

## *PDT Meeting Notes, October 15, 2014, Boston, MA*

### **1. Review updated alternatives based on September Council meeting motions**

Staff reviewed the modifications approved by the Council in September. As the PDT reviewed the new alternatives and modifications the PDT highlighted several aspects of the alternatives that should be clarified:

1. Clarified recommendations for transit rules for new areas (no transit through CA2 extension; transit allowed in NL extension; and no transit for closure within ETA)
2. Clarified recommendation that specification Alternative 2 and Alternative 4 should NOT be combined with flexible allocation alternative, lottery system should be used only for those alternatives. Only if area closed in ETA is flexible allocation alternative justified.
3. PDT recommends including a new alternative for the number of LAGC trips in MA AAs, Option 4. Option 4 would allocate a poundage equivalent to the proportion of catch from access areas overall. For example, in 2015 about 38% of total catch projected to come from access areas. So that same percentage would be applied to the total LAGC IFQ allocation for 2015.
4. PDT reviewed and approved strawman language developed for carryover provisions related to access area allocations (Section 3.0). Included in draft FW26 document for Cmte to consider.
5. PDT updated OFL/ABC values based on data issue discovered at SSC meeting. Updated values included in FW26 document.
6. PDT recommends status quo for LAGC incidental and LAGC NGOM TACs: 50,000 pounds for incidental target TAC and 70,000 pounds for NGOM hard TAC.
7. Recommend default measures for 2016 be modified. For LA vessels: Status quo of 75% of projected DAS and no access area trips. But if default value less than 20DAS, allocate 20 DAS as default allocation. For LAGC: status quo (100% of projected IFQ).

These issues have been added to FW26, but the Cmte should approve them.

### **2. Review projections**

Dvora Hart reviewed the assumptions used for 2 runs presented at the meeting: the base run and the closure run. The PDT discussed the results and decided to modify different F targets for some of the areas for the final runs. Specifically, modifications were made to MA AAs based on whether allocations would be based on a lottery or flexible approach. Dr. Hart is going to re-run the projections using the changes recommended by the PDT. The PDT will review updated by conference call on October 21. Dr. Hart also reviewed revised ABC values, which are now slightly lower. Thus the LAGC IFQ allocation and observer set-aside for 2015 are also lower, by small amounts.

The PDT discussed the possibility of using a seasonal closure to increase yield from MA AAs. The PDT decided to look into the issue further and look for previous data and decide whether to recommend an alternative on the October 21 conference call. Vessels need to fish 20% longer in the fall to get the same yield as the spring/summer. And since vessels are on a clock in open areas makes sense to fish those areas in the spring/summer when meats are better, and AA in the fall since there is no time issue. There may be auxiliary benefits for turtles as well, depending on when and where vessels shift effort. But concerns were also discussed that allocations will not be made until May, as well as about half of the total DAS for the year, so that needs to be considered as well.

### **3. Review Draft SAFE Report**

The PDT reviewed parts of the SAFE Report that are complete and highlighted sections that still need work. Matt Camisa is going to review MA section, Trish DeGraaf is going to review ME section, NMFS PRD going to review PR section, NMFS APS going to create LPUE by area tables, and work still needs to be completed on several section.

## **1. Review of updated projections**

Dvora Hart reviewed updated projections based on recommendations the PDT made at the previous meeting related to area fishing mortality targets. An error was found in how one of the SAMS areas was treated in the results presented at the previous meeting, and that was corrected. In addition, the model has been updated to be more automatic now so those types of errors will not occur in the future. The error resulted in an increase in open area DAS by 3 DAS.

Base Run (Alt2) – the target Fs were adjusted for the MA AA because this alternative is set allocations per area now, lottery only. Each MA AA set at 0.35 so total AA allocation up to 8,700 mt (compared to 8,100 from meeting using different target F values per area). Higher total AA catch comes out to a possession limit of 17,900, but the PDT recommends that the possession limit be rounded down (17,000 pounds) in light of issues discussed. Total catch projected at 48 million for this run.

Closure Run (Alt 3) – One less DAS than base run because about 3% of effort from area closure extension around CA2south. Total catch for this run is 47 million pounds, one million less than base run, because this run has 1 DAS less than base run. Noted that F rates set in this alternative based on what the PDT thinks in terms of effort by area since this alternative will likely be coupled with the flexible allocation option if ETA subarea is closed. In that case vessels could fish in any of the three areas so F expected to be higher in ETA (0.5, compared to set amount of 0.35 in base run). Some concern was raised that 0.50 is too high and allocations should not be set on such a high F. But other points made that allocations want to direct effort in deeper waters, off small scallops in shallow water, and higher F in deeper waters more appropriate for the resource there.

Lower F in MA AA (Alt4) – Run includes both extensions on GB (CA2 and NL small) and F reduced in all 3 MA areas to 0.30, compared to 0.35 in Alt2. This reduction reduces total catch to 45 million pounds, and possession limit would be reduced by about 1,000 pounds as well (16,000 pounds per trip).

Noted that Alt 3 and Alt 4 have higher LT landings compared to the base run, especially in middle years (2017-2019). These two runs expected to have lower risk of lower landings in later years, by reducing F in 2015. The PDT is not going to identify a preferred alternative at this time. After all runs and analyses are complete, and if the Committee requests, the PDT could identify a preferred specification alternative by conference call.

## **2. Seasonal meat weight variation**

PDT reviewed data available. *Consensus to recommend that FW26 consider an alternative that would have a seasonal closure in all three MA areas from Sept 15 – Nov 30 (2.5 months) to increase yield.* Preventing catch in the fall when scallops are spawning would increase overall yield per animal. If too many trips are taken during the time period when scallop meat weights are lower (typically the fall), there could be unanticipated higher fishing mortalities. This could lead to lower yields from the access areas in future years (2016 and 2017).

At this time the PDT is not supportive of including an alternative that would limit the number of trips during this season or consider a lower possession limit if trips taken in that season. The latter may be too complex to implement at this late stage and the former may not have much of an effect since fishing patterns are not usually high in the fall to start with. For example, many vessels may not be planning to fish more than one MA trip in the fall to begin with. The PDT recommends that a seasonal closure is the only option that should be explored in this action. Staff will present what is available to the AP and Cmte next week for possible inclusion in FW26.

## **3. Review up updated price model**

Demet Haksever reviewed an updated price model. The model itself is not much different than ones used in previous actions, except it includes a few new data points and a few changes in variable definitions. Overall, the model is explaining about 87% of the variation; which is very robust. When predicted prices were compared to actual prices, there was less than a 5% difference for all 16 years combined, and less than 3% for more recent years when dealer data has improved. *The PDT approved use of this model for the cost benefit analysis in FW26.*