

SCIENTIFIC AND STATISTICAL COMMITTEE REPORT ON
GROUNDFISH FISHERY MANAGEMENT PLAN AMENDMENT 16 - REBUILDING PLANS

Dr. Kit Dahl provided an overview of Draft Amendment 16-1 to the groundfish fishery management plan (FMP) (Exhibit E.5, Attachment 2) with emphasis on modifications that have been incorporated since the last Scientific and Statistical Committee (SSC) review of the draft amendment (November 2002). The SSC focused on three of the issues delineated in Section. 2.1 of the Draft Amendment, namely:

- 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.

In previous statements (September 2002 and November 2002), the SSC has emphasized that the Council should expect numerical details of rebuilding plans (e.g., B_{MSY} or B_0) to change over time – whether due to improved estimates of these parameters from updated stock assessments, the development of new models, or due to technical errors that were not discovered in the previous stock assessment review. The SSC recommended that the use of hard numbers in the rebuilding amendment be minimized and that revisions to rebuilding plans be tied more closely to the stock assessment cycle. In general, the preferred options in the current draft of the amendment are now closely aligned with the SSC recommendations.

The remaining point that could be clarified is the specification of control rules in the FMP amendment. In the current draft, it is not clear whether future harvest guidelines (for stocks under rebuilding) will be based on constant-F strategies or whether, in some cases, constant catch strategies will be acceptable. The SSC suggests that constant-F strategies be used in all cases, and this should be clearly stated in the amendment.

Mr. John DeVore reviewed Draft Amendment 16-2, Parts I through V (Exhibit E.5, Attachments 3 through 7). The remaining sections of Amendment 16-2 – Environmental Review (Part VI) and Combined and Cumulative Effects (Part VII) – were not available for SSC review. However, Mr. DeVore provided a status report on Part VII. The subsequent SSC discussion focused primarily on the newly incorporated "mixed stock exception" option (MSE) that will be incorporated into the draft amendment and, in particular, the Part VII "cumulative effects analysis" that will support it. Under the MSE option, bocaccio, canary, yelloweye, and widow rockfish rebuilding plans would be exempted from the usual rebuilding guidelines (e.g., there would be no requirement for rebuilding to B_{MSY} within T_{MAX} years). Prior to consideration of the MSE option, the SSC recommends:

1. Clearly defined criteria should be established for species to be exempted.
2. Widow rockfish should be removed from the candidate list unless future harvest of widow constrains the catch of other species.
3. The "cumulative effects analysis" should include the full suite of biological effects and economic benefits under the MSE option. As currently envisioned, stock size changes for groundfish stocks that are not in the overfished category are not incorporated into the analysis. Benefit tradeoffs, such as in exvessel revenue, are likely to be dominated by the non-overfished stocks.

These recommendations are of utmost importance should the Council desire to use the MSE option as its preferred option in finalizing the amendment at the June 2003 Council meeting. Further, the Council should note that the SSC will not be able to review the "cumulative effects analysis" prior to the June Council meeting.