

SCIENTIFIC AND STATISTICAL COMMITTEE REPORT ON
FMP AMENDMENT 20 – TRAWL RATIONALIZATION – FINAL ACTION
FOR ADAPTIVE MANAGEMENT PROGRAM

Mr. Jim Seger and Mr. Merrick Burden briefed the Scientific and Statistical Committee (SSC) on the proposed final actions being considered for the adaptive management program (AMP) of the trawl rationalization program. Previously, the SSC had noted the need for clear goals and objectives to inform the analysis of the AMP and for tightly specified qualification requirements consistent with the objectives. At its April meeting, the Council defined goals and objectives for the AMP. As specified in the Groundfish Management Team (GMT) report (Agenda Item E.12.b) they include:

- Community stability
- Processor stability
- Conservation
- Unintended/unforeseen consequences of the Trawl Individual Quota program, and
- Facilitate new entrants (both processors and harvesters).

The SSC's previous comments on these issues remain pertinent:

1. If the AMP is intended to address unintended consequences associated with rationalization, those consequences will not be fully known until after rationalization occurs. These consequences may be different in the early periods of rationalization than in later periods after the industry has adjusted to the trawl individual quota program. Therefore, flexibility is a desirable design feature.
2. Given that 10 percent of the quota is the maximum amount that may be allocated to an AMP, trying to address too many objectives with the program could lead to diminished program results.

In addition:

- It is not clear how the adaptive management program can be used to facilitate the new entrants into the fishery objective.
- The GMT report discusses several ways to change behavior by rewarding vessels that engage in “desirable” practices. The SSC notes, however, that use of indirect proxies to alter behavior or practices may have unintended consequences, some of which may be perceived as negative or undesirable. For example, in order to provide an incentive to reduce gear impacts to bottom habitats, the report offers the option of rewarding vessels with the fewest tow-hours per pound of Individual Fishing Quota. Although for some cases tow-hours may be a good proxy for habitat damage, it is just a proxy and using it may result in other, unexpected changes in fishing behavior that may be undesirable. The SSC cautions that great care and much thought should be used before implementing such policies.