

## ADOPTION OF A PROPOSED RANGE OF 2004 GROUND FISH MANAGEMENT MEASURES

Situation: Management measures adopted during the Council process are designed to implement new and existing rebuilding programs, achieve bycatch reduction mandates, keep total catch within the proposed harvest levels, and achieve optimum benefits to the various user groups and fishing communities. The harvest levels and allocations adopted for 2003 are attached to provide a reference when the Council deliberates management alternatives for 2004 (Exhibit B.14, Attachment 1).

In the last four years the Council has implemented a substantial restructuring of the groundfish fishery that includes gear restrictions, seasons, dramatically lower harvest levels consistent with previously-approved rebuilding programs for overfished species, and depth-based restrictions that shift the fishery out of the areas where the most depleted groundfish species reside. The management implications of new groundfish stock assessments and rebuilding analyses, as well as the advent of new observer data require consideration of different management measures than implemented in 2003.

The Ad Hoc Allocation Committee (Committee) is scheduled to meet on June 10 and 11 (Exhibit B.14.b, Supplemental Ad Hoc Allocation Committee Report) to begin formulating recommended management and allocation alternatives that are responsive to new assessments and rebuilding analyses. Additionally, the Groundfish Management Team, Groundfish Advisory Subpanel, and interested public are expected to provide recommendations and alternatives for 2004 management.

The Council should develop a range of specific management options at this meeting to help focus public attention on the extent of changes that may be necessary and to provide the basis for adopting final 2004 management measures at the September Council meeting. Allocation alternatives or specifications consistent with proposed management measures should also be considered and adopted by the Council at this time. A preliminary draft 2004 Annual Specifications Environmental Impact Statement (EIS) will be prepared for Council consideration at the September Council meeting. The outline of a draft 2004 Annual Specifications EIS is provided as Exhibit B.14, Attachment 2. It will be important that the Council and its advisors carefully deliberate the potential effectiveness of alternative management measures to stay within the alternative harvest levels adopted under agenda B.4. Otherwise, the quality of the 2004 Annual Specifications EIS may be compromised if alternatives are not properly structured and analyzed with as much scientific rigor as possible.

To aid the Council adoption of management measure alternatives, the public comment period under this agenda also serves as a scoping meeting under the National Environmental Policy Act (NEPA), as previously announced in the *Federal Register*. Pursuant to the NEPA, the Council, in cooperation with NMFS, seeks public comment on the scope of the EIS that will be prepared for the 2004 groundfish harvest specifications and management measures. The scope consists of the range of actions, alternatives, and impacts to be considered in the EIS. At the end of the public scoping period, Council and NMFS staff will prepare and make available a scoping summary describing the oral and written comments on the scope of the analysis, including those made at this meeting and, as appropriate, how they will be addressed in the EIS. Comments are most helpful if they bear directly on the range of alternatives that should be considered and the specific impacts to the natural and human environment the commenter believes the proposed action will cause.

### **Council Action:**

- 1. Adopt a proposed range of 2004 management measures for public review.**

### **Reference Materials:**

1. 2003 Specifications of Acceptable Biological Catch (ABC), Optimum Yields (OYs), and Limited Entry and Open Access Allocations, by International North Pacific Fisheries Commission (INPFC) Areas (weights in metric tons) (Exhibit B.14, Attachment 1).

2. Scoping Information Document: Acceptable Biological Catch and Optimum Yield Specifications and Management Measures for the 2004 Pacific Coast Groundfish Fishery Draft Environmental Impact Statement outline (Exhibit B.14, Attachment 2).
3. Public comment (Exhibit B.14.e).
4. Draft minutes of the June 10 and 11 Ad Hoc Allocation Committee meeting (Exhibit B.14.b, Supplemental Ad Hoc Allocation Committee Report).

Agenda Order:

- a. Agendum Overview John DeVore
- b. Reports and Comments of Advisory Bodies
- c. Tribal Comments and Recommendations Jim Harp
- d. Agency Comments and Recommendations Phil Anderson/Neal Coenen/Marija Vojkovich
- e. Public Comments
- f. **Council Action:** Adopt a Proposed Range of 2004 Management Measures for Public Review

PFMC  
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