

MID-BIENNIUM ANNUAL CATCH LIMIT ADJUSTMENT AND REBUILDING HARVEST RATE ADJUSTMENT POLICIES

The Council is considering advancing two initiatives that affect groundfish harvest specification policies. The first initiative, which concerns changing annual catch limits (ACLs) in the second year of a biennial management cycle, is commonly called the “green light” policy. The second initiative was one recommended by the Groundfish Advisory Subpanel (GAP) that would implement a default rebuilding revision rule such that as an overfished stock rebuilds to a biomass above the minimum stock size threshold (MSST), the 40-10 or 25-5 harvest control rule would be automatically implemented (see [Agenda Item G.6.a, Supplemental GAP Report, June 2016](#)).

Mid-Biennium Annual Catch Limit Adjustment Policy

The mid-biennium ACL (then called optimum yield or OY) adjustment policy was originally considered when the biennial management process was developed under the Groundfish Fishery Management Plan (FMP) Amendment 17. The biennial management cycle begins in odd years when groundfish stock assessments are conducted, reviewed, and adopted if endorsed by the Scientific and Statistical Committee. Assessment results inform management decisions for the following two years (i.e., the next two-year management cycle). Mid-biennium ACL adjustments were contemplated in the Amendment 17 process in the event a significant change in stock status (i.e., a stock transitions from healthy to overfished or vice versa) as evidenced by an approved assessment could compel an ACL adjustment in the second year of the management cycle in which the assessment was approved. Decreasing the ACL mid-biennium (i.e., “red light” policy) and increasing the ACL mid-biennium (i.e., “green light” policy) were both contemplated under Amendment 17; however, the Secretary of Commerce only approved the “red light” policy.

Amendment 17 was adopted by the Council in November 2002 and partially approved by the Secretary of Commerce in October 2003. The FMP amendatory language was developed subsequent to Council adoption of Amendment 17 and prior to Secretarial approval. The Council had discussed a process where harvest specifications could be changed mid-biennium based on new scientific information or to correct a technical error in the specifications during the development of Amendment 17. The final amendment language only allowed a downward adjustment of harvest specifications in the second year of the biennial management cycle (i.e., the “red light” policy) based on new scientific information (i.e., a stock assessment) to avoid a conservation problem; technical corrections of harvest specifications were still allowed.

The Council again considered allowing both a “red light” and a “green light” policy at their September 2004 meeting. The Council decided to task the ad hoc Groundfish Information Policy Committee (GIPC) with analyzing the effect of a “green light” policy. The GIPC met in January 2005 and recommended a policy to consider only downward mid-term OY adjustments for overfished groundfish species if, absent an OY adjustment, there would be a significant impact to the rebuilding plan (see [Agenda Item F.1.b, Attachment 1, March 2005](#)). The GIPC rationale centered on a concern that allowing a more flexible policy that considered increases and decreases of OY for any species of concern would subvert the intended stability of the multi-year management process.

The Council decided to revisit this decision in June 2016 and scheduled this agenda item for this reconsideration.

Rebuilding Harvest Rate Adjustment Policy

In June 2016, the GAP recommended consideration of a default rebuilding revision rule that would automatically implement the 40-10 or 25-5 harvest control rule for an overfished groundfish stock managed under a rebuilding plan when the stock rebuilds to the precautionary zone (i.e., depletion is between the MSST and the biomass target (i.e., B_{MSY}) (the GAP termed this a harvest rate “ramp up” policy). Ms. Chantel Wetzel and Dr. Owen Hamel of the National Marine Fisheries Service Northwest Fisheries Science Center provide simulation results of predicted rebuilding times and cumulative removals under the current rebuilding plans for yelloweye rockfish and Pacific ocean perch (POP) compared to an implementation of the harvest rate “ramp-up” revision rule recommended by the GAP (Agenda Item F.8.a, Attachment 1). Their results indicate the harvest rate “ramp-up” policy would extend rebuilding by 98 years and 79 years for yelloweye and POP, respectively. While the harvest rate “ramp-up” strategy or 25-5 rule was the control rule decided for the now completed petrale sole rebuilding plan, this strategy may not meet the Magnuson-Stevens Act mandate to rebuild an overfished stock in the shortest time possible while taking into account the status and biology of any overfished stocks of fish, the needs of fishing communities, recommendations by international organizations in which the United States participates, and the interaction of the overfished stock of fish within the marine ecosystem (Section 304(e)) in all cases. Therefore, the harvest rate “ramp-up” strategy may be suitable for some overfished stocks, especially relatively productive stocks like petrale sole, but may not be a suitable default strategy for revising rebuilding plans of all our overfished stocks.

Council Action:

Adopt a Range of Policy Alternatives for Mid-Biennium Annual Catch Limit Adjustments and Rebuilding Harvest Rate Adjustments.

Reference Materials:

1. Agenda Item F.8.a, Attachment 1: Evaluating the Performance of a Proposed 40-10 Harvest Control Rule Rebuilding Rule Revision Relative to the Current Rebuilding Rules.

Agenda Order:

F.8 Mid-Biennium Annual Catch Limit Adjustment and Rebuilding Harvest Rate Adjustment Policies

John DeVore

- a. Reports and Comments of Advisory Bodies and Management Entities
- b. Public Comment
- c. **Council Action:** Adopt Range of Policy Alternatives for Mid-Biennium Annual Catch Limit Adjustments and Rebuilding Harvest Rate Adjustments; Provide Further Direction as Necessary

PFMC
08/22/16