

SCIENTIFIC AND STATISTICAL COMMITTEE REPORT ON HARVEST  
SPECIFICATIONS FOR 2009-2010 FISHERIES

Mr. John Devore provided an overview of the background materials associated with this agenda item, including correction of a number of editing errors in the tables (H.1a, Attachment 2). In November 2007, the Scientific and Statistical Committee (SSC) reviewed the acceptable biological catches (ABCs) and optimum yields (OYs) for the 2009-2010 management cycle, and endorsed their use by the Council in developing management measures. Further review at this meeting did not uncover issues that would cause the SSC to amend this endorsement.

The SSC recommends that in the future, a more thorough process be developed for confirmation of the final numbers in the harvest specification tables (H.1a, Attachment 2). The large number of species/stocks in these tables, coupled with a multiplicity of management actions/alternatives, makes it difficult for the SSC to confirm all table entries during the course of a typical, two-day SSC meeting. A brief meeting of the SSC Groundfish Subcommittee and key members of the Groundfish Management Team (GMT) and Council staff in conjunction with the November 2009 Council meeting may be a preferable process for final confirmation of the harvest specifications. Further, the process would also be greatly facilitated by providing links between the ABCs shown in the harvest specification tables and the assessment document tables on which they are based.

The SSC notes that generally the Council's ABCs are taken as the point estimates from the base case assessment results. Although decision tables capture the uncertainty in the ensuing OYs, uncertainty in the ABCs is not explicitly conveyed in the Council's current process. The upcoming Magnuson-Stevens Reauthorization Act (MSRA) implementation – particularly revision to the NS1 (National Standard) and NS2 guidelines – may require a full consideration of uncertainty when establishing ABCs. A decision rule that adjusts the ABC from the base case approach as a function of uncertainty and risk may need to be developed. Many of the Council's groundfish assessments provide estimates of uncertainty that are suitable for such an ABC decision rule. However, the risk aspects are critical and will require guidance from the Council as well as the revised NS guidelines. More specifically, the Council's current ABCs are risk-neutral in that best estimates of ABC are neither decreased nor increased in the face of uncertainty – even when uncertainty is large. The MSRA implementation may require a risk-averse approach – where ABCs are reduced as a function of the uncertainty and risk – for the Council's 2011-2012 harvest specifications.

Finally, the SSC notes three specific issues related to the 2009-2010 harvest specifications.

1. For shortbelly rockfish, the "Alt 3 OY" is greater than the ABC (Table 2-1a). This alternative should be modified or deleted since OY cannot exceed ABC.
2. For sablefish, a coastwide model was used for the assessment and consequently, the ABC and OY values (tabulated by the GMT) are with respect to entire U.S. west coast (i.e. from the U.S.-Canada border south to the U.S.-Mexico border). However, the executive summary of the assessment document (second sentence therein) suggests to some that the assessed biomass corresponds to that north of Point Conception only. The sablefish

executive summary should be modified to clarify the geographic extent of the assessed stock before the final assessment document is published.

3. As a general matter, the SSC recommends that the Council manage fisheries based on stock targets and thresholds that are defined at a level concordant with stock assessments, not based on an assemblage aggregate. However, if the Council elects to continue managing blue rockfish as part of the southern nearshore assemblage, in-season landings should be closely tracked to ensure that the blue rockfish catch does not exceed its ABC. This issue primarily applies to blue rockfish but other species may have similar concerns, e.g. longnose skate.

PFMC  
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