

RED LIGHT/GREEN LIGHT THRESHOLD FOR OPTIMUM YIELD ADJUSTMENTS

The Council adopted Groundfish Fishery Management Plan (FMP) Amendment 17 in November 2002 which put in place a new biennial groundfish management process. As part of this action, the Council adopted the Groundfish Management Team (GMT) advice to include a mid-process “best available science” check of harvest specifications (Agendum C.4.a, Attachment 1). The mid-process check would be responsive to new assessments and other scientific information that might compel the Council to consider adjusting optimum yields (OYs) before the second year of the biennial management cycle. For instance, new groundfish assessments adopted by the Council in November 2005 might compel the Council to change OYs before the start of the 2006 fishing year. The exact wording of the Council's November 2002 motion is as follows:

Adopt Alternative 3 as described in the EA Exhibit G.5, Attachment 1, including (1) the mid-process best available science check in the Exhibit G.5.c, Revised Supplemental GMT Report, (2) including the two one-year OY recommendations as in Exhibit G.5.c, Revised Supplemental GMT Report, and (3) with the exception that whiting may be done on an annual basis.

Further the GMT will be tasked to work with the Council advisory bodies to come up with the thresholds for determining whether mid-process changes are necessary.

While the policy for considering a mid-process check on OYs, including the thresholds for triggering this decision, has yet to be developed, there has been some confusion as to, (1) whether the mid-process check would allow consideration of both decreases and increases of OYs (i.e., red light/green light) or only decreases in OYs (i.e., red light only) and (2) what species are eligible for potential adjustment. The transmittal letter for the proposed FMP amendment referred to “altering harvest levels” in light of new science, implying either direction and for any species (Agendum C.4.a, Attachment 2, third paragraph). However, the FMP amendatory language, that spoke to the mid-process check of OYs and was approved by the Secretary of Commerce when Amendment 17 was approved, only considered downward adjustments to OYs and only for overfished stocks (Agendum C.4.a, Attachment 3). This amendatory language was not presented to the Council when the Amendment 17 decision was made in November 2002, but was included in the materials put forward for Secretarial approval. The FMP Amendment 17 approval letter refers to a checkpoint process ensuring harvest levels are adequately conservative to protect overfished species (Agendum C.4.a, Attachment 4, second paragraph). On the other hand, recent GMT and Scientific and Statistical Committee discussions refer to investigating adjustments in either direction and are not limited to overfished species (Agendum C.4.a, Attachments 5 and 6, respectively).

The Council task under this agendum is to provide guidance to the National Marine Fisheries Service on the Council's intent when they adopted the concept of a mid-process check of OYs under multi-year management and to discuss future plans for development of a mid-process check on OY levels to reflect best available science.

Council Task:

- 1. Provide a finding of whether the mid-process check of harvest specifications was intended to include consideration of both increases and decreases of OYs and for just overfished species or all species.**
- 2. Provide guidance on assignments to advisory bodies.**

Reference Materials:

1. Agendum C.4.a, Attachment 1: Revised Supplemental GMT Report from the November 2002 Council meeting.
2. Agendum C.4.a, Attachment 2: Amendment 17 transmittal letter from Dr. Donald McIsaac to Mr. Robert Lohn dated May 14, 2003.
3. Agendum C.4.a, Attachment 3: FMP Amendment 17 amendatory language (Section 5.7.1 as amended).
4. Agendum C.4.a, Attachment 4: Amendment 17 approval letter from Mr. Robert Lohn to Mr. Donald Hansen dated August 19, 2003.
5. Agendum C.4.a, Attachment 5: Excerpt from summary minutes of the February 2003 GMT meeting.
6. Agendum C.4.a, Attachment 6: Excerpt from summary minutes of the March 2003 SSC meeting.

Agenda Order:

- a. Agendum Overview
- b. Reports and Comments of Advisory Bodies
- c. Public Comment
- d. Council Guidance on Defining the Task

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