



UNITED STATES DEPARTMENT OF COMMERCE
National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration

NATIONAL MARINE FISHERIES SERVICE
Northwest Region
7600 Sand Point Way N.E., Bldg. 1
Seattle, WA 98115

April 5, 2002

Dr. Hans Radtke, Chairman
Pacific Fishery Management Council
7700 NE Ambassador Place
Portland, OR 97220

Dear Dr. Radtke:

RE: Contents of Individual Rebuilding Plans

At its April 2002 meeting, the Council will be considering its process for developing fishery management plan (FMP) amendments to address the overfished species rebuilding requirements of the Magnuson-Stevens Fishery Conservation and Management Act (Magnuson-Stevens Act). There has been much discussion within the Council family, both formal and informal, about the structuring of individual rebuilding plans. One question we have all struggled with is exactly what parts of the rebuilding timeframe and strategy are locked into the rebuilding plan and can only be changed by plan amendment, and what might change with a new stock assessment. Based on the requirements of the Magnuson-Stevens Act, the National Standard Guidelines, and examples provided by rebuilding plans from other councils, I believe that rebuilding FMP amendments should contain the following parameters:

1. A best estimate of B_{MSY} , or its proxy, where B_{MSY} is the biomass target for achieving rebuilding. It would be helpful to the Council's plan development process if the Scientific and Statistical Committee and the Groundfish Management Team could discuss the trade-offs of expressing B_{MSY} as a formula (example: 40% of current best scientific estimate of B_{zero}) versus numeric quantification. The Plan should also state the conditions under which the B_{MSY} calculations will be updated. This would range from a technical update with each subsequent stock assessment to a FMP amendment.
2. A fixed rebuilding period, including the minimum possible time to rebuild to the B_{MSY} level in the absence of fishing with a 50% probability (T_{MIN}). Rebuilding plans must also include the maximum allowable time to rebuild (T_{MAX}) and mean generation time if the rebuilding time exceeds 10 years, as well as the target time for rebuilding (T_{TARGET}). These times should be expressed numerically and should be fixed within the FMP such that they are changeable only by FMP amendment. Whenever T_{TARGET} is set greater than T_{MIN} , the socioeconomic benefits from the extended rebuilding period should be greater than the benefits that would accrue from more rapid rebuilding.
3. The probability of achieving the rebuilding goal (B_{MSY}) within T_{TARGET} years.



4. The rebuilding harvest control rule that will annually set harvest rates for the species in question and will be applied to the most current stock assessment. Additionally, the current forecast for the rebuilding trajectory should, at a minimum, be analyzed in background documents for each rebuilding plan and be included within the FMP where appropriate for a given species. Harvest strategies may include: constant catch strategy – where catch is held constant over time until the stock reaches B_{MSY} ; a constant fishing mortality rate – where a constant proportion of the stock is removed annually until the stock reaches B_{MSY} , or a combination of these strategies. Protocols for adjusting the harvest control rule should be detailed in the rebuilding plan FMP. Potential protocols range from a technical adjustment with each stock assessment to keep the probability of rebuilding from falling below 50%, to a full FMP amendment.

NMFS has provided guidance on other elements of the rebuilding plans at past Council meetings and that guidance has not changed. In this letter, we wished to highlight the above issues as an aid to your upcoming discussions. NMFS is looking forward to working with the Council in developing and implementing these rebuilding plans.

Sincerely,



William L. Robinson
Assistant Regional Administrator
for Sustainable Fisheries