

SCIENTIFIC AND STATISTICAL COMMITTEE REPORT ON FISHERY
MANAGEMENT PLAN AMENDMENTS TO IMPLEMENT ACL REQUIREMENTS

All of the Council's Fishery Management Plans (FMPs) will need to be modified to some extent due to implementation of Annual Catch Limits (ACLs). Dr. Peter Dygert discussed the applicability of the new NS1 Guidelines to salmon stocks under Council management. The Council staff summary, Agenda Item D.6.a Attachment 2 presents the latest thinking on how these guidelines could best be applied. Many aspects of the Salmon FMP are compatible with ACLs.

The principle difficulty with applying ACLs to salmon lies in accommodating the diversity of stocks and management approaches that have evolved over time to meet the individual biological and political needs of the stocks. There is flexibility in the Guidelines to accommodate some of these existing agreements. Many stocks appear to qualify as exceptions because they are included in the Pacific Salmon Treaty, or are listed under the Endangered Species Act. Other stocks are impacted at low levels in Council fisheries and may qualify as Ecosystem Components.

The FMP needs more explicit definitions of Overfished, Overfishing, and Conservation Concern. Triggers for starting and ending an Overfishing Concern should be made more explicit. In addition, the Council may wish to distinguish between cases of underproduction, where stocks are low because of environmental or habitat considerations, and overfishing, where stocks are low because of fishing activities. The management response may not be different under the two circumstances, but this could help focus restoration efforts on the appropriate sector.

Consideration of uncertainty in salmon management is implemented unevenly. In some cases it is built in to escapement goals or exploitation rate control rules. In most areas it is either not explicitly estimated or not considered. Buffers in the Guidelines are linked to uncertainty. More explicit accounting of the various sources of uncertainty in salmon management will help in establishment of realistic buffers that are not overly precautionary.

Accountability measures, as defined in the NS1 Guidelines, are applied differently North and South of Cape Falcon, largely because of the differing management methods applied. The FMP should make it clear how these accountability measures (AMs) align with NS1 Guidelines or why AMs may not be necessary in some cases.

Even the moderate schedule to accomplish this FMP amendment will be difficult to achieve, especially if new methodologies need to be developed to incorporate uncertainty.