

SCIENTIFIC AND STATISTICAL COMMITTEE REPORT ON
FISHERIES IN 2015-2016 AND BEYOND: HARVEST SPECIFICATIONS,
MANAGEMENT MEASURES, AND AMENDMENT 24

The Scientific and Statistical Committee (SSC) reviewed various documents related to establishing harvest specifications for the 2015-2016 fisheries and for Amendment 24 to the Groundfish Fishery Management Plan. The supplemental material for this agenda item became available during the SSC meeting. Therefore, the SSC did not have time to review it.

Cowcod Overfishing Level (OFL)

The SSC recommends the updated 2016 OFL of 68 mt for cowcod (Table 1, Agenda Item F.7, Attachment 2).

Harvest Specifications Draft Environmental Impact Statement

Dr. Kit Dahl and Mr. John DeVore provided the SSC with an overview of the Draft Environmental Impact Statement (DEIS) (Agenda Item F.7 Attachment 4). The DEIS is a comprehensive evaluation of the long- and short-term environmental and socioeconomic impacts of future catches. The short-term analyses (Sections 4.1 – 4.7) are related to the 2015-2016 fisheries while the long-term analyses (Sections 4.8 - 4.12) relate to the process of determining default harvest specifications.

Socioeconomic and Biological Analyses

Most of the short-term socioeconomic analyses are based on models which have been previously reviewed by the SSC. However, the methods used for projecting trawl catches for 2015-2016 fisheries have not been reviewed. The SSC was briefed on the methods and finds them to be reasonable. The projections of attainment are likely to be very uncertain given the fishery may still be in a transitional phase to the catch share program. The SSC has also not reviewed the approach used to evaluate the implications of trip limits for lingcod during the closed season. The SSC should review this analysis for the 2017-2018 harvest specifications process.

The projected long-term socioeconomic impacts are highly uncertain. Historical variation in ex-vessel revenue is due to many factors, such as management and changes in markets, and it is not clear how these factors will impact revenue in the future. However, the SSC agrees that the evaluation of long-term socioeconomic impacts is reasonable given the available information.

The biological analyses in the DEIS have been updated based on previous comments by the SSC. These analyses are sufficiently complete.

Atlantis Model Results

The Atlantis model is used in the DEIS to explore the long-term biological implications of the default harvest specifications. The SSC reviewed a preliminary version of the analysis based on this model in April 2014. The analysis has been updated based on the suggestions from the SSC. In particular, results are now provided to evaluate impacts on marine mammal and seabird populations. A methodology panel is scheduled (June 30 - July 2, 2014) to review the Atlantis model and report to the Council in September 2014.

The outcomes of the Atlantis model are scaled to results for a benchmark scenario in which productivity is set to base levels and catches are based on the 'recent averages' scenario. Across a broad range of catch levels, there do not appear to be large impacts of the groundfish fishery on other components of the ecosystem, although, and as expected, biomass levels for target species are lower for the higher catch scenarios.

SAFE Document

Mr. John DeVore summarized the contents of the draft groundfish SAFE document (Agenda Item F.7 Attachment 7). The draft SAFE follows the revised National Standard 2 guidelines for SAFE documents and has been developed with input from NMFS staff and stock assessment teams. It contains a considerable amount of information which will be valuable to the Council, scientists, and the public. The SSC will be involved in the review of the next version of the document through its Groundfish and Economics Subcommittees. The SSC highlights that the time needed to update this document every biennial cycle may be substantial.

PFMC
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