

SCIENTIFIC AND STATISTICAL COMMITTEE REPORT ON TRAWL
RATIONALIZATION (TRAWL INDIVIDUAL QUOTA (TIQ) PROGRAM)

Mr. Jim Seger briefed the Scientific and Statistical Committee (SSC) on the status of the Council's efforts towards rationalizing the limited entry trawl fishery by implementing a Trawl Individual Quota (TIQ) system of management. Although a variety of briefing materials was made available to the SSC, the presentation was primarily limited to a review of Table 2 (Summary of IFQ alternatives) in the Groundfish Allocation Committee (GAC) report on trawl rationalization (Agenda Item E.4.b, GAC Report, March 2007). It is clear that the package of alternatives that is now being considered by the Council has been simplified since September 2006, when the SSC last considered this topic. This simplification will serve to highlight the key policy decisions that the Council will make as the TIQ issue moves forward. However, the link between the revised set of options and the stated objectives of the TIQ program is still not clearly articulated.

Following the presentation, the SSC's discussion largely centered on the topic of area-based management and, in particular, the GAC's request that "the SSC groundfish subcommittee identify species susceptible to localized depletion and other factors to consider in establishing biological regions." This is now an important issue because the GAC also made the recommendation to "eliminate the community stability program and rely on other measures to address community concerns (e.g., area-based management and potential regional fishery management associations.)"

The SSC notes that the term "localized depletion" is extremely ambiguous and may have different meanings to different people. If defined as the fraction of current spawning biomass relative to the unfished level (e.g., the 40:10 rule that regulates groundfish harvests), it would be impossible to determine "depletion" on localized and/or regional spatial scales with our current level of knowledge for almost all species. However, if defined simply as a site-specific relative reduction in catch rate more progress could be achieved. Hence, the first issue to resolve is: what is the precise concern about localized depletions? Although unstated, the implied concern is that implementation of a TIQ system will cause fishing effort to undergo a spatial shift that concentrates fishing effort and leads to localized depletions.

To respond to the GAC's request and to move things forward, the SSC agreed to hold a meeting of the groundfish subcommittee sometime before September to consider several issues. These would include a consideration of different ways of defining localized depletion and identification of data sources that would be useful in describing spatial and temporal patterns in the distribution and abundance of trawl-caught groundfish on the US West Coast. These data sources would likely include port-specific landings, trawl logbooks, NMFS fishery-independent surveys, and observer data. It would then be helpful to identify a reasonable set of analytical procedures that could be applied to the data and, finally, to task the work to a team of analysts. Once completed, the SSC notes that a significant ancillary benefit of this type of analysis would be to formalize a

methodology for apportioning a coastwide optimum yield (OY) into smaller spatial units (e.g., States, INPFC areas, etc).

In addition, the SSC has the following three specific comments regarding the TIQ options as they are currently framed:

1. With respect to the use of area-based management tools as a means to protect and stabilize fishing communities, the SSC notes that area-based management may or may not be the best way to achieve this goal, if it is desired. Area-based management may more closely correspond to the protection of regional economies rather than individual communities.
2. The overall economic rationale for TIQs is to reduce excess capacity in the harvesting sector. Consequently, it is not obvious why quota shares should be allocated to the processing sector. Therefore, a clear justification for this option should be developed.
3. The SSC recommends that the option for an expanded voluntary program for collection of socio-economic data be dropped, and that the collection of such information be mandatory under the TIQ program. It is also important that the specific types of data collected should allow subsequent evaluation of the effectiveness of the program in achieving its goals and objectives. In particular, the collection of *ex-ante* and *ex-post* data is necessary to accomplish this.

PFMC
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