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New England Fishery Management Council

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

MEMORANDUM

DATE: April 23, 2009
TO: Science and Statistical Committee
FROM: Executive Director Paul J. Howard
SUBJECT: **Amendment 16 to the Northeast Multispecies Fishery Management Plan: Review of Rebuilding Programs for Newly Overfished Stocks and Further Development of ABC Guidance – Terms of Reference**

In June the Council is scheduled to make final decisions on the proposed action for Amendment 16 to the Northeast Multispecies FMP. This complex amendment modifies measures to continue the rebuilding programs adopted by Amendment 13, adopts formal rebuilding strategies for stocks recently determined to be overfished, and implements requirements for the setting of Acceptable Biological Catch (ABC) and Annual Catch Limits (ACLs). The amendment may also substantially modify the sector administration provisions and may authorize up to seventeen additional groundfish sectors. Council approval of the amendment is scheduled for June because of the requirement to implement new measures by May 1, 2010.

The SSC is asked to provide advice on the following two issues:

- (1) **Review the formal rebuilding strategies for stocks that have been determined to be overfished (witch flounder, GB winter flounder, pollock, Atlantic wolffish, and northern windowpane flounder).** Amendment 16 proposes one alternative for each of these stocks. The Council asks that the SSC comment on the reasonableness of these options and the development of rebuilding programs for the stocks that do not have reliable projections (Atlantic wolffish, northern windowpane flounder).
- (2) **Develop further guidance for setting groundfish ABCs.** Amendment 16 adopts mortality objectives and formal rebuilding strategies but does not specify ABCs or ACLs. The Council is expected to ask the SSC to review ABCs for the multispecies complex this fall and will adopt ACLs based on those recommendations. These decisions will be forwarded to NMFS in a specifications package, similar to the approach used for annual TACs for other species.

In anticipation of the demands on the SSC of developing ABC recommendations for twenty groundfish stocks, the PDT briefed the SSC in July of 2008 on an approach that was proposed to provide a starting point for ABC discussions. The goal is to achieve an understanding between the SSC and the PDT on the information the SSC believes should

be considered for setting ABCs so that the PDT can provide this information for all twenty stocks in a structured way. A further benefit is that the approach will be documented so that the public will know what to expect.

At this meeting, the Groundfish PDT will present a draft technical memorandum that describes the approach to be used for developing ABC recommendations that is based on last year's discussions with the SSC. The PDT will also present analyses of the performance of the approach as requested by the SSC. **The Council asks the SSC to review the PDT's recommendations and suggest modifications or additional work that should be completed prior to the setting of ABCs later this year.**

In July 2008, the SSC reviewed the analytic tools used to analyze biological and economic impacts of groundfish management measures. No further discussion of these analyses is requested at this meeting.

Relevant Materials

1. SSC Overview of Amendment 16 (powerpoint presentation).
2. SSC Amendment 16 Mortality Targets (powerpoint presentation)
3. Groundfish PDT memo dated September 26, 2008 (Amendment 16 mortality reductions)
4. Groundfish PDT memo dated October 24, 2008 (new rebuilding programs)
5. Multispecies ABCs (powerpoint presentation)
6. Draft technical guidance for setting ABCs
7. Stocks Without Projections