

SCIENTIFIC AND STATISTICAL COMMITTEE REPORT ON UPDATE ON MARINE RESERVES ISSUES

The Scientific and Statistical Committee discussed the proposed West Coast Marine Protected Area (MPA) Demonstration Project and the proposal titled "Integration of marine protected areas and fishery science management." These proposals both address important aspects of marine reserve management and, to a large degree, complement each other.

The integration proposal would bring together many of the major parties (National Ocean Service MPA Science Center, NMFS Southwest Fisheries Science Center, Pacific Fishery Management Council, National Center for Ecological Analysis and Synthesis) involved in design, evaluation, and implementation of marine reserves for the West Coast to integrate traditional fishery stock dynamics and management with the science of marine reserves. In the past, a lack of communication and common terminology have hindered progress in coordinating marine reserve plans. Getting the appropriate parties together to develop a scientific basis for reserves in marine management would be a major step forward.

The SSC encourages the Council to participate in the integration proposal. The stock assessment and fisheries expertise possessed by the Council family would contribute significantly to the integration project. Council participation would also help direct the products of the integration project toward management applications useful to the Council.

The demonstration project would have the goal of integrating MPA considerations in groundfish fishery management specifications. Like the integration proposal, it would involve a coordinated interagency effort, but would be directed to implementation. Furthermore, the integration proposal fits in well with the types of products specified in the demonstration project.

One of the objectives of the demonstration project is "full coordination of MPA considerations in the 2005-2006 Annual Groundfish Fishery Specifications." Given the complexity of marine reserve issues and the developmental nature of the science it may be difficult to meet this time frame. However, significant progress in that direction could be achieved.

Marine reserve issues will demand an increasing share of the Council's time in the next several years. Communication among the various parties involved and participation in the two proposed projects will be central to successful development of fishery regulations in marine reserves. This would require substantial commitment of staff time to this process, especially if rapid progress is expected. This could require reallocation of staff priorities. In addition, Council and advisory body meeting time will be needed.

The SSC discussed their draft white paper. It will be ready for the November 2003 Council meeting.