

SCIENTIFIC AND STATISTICAL COMMITTEE REPORT ON
ECONOMIC DATA COLLECTION PROGRAM REPORT ON FISHERY STATUS
AND OVERVIEW ON SOCIAL SCIENCE RESEARCH

Dr. Todd Lee and Ms. Erin Steiner (NWFSC) made a presentation to the Scientific and Statistical Committee (SSC) on the status of the Economic Data Collection (EDC) Program. The presentation focused on reports prepared by the Northwest Fisheries Science Center (NWFSC) that cover four fishery sectors involved in the groundfish catch shares fishery: first receivers/shorebased processors, catcher vessels, catcher-processors, and motherships (Agenda Item J.5.b, NWFSC Reports 1-4). The reports provide detailed information that is useful for understanding the current economic status of the catch shares fishery and evaluating economic effects of the catch shares program. The reports satisfactorily respond to recommendations made by the SSC Economics Subcommittee.

To ensure proper interpretation of results, it is important to note that many of the indicators included in the EDC reports (e.g., revenues, costs, crew compensation) are not specific to groundfish, but pertain to participation in all West Coast fisheries by entities involved in groundfish catch shares. Thus, the values of these economic indicators are contingent on the number of days fished in West Coast fisheries. Due to the lack of cost data for Alaska fisheries, these indicators exclude participation in Alaska fisheries – an omission which is most relevant to entities that participate in the whiting fishery. Also, because the coverage of fixed costs in the EDC surveys is limited to costs directly related to maintenance and operation of vessels and processing facilities and excludes items such as office space, transportation of fish, and accounting services, net revenue estimates derived from these surveys overestimate true net revenue.

Dr. Suzanne Russell (NWFSC) presented a report to the SSC entitled “The Pacific Groundfish Fishery Social Study” (Agenda Item J.5.b, NWFSC Report 5). This report provides an initial look at the results of in-person interviews of groundfish catch share stakeholders from Morro Bay to the Canadian border conducted by Dr. Russell and her research team. These voluntary interviews were administered in the form of standardized surveys or semi-structured questions, and conducted in 2010 (before the catch shares program) and 2012 (after catch shares implementation but before quota trading was allowed). Additional interviews are planned for 2015 (one year after quota trading was allowed), contingent on funding. A more extensive report on this study – including the 2015 interviews – will be provided to the Council for the five-year review of the catch shares program.

The vessel owners and processors interviewed were identified from known sampling frames (limited entry permit holders for the 2010 interviews, quota share permit holders for the 2012 interviews). However, no such frames exist for stakeholders such as crew members, processing plant workers, fishery-related businesses such as fuel suppliers, and fishermen’s spouses. Instead, these latter stakeholders were identified through a process of personal referrals. Samples derived in this manner are not necessarily representative and make it difficult to compare results from the 2010 and 2012 interviews. The SSC recommends that further efforts be made to validate the social

changes identified in this study, to the extent possible, with verifiably representative data, such as EDC survey data.

One important aspect of the social study is the attention given to stakeholder groups that are rarely considered in regulatory analysis, largely due to lack of data. The ability to obtain contact information on crew members and processing plant workers would help collect data to ensure that the effects of regulations on these groups receive more attention in the future.

The SSC commends economists and social scientists at the NWFSC for their work on the EDC Program and the Pacific Groundfish Social Study. Both projects involve considerable commitment of time and resources and contribute to an in-depth understanding of the effects of groundfish catch shares.

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