BIENNIAL MANAGEMENT PROCESS FOR 2013-2014 GROUNDFISH 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 (1) to review the schedule and process for deciding 2013-2014 groundfish harvest specifications and management measures (Attachment 1); and to adopt for public review and analysis (2) 2013-2014 overfishing limits (OFLs) for groundfish stocks and stock complexes recommended by the Scientific and Statistical Committee (SSC); and (3) overfishing probabilities (P*s)/acceptable biological catches (ABCs) 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 (Attachment 1) that requires timely, step-wise decision-making and expeditious preparation of National Environmental Policy Act (NEPA) analyses. 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 that they intended to specify 2013-2014 harvest specifications and management measures with limited changes relative to those specified under 2012 regulations (see June minutes provided in Agenda Item F.2.a, Attachment 1).

The Council is tasked with adopting 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 2). 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 2 from past assessments for those category 1 and 2 stocks that were not assessed this year. While the 2012 OFLs for unassessed category 3 stocks could normally be specified, a technical error in those estimates was discovered at the April review panel meeting for data-poor assessment methods. Corrected OFL estimates for these unassessed stocks are provided in Attachment 2. The SSC will review these OFLs and make their recommendations to the Council at this meeting. The Council is scheduled to adopt final preferred OFLs at this meeting; however, OFLs for those stocks recommended to be reviewed at this year’s mop-up panel (e.g., bocaccio and darkblotched rockfish) will be adopted at the November meeting.

The Council is also tasked with deciding preliminary preferred ABCs at this meeting. As in the past process, the Council will select a 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*/sigma relationship depicted in Attachment 3. A sigma value, or estimated variance about the current biomass estimate, has been calculated by the SSC for each stock category. The buffer amount determined in the P*/sigma relationship is subtracted from the OFL to determine the ABC. Attachment 4 provides 2013 and 2014 ABC values presuming the Council decides to maintain their status quo P* choices for each stock and stock complex.
There are three stock assessments being reviewed by the SSC at this meeting for stocks that are currently managed in stock complexes. Besides spiny dogfish, new assessments are provided for blackgill and greenspotted rockfish that are managed in the northern and southern slope and shelf rockfish complexes, respectively. It would be helpful if the Council could provide initial guidance on how they may want to manage these stocks beginning in 2013 (i.e., whether to continue to manage these stocks within their respective complexes or not). This will help the GMT and Council staff structure the harvest specification tables that will be provided in November.

The Council may want to consider restructuring existing stock complexes in the 2013-2014 specifications process, particularly if the spiny dogfish assessment is adopted. An analysis in consideration for restructuring stock complexes is provided in Attachment 5. Members of the GMT and Council staff also recently published a PSA analysis of existing groundfish stock complexes in the North American Journal of Fisheries Management that was submitted last winter. This journal article is provided in hard copy only at this meeting to provide context for the Attachment 5 analysis since copyright laws prohibit the Council from posting the entire article online. The Attachment 5 analysis, conducted by a subgroup of the GMT and Council staff, is a Productivity and Susceptibility Assessment (PSA) of all FMP species and a select number of non-FMP species taken in west coast groundfish fisheries. The addition of the non-FMP species to the analysis is especially important for determining harvest specifications for the Other Fish complex. The Other Fish complex is an assemblage of disparate species without a scientific basis for status quo harvest specifications. Further, spiny dogfish, newly assessed this year, is a component stock in the Other Fish complex and may be removed from the complex starting in 2013. The harvest-based specifications for many of the component stocks of the Other Fish complex cannot be accurately calculated because many of these stocks have been landed in a market category of species that are not differentiated to individual species in landings records (e.g., unspecified skates and unspecified grenadiers). The GMT had previously recommended adding these other related species in order to have the ability to estimate OFLs for these market categories using approved methods for data-poor species. Since the FMP and NS1 guidelines recommend managing stock complexes of stocks with similar overfishing vulnerabilities that are caught in similar areas in similar fisheries, some alternative restructuring of the Other Fish complex is offered in the analysis.

Finally, the SSC is scheduled to review the socioeconomic model used to distribute commercial groundfish landings to port groups (Attachment 7) as an intermediate step in estimating regional income impacts. The SSC will report on this review at this meeting.

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

1. Review scope of action and schedule for deciding 2013-2014 groundfish harvest specifications and management measures;
2. Adopt final OFLs recommended by the SSC;
3. Adopt preliminary P*s/ABCs for groundfish stocks and stock complexes;
4. Provide guidance on restructuring/managing groundfish stock complexes.

Reference Materials:

2. Agenda Item G.5.a, Attachment 2: 2012 OFLs (mt) and recommended 2013 and 2014 OFLs (mt) for west coast groundfish stocks.
3. Agenda Item G.5.a, Attachment 3: Relationship between P* and the percent reduction of the OFL for deciding the 2013 and 2014 ABCs for category 1, 2, and 3 stocks based on sigma values of 0.36, 0.72, and 1.44, respectively.
4. Agenda Item G.5.a, Attachment 4: 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.

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: Review Scope of Action and Schedule, and Adopt Final Overfishing Limits (OFLs) and Preliminary P*s/Allowable Biological Catches (ABCs) for 2013-2014 Management Specifications (Continues on Friday)

PFMC
08/30/11