

SCIENTIFIC AND STATISTICAL COMMITTEE REPORT ON
PREFERRED ALTERNATIVE HARVEST LEVELS FOR 2005-2006 FISHERIES

The Scientific and Statistical Committee (SSC) reviewed the “Groundfish Management Team Recommendations for the Range of 2005-2006 Harvest Levels.” The SSC discussion centered primarily on lingcod and cabezon, because revised assessment results are available for these two species. The GMT appears to have developed harvest ranges for these species that are consistent with the revised assessment results.

Regarding lingcod, the SSC again discussed the potential merit of separate northern and southern area management. Separate area management can help to avoid local area depletion when one geographic portion of a stock is less productive than another. This appears to be the case with lingcod, where data indicate the southern portion of the stock is less productive than the northern portion of the stock. The SSC notes the GMT proposal for splitting the sport fishery harvest guideline between the two areas has merit in this regard, especially when one considers the current allocation is approximately 70:30 (sport:commercial) in the south. Splitting the commercial harvest guideline between the two areas could also be potentially beneficial. The SSC notes the GMT proposes to use trawl survey data to modify the management area split from that presented in the assessment (the Eureka/Columbia International North Pacific Fishery Commission border) to the California/Oregon state border. This approach seems reasonable given the available data.

With respect to cabezon, the SSC notes the 2004 catch used in the projections (26 mt) is likely to be an underestimate of the true 2004 catch based on the California optimum yield (OY) of 88 mt. This underestimated catch causes the projected 2005-2006 harvest levels to be overestimated, particularly for the 60-20 option. The SSC recommends that in the future, rebuilding analyses should incorporate the most recent available data for developing catch projections.

The SSC observed that Table 1 (Exhibit C.8.b) indicates that for Pacific Cod, Other Flatfish, and Other Fish, the low OY option represents 50% of the established ABC. This adjustment is consistent with past council options for species groups where quantitative assessments were not available.