

As Brad Pettinger mentioned in his testimony this past September, the Oregon Trawl Commission (OTC) is in the final stages of the Marine Stewardship Council (MSC) certification of the west coast trawl groundfish fishery (WCGFTF). A careful review of the fishery by the assessment team showed that the fishery is very well managed.

However, the assessment team did find a few areas that were identified as deficient and 5 conditions have been placed on the fishery. These deficiencies were highlighted by the SSC in their report on the flatfish harvest policy (need for an MSE) and the Cope, et al paper on Productivity–susceptibility analysis (PSA) (more info needed).

As some of you know, all fisheries certified to the MSC standard to date have areas that need improvement and action plans have been implemented to get them up to the MSC standard in a timely manner. Now, an action plan has been identified and accepted by both the client (OTC) and the assessment team and it has been forwarded to Council staff. Fortunately, some of the work has already been completed, as the Aurora and Rougheye Rockfish assessments satisfies the 2/3 of condition 4 and the Sharpchin Rockfish assessment satisfied 1/3 of Condition 5.

With that, the MSC requires that the relevant agencies acknowledge the action plan and indicate their support for the activities spelled out in it. The proposed activities include a Management Strategy Evaluation (MSE) of the Council's flatfish harvest policy and additional information to better inform the Council about the status of Shortraker rockfish, Silvergrey Rockfish and California Skate.

If the Council process does not move forward with activities that satisfy these conditions, then the client (OTC) will provide funding to hire a qualified individual(s) to do the work. That information will then be presented for inclusion into Council process. All of these activities will inform and add value to the Council decision making process.

What the OTC needs today is a commitment for a letter from the Council acknowledging your support, in that any information that is generated (MSE for example) from the action plan would be considered for action through the Council process.