SCIENTIFIC AND STATISTICAL COMMITTEE REPORT ON
FURTHER REFINEMENT OF AMENDMENT 16 - REBUILDING PLANS

Mr. Jim Seger updated the Scientific and Statistical Committee (SSC) on the current status of Amendment 16 options for the groundfish fishery management plan (FMP) to ensure that rebuilding plans for overfished stocks comply with the Magnuson-Stevens Fishery Conservation and Management Act (Magnuson-Stevens Act).

The SSC identified Issues 1, 2, and 3 from Sec. 2.1 of Attachment 1 of Exhibit G.10 to be the most relevant to its discussion:

Issue 1: The form and required elements of rebuilding plans.

Issue 2: The process for periodically reviewing rebuilding plans.

Issue 3: Defining events or standards that would trigger revision of a rebuilding plan.

Under Issue 1, Option 1b would require that specified elements of rebuilding plans be incorporated into the FMP by amendment, including numerical values for the rebuilding parameters: T_{MIN}, T_{MAX}, T_{TARGET}, and P_{MAX}.

As indicated in the Supplemental SSC Reports on items C.5.b from June 2002, and C.7.b from September 2002, the SSC recommends a more "flexible" approach be taken with respect to the specified elements of rebuilding plans than what currently appears in Option 1b.

Because the rebuilding analyses are complex, a natural tendency may be to specify numerical values for the rebuilding parameters in the FMP. This "fixed" approach could create a false sense of precision, and substantial administrative costs will likely be incurred as many rebuilding parameter values are updated during the normal flow of scientific information into the management process. For example, consider the recent situation with bocaccio. Results from the most recent Bocaccio Rebuilding Analysis indicate that under the SSC's Guidelines for Rebuilding Overfished Stocks, bocaccio fails to rebuild by T_{MAX} with 50% probability, even with zero fishing mortality. This unusual result stems from an update of the original bocaccio rebuilding analysis, and is explained by two unfavorable events that occurred since the original work, (1) The 1999 year-class is not considered to be as strong as previously believed, and (2) landings over the last three years were much greater than the Optimum Yield (OY) in each of those years. As new information about the strength of the 1999 year-class became available from the latest bocaccio stock assessment, the numerical values of rebuilding parameters were updated, leading to the result that bocaccio will not rebuild by T_{MAX} with 50% probability.

Therefore, the SSC recommends that only one of the rebuilding parameters should be numerically specified. After careful discussion, the SSC concluded that P_{MAX} is the most logical candidate for numerical specification by fishery managers. The specified value of P_{MAX} is constrained to be at least 50%, though a more conservative choice may be preferable. All other rebuilding parameters, including T_{MIN} and T_{MAX}, can be derived using scientific information from stock assessments, formulas, or algorithms from the SSC Terms of Reference for Groundfish Rebuilding Analyses (e.g. Exhibit F.7, April 2001).

The SSC recommends Option 1b be revised to read: "For each overfished species, the FMP would be amended to specify a numerical value for P_{MAX}, the probability of rebuilding within T_{MAX}. All other rebuilding parameters would be described by an algorithm or formula in the FMP."

The SSC also discussed options under Issue 2 for periodically reviewing rebuilding plans. The SSC

suggests that timing of reviews be closely aligned with stock assessments for the overfished stocks and recommends Option 2b.

Issue 3 for evaluating rebuilding progress would be resolved by the flexible specification in the revision of Option 1b. In a routine situation, such as canary rockfish in the 2003 fishery, OY would be adjusted to ensure rebuilding of the stock according to the specified P_{MAX}. Otherwise, like the situation with bocaccio this year, progress would be inadequate, and the rebuilding plan would be amended.

PFMC
10/31/02