

SCIENTIFIC AND STATISTICAL COMMITTEE REPORT ON EXEMPTED FISHING
PERMIT (EFP) FOR 2012

The Scientific and Statistical Committee (SSC) discussed the West Coast Aerial Sardine Survey Exempted Fishing Permit (EFP) application (Agenda Item D.1.a, Attachment 1) for 2012. Mr. Tom Jagielo and Mr. Mike Okoniewski were available to answer questions about the EFP.

The proposed survey follows essentially the same methodology as used for the past three years. The key changes in this year's EFP proposal included: (i) an increase in the proposed allocation from 2,700 mt to 3,000 mt, and (ii) an increase in the number of point sets from 76 to 82. This increase is requested to allow a stratified sampling scheme that provides point set sampling over a broader area than in 2011, stretching further north. Additional vessels and a fourth plane will likely be added to allow for the additional point sets proposed for the survey.

The SSC notes that the methodology and analysis of data from this project has been reviewed by a Stock Assessment Review Panel and the SSC in 2009 and 2011. Those reviews of the aerial survey were generally positive and led to improved analysis, and the SSC recommended going forward with EFPs in the subsequent years. Issues remain with the spatial extent of the point sets, although the extent of sampling has increased and is discussed further in this year's EFP. The SSC encourages efforts to sample fish along the entire range of the aerial survey. Sampling does not occur within three miles of shore. The SSC requests an initial estimate of the proportion of sardine biomass that occurs in these nearshore waters.

The aerial survey is one of four indices used to estimate sardine abundance. Consistent sampling is essential for building a time series of this index for use in stock assessment. In relation to abundance indices for Pacific sardine, a methodology review of the Canadian surface trawl survey will be conducted this May. A thorough comparison of all abundance indices should be conducted as soon as the number of data points is sufficient for analysis.

The SSC endorses the EFP proposal for implementation in 2012.