

HABITAT COMMITTEE COMMENTS ON
SCIENTIFIC AND STATISTICAL COMMITTEE
REVIEW OF MARINE RESERVES ISSUES

The Habitat Committee (HC) reviewed and discussed the SSC White Paper on Marine Reserves.

Our committee appreciates the substantial effort put forward to articulate the issues associated with the Council's consideration of marine reserves. We applaud the call for rigor and a consistent approach in the Council's consideration of all management tools, including marine reserves. This paper will lead to progress in implementing the marine reserve aspects of the Council's Groundfish Strategic Plan.

All of the Council's management and conservation decisions take place in a context of substantial scientific uncertainty. It is important to remember that marine reserves will represent another experiment in fishery management and conservation with comparable uncertainty.

Marine reserves have points in common with other management tools available to the Council, such as areas closures. They could also be a tool in protecting any designated habitat areas of particular concern (HAPCs) (those that contain rare, sensitive, vulnerable or important ecological functions). The SSC may want to address this role specifically in the White Paper.

Marine reserves have the potential to address multiple Council objectives concurrently, notably population size and age structure, bycatch, stock rebuilding, sustainable ecosystems, and habitat conservation. To ensure marine reserve proposals address these multiple objectives, the HC supports the SSC's recommendation that the Council consider developing a mechanism to ensure others understand Council expectations regarding marine reserve proposals.

The Habitat Committee suggests that the consideration of marine reserves as a management and conservation tool continue with as much rigor as possible, but without unrealistic *a priori* information requirements or expectations.

PFMC
03/11/04