

SCIENTIFIC AND STATISTICAL COMMITTEE REPORT ON
STATUS OF 2002 PACIFIC HALIBUT FISHERIES

Dr. Rick Methot presented an updated report on Pacific halibut bycatch and mortality in the groundfish fishery with new estimates for 2001. Although no new data on halibut bycatch rates are available, total bycatch estimates for 2001 were derived from effort data by stratum from trawl logbooks in 2001 and halibut bycatch rates during 1995-1999 in the Enhanced Data Collection Program (EDCP). The estimates use methodology accepted by the Scientific and Statistical Committee (SSC) in September 2000, and are based on bycatch rates stratified by season, depth, latitude, and the level of arrowtooth flounder catch.

The SSC notes that observer data collected since August 2001 are scheduled to become available in late 2002. These data will make it possible to obtain annual estimates of halibut bycatch and mortality starting with 2002. For future updates, the SSC recommends use of the current year bycatch rate and halibut length composition to estimate bycatch and mortality. Given the ad hoc nature of using mean bycatch rates and proportion legal for strata without observations, the SSC encourages exploration of alternative approaches to handle missing data. The SSC notes that estimating halibut bycatch is conceptually no different than estimating bycatch of other non-target species, so adopting a uniform approach to analyzing observer bycatch data may be advantageous.

PFMC
09/11/02