

SCIENTIFIC AND STATISTICAL COMMITTEE REPORT ON  
GROUNDFISH HARVEST RATE POLICY

The Scientific and Statistical Committee (SSC) commends the Groundfish Harvest Rate Policy Workshop Panel (Panel) for the high caliber of technical review it has brought to bear on the question of West Coast groundfish productivity. Through written papers, presentations, and a robust interactive dialog, the workshop comprehensively reviewed the best available scientific information on appropriate "risk-neutral" proxies of  $F_{MSY}$ . The twelve written contributions to the workshop will be submitted for publication in the primary scientific literature.

The draft Panel report 1) summarized the scientific and management background of the harvest proxy issue, 2) concisely explained some areas of common confusion, and 3) recommended default groundfish  $F_{spr}$  harvest rates for Pacific whiting ( $F_{40\%}$ ), *Sebastes* and *Sebastes* ( $F_{50\%}$ ), flatfish ( $F_{40\%}$ ), and other groundfish ( $F_{45\%}$ ). The report notes these recommendations were not developed as precautionary changes, but instead they attempt to correct previous estimates of productivity.

The SSC notes that qualitatively different levels of uncertainty are associated with the Panel's proxy estimates. Further, the SSC recommends the Council develop precautionary adjustments that reflect these varying levels of uncertainty when developing target F values for the fishery. Precaution is warranted, because 1) while the proxy values were recommended as "risk-neutral" values for the groups, some individual species in the aggregations are less productive than the average and may be overfished if the group proxy is applied, and 2) estimation and process error result in the chance of exceeding the true  $F_{MSY}$  value for any individual species, even if the "best estimate" proxy is applied.

The SSC's preliminary review supports the Panel's consensus findings. The SSC will complete its review of the  $F_{MSY}$  proxy issue in June.

PFMC  
04/04/00