SCIENTIFIC AND STATISTICAL COMMITTEE REPORT ON PHASED-IN APPROACH TO CHANGING HARVEST LIMITS – SCOPING

The Scientific and Statistical Committee (SSC) reviewed the working draft of National Standard 1 (NS1) Technical Guidance for Designing, Evaluating, and Implementing Carry-over and Phase-in Provisions within ABC Control Rules (Agenda Item H.7, Attachment 1). Dr. Dan Holland, the lead author on the technical memorandum, provided an overview of the report, including approaches to and considerations for implementing phase-in.

A major change in NS1 guidance for phase-in since 2016 is that it can now be applied to acceptable biological catch (ABC) values, limited to a 3-year period (i.e., in the third year, the ABC must be at the prescribed ABC without phase-in [though it may still be modified by carry-over]).

Phase-in can provide greater stability and less variability in ABCs and annual catch limits (ACL) over time, resulting in lower management uncertainty. It may be applied for both decreases and increases in ABC. As ABCs and ACLs are modified with phase-in, associated biomass projections and overfishing limits (OFL) will change in response.

While phasing in a new scientific uncertainty buffer approach has a different basis than phasing in a change in ABC due to a new assessment, both involve a change in perception, of either the status and/or scale of the stock or the uncertainty in the assessment, and both result in similar changes in management.

Any proposed phase-in approach must be accompanied by comprehensive analysis and continue to prevent overfishing in each year (i.e., OFLs cannot be exceeded). Factors considered should include species mean generation time, assessment precision, stock structure, and management uncertainty. The overall impact of the status quo versus a phase-in approach depends on the frequency of phase-in. Multiple applications of phase-in to a single stock in a limited time frame is possible but should only be implemented following a robust analysis of potential impacts. The Council may want to identify a minimum buffer between the OFL and ABC for phase-in, either in general or on a case-by-case basis. Management strategy evaluation is an ideal way to evaluate phase-in provisions relative to the above factors. Within individual assessments, decision table projections with and without phase-in would provide useful information on potential impacts.

PFMC
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