

SCIENTIFIC AND STATISTICAL COMMITTEE REPORT  
TO THE GROUND FISH MANAGEMENT TEAM  
ON THE GROUND FISH OBSERVER DATA AND BYCATCH MODEL FOR 2004

Dr. Jim Hastie summarized updates to the bycatch model for analyses that will be conducted in 2004. The major update to the bycatch model was the addition of the second full year of observer data from the Northwest Fisheries Science Center's West Coast Groundfish Observer Program (WCGOP) in 2003. New bycatch ratios were estimated for both the limited-entry trawl fishery and limited-entry fixed-gear sablefish fishery.

The Scientific and Statistical Committee (SSC) has the following comments on the proposed updates to the fixed-gear bycatch model:

1. Bycatch ratios should be implemented separately for the two fixed gears (pots and longlines).
2. The ratio of active pot permits to active longline permits should be examined for trends in recent years.

Dr. Hastie proposed three changes to the bycatch model for the limited-entry trawl fishery:

- Bycatch ratios will be calculated with reference to total catch of the target species instead of landed catch.
- Bycatch ratios for depth strata deeper than 150 fathoms will be calculated using a dividing line of 40°10' N. Lat. to delineate northern and southern bycatch ratios for all species and depths (with the exception of darkblotched rockfish occurring in depths greater than 150 fathoms).
- Seasonal stratification will be defined as two, 6-month (winter/summer) seasons for all depth strata less than 100 fathoms and three, 4-month (winter/transition/summer) seasons for depth strata greater than 150 fathoms.

The SSC endorses these proposed changes to the bycatch model.

The SSC recommends that bycatch ratios for the limited-entry trawl fishery model be calculated as a weighted average of the two annual rates (mean of the ratios from 2002 and 2003) instead of weighting the annual components of the ratio and then combining them as currently proposed. In addition, the mortality rate for sablefish discards should be re-examined as there is some recent unpublished research information that may be informative.

Although the SSC agrees with the concept of weighting recent observer data more heavily than older observer data, it recommends that a more standardized method of establishing the weights assigned to each year be explored. For example, geometric averaging should be examined as this would be less subjective and would allow the weighting factors for future years, as more observer data become available, to be defined prior to data collection.