

**NON-TARGET SPECIES COMMITTEE MEETING
SEPTEMBER 15, 2004**

Members in attendance: Chair Dave Benson, Julie Bonney, Karl Haflinger, Michelle Ridgway, Whit Sheard, Lori Swanson, Paul Spencer, and Lisa Butzner for Thorn Smith. Eric Olsen was absent. Staff support was provided by Sarah Gaichas and Jane DiCosimo. Others in attendance: Sue Hills, Rebecca Reuter, Phil Rigby, Dave Clausen, Mike Sigler, Dean Courtney, Andy Smoker, Tom Pearson, Melanie Brown, John Lepore, and Diana Stram.

The purpose of the meeting was to adopt a problem statement for the management of non-target groundfish species as an overarching objective. The committee reviewed draft problem statements from Lori Swanson, Karl Haflinger, and the ad hoc working group and adopted the following language for the framework approach.

The current management regime may not provide appropriate protection for all species in the ecosystem impacted by the groundfish fisheries, including species for which little biological information is available. The current management system also purports to manage species that are not targeted by groundfish fisheries and may be unaffected or minimally affected by groundfish fisheries. These non-target species are often managed as a complex, which carries the risk that individual species within the complex may be overfished while the complex catch as a whole is within allowable catch guidelines. Conversely, attempts to remove these species from complexes often result in single species quotas that constrain targeted groundfish operations. Since many of these non-target species are either not abundant, not well surveyed, or have life histories that are not well understood, the quotas may not be set appropriately. However, obtaining sufficient data to appropriately manage them under the current quota system may be prohibitively expensive or not possible with current sampling technology. In addition, there is no mandate to manage these species for optimum yield so it may be desirable for both management and conservation to move these species outside of the current quota system.

The problem is then one of deciding how to manage data-poor non-target species outside of the traditional yield-oriented framework used for groundfish species, while still maintaining appropriate protection for those species. If yield-based approaches are not used, then other guidelines for acceptable levels of catch must be determined. Also, if acceptable levels of take cannot be determined and catch is still of concern, protection measures outside of the current quota system may also be considered. Additionally, since markets and circumstances change, a process for transitioning in a timely manner between quota-based target and non-target species management should be established.

The committee agreed that the management issue for rockfish, flatfish, and other species was too broad for a uniform problem statement, therefore the committee agreed to develop two problem statements, for the framework (above) and rockfish, and recommended splitting the non-target initiative into three separate analyses. The committee recommended analyzing the framework approach (see ad hoc group recommendations) and alternative management for non-target rockfish simultaneously. The framework would be refined by applying the rockfish example to it. The committee recognized that management problems for non-target rockfishes have been identified separately and have crossover implications, e.g., in the annual specification process, proposals from stock assessment authors to separate species from within complexes, GOA groundfish rationalization, IRIU in the BSAI, PSEIS recommendations.

The committee requested clarification from the Council on the committee's mission statement, regarding the potential for committee involvement with a separate but related management initiative on alternative management strategies for rockfish. The committee noted that a staff discussion paper that is scheduled for review at the December 2004 Council meeting would address both target and non-target rockfish management. However, the same rockfish species may be a target in the GOA, but not a target in the BSAI.

The committee tentatively identified its next meeting for November 15, 9 am – noon at the AFSC- Seattle (the morning prior to the Groundfish Plan Team meeting). It will review guidance from the Council on whether it should also address target management of rockfish, develop a problem statement for (target? And non-target) rockfish, and adopt a suite of alternative for the framework for separating all groundfish into target and non-target categories.

The committee requested that AFSC staff provide a briefing on the status of the draft revisions to the National Standard Guidelines and how they may affect proposed management of non-target groundfish species. The committee had reviewed an earlier recommendation of the ad hoc group that would have placed the non-target groundfish species outside of the OFL and OY concepts. This does not appear likely under proposed revisions. An alternate solution would be to remove the non-target species from the groundfish FMPs. This is not the preferred approach because it is believed that the FMPs offer additional protection. The committee also requested that AFSC staff provide the definition of a “fishery.”