

SCIENTIFIC AND STATISTICAL COMMITTEE STATEMENT ON
AMENDMENT 17 - MULTI-YEAR MANAGEMENT

Amendment 17 to the Pacific Coast Groundfish Fishery Management Plan (FMP) (Exhibit G.5, Attachment 1) offers four options, in addition to the *status quo*, to change the Council's process for setting groundfish specifications and management measures from an annual to a biennial cycle. The Council initiated this FMP amendment to: (1) allow for a new legally mandated five month notice and comment period and (2) to reduce workload by streamlining the specifications process. Moving to a biennial process is likely to have both favorable and unfavorable consequences, many of which are difficult to foresee. Of foremost concern to the Scientific and Statistical Committee (SSC) are the potential impacts to the quality of the scientific information the Council uses in its decision-making process.

This subject has been commented upon previously by the SSC (see Exhibit A.5, April 2002 Council Minutes, pp. 42-43). The SSC reiterates that it is most important to base management advice on results from stock assessments that use the most recent data. However, across the four biennial options considered, there is a substantial range in the timeliness of the scientific information that will be used to manage the groundfish fishery. Alternative 5 provides the most current information and is, therefore, the option preferred by the SSC.

It would be useful to evaluate the implications of setting groundfish acceptable biological catches for a number of years into the future based on survey data that are several years old. To some degree this is a feature of the current annual management cycle. However, it will likely be exacerbated under a biennial system and this will increase the level of uncertainty in the scientific advice the Council receives.

PFMC
10/30/02