SCIENTIFIC AND STATISTICAL COMMITTEE REPORT ON REBUILDING PLAN REVISION POLICY

At the June meeting, the Scientific and Statistical Committee (SSC) prepared a detailed statement that described an approach to assessing adequacy of progress of overfished groundfish stocks towards attaining their rebuilding targets. The SSC also evaluated a set of decision rules that could lead to revisions of rebuilding plans, should progress be deemed inadequate. The approach was developed and studied using a computer simulation technique termed a management strategy evaluation (MSE). Although the Council directed the SSC to continue its evaluation of revision rules, subsequent advice from Council staff indicated that the approach was inconsistent with language in Amendment 16-1 to the groundfish FMP. Hence, work on the MSE was stopped and, instead, a list of rebuilding "runs" was developed that could be used by the Council to assess rebuilding progress and to provide some guidance on what changes might be required to rebuilding plans (see Agenda Item F.7.a, Attachment 1). Effectively, this will allow the Council to treat each overfished stock individually.

The SSC discussed the list of runs that are outlined in Attachment 1 and concluded that results from such an analysis should provide the essential information the Council will need to evaluate rebuilding progress and to implement revisions to rebuilding plans, should progress be lagging. In particular, Run #5 is viewed as critical for framing a set of alternatives that could bracket a range of policies. Specifically, there are two possible outcomes of Run #5 that could guide Council decision-making. First, if Run #5 shows that the probability of rebuilding by T_{max} at the current SPR is greater than the original probability value selected by the Council (P_0), thus in order to be consistent with proposed NS1 guidelines, the existing exploitation rate should be maintained in order to rebuild the stock as soon as practical. Second, if Run #5 indicates that the probability of rebuilding by T_{max} at the current SPR is less than 0.50, then the Council may elect to lower the exploitation rate (i.e., increase SPR) to insure that rebuilding is more likely than not.

Some additional recommendations are:

- T_{min}, mean generation time, and T_{max} should be re-calculated routinely using new information obtained from updated stock assessments and their values compared with existing estimates.

- Both the rebuilding exploitation rate and spawning potential per recruit (SPR) should be reported in rebuilding analyses.

- An additional rebuilding run should be conducted that maintains the same OY values as provided in the existing rebuilding analysis.

- If an analyst opts to use a different method of projecting stock rebuilding the effect of the change should be fully evaluated and described.