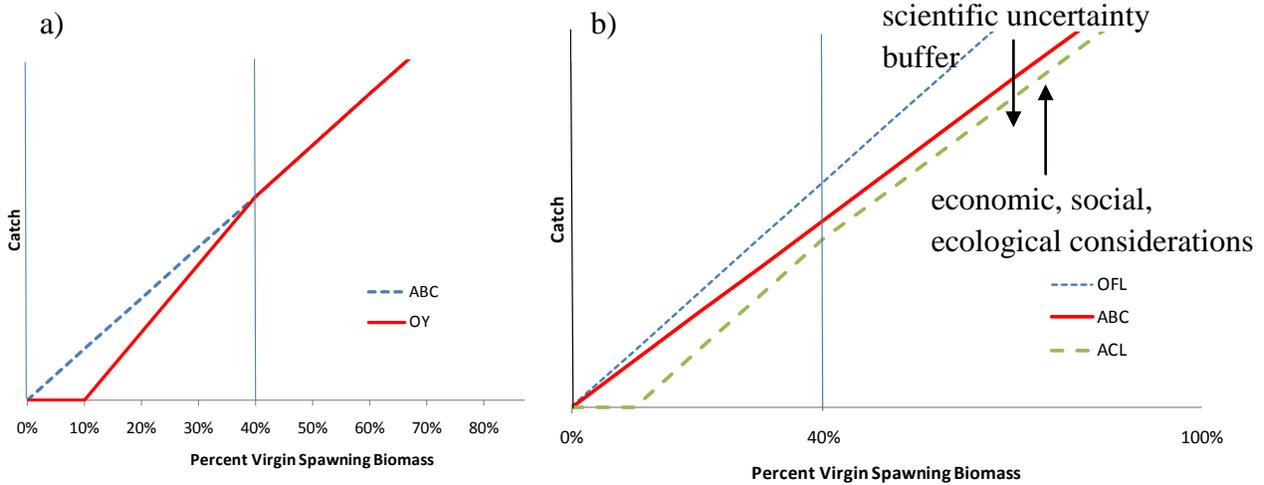


**SCIENTIFIC AND STATISTICAL COMMITTEE REPORT ON FMP
 AMENDMENT TO IMPLEMENT ACL REQUIREMENTS**

The Magnuson-Stevens Fishery Conservation and Management Reauthorization Act (MSRA) and the revised National Standard 1 (NS1) guidelines introduce new fishery management concepts to better account for scientific and management uncertainty in order to prevent overfishing. The Council’s current Fishery Management Plan (FMP) for Pacific coast groundfish needs to be aligned with the NS1 guidelines, and scientific uncertainty needs to be explicitly specified and accounted for. Dr. Alec MacCall briefed the Scientific and Statistical Committee (SSC) on the activities of the NMFS NS1 Working Group (NS1WG). The NS1WG has been working on technical issues associated with implementing the new annual catch limit (ACL) requirements.

The two figures below represent: (a) the Council’s current 40-10 harvest control rule and terminology for the conservation and management of groundfish and (b) a hypothetical harvest control rule that includes scientific uncertainty as required by the MSRA.



To quantify scientific uncertainty in stock status, the SSC recommends conducting a meta-analysis to characterize variability in stock assessments over time. The Council will then have a basis with which to evaluate the trade-off between the size of the scientific uncertainty buffer and the risk of overfishing and can specify a level of risk aversion. The SSC would then review the application of the scientific uncertainty buffer based on that policy choice.

Under the NS1 guidelines, the groundfish FMP will need to specify status determination criteria so that overfishing determinations can be readily made. The FMP must describe whether a maximum fishing mortality threshold or an overfishing limit (OFL) will be used to determine overfishing status. The former is specified as a fishing mortality rate (e.g., F_{msy}) and the latter as a catch level. The SSC recommends defining overfishing as exceeding the OFL catch because it is straightforward, understandable, easily measured, and can accommodate annual accountability measures.

The SSC also recommends the following tasks be completed as soon as practicable, with Council staff coordinating these efforts. The SSC would then review the completed products.

1. Evaluate the efficacy of current in-season monitoring as an accountability measure, which should be documented in the FMP amendment.
2. Document the history of current harvest control rules to identify precautionary adjustments currently in place.
3. Review current rebuilding plans and analytical methods to ensure compliance with NS1 guidelines.
4. Categorize all FMP groundfish species as “stocks in the fishery” or “ecosystem component species”.
5. Assign vulnerability scores to all species in the FMP. A stock’s vulnerability is a combination of its productivity, which depends upon its life history characteristics, and its susceptibility to fishery. These scores could potentially be used in conjunction with the meta-analytical results to tier uncertainty buffers.

The SSC notes that there does not appear to be enough time to adequately finish these tasks under the proposed schedule. Frameworking the FMP amendment may provide flexibility in both implementation and application of MSRA ACL requirements.

PFMC
04/07/09