

SCIENTIFIC AND STATISTICAL COMMITTEE REPORT ON MARINE RESERVES

The Scientific and Statistical Committee (SSC) heard a presentation of the process to establish marine reserves in the Channel Islands National Marine Sanctuary (CINMS). The process described seems to be well designed, with guidance from scientists who are experts in their fields. Recommendations are scheduled to be forwarded to the Sanctuary Advisory Committee in May, the Channel Islands National Marine Sanctuary and California Department of Fish and Game in June, and agencies including the Council, National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration, and the California Fish and Game Commission in the Fall of 2001.

The Council is currently exploring the possibility of establishing marine reserves. Reserves established under the Channel Islands Marine Reserves Process (CIMRP) are likely to be the first substantial reserves to be incorporated under Council management.

Much of the SSC discussion focused on the role of the Council in this process. Given the advanced state of design, negotiation, and consensus building in the marine reserves process it would be difficult for the SSC or the Council to provide much substantive input for the immediate proposal. The CIMRP presentors indicated their interest in coordinating marine reserve proposals with existing management systems that have been implemented by the Council. There is a critical need to evaluate the interaction of closed areas with existing controls. The SSC can review the products of the science and socio-economics panels to verify that their work represents sound science, keeping in mind that the science and economics of marine reserve design is a young field with much uncertainty. The Council must be present during future stages of reserve design to ensure effective integration of reserve design with fishery management.

The Council, upon determining that it supports the recommendations coming out of the process, can work to modify fishery management plans (FMPs) and other Council documents and procedures to enable implementation of the plan. Accomplishing these tasks may take one or two years and constitute a significant work load for the Council.

Following are brief notes on some observations and concerns.

- The Council has jurisdiction only over species with FMPs. Protection for other species will need to come from other authorities.
- Management of the reserves will likely require amendments to all of the Council's FMPs (Coastal Pelagic Species, Groundfish, Salmon). It will take time once reserves are designed to modify FMPs and regulations to accommodate reserves. This also provides opportunity for baseline monitoring of reserves.
- The CIMRP science panel recommended a reserve size of 30-50% of the area in their jurisdiction. They indicated that regulations prohibiting catch would be required in the reserve and that effort outside the reserve would require additional controls. The SSC requests documentation regarding the basis for the recommendations for reserve size, siting and effort control.
- Two of the goals of the process are to (1) maintain fisheries benefits and (2) maintain long-term socio-economic viability while minimizing short-term losses. The SSC requests documentation of the cost-benefit analysis relative to these goals.
- Enforcement requirements depend on the areas designated. The CIMRP science panel recommends a network of reserves ranging in size from 10 to 100 square kilometers. This recommendation will need to be reconciled with enforcement considerations: enforcement may or may not be easier with fewer, larger reserve areas.
- Performance criteria based on appropriate monitoring programs have to be identified to maximize information gain from the reserve system and to evaluate its effectiveness. The presenters acknowledged that this has not yet been done, and solicited suggestions.