

SCIENTIFIC AND STATISTICAL COMMITTEE REPORT ON  
UPDATE ON MARINE RESERVES ACTIVITIES

The Scientific and Statistical Committee (SSC) did not have access to all of the content of the presentations made by Drs. Lubchenco, Hixon, and Fluharty under agenda item D.1. However, the committee is pleased with the Council's efforts to engage these individuals in a discussion of the "effects of marine reserves on system productivity and yield in the presence of an effective fishery management program" (Exhibit D.1.a, Attachment 1, March 2003). As indicated in a previous SSC statement, the SSC considers it critically important that the Council's marine reserve deliberations focus on "empirical studies and theoretical models that most closely reflect conditions on the Pacific Coast, where highly restrictive management measures have been implemented" (Exhibit F.1.c, Supplemental SSC Report, November 2001). The SSC encourages an objective scientific dialogue on this important topic.

The SSC discussed the proposal by the National Fisheries Conservation Center (NFCC) to hold a workshop to improve the integration of marine reserves science and traditional fisheries management (Exhibit D.2.a, Attachment 3, March 2003). The SSC considers the questions that the NFCC intends to address at the workshop (Exhibit D.2.c, Public Comment, March 2003) to be important aspects of this issue. While the workshop will focus on these questions generically rather than in the specific context of fisheries managed by the Council, workshop output may be useful in terms of informing the Council's discussions of marine reserves. The SSC has a number of questions regarding workshop process (e.g., types of expertise to be represented on the review panel, terms of reference, workshop products). Given the importance of process to the outcome of the workshop, the SSC would like to encourage a representative of the NFCC to make a presentation to the SSC at the next available date to clarify these process questions.

To help the Council deal with the reserve issues before it (Exhibit D.2., Situation Summary, March 2003), the SSC proposes that its Marine Reserves Subcommittee meet some time this summer to prepare a white paper on marine reserves that could be presented at the Council's September or November meeting. The objective of the white paper would be to assist the Council in setting the technical ground rules for discussion of marine reserve initiatives generated within and outside of the Council family. The white paper would focus on issues of specific relevance to the Council. These would include (1) guidance for determining what constitutes "best available science" in terms of the applicability of the marine reserves literature to use reserves as a management tool, (2) the essential role of natural and social sciences in evaluating ecosystem and fishery effects associated with reserves, and (3) implications of marine reserves for stock assessments.

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