

SCIENTIFIC AND STATISTICAL COMMITTEE COMMENTS ON
CONSISTENCY OF CALIFORNIA ROCKFISH SIZE LIMITS WITH GROUND FISH PLAN

The Keeley Bill, enacted by the California State Legislature in 1998, imposed minimum size limits on eight nearshore species included in the Council's groundfish fishery management plan (FMP). At its March meeting, the Scientific and Statistical Committee (SSC) raised two issues regarding the consistency of these regulations with the FMP, (1) whether the minimum size limits could be effectively enforced in the geographically dispersed live fish fishery, and (2) whether the size limits would be an effective management tool, given the potential mortality of released undersized fish.

Although a fiscal year 1999/2000 budget for California has not yet been finalized, Mr. Tom Barnes reported the current version submitted to the California State Legislature includes over \$5 million for implementation of the Keeley Bill. Some of that increased funding is intended to hire 14 new marine wardens and purchase of a new patrol boat and aircraft. If approved by the Governor of California, this funding is expected to enhance monitoring and enforcement capabilities in the live fish fishery.

The CDFG also provided the SSC with information on several studies that provide information regarding the extent of shaker mortality for several nearshore fish stocks. The SSC does not consider these studies to be conclusive. However, the CDFG is also in the process of contracting with the Moss Landing Marine Laboratory to further evaluate the issue of shaker mortality. The results of the contract are intended to inform the development of California's nearshore fisheries FMP. The SSC looks forward to the opportunity to review that FMP.

PFMC
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