

WPRFMC Crustacean Reports: *65th Meeting of SSC*

Ilima Room, Ala Moana Hotel
Honolulu, Hawaii
8-10 April 1997

Lobster Discards:

The SSC discussed the issue of lobster discards extensively. It noted that the risk of overfishing under the FMP is small even if the logbook estimates of discards were used. **The SSC concurs with the CPT/AP that the 1996 logbook estimates of discards be used in setting the 1997 quota, and that a well designed observer program, possibly 100% coverage, be implemented for the purpose of obtaining better information on discards.** Variables which are important but extremely difficult to quantify and not taken into consideration when formulating the quota include: the large spatial heterogeneity in abundance, details on the size-structure of the population, and misreporting (random error). **The SSC recommends that the effects of discard uncertainty be incorporated into the risk assessment model and that the "failure modes" of this "operational" fishery model be determined by further simulation.** The SSC supports further development of lobster population models, contingent upon manpower and funding constraints and priorities.

The SSC concurs with the CPT/AP recommendations on the NWHI lobster fishery, specifically:

- 1) That NMFS explore the feasibility of developing regional and species-specific population models, incorporate fishery independent data into the model, and continue to update and improve model parameter estimates;
- 2) That NMFS update the harvest rate and risk simulations to incorporate newly acquired data such as the gear selectivity curve and drop the conversion to age step; and complete the sensitivity analysis of the revised model and publish it in the peer-reviewed literature.
- 3) To use the 1996 logbook estimate of discards, because the NMFS shore-side approach, although rigorous, is sensitive to spatial sampling of the research cruise relative to spatial targeting of the fishery; and
- 4) To concur with the conclusion of no known substantial economic basis for high-grading in 1996.

Other issues:

Regarding the amended Magnuson-Stevens Act, the SSC concluded that the existing logbook already contains provisions for recording bycatch. However, observer coverage would be a good method for obtaining detailed bycatch/incidental take information.

The SSC found that the proposed revised logbook form contains additional information appropriate for rational management. However, the SSC expressed concern over the heavy burden of reporting required by fishermen to complete the form. Some members suggested that the observer record the detailed information or that further efforts be made to reduce the time needed to complete these forms.

Regarding other issues, the SSC concurs with the CPT/AP recommendations, specifically:

- 1) That the Council make a determination on permit leasing by holders of multiple permits;
- 2) That landings from logbooks be routinely validated with dockside sampling or sales slips to verify that the harvest guideline is not exceeded; and
- 3) That impacts of industry proposed changes to the FMP (i.e., publish the harvest guideline for the coming season earlier, leave gear on the fishing grounds temporarily, and open the season

a month earlier) be evaluated by NMFS, particularly by stock assessment, protected species, and enforcement personnel, and reported to the Council.

The SSC supports the use of VMS data for research use in general and feels that such data would be particularly useful for analysis of the spatial heterogeneity of lobster populations and for management.