

SCIENTIFIC AND STATISTICAL COMMITTEE COMMENTS ON  
STATUS REPORT ON HARVEST POLICY REVIEW

The Groundfish Management Team (GMT) has taken the lead in the past couple of years to reassess the default  $F_{MSY}$  proxy for groundfish, particularly for the rockfish stocks. This is a separate issue from the 40-10 harvest policy in the groundfish plan. The GMT goals were to have completed this evaluation in time for this year's groundfish assessment cycle. A number of assessment scientists are in the process of developing position papers on the subject. Two workshops have been held to review work in progress. The modeling to date has generated considerable debate and diverging views. We anticipate that research will not be completed until later this summer or early fall. Given the diverging views, it is unlikely a clear consensus on the appropriate harvest rate policy will be forthcoming. As a result, we expect that once all papers are completed, there will need to be a peer review similar to the Stock Assessment Review (STAR) Panel process from which to develop a unifying harvest rate policy. Given the workload issues associated with the 1999 assessment cycle and rebuilding plans for the overfished stocks, the earliest time to have such a review would likely be in the first quarter of next year. A revised harvest rate policy then will not be fully reviewed and adopted at the November Council meeting. If the preliminary findings indicate that there is an urgency to reduce harvest rates for 2000 below  $F_{35\%}$  or  $F_{40\%}$ , the Council will have the option to reduce optimum yield at the November meeting.

The Scientific and Statistical Committee (SSC) recommends that the Council and NMFS work with the SSC Groundfish Subcommittee to organize this peer review. The Council also needs to give direction to the GMT, SSC, and Council staff on the process for implementing recommended future harvest rate changes.

PFMC  
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