

ITEM 3.C
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SPORTFISHING ASSOCIATION OF CALIFORNIA

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AGENDA ITEM C 3

ROBERT C. FLETCHER
PRESIDENT

JUNE 18, 2002

W. A. NOTT
PRESIDENT-EMERITUS

**TESTIMONY OF BOB FLETCHER, PRESIDENT,
SPORTFISHING ASSOCIATION OF CALIFORNIA
RE: REBUILDING ANALYSES FOR BOCACCIO**

I am Bob Fletcher, President of the Sportfishing Association of California (SAC). SAC is a non-profit, political organization representing the interests of the commercial passenger fishing vessel (CPFV) fleet in southern California. Many of the SAC vessels rely heavily on the catch of rockfish during the year, and the new stock assessment information on bocaccio fails to truly represent the status of the bocaccio stocks, especially that portion of the resource south of Point Conception. The unanimous opinion of the skippers and boat owners in SAC is that since 1998 when the ocean regime shifted and cooled, the rockfish resource and especially bocaccio has recovered remarkably. Today on virtually every offshore bank and underwater ridge the bocaccio stocks are flourishing, with several different year classes in evidence. The lack of a fishery independent survey of rockfish stocks south of Conception the last 25 years, coupled with the empirical evidence of bocaccio abundance from the fishermen, raises significant questions about the accuracy of the bocaccio stock assessment.

To support this contention I understand that the assessment shows a more productive and abundant resource south of Point Conception, but that the STAR panel refused to allow the author to 'partition' the stock assessment geographically. If this had been done, additional bocaccio would have been made available to recreational and commercial fishermen in the zone from Conception to Mexico.

Speaking of Mexico, there is an additional 250 miles of good bocaccio habitat and resource south of the border, and this portion of the bocaccio stock is lightly exploited. This area holds large populations of bocaccio that helps buffer the stock from the kinds of impacts that take place to the north. Based on all the foregoing information, I would urge the Council to consider splitting the assessment at Point Conception, and then work with the recreational and commercial industry reps on ways to maximize the angler and fisherman opportunity in the area south of Point Conception for the 2003 regulations. I would gladly be involved in any such effort.

Thank you for the opportunity to testify on this critical issue for the CPFV fleet.

Sincerely,


Bob Fletcher, President