

SCIENTIFIC AND STATISTICAL COMMITTEE REPORT ON
FINAL ACTION ON TRAWL CATCH SHARE PROGRAM GEAR USE REGULATIONS
FOR FISHING IN MULTIPLE MANAGEMENT AREAS

The Scientific and Statistical Committee (SSC) was briefed by Mr. Jim Seger on the information provided under Agenda Item G.9. A third alternative (G3) for fishing in multiple individual fishing quota (IFQ) management areas on the same trip was added to the prior range of alternatives. The new alternative would allow fishing in multiple IFQ management areas on the same trip without sorting retained fish. Under alternative G3 three options are proposed to account for catch from different management areas. Option 1 would assign the catch to the more restrictive or conservative harvest limits. Option 2 would prorate catch based on some measure of the percentage of effort or total catch on each side of the management line. Option 3 would assign catch based on the port of landing.

The SSC discussed the NMFS report on this alternative. The SSC does not anticipate that any of the proposed alternatives that allow fishing in multiple areas would create substantial problems for stock assessments in the foreseeable future. In particular, none of the three options proposed under alternative G3 is expected to create a substantial problem for data used in stock assessments or have substantial adverse biological impacts on the stocks themselves. However, the number of trips in multiple areas should be monitored. If in the future there is an unexpected increase in the number of trips fishing in multiple areas, it may be necessary to reassess whether this could undermine catch data quality.

Options 2 and 3 for assigning catch from multiple areas can in some cases create incentives for fishermen to fish in one area and land catch in another where availability of quota pounds for that species may be less constraining or the quota pounds less valuable. An example would be catching sablefish north of 36° N latitude and landing it south of 36° N latitude. Although the SSC is not concerned that this would undermine data quality for assessments or have adverse biological impacts, it does have the potential to undermine the integrity of the IFQ management system which is based on individual accountability for catch of specific species in specific areas. Shifting of catch across management areas can be monitored (if logbooks and Vessel Monitoring System are available) and the incentive to shift catch would be substantially lower under option 2 with catch assigned pro-rata based on effort in each area.