

SCIENTIFIC AND STATISTICAL COMMITTEE REPORT ON
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MARINE RESERVES ISSUES

The Scientific and Statistical Committee (SSC) discussed the draft report on marine reserve proposals being prepared by the SSC's Marine Reserves Subcommittee. This meeting was the first opportunity for the entire SSC to review the report, and the SSC does not have a final report for the Council to consider at this time. The draft report is comprehensive, and the SSC commends the Marine Reserves Subcommittee for its work thus far. The SSC received helpful comments from the public during its discussion. The SSC discussion and public comments motivated a set of revisions to the current draft, and the SSC anticipates that a final version of the report will be ready for the Council in June 2004.

The SSC would like to clarify that an intended audience for the report includes agencies and entities that request Council consideration of proposals to establish marine reserves in federal waters on the West Coast. Revisions to the draft report will make this intention explicit. The SSC emphasizes that material in the report should be interpreted as guidelines for future proposals. The report is intended ultimately to be used as a reference, and provide aid for navigating federal policies (e.g., National Environmental Policy Act) that must be followed by the Council to implement fishing regulations.

The SSC is aware that the terminology used to define spatial closures varies from one entity to another (e.g., California's Marine Life Protection Act, National Research Council). The SSC report distinguishes between closures for a specific period of time until some condition is met (e.g., rockfish conservation areas), and indefinite closures. In particular, the report currently refers to marine reserves as permanent closures to some or all forms of fishing. The SSC intends for language in the report to be consistent with terminology in other Council documents.

The report emphasizes the importance of defining objectives, setting performance standards, and establishing criteria to measure progress towards meeting objectives. In general, science can be useful for establishing criteria and methods for measurement. On the other hand, identifying objectives and setting standards for marine reserves will require policy decisions.

The report describes five types of objectives for marine reserves, (1) provide insurance against errors in fishery science or management, (2) provide fishery benefits, (3) provide ecosystem benefits, (4) provide nonfishing social benefits, and (5) provide opportunity to advance scientific knowledge.

Revisions to the draft report will further elaborate on the objectives related to providing social benefits (Section III.D.) and advancing scientific knowledge (Section III.E.). Specifically, Section III.D. will be expanded to include a discussion of trade-offs among consumptive, non-consumptive and non-use values of the ocean and the potential use of non-market valuation techniques (e.g., travel cost, hedonic pricing, contingent valuation) in revealing such trade-offs. Section III.E. will be expanded to focus on study plans for scientific research proposals. In addition, the discussion of EIS examples in Section IV of the current draft is extensive, and much of this material will be moved to an appendix.

PFMC
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