

Mid-Atlantic Fishery Management Council

SSC Report

Since the last National SSC Workshop in Charleston, several significant events occurred in the Mid-Atlantic. First, the ABC control rules, part of an omnibus amendment to all the FMPs under the aegis of the MAFMC, were approved by the Secretary of Commerce and are now being used to guide the SSC. The final ABC rules and risk policy are essentially the same ones presented at last year's workshop.

The MAFMC also supported a simulation study to evaluate the effectiveness of approaches to setting ABCs for both data rich and data poor stocks (Wilberg et al. 2011¹). These studies evaluated the adopted MAFMC control rules and approaches recommended by Berkson et al. In data-rich situations, these studies indicate a conservative P* rule that assumed a CV in the OFL of approximately 100% were most reliable. For the data-poor control rules, there was not a single rule that performed best in all situations explored. Simulation studies indicated that if managers choose to err on the side of caution, particularly in highly uncertain situations for species with risky life histories, the Restrepo control rule was most reliable.

As mentioned last year, the SSC has formed a Social Sciences Subcommittee with the primary mission of working with the fishing industry to develop performance reports for each fishery. The pilot set of fisheries was the pelagic fisheries for longfin squid, shortfin squid, Atlantic mackerel, and butterfish. The performance reports for these fisheries were used as background documents by the SSC during the formulation of ABC recommendations. Based on the utility of these reports to the SSC decision making process, performance reports will be prepared in the coming year for all MAFMC-managed fisheries and submitted to the SSC for use in the ABC-setting process.

Finally, the Ecosystems Subcommittee began their work on assisting the MAFMC as it moves towards ecosystem-based fisheries management (EBFM). The subcommittee defined forage species, proposed a stepwise methodology by which forage species can be handled in the ABC-setting process, and provided the MAFMC with some thoughts on how to set goals, objectives, and standards for EBFM.

¹ Wilberg, M. J., T. J. Miller, and J. Wiedenmann. 2011. Evaluation of Acceptable Biological Catch (ABC) Control Rules for Mid-Atlantic Stocks: Final Report to Mid-Atlantic Fishery Management Council. University of Maryland Center for Environmental Science Chesapeake Biological Laboratory [UMCES]CBL 11-029.