

## SCIENTIFIC AND STATISTICAL COMMITTEE COMMENTS ON MARINE RESERVES

The Scientific and Statistical Committee (SSC) was briefed by Mr. Jim Seger of Council staff and Dr. Richard Parrish of the National Marine Fisheries Service on the Draft Phase I Technical Analysis Report "Marine Reserves to Supplement Management of West Coast Groundfish Resources" (Attachment C.1. a.).

The technical report is a conceptual evaluation of the potential role for marine reserves in West Coast fishery management. The authors have responded to many of the review comments and questions raised by the SSC in its September 1999 statement and have developed a comprehensive treatment of the issues surrounding marine reserves.

The report raises several important points about marine reserves and fishery management:

- There is a great deal of uncertainty about how marine reserves will contribute to West Coast fishery management.
- Because of this uncertainty, monitoring and evaluating the impact of marine reserves will be an important component of their use.
- The Council has authority to establish marine reserves for only those species managed under an FMP.
- The Council has direct control over fishing, but will have limited consultative authority over nonfishing factors that will affect the performance of marine reserves.

### **COUNCIL ACTION**

The SSC finds the objectives and options contained in the Phase I report, although very broad, are sufficient for a conceptual review. We recommend the Council adopt the report for public review. We also recommend the Council proceed to Phase II to analyze options.

### **PHASE II CONSIDERATIONS**

The SSC identified a number of additional issues that will be important to consider if the Council decides to proceed to Phase II. These issues pertain to the objectives and options for marine reserves and are presented as guidance to the authors of the analysis documents.

#### **1. Objectives**

- The objectives for marine reserves will determine their scale and the choice of regulations controlling their use. For example, reserves established to preserve unique areas of habitat will be smaller than those established to achieve stock rebuilding or broad ecosystem benefits for multiple species.
- To track progress toward meeting objectives, marine reserves will have to be monitored under controlled experimental conditions. Because marine reserves will not produce fishery-dependent data (catch and catch-at-age), fishery-independent surveys will have to be conducted in closed areas. If marine reserves are a significant component of a stock rebuilding plan, evaluation may be required at two-year intervals.
- Monitoring and evaluation will require enhanced data collection and additional staff time. The cost of funding these activities should be explicitly considered in the evaluation of management options. The environment of limited funding means that there will be tradeoffs between alternative actions, for example monitoring marine reserves versus enhanced data collection to support "status quo" activities such as stock assessments. The issue is where the biggest payoff is likely to be.

#### **2. Development of Options**

- Allocation issues need to be addressed explicitly when various options are developed and analyzed. The scale, siting, and rules governing marine reserves allocate fish and fishing opportunities among recreational and commercial fisheries, gear types, and fishing communities.
- The impact of marine reserves will not be measurable in the short term. The relatively rapid recovery rates observed for haddock and cod in New England should not be expected for West Coast rockfish, because the species have very different life histories. Marine reserves will require a long-term commitment of management, enforcement, and research.
- It is important to acknowledge marine reserves will not substitute for fishery regulations outside the reserve area. Additional fishing restrictions may be required outside the reserve area to prevent concentrations of fishing effort that could lead to localized depletions, habitat damage, and conflicts.
- Defining more specific objectives for marine reserves will help analysts conduct a comprehensive comparison of alternative designs, locations, and regulations. The analysis of options should specifically address the objectives and should include a comparison of the cost effectiveness of marine reserves versus alternative methods (including combinations of marine reserves and alternative methods) of achieving the objectives. Alternatives include other management tools as well as doing a better job at the “status quo.”

PFMC  
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