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New England Fishery Management Council

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John Pappalardo, *Chairman* | Paul J. Howard, *Executive Director*

To: Paul J. Howard, Executive Director
From: Dr. Steve Cadrin, Chairman, Scientific and Statistical Committee
Date: September 23, 2009
Subject: **Correction to the 2010-2011 Acceptable Biological Catch (ABC) recommendation for the skate complex**

The Scientific and Statistical Committee (SSC) was asked to review a correction to the skate complex ABC, using the same basis (median catch/biomass from catches determined with the selectivity ogive method) for determining the ABC, approved by the SSC February 6, 2009. This correction substitutes the 2007 spring survey biomass index for little skate, replacing a zero value (included as a missing value) in the previous calculations and adds the 2008 spring survey value, both of which were available for the Data Poor Assessment Workshop.

On September 16 2009, the SSC reviewed several sources of information and associated presentations by the Skate Plan Development Team (PDT):

1. Proposed correction to skate ABC calculation input values
2. SSC recommendations on Skate Amendment 3, February 11, 2009
3. Skate ABCs, updated reference points, and management recommendations (January 26, 2009 memo from Skate PDT to SSC)
4. Skate rebuilding catch limit re-analysis (January 14, 2009 memo from PDT to SSC)

In February 2009, the SSC recommended that:

“Acceptable Biological Catch for the northeast skate complex is 23,826 mt per year for the 2010 and 2011 fishing years. The ABC recommendation is derived as the multispecies skate catch associated with the median of the observed series of a catch/biomass exploitation index and the most recent 3-year average of the multispecies skate survey index. ... The Annual Catch limit (ACL) cannot exceed the ABC. The recommended ABC (23,826 mt) is 57% of the estimated catch in 2007. Therefore total catch (the sum of landings and discards) must be reduced by at least 43%.”

The PDT’s calculation of the most recent 3-year average of the multispecies skate survey index inadvertently excluded the 2007 spring survey catch of little skates. The multispecies skate index increases by 15% when the 2007 spring survey catch of little skates is included. When the 2008 spring survey catch of little skates (which was available and reviewed by the 2008 Data Poor Stocks Working Group, DPSWG) is included, the index increases by another 11%. Correcting the omission and updating the calculation to spring 2008 produces a 29% increase in the multispecies skate index and the resulting ABC calculation, using the ABC method previously recommended.

Survey information from fall 2008 was not provided to the SSC, nor was it reviewed by the DPSWG or the Skate PDT. Therefore, the ABC recommendations for 2010 and 2011 are based on survey data through spring 2008. The SSC would prefer to consider all available information in the

derivation of ABC recommendations, but the SSC cannot consider data that has not been reviewed by a scientific group in the stock assessment, peer review or PDT process. Therefore, the SSC would like to re-consider the 2011 ABC recommendation based on updated survey data and results from the 2008 survey calibration workshop.

The SSC revises its previous recommendation on Acceptable Biological Catch for the northeast skate complex.

- 1. The revised recommendation is that ABC is 30,643 mt per year for the 2010 and 2011 fishing years.**
- 2. The revised ABC is 74% of the estimated catch in 2007 (landings plus dead discards). Therefore total catch (the sum of landings and dead discards) must be reduced by at least 26%.**
- 3. The 2011 ABC recommendation should be reconsidered by the SSC in 2010 based on the Plan Development Team's review of updated survey data and results from the 2008 survey calibration workshop.**