

SSC Roadmap March 2-4, 2009

ABC Process Meeting

Introduction

This special meeting of the SSC is convened as a workshop to address establishing a process for setting ABC levels for assessed stocks, stocks under rebuilding plans, and stocks for which no assessment has been conducted. This meeting was requested by the SSC in June, 2008 , and approved by Council in September, 2008.

The final National Standards 1 Guidelines on ACLs was published in the Federal Register on January 16th, 2009 (Attachment 8). This document provides guidance to the Fishery Management Councils and their Scientific and Statistical Committees on setting Annual Catch Limits and the level of Acceptable Biological Catch as part of a system of targets, limits, and Accountability Measures.

At the September, 2008 SAFMC Council Meeting the following motions were approved:

1. THE COUNCIL REQUESTED THAT STAFF ASK THE SSC TO LOOK AT ACLS AS A SYSTEM OF TARGETS AND LIMITS AND WHEN EVALUATING ACLS RELATIVE TO THE RISK OF OVERFISHING TO LOOK AT THIS AS A SYSTEM AS A WHOLE.
2. DIRECT THE SSC, SEFSC AND STAFF TO EVALUATE 25% (RANGE OF 10-50%) PROBABILITY OF OVERFISHING WHEN SETTING THE ABC WITH RESPECT TO OVERFISHING.

The Agenda for this three-day meeting is largely open, reflecting its nature as a workshop, however the following topics are offered as a guideline for discussion.

Discussion Topics

Questions about NS1 Guidelines

1. NS1 establishes the category of ecosystem component (EC) species and suggests that an FMP may be amended to indicate which species should be in the EC category. If a species is in an FMP, it must have an ACL and AM's (and by inference an ABC), unless it is an EC species. NS1 mentions that the Council or Secretary may establish EC species, but does not mention any SSC involvement. Is this a scientific decision, and what should the role of the SSC be?
2. It does not appear that ABCs are required in order for the Council to proceed with setting ACLs and AMs. NS1 states "Each Council shall develop ACLs for each of its managed fisheries that may not exceed the 'fishing level recommendations' of its SSC or peer review process."

This seems to indicate that an ACL can be established by the Council without having an ABC (which has a very specific definition), but instead have a 'fishing level recommendation' (which could mean using catch levels established under some older system). Then management does not need to wait for ABCs from the SSC, but does at least require recommended catch levels.

Further, the sentence above seems to suggest that 'fishing level recommendations' from the peer review process (in our case SEDAR), are sufficient. We might want to consider for future SEDAR Review Workshop terms of reference whether or not we want reviewers' comments on this topic.

3. NS1 makes it clear that ABCs must be established based on an ABC control rule, and that the ABC control rule needs to be established in conjunction with the Council. How will the Council address the framework developed by the SSC?
4. NS1 states "The ABC control rule should consider reducing fishing mortality as stock size declines and may establish a stock abundance level below which fishing would not be allowed." An example of this is the PFMC "40-10" rule which shuts down fishing if the population reaches 10% of virgin biomass or less. This has interesting ramifications for red snapper and snowy grouper, as both are below this 10% threshold.
5. NS1 suggests the use of indicator species. The SSC has previously rejected this idea.
6. NS1 suggests that the SSC shall provide recommendations for achieving rebuilding targets. This could be addressed by establishing preferred probabilities for achieving rebuilding.

Questions addressing Limits, Stocks and Control Rules

1. Fishing level recommendations
 - a. For assessed stocks
 - i. Neither overfished nor undergoing overfishing
 - ii. Overfishing, not overfished
 - iii. Overfished, not overfishing
 - iv. Both overfishing and overfished
 - v. Stocks under rebuilding plans
 - b. For Unassessed stocks
2. Types of stocks
 - a. Stocks not in the Fishery Management Unit
 - b. FMU Targeted stocks
 - c. FMU Untargeted stocks
 - d. FMU Ecosystem Component Stocks
 - e. Criteria for defining categories/SSC role
3. Establishing ABC Control Rules

Process Meeting Materials

The background documents provided for the March ABC Process Meeting fall roughly into four categories. There are legislative background documents, documents related to methods for ACLs, documents relating to the history of the ACL discussion in the SAFMC SSC, and documents relating to assessments or life-history information of stocks in the Snapper Grouper Fishery Management Plan.

Note that some of these documents are compiled from many others. They are denoted with an asterisk (*) below; use the 'bookmarks' facility in PostScript to navigate these.

Legislative documents

The Reauthorized Magnuson-Stevens Act of 2007	Attachment 6
National Standard 1 Guidelines, Proposed Rule	Attachment 7
National Standard 1 Guidelines, Final Rule	Attachment 8
National Standard 1 Guidelines ACL Presentation	Attachment 9

ACL documents

Lenfest Group ACL report	Attachment 10
MRAG Americas Gulf of Mexico ACL report	Attachment 11
Gulf of Mexico King Mackerel ACL letter	Attachment 12
P* Probability Analysis paper (Shertzer, et al.)	Attachment 13

SSC ACL history

*SSC Reports and motions relevant to ACLs	Attachment 14
SG Am13 Options Paper, 2003	Attachment 15

Assessment reports and life-history information

*Assessment Reports	Attachment 16
SEDAR 17 Spanish Mackerel Assessment Report	Attachment 17
SEDAR 17 Vermilion Snapper Assessment Report	Attachment 18
Snowy Grouper Rebuilding Projections March 2005	Attachment 19
Compensatory Density Dependence	Attachment 20
Red grouper life history 2007	Attachment 21
Impacts of Amendment 16 on Red and Black Grouper	Attachment 22
Red Grouper Management History	Attachment 23
Black Grouper Management History	Attachment 24
MARMAP CPUE figures	Attachment 25

Additional materials

At the December meeting, several requests were made for information from the Science Center. The status of these is as follows.

To be provided either in the 2nd Briefing Book or at the March meeting:

- Updated 2002-2008 landings and discard information for golden tilefis for the commercial handline and longline fishereies and for MRFSS and headboat recreational fisheries.
- Updated projections of golden tilefish for 2003-2012 providing fishing mortality, SSB and directed and discard yield.
- Updates on NOAA Fisheries working groups addressing revised National Standards and guidelines for implementing the MSRA.

Requests canceled due to upcoming assessment:

For red and black grouper:

- Standardized CPUE from logbook and headboat data
- Annual age and length composition and mean size from fishery dependent and independent sources
- Annual landings and discard information from commercial and recreational sources.

These data will be produced as part of the assessment process and will be available by the December SSC meeting.

Additionally, a long-standing request for summary information about managed stocks has been addressed by Council Staff. Excel files summarizing landings information for the MRFSS, Headboat, ALS and Logbook databases will be provided on a CD to be distributed at the March meeting.