

REBUILDING PLANS

Situation: This agenda item concerns rebuilding plans for seven groundfish stocks (Exhibit C.5, Attachment 1) that have been declared overfished by the National Marine Fisheries Service (NMFS) based on provisions in the Magnuson-Stevens Fishery Conservation and Management Act. Rebuilding plans for canary rockfish, cowcod, and bocaccio have been revised according to guidance provided at the last Council meeting and are being considered for final Council approval (Exhibit C.5, Attachment 2, Supplemental Attachments 3 and 4). Updated rebuilding analyses for Pacific ocean perch (POP) (Exhibit C.5, Attachment 5), coastwide lingcod (Exhibit C.5, Attachment 6), and darkblotched rockfish (Exhibit C.5, Attachment 8) have been prepared consistent with Council directives. Rebuilding plans for these three species are scheduled for final Council adoption this November. The Council is requested to adopt rebuilding targets, checkpoints, and strategies for these species to guide final drafting of rebuilding plans and for adoption of 2002 acceptable biological catches (ABCs), optimum yields (OYs), and management measures (Exhibits C.3 and C.7). Likewise, further specification and adoption of rebuilding targets, checkpoints, and strategies for widow rockfish (Exhibit C.5, Attachment 7) are required to complete a rebuilding plan and develop congruent 2002 ABCs, OYs, and management measures in November.

Rebuilding plans for canary rockfish, cowcod, and bocaccio were considered for final Council approval at the June 2001 Council meeting. The Council decided the plans insufficiently addressed measures to describe and protect important habitats and methods for evaluating and controlling fishing-related mortality; elements that were judged critical to a comprehensive rebuilding plan. Rebuilding plans for these species have been revised accordingly (Exhibit C.5, Attachment 2, Supplemental Attachments 3 and 4) with specific recommendations for identifying and protecting important habitat areas. The framework for describing these habitats and species distributions in Geographic Information Systems (GIS) databases has been defined. As key GIS databases become available, managers will have the means to consider area-specific management measures that could be useful for designing effective rebuilding strategies. Another important revision to these plans mandated by the Council is a detailed analysis of alternative strategies for evaluating and controlling fishing-related mortality. An analysis of the strengths and shortcomings of status quo and alternative strategies for controlling bycatch and other sources of mortality is provided. More importantly, strategies for improving assessment of bycatch and fishing mortality are outlined. This Council directive is a central tenet of these rebuilding plans and will continue to guide rebuilding of overfished species. These three plans are expected to provide a template for other rebuilding plans, which are in a formative stage of development.

POP have been overfished on the West Coast by foreign vessels since prior to the implementation of the Pacific Coast Groundfish Fishery Management Plan in 1982. A new rebuilding analysis, authored by Dr. Andre Punt and Mr. James Ianelli (Exhibit C.5, Attachment 5), provides the Council with updated technical input for estimating virgin biomass (B_0) and predicting future recruitment. In June, based on a recommendation by the Scientific and Statistical Committee (SSC), the Council requested, an updated POP rebuilding analysis using the new rebuilding model developed by Dr. Punt. This has been accomplished, and now the Council needs to provide guidance for rebuilding plan authors on key rebuilding targets, checkpoints, and strategies for POP. Council guidance will also be instrumental for determining the 2002 ABC and OY for POP. The POP rebuilding plan is scheduled for Council adoption in November.

The West Coast lingcod stock was declared overfished in 1999 based on a 1997 assessment of the northern portion of the stock. New assessments were completed in 1999 (southern portion of the stock) and 2000 (both southern and northern portions of the stock). The lingcod rebuilding plan, put before the Council in June, did not incorporate the new 2000 coastwide assessment. The SSC and Groundfish Management Team (GMT) recommended incorporation of the new assessment data into an updated rebuilding analysis prior to Council consideration of rebuilding plan approval. An updated lingcod rebuilding analysis, authored by Mr. Tom Jagielo and Dr. Jim Hastie, has been completed (Exhibit C.5, Attachment 6) and is now before the Council for approval. The Council is requested to provide guidance to rebuilding plan authors by adopting targets, checkpoints, and strategies for rebuilding West Coast lingcod. Final plan approval is also scheduled for November.

The widow rockfish resource was declared overfished earlier this year based on last year's stock assessment. The Council approved a revised rebuilding analysis for widow rockfish, authored by Drs. Alec MacCall and Andre Punt, at the June Council meeting. The Council also adopted a range of alternative constant rate rebuilding policies based on the revised analysis that correspond to a 60%-80% probability of attaining the target biomass within the specified rebuilding time frame. The 2002 OYs for widow rockfish that equate to this range are 726 mt-856 mt, which are down substantially from the 2001 OY of 2,300 mt. The complete widow rockfish rebuilding plan will follow the format presented in the canary rockfish, cowcod, and bocaccio rebuilding plans. Exhibit C.5, Attachment 7 is a draft of Section 2 (alternatives) that is analogous to that section in those rebuilding plans. The alternatives presented in Attachment 7 will be the basis for management policies established in the rebuilding plan. Specific management measures to implement the policies will be developed in the completed rebuilding plan. The Council is requested to specify a constant rate harvest policy within the adopted range that will guide development of the widow rockfish rebuilding plan and allow managers to design 2002 management measures for midwater trawl and other fisheries that catch widow rockfish (Exhibit C.5, Attachment 7).

Darkblotched rockfish, another species declared overfished earlier this year based on a 1999 assessment of the stock, has an updated rebuilding analysis which is available for Council consideration (Exhibit C.5, Attachment 8). A new assessment, completed in 2000, indicated stock biomass was considerably lower than was indicated in the 1999 assessment. The SSC and GMT advised the Council a new rebuilding analysis incorporating the 2000 assessment was needed. The new rebuilding analysis was completed this summer by Dr. Richard Methot (Exhibit C.5, Attachment 8) and is now before the Council for consideration. As for POP, coastwide lingcod, and widow rockfish, the Council is requested to adopt specific rebuilding targets, checkpoints, and strategies based on the new rebuilding analysis for darkblotched rockfish to guide rebuilding plan authors. The Council also needs to specify a 2002 ABC and OY for the species consistent with rebuilding objectives to help shape slope fisheries that catch darkblotched rockfish.

Council Action:

- 1. Adopt final rebuilding plans for canary rockfish, cowcod, and bocaccio.**
- 2. Review a revised rebuilding analysis for Pacific ocean perch and adopt rebuilding targets, checkpoints, and strategies.**
- 3. Review an updated rebuilding analysis for lingcod and adopt rebuilding targets, checkpoints, and strategies.**
- 4. Review and adopt targets, checkpoints, and strategies for rebuilding widow rockfish.**
- 5. Review an updated rebuilding analysis for darkblotched rockfish and adopt rebuilding targets, checkpoints, and strategies.**

Reference Materials:

1. Rebuilding Plan Matrix for Groundfish Species Declared Overfished (Exhibit C.5, Attachment 1).
2. Revised canary rockfish rebuilding plan (Exhibit C.5, Attachment 2).
3. Revised cowcod rebuilding plan (Supplemental Exhibit C.5, Attachment 3).
4. Revised bocaccio rebuilding plan (Supplemental Exhibit C.5, Attachment 4).
5. Revised Rebuilding Analysis for Pacific Ocean Perch (Exhibit C.5, Attachment 5).
6. Updated Rebuilding Analysis for Lingcod (Exhibit C.5, Attachment 6).
7. Draft Widow Rockfish Rebuilding Plan Alternatives (Exhibit C.5, Attachment 7).
8. Rebuilding Analysis for Darkblotched Rockfish (Exhibit C.5, Attachment 8).

Groundfish Fishery Strategic Plan (GFSP) Consistency Analysis

Rebuilding overfished species, as mandated by the Magnuson-Stevens Fishery Conservation and Management Act, was a primary motive for developing and implementing the GFSP.

Many sections of the GFSP describe how rebuilding plans factor into short- and long-term Council priorities for conducting groundfish conservation and management. GFSP objectives such as developing sustainable and effective harvest policies (Sec. II.A.2), achieving fleet capacity reduction (Sec. II.A.3.(b)), allocating groundfish resources (Sec. II.A.4), developing an effective Observer Program (Sec. II.A.5), and development of marine reserves as a groundfish management tool (Sec. II.A.6) are grounded by the need to accomplish the goal of rebuilding overfished groundfish stocks.

PFMC
08/29/01