

SCIENTIFIC AND STATISTICAL COMMITTEE REPORT ON
PACIFIC MACKEREL HARVEST GUIDELINE FOR 2005/2006 FISHERY

Dr. Kevin Hill briefed the Scientific and Statistical Committee (SSC) on the “Assessment of the Pacific Mackerel Stock for U.S. Management in the 2005-2006 Season” (Agenda Item F.1.b, Attachment 1). The assessment and harvest recommendations are based on a catch-at-age model, ASAP, that received Stock Assessment Review (STAR) Panel review in June 2004. The SSC concluded that the current assessment and the resulting Harvest Guideline of 17,419 mt represents the best available science for the 2005/2006 fishing season.

The SSC identified several technical issues in the assessment that warrant future investigation, including questions about survey selectivity, the stock-recruit function, and reliability (weighting) of older catch-at-age data. These questions and others should be addressed with a STAR Panel in 2006.

One outstanding issue concerns the distribution of the mackerel stock south of the U.S./Mexico border. The bulk of Pacific mackerel spawning occurs off Baja California, while larval surveys are conducted in the Southern California Bight. Therefore, data used to develop abundance indices for use in the stock assessment cover only a small proportion of the area of spawning. Data from the Investigaciones Mexicanas de la Corriente de California (IMECOCAL) program could provide information that covers a larger proportion of the spawning area. In addition to Pacific mackerel, these data could be used in future assessments of Pacific sardine and bocaccio. All coastal pelagic species (CPS) assessments and management would benefit from closer coordination with Mexico.

The harvest control rules for Pacific mackerel and other CPS were developed prior to the current revision of the Sustainable Fisheries Act. Once technical assessment issues have been addressed, the SSC recommends the Council initiate a process to review, and possibly revise, harvest control rules and overfishing definitions for consistency with the current authorizing legislation.

PFMC
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