

## HARVEST SPECIFICATIONS FOR 2011-2012 FISHERIES

The Council decided a schedule and process for developing an Environmental Impact Statement (EIS) to determine 2011-2012 groundfish harvest specifications last June. It was also decided to use the proposed Amendment 23 harvest specification framework, which contemplates setting an overfishing limit (OFL), an acceptable biological catch (ABC) that incorporates a scientific uncertainty buffer, and an annual catch limit (ACL) for each groundfish stock and stock complex. The adopted schedule and process calls for the Council to decide 2011 and 2012 groundfish harvest specifications, as well as a range of 2011-2012 management measures (see Agenda Items I.4 and I.6) at this meeting. Final decisions on 2011-12 harvest specifications and management measures are scheduled for the June Council meeting.

Setting biennial harvest specifications under the new Amendment 23 framework has many similarities to the old framework since the Pacific Coast Groundfish Fishery Management Plan (FMP) was the template for new National Standard 1 guidelines that compelled Amendment 23. For instance, the new OFL is defined exactly the same as the existing ABC and the new ACL is analogous to a total catch optimum yield (OY), which has been the specified harvest limit in west coast groundfish management since 1999. However, the new ABC is somewhat different in that scientific uncertainty is explicitly incorporated in that level of harvest. Under the old framework, scientific uncertainty, as well as management uncertainty, socioeconomic concerns, and other factors were considered when setting the OY. Under the new Amendment 23 framework, scientific uncertainty is incorporated in the ABC specification and the other considerations are taken into account in setting the ACL.

Information relevant to setting OFLs and ABCs are provided in Agenda Item I.2.a, Attachment 1. Table 2-1a in Attachment 1 provides the projected 2011-12 OFLs and proposed species categories for stocks and stock complexes. The Scientific and Statistical Committee (SSC) will review the recommended OFLs and species categorizations in Table 2-1a and provide their recommendations on these two science-based decisions at this meeting. The OFLs recommended by the SSC will be the starting point for deciding the other harvest specifications that will limit the available yield of stocks and stock complexes. The species categories (i.e., category 1, 2, and 3) are based on the amount of data available to inform a harvest specification with a category 1 stock being a relatively data-rich stock and category 3 being a relatively data-poor stock. The significance of these species categories is that the size of the scientific uncertainty buffer that determines the ABC is predicated on the species category with relatively smaller buffers for category 1 stocks and progressively larger buffers for category 2 and 3 stocks. The recommended approach for setting category 1 ABCs is to decide an overfishing probability ( $P^*$ ) for each category 1 stock. Table 2-1b depicts what the 2010 ABCs would be if an Amendment 23/ $P^*$  approach was used to decide 2010 ABCs (denoted ABC\* in the table) across a range of  $P^*$  values. Likewise the projected 2011 and 2012 ABCs under the range of  $P^*$  values for category 1 stocks are provided in Tables 2-1c and 2-1d, respectively. Table 2-1a also provides the presumptive ABCs for category 2 and 3 stocks if a 25 percent reduction from the OFL for category 2 stocks and a 50 percent reduction from the OFL for category 3 stocks were chosen. The category 2 and 3 buffer amounts are based on the status quo OY reductions

typically recommended by the Groundfish Management Team (GMT) to account for the greater scientific uncertainty of these relatively data-poor stocks. However, the actual buffer amounts are a policy decision the Council must make. Council guidance to date has been to endorse the SSC recommendations to specify progressively larger scientific uncertainty buffers for category 1, 2, and 3 stocks, respectively.

Information relevant to setting ACLs and optimum yields (OYs) is provided in Attachment 2. The range of 2011 and 2012 ACLs for analysis decided last November are provided in Tables 2-2a and 2-2b, respectively. Table 2-2c provides the basis for each ACL alternative. Those ACL alternatives with a scientific uncertainty adjustment built into the alternative are highlighted since the ABC decision explicitly takes scientific uncertainty into account. Table 2-3 provides ACL alternatives for the two stocks in the precautionary zone (i.e., sablefish and blue rockfish-stocks with an estimated spawning biomass above the minimum stock size threshold yet below the biomass target) where the 40-10 control rule applies. Two options for the 40-10 control rule were provided under Amendment 23: option 1 where the 40-10 adjustment is made from the OFL and the preliminary-preferred option 2 where the 40-10 adjustment is made from the ABC (see Figure 1 for a graphic depiction of these options). Table 2-4 and Figure 2 provide the estimated median time to rebuild each overfished species under the ACL alternatives analyzed. This information will be useful in developing a petrale sole rebuilding plan and in consideration of modifying the existing rebuilding plans for canary rockfish and Pacific ocean perch as recommended by the SSC (also see Agenda Item I.4).

The criteria for setting OYs under the new Amendment 23 framework are somewhat ambiguous at this point. A National Marine Fisheries Service (NMFS) national working group is deliberating the context of OY management under the new NS1 guidelines. Pending clarification of the OY concept, the Council may want to consider setting all OYs equal to ACLs for the 2011-12 management period.

The Council is tasked with specifying SSC-recommended OFLs and deciding preliminary-preferred ABCs for each stock and stock complex in the FMP under this agenda item. The Council is also tasked with deciding preliminary-preferred ACLs and OYs for the non-overfished stocks under this agenda item. While information relevant to deciding a preliminary-preferred ACL/OY for the overfished stocks is provided in Attachment 2, the Council is scheduled to defer ACL decisions for the overfished species to Agenda Items I.4 and I.6, where more information and analysis for these decisions are provided.

**Council Action:**

- 1. Adopt SSC-recommended 2011 and 2012 OFLs for all groundfish stocks and stock complexes.**
- 2. Adopt preferred 2011 and 2012 ABCs that incorporate scientific uncertainty buffers for all groundfish stocks and stock complexes.**
- 3. Adopt preferred 2011 and 2012 ACLs for all non-overfished groundfish stocks and stock complexes.**

Reference Materials:

1. Agenda Item I.2.a, Attachment 1: Tables and Other Information Relevant to Deciding 2011-2012 Groundfish Overfishing Limits and Acceptable Biological Catches.
2. Agenda Item I.2.a, Attachment 2: Tables and Graphics Relevant to Deciding 2011-2012 Groundfish Annual Catch Limits.

Agenda Order:

- a. Agenda Item Overview **John DeVore**
- b. Reports and Comments of Advisory Bodies and Management Entities
- c. Public Comment
- d. **Council Action:** Adopt Preferred Overfishing Limits and Acceptable Biological Catches for all Groundfish Stocks, and Annual Catch Limits and Optimum Yields for all Non-Overfished Groundfish Stocks

PFMC  
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