

SCIENTIFIC AND STATISTICAL COMMITTEE STATEMENT ON
MANAGEMENT MEASURES FOR 2002 AND ENVIRONMENTAL ASSESSMENT

As part of the process of setting harvest guidelines for the 2002 groundfish fishery, the Groundfish Management Team (GMT) (in conjunction with NMFS, state agencies, and the Scientific and Statistical Committee [SSC]) has undertaken a more comprehensive analysis of bycatch rates than was carried out in the past. Dr. Jim Hastie presented *Evaluation of Bycatch and Discard in the West Coast Groundfish Fishery* (Exhibit C.3, Supplemental Attachment 3). He described new methodology and the use of additional sources of data to estimate bycatch rates and discards. In the past, *Sebastes* discard rates were largely determined from the observed discard of widow rockfish across all fishing strategies from the Pikitch study (1988). In recent years, several analyses have been done that used logbook, Enhanced Data Collection Program (EDCP) and other data to estimate discard rates for lingcod and the Dover sole/thornyhead/rawl-caught sablefish complex (DTS) species. In this year's analysis, a new approach was adopted that involves calculating bycatch rates of overfished species in the context of specific target strategies, then calculating discards by assessing, on a vessel basis, the degree to which bycatch exceeds available landings limits for each species. Simulation analysis was also carried out to examine the effect of high variability in the estimation of key bycatch rates on the subsequent discard estimates.

Recognizing that [1] the GMT analysis is only the first stage of a more comprehensive evaluation that will be undertaken over the next two years and [2] a full SSC review was not possible given the urgency of the work and its application in the 2002 landed catch optimum yield (OY)-setting process, the SSC considers the GMT analysis to be the best way to proceed for the coming year. The analysis is well thought out and makes more comprehensive use of the available data than the work used in previous years. The SSC looks forward to working with the GMT on further improvements of the methods and refinements in the data analysis.

Mr. John Devore and Mr. Jim Seger overviewed the contents on the draft Environmental Assessment/Regulatory Impact Review (EA/RIR) for the proposed 2002 groundfish Acceptable Biological Catch and Optimal Yield specifications and management measures for the Pacific Coast Groundfish Fishery (Exhibit C.4, Supplemental Attachment 1). The SSC notes that the document provides a basis for evaluating the impact of alternative harvest levels, assumed discard rates, and season options. The version of the document supplied to the SSC does not include information regarding bycatch alternatives, but this will be included in the version presented to the Council.

The alternatives considered in the EA/RIR attempt to capture a range from the status-quo to reducing the impact of reduced OYs on the size of trip limits through seasonal modifications. The draft EA/RIR only considers a subset of the possible alternatives. Additional alternatives, which may include modification of season length, may be developed and refined during Council deliberations. No formal analyses of the alternatives are included in the EA/RIR, precluding a review by the SSC. The tables included in the draft EA/RIR nevertheless, do provide a basis for consideration of the impact of management measures on gross revenue, but little information relative to costs and community impacts.

Benefits and costs of seasonal alternatives may have substantial impacts on different segments of the fleet and processors. The document includes economic information gathered during a survey of trawlers conducted several years ago, as well as processor data recently provided by the West Coast Seafood Processors Association. While the representativeness of these data has not been evaluated, they nevertheless illustrate the usefulness of industry cost data for evaluating the effects of management options. For the immediate issues at hand, the SSC recognizes the desirability of incorporating the available trawl and processor data in the EA/RIR for purpose of eliciting public comment. Given continuing expectations regarding the need for economic analyses, the SSC encourages the collection of additional economic data for all fishery sectors by means of designed surveys or through interviews with key participants. These data collections should be conducted independently of specific management issues and should occur periodically to reflect changes in fishery conditions.