

3.4 Stock Assessment and Fishery Evaluation Report

National Standard 2 of the Magnuson-Stevens Act requires that the best scientific information available be used in developing fishery management plans (FMPs) and implementing regulations. For highly migratory species (HMS), except dorado and sharks, NMFS and the Pacific Council rely on analyses and assessments adopted by various international bodies (of which U.S. is an active participant), such as the Inter-American Tropical Tuna Commission (IATTC), Interim Scientific Committee for Tuna and Tuna-like Species in the North Pacific (ISC), Standing Committee on Tuna and Billfish (SCTB) and others. For other species such as dorado and sharks, the HMS Management Team (HMSMT) and NMFS develops stock and fishery assessments, provides peer reviews and presents the results to the Council. The guidelines for implementation of NS 2 require preparation of an annual Stock Assessment and Fishery Evaluation (SAFE) report. The SAFE report will largely rely on international body assessments, NMFS directed assessments, and any new fishery information. The NS 2 guidelines for a SAFE report, adapted for this FMP, are below.

The SAFE report is a document or set of documents that provides the Council with a summary of information concerning the most recent biological condition of stocks and the marine ecosystems in the management unit and the social and economic condition of the recreational and commercial fishing interests, fishing communities, and the fish processing industries. It summarizes, on a periodic basis, the best available scientific information concerning the past, present, and possible future condition of the stocks, marine ecosystems, and fisheries being managed under federal regulation.

The Secretary of Commerce has the responsibility to assure that a SAFE report or similar document is prepared, reviewed annually, and changed as necessary. The Secretary or Council may utilize any combination of talent from Council, State, Federal, university, or other sources to acquire and analyze data and produce the SAFE report.

The SAFE report provides information to the Council and Southwest Region of NMFS for determining annual harvest levels from each stock, documenting significant trends or changes in the resource, marine ecosystems, and fishery over time, and assessing the relative success of existing state and Federal fishery management programs. Information on bycatch and safety for each fishery should also be summarized. In addition, the SAFE report may be used to update or expand previous environmental and regulatory impact documents, and ecosystem and habitat descriptions.

Each SAFE report must be scientifically based, and cite data sources and interpretations.

Each SAFE report should contain information on which to base harvest specifications.

Each SAFE report should contain a description of the maximum fishing mortality threshold and the minimum stock size threshold for each stock or stock complex, along with information by which the Council may determine:

- Whether overfishing is occurring with respect to any stock or stock complex; if any stock or stock complex is overfished; if the rate or level of fishing mortality applied to any stock or stock complex is approaching the maximum fishing mortality threshold, and if the size of any stock or stock complex is approaching the minimum stock size threshold.
- Any management measures necessary to provide for rebuilding an overfished stock or stock complex (if any) to a level consistent with producing the maximum sustainable yield in such fishery.

Each SAFE report may contain additional economic, social, community, essential fish habitat (EFH), and ecological information pertinent to the success of management or the achievement of objectives of each FMP.

Each year, in June and September, the HMSMT will deliver one combined SAFE report for all species in this FMP to the Council. The SAFE report will follow the guidelines specified in NS 2 and will be used by the Council and NMFS to develop and evaluate regulatory adjustments under the framework procedure or the FMP amendment process. This information will provide the basis for determining annual harvest levels from each stock, documenting significant trends or changes in the resource, the bycatch, and the fishery over time, and assessing the relative success of existing state and federal fishery management programs. In addition, the SAFE report will be used to update or expand previous environmental and regulatory impact documents, and ecosystem and habitat descriptions, including EFH. The SAFE report will also make recommendations to the Council on matters concerning bycatch and incidental catch.

PFMC
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