

Recommendations to the Council from the 66th Meeting of the Scientific and Statistical Committee

5-7 August 1997

King Kamehameha Hotel

Kailua-Kona, Hawaii

Bottomfish

Status of the fishery

Bob Moffitt (NMFS, BPT Chairman) presented a report on the status of the Hawaii fishery (from 1996) and noted the continued serious overfished status of onaga and ehu.

Walter Ikehara (HDAR) presented information on the State's new seafood dealer license requirement. Although draft rules are being prepared, a date for final implementation has not been set.

Main Hawaiian Islands (MHI)

Walter Ikehara provided information on progress with the State's onaga and ehu management plan. The public hearing process has been completed and the Board of Land & Natural Resources is expected to meet and hold a final hearing in October 1997. New regulations could be in effect by the end of the year.

Robert Schroeder reported on federal considerations for overfished onaga and ehu and noted the alternative options of closed federal areas and closed season. Under the reauthorized Magnuson-Stevens Act, the Council may be required to take action to restore overfished species to above 20% SPR within a ten-year time frame. Bob Moffitt reported on a revised simulation model recently completed by Don Kobayashi to address this need. He concluded that, under the strict assumption of no fish movement out of the reserve, a reduction in fishing mortality through a 20% closed area could restore SPR to the required level within 10 years. There was substantial discussion on various aspects of the overfishing problem in the MHI. It was suggested that if it could be shown that onaga and ehu were one contiguous stock, archipelago wide, then SPR should properly be calculated for the entire Hawaiian chain. The healthy Northwest areas would most likely elevate the low SPRs of the main islands to an overall level above 20%. In essence we could define ourselves out of the problem.

The SSC offers the following to the Council:

- 1) The SSC stands by its previously expressed position on overfished MHI bottomfish (i.e., Arecommends continued support for final development and speedy implementation of the plan by the State, and Arecommends continued development of the Council's plan [for closed federal areas]). However, the SSC indicated concern with regard to monitoring and enforcing the State's MHI bottomfish plan.**
- 2) As the assumption (Kobayashi's simulation) of no movement seems unlikely, the SSC alerts the Council that even if the State's plan becomes effective, onaga and ehu recovery rates may be insufficient to meet federal requirements. The Council may also be required to adopt management measures above and beyond those proposed by the State plan.**

3) The SSC questioned whether a genetics study of Hawaii bottomfish would generate results in a sufficiently timely manner or would even be the appropriate methodology for addressing management concerns in order to justify the expenditure required (possibly over \$100,000). If a genetics study is carried out by the State, samples from the NWHI be included.

Northwestern Hawaiian Islands (NWHI)

Marcia Hamilton presented information on the NWHI bottomfish management system for the Mau (open access) zone. Marcia is contracted by the Council to draft a Mau Zone limited entry amendment based on the Bottomfish Task Force's progress to date. The SSC was presented a revised analysis on the Atarget® number of vessels for the Mau Zone. Marcia's revised analysis outlined three methods which could be used to determine the long-term target number for the Mau zone: (1) total MSY - 13 vessels; (2) efficient MSY - 8 vessels; and (3) economic breakeven - 5 vessels. She also presented the SSC with the Task Force recommendations regarding the definition of vessel owner, replacement vessels, vessel size limitations, and new entry provisions.

Don Schug reported on the M-S Acts new provisions that allow the Council to consider indigenous fishing practices in the development of FMPs and amendments. He presented a AReport on the Round Table Discussion Regarding Preferential Access for Native Hawaiians to the Mau Zone Fishery,® which recommends that the Council consider an option that provides a certain number of reserved permits for native Hawaiian fishermen. The recommendation suggests 2 permits or 25% of the total Atarget® number of permits be reserved for native Hawaiian fishermen.

There was substantial discussion by the SSC concerning the fact that the Task Force selected Atotal MSY® criteria which generates 13 vessels as the "target" number for the Mau zone. If there is under-reporting occurring in the fishery, using this criteria could cause the fishery to be fished beyond MSY on a long-term basis. The SSC suggests that by selecting criteria based on an efficient MSY system, the possibility of exceeding MSY could be reduced. The SSC also discussed the likely rate of attrition that would occur from the initial number of permitted vessels (18) under the preferred option (B3). The SSC noted that issues such as permit issuance, renewal, and vessel replacement requirements be left for the Task Force to address.

The SSC recommends that the long-term Atarget® number of permitted vessels for the Mau Zone meet the MSY efficiency criteria (i.e., 8 vessels).

The SSC accepts that permits would be issued to 18 existing or historical permit holders and that an additional 2 permits would be reserved for native Hawaiian fishing rights (total 20 permits). The SSC noted that attrition of the 18 initial permits down to 6 permits (plus 2 native Hawaiian permits) would occur over a reasonable period of time (ie 5 years), meeting the target number of 8 total permits.