

SCIENTIFIC AND STATISTICAL COMMITTEE REPORT ON INTERNATIONAL MANAGEMENT ACTIVITIES AND RECOMMENDATIONS

The Scientific and Statistical Committee (SSC) met with the Highly Migratory Species Management Team (HMSMT) and the Highly Migratory Species Advisory Subpanel (HMSAS) to discuss (1) the management framework and (2) limit and target reference points for North Pacific albacore tuna. Dr. Kit Dahl (Pacific Fishery Management Council staff) provided context for the various issues related to this agenda item that were pertinent for SSC consideration. Dr. Suzanne Kohin (Southwest Fisheries Science Center) gave a presentation which summarized the issues on which the HMSMT desired SSC input.

The Northern Committee (NC) of the Western and Central Pacific Fisheries Commission has submitted a schedule for developing a precautionary framework for the management of North Pacific albacore tuna (Agenda Item E.2.a, Attachment 1). The Pacific Fishery Management Council (Council) has the opportunity to provide comments on this schedule prior to the upcoming meeting of the NC in September 2012. The SSC recommends that a Management Strategy Evaluation (MSE) should be an integral part of this proposed framework development process and the Council could provide valuable input on the evaluation criteria used in the MSE process. For example, evaluation criteria could include maximizing long-term yield or stabilizing annual yields depending upon management goals.

As part of the above process, the NC will develop limit and target reference points for North Pacific albacore tuna. The Council has the opportunity to comment on possible approaches for developing these reference points. The SSC supports the conceptual model being proposed by the NC as it closely aligns with the current stock status determination process used in the Council's Groundfish Fishery Management Plan (FMP). The SSC notes, however, that B_{MSY} was proposed as a potential limit reference point in one of the documents associated with this agenda item (Agenda Item E.2.a, Attachment 2). While B_{MSY} may be an appropriate target reference point, it is not an appropriate limit reference point. If used as a limit reference point, one would expect the stock to be overfished approximately half the time due to assessment and management imprecision when fishing at F_{MSY} .

The SSC concurs with the International Scientific Committee (ISC) Albacore Working Group that spawning potential ratio (SPR) reference points (e.g., $F_{40\%}$, $F_{30\%}$) should be considered as potential F_{MSY} proxies for albacore in any MSE sponsored by the NC.

Finally, the SSC notes that it currently gives only a cursory review to stock assessments conducted by Regional Fishery Management Organizations (RFMOs) for HMS species primarily due to the lack of detail that is presented to the SSC for review. These reviews are not comparable to the in-depth reviews that stock assessments receive during the Stock Assessment Review Panel process conducted by this Council. Therefore, the Council must rely on the rigor of the analysis and review process conducted by the RFMOs for assessing stock status.