FRAMEWORK ADJUSTMENTS AND MONITORING

The Closed Area Technical Team met on August 19, 2013 and discussed framework adjustments to groundfish management areas, as well as monitoring approaches. This topic is a work in progress and there is more work to be done by the CATT. Staff will present this topic to the Joint Committees on September 5 and is seeking any guidance the Committee wishes to provide on how to approach the process of modifying groundfish management areas via framework adjustment, or how best to monitor groundfish management areas designated or changed via the Omnibus EFH Amendment.

CLOSED AREA FRAMEWORK ADJUSTMENT PROCESS
August 2013 Draft
Discussed by CATT on 8/19/13

<u>Council-driven approach</u>

1. Determine a time line (recovery time) for when closed area data can first be reviewed (for example, 3, 5, 10 years).
   - Need enough time for change to take effect
   - Need enough data to analyze
     - Sample size
     - Seasonality?
     - Statistical power
   - Data could be reviewed periodically (every X years no matter what, look for thresholds)
   - Data could be reviewed only when it is anticipated that a threshold has been reached.
     - The thresholds should be well defined and measurable so that managers would have a good idea if a threshold was being approached or exceeded.
     - Council or NMFS would request a review.

2. Determine that a threshold is met to either: open a closed area, maintain a closed area, or close additional areas.
   - Council's technical advisors (possibly CATT, PDT) meets to review data to verify if a threshold is reached (this would be based on either 1(c) or 1(d) above).
   - Technical advice presented to appropriate oversight committees and the Council to consider including in the next Framework Adjustment

<u>Industry-driven approach</u>

1. Industry suggests that a threshold has been met.
   - Recommend that industry still be subject to initial recovery time as explained above.
   - Utilizes data gathered by both industry and others (federal agencies, academia, etc.).

2. Industry requests to meet with technical advisors to present data
   - Technical advisors meets to review data presented by industry to verify if a threshold is reached (this would be based on either 1(c) or 1(d) above).
   - Technical advisors presents findings to industry
   - Technical advisors present data to Council to consider including in the next Framework Adjustment
     - Access could likely be as either a special access program or sector exemption
       - If sector exemption, would it be for all sectors or requesting sector?

CLOSED AREA MONITORING ALTERNATIVES
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Below are several different possibilities for researching and monitoring closed areas that could be considered. Multiple approaches could be combined.

1. Before-After-Control-Impact Analysis (BACI)
   - Sample areas before and after opening and compare those areas to a near-by control area.
   - Concerns from Center staff about a lack of available data before opening
   - Would need to consider how we sample these areas (camera, fishing, etc.)
   - When would research start, would delays to opening be acceptable?

2. Research Set-Aside
   - A portion of the annual groundfish ACL would be set aside, proceeds from that catch go towards research
   - Greatly reduced allocations and a dynamic market do not guarantee financing
   - Auction research ACE? (auction DAS or allocations? to vessels or sectors?)

3. Sector Set-Aside
   - A sector voluntarily sets aside a portion of its catch that can be caught in a closed area
   - Would we need to develop incentives for sectors to set aside catch (free observer coverage?)
   - Would have to figure out what portion is acceptable to set aside
   - What if no sector volunteers?
   - Could this be done as a sector exemption, an EFP, or just a component of an operations plan

4. Add survey tows to NMFS surveys
   - Would be limited seasonally
   - Concerns about limited funding may make this unfeasible

5. Observer/ASM lottery
   - Select X number of observer days into closed areas, vessels selected can go into the area with observer/ASM on board.

Methods for monitoring closed areas include:

1. Underwater Cameras
   - HabCam is already being used to monitor sea scallops and benthic habitat
   - Less benthic disturbance
   - Observing fish could be considered a weakness

2. Fishing
   - Necessary because some of the closed areas are designed to protect spawning and juvenile fish
   - Fixed gear (gillnets/longline) would have less habitat impacts but may not catch as many fish as trawls
   - Tagging studies could be utilized to track residency

Reopening Criteria:

1. Threshold
   - Open when populations of concern rebuild
     - Could be counter-productive – why open an area that is working?
   - Open if populations do not rebuild (closed area providing no benefits)
     - Could be problematic – increasing fishing pressure on struggling stock
   - Thresholds could be based on
     - B_{msy}
     - Rebuilding status
     - Observed biomass in the closed area compared to control area

2. Threshold for consecutive years (i.e. stock stays in rebuilt status for at least X years).

3. Effort reductions
   - The fishery is reduced by X amount since implementation, as a result can open X closed areas.
   - Would we need to add additional areas if effort increases?
   - No correlation between effort reduction and stock status