



New England Fishery Management Council

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To: Paul J. Howard, Executive Director
From: Dr. Steve Cadrin, Scientific and Statistical Committee Chairman
Date: November 18, 2008

Subject: SSC Recommendations on 5-year Research Priorities

The SSC reviewed the Draft Plan for Five year Research Priorities for New England Fishery Management Council, prepared by the Research Steering Committee. The SSC appreciates the work and of the Research Steering Committee and endorses its recommendations. We offer the following revisions to the Draft Plan, by category (revisions in bold):

Stock Assessment: Clarify appropriate approaches to retrospective problems as, "Investigate/determine the cause for retrospective patterns in New England multispecies groundfish assessments, and identify appropriate adjustments (**e.g., data or model revisions**) to resolve those patterns."

Surveys: Clarify the scope of acoustic surveys as, "Continue development of hydroacoustic surveys of **pelagic species** to provide an independent means of estimating stock sizes and/or defining localized depletion (long-term research possibilities)."

Fishery Performance: **Investigate fleet dynamics and their relationship to population dynamics.**

Fisheries Management:

- **Investigate the effect of various management instruments (specifically user rights and ocean zoning) on management performance (biological social, and habitat) and enforcement.**
- **Investigate the feasibility of public leasing of vessels to reduce fishing mortality for fisheries that have long-term potential to sustain the existing fleet.**
- **Consider management options for minimizing impacts on vulnerable marine ecosystems.**
- **Evaluate effects and effectiveness of permanent closed areas.**

Fisheries Interactions: Clarify that all forage species should be considered as, "Synthesize predation information on herring **and other forage fishes** and conduct investigations to address information gaps; investigate the role of herring **and other forage fishes** in the Northwest Atlantic ecosystem and the importance of herring **and other species** as a forage for other commercial fish stocks; assess the importance of herring as forage relative to other forage species in the region."

Expanded Ecosystem Studies: **Monitor trends in non-target, ecosystem components (e.g., wolffish).**

General Comment and Offer:

A more comprehensive and systematic approach to developing research priorities would improve our advice to the Council and NMFS. Research topics could be categorized as short- and long-term items. Cost-benefit analyses would help to prioritize topics. Research topics and capabilities could be expanded beyond potential cooperative research topics and coordinated among all NOAA line offices. The SSC is willing to assist in a more strategic approach to developing research priorities.