 2010 ABCs (mt) and Projected 2011 and 2012 OFLs (mt) for Assessed stocks and Initial FMP Species Categorizations.

Agenda Order:

- a. Agenda Item Overview
- b. Reports and Comments of Management Entities and Advisory Bodies
- c. Public Comment
- d. **Council Action:** Adopt Alternatives for Public Review

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PFMC
2/22/10