

SCIENTIFIC AND STATISTICAL COMMITTEE REPORT ON
FISHERY MANAGEMENT PLAN AMENDMENT FOR LIMITED ENTRY IN
THE HIGH SEAS PELAGIC LONGLINE FISHERY

Dr. Jim Carretta (National Marine Fisheries Service Southwest Fisheries Science Center) briefed the Scientific and Statistical Committee (SSC) on an updated analysis of projected sea turtle takes and mortalities from the California-based high seas longline fishery for swordfish. This analysis differs from Dr. Carretta's earlier work (presented to the SSC in June 2003), in that, it posits changes in fishing methods that may reduce takes and mortalities of Endangered Species Act-listed sea turtles. Specifically, the updated analysis assumes that: (1) circle hooks will be used in place of J-hooks; and (2) mackerel (rather than squid) will be used to bait the hooks. Both of these factors have been shown to reduce substantially the sea turtle takes and mortalities in swordfish longline fisheries in the Atlantic Ocean.

While the revised analysis appears to be reasonable, the SSC received no documentation and was, thus, unable to formally review the work. However, the SSC offers the following considerations for future work.

1. The applicability of the results from the Atlantic to the California-based swordfish fishery should be examined. In particular, there may be differences in the size composition of loggerheads taken in the Atlantic- and California-based fisheries that should be considered. For example, there is some indication that smaller sea turtles (i.e., less likely to be hooked in the mouth) interact with the Atlantic-based fishery.
2. The Monte-Carlo simulation approach may be improved by the use of non-parametric distributions for some of the input parameters.

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