

33rd ANNUAL MEETING – SEPTEMBER 2011

**FISHERIES COMMISSION'S REQUEST FOR SCIENTIFIC ADVICE ON MANAGEMENT
OPTIONS IN 2013 AND BEYOND OF CERTAIN STOCKS IN SUBAREAS 2, 3 AND 4 AND
OTHER MATTERS**

1. The Fisheries Commission with the concurrence of the Coastal State as regards to the stocks below which occur within its jurisdiction ("Fisheries Commission") requests that the Scientific Council provide advice in advance of the 2012 Annual Meeting, for the management of Northern shrimp in Div. 3M, 3LNO in 2013. The advice should be provided as a range of management options and a risk analysis for each option (rather than a single TAC recommendation).

Noting that Scientific Council will meet in October of 2011 for 2013 TAC advice, Fisheries Commission requests the Scientific Council to update its advice on shrimp stocks in 2012 for 2013 TAC.

Fisheries Commission further requests that SC provide advice in accordance to Annex 1.

2. Fisheries Commission requests that the Scientific Council provide advice for the management of the fish stocks below according to the following assessment frequency (unless Fisheries Commission requests additional assessments):

Two year basis

American plaice in Div. 3LNO
Capelin in Div. 3NO
Cod in Div. 3M
Redfish in Div. 3LN
Redfish in Div. 3M
Thorny skate in Div. 3LNOPs
White hake in Div. 3NOPs
Yellowtail flounder in Div. 3LNO

Three year basis

American plaice in Div. 3M
Cod in Div. 3NO
Northern shortfin squid in SA 3+4
Redfish in Div. 3O
Witch flounder in Div. 2J+3KL
Witch flounder in Div. 3NO

To continue this schedule of assessments, the Scientific Council is requested to conduct the assessment of these stocks as follows:

In 2012, advice should be provided for 2013 and 2014 for Redfish in Div. 3LN and Thorny skate in Div. 3LNOPs and for 2013, 2014 and 2015 Northern shortfin squid in SA 3+4.

In addition, advice should be provided in 2012 for cod Div. 3M.

The advice should be provided as a range of management options and a risk analysis for each option (rather than a single TAC recommendation). Additionally, Fisheries Commission requests that SC provide advice in accordance to Annex 1.

The Fisheries Commission also requests the Scientific Council to continue to monitor the status of all these stocks annually and, should a significant change be observed in stock status (e.g. from surveys) or in bycatches in other fisheries, provide updated advice as appropriate.

3. With respect to Northern shrimp (*Pandalus borealis*) in Div. 3LNO, noting the NAFO Framework for Precautionary Approach and recognizing the desire to demonstrate NAFO's commitment to applying the precautionary approach, Fisheries Commission requests the Scientific Council to:
 - a) identify F_{msy}

- b) identify B_{msy}
 - c) provide advice on the appropriate selection of an upper reference point for biomass (e.g. B_{buf})
4. The Fisheries Commission adopted in 2010 an MSE approach for Greenland halibut stock in Subarea 2 + Division 3KLMNO (FC Working Paper 10/7). This approach considers a survey based harvest control rule (HCR) to set a TAC for this stock on an annual basis for the next four year period. The Fisheries Commission requests the Scientific Council to:
- a) Monitor and update the survey slope and to compute the TAC according to HCR adopted by the Fisheries Commission according to Annex 1 of FC Working Paper 10/7.
 - b) Advise on whether or not an exceptional circumstance is occurring.
5. Fisheries Commission requests the Scientific Council to examine the consequences resulting from a decrease in mesh size in the mid-water trawl fishery for redfish in Div. 3LN to 90mm or lower.
6. The Fisheries Commission adopted in September 2011, conservation plans and rebuilding strategies for 3NO cod and 3 LNO American plaice and “recognizing that further updates and development of the plans may be required to ensure that the long term objectives are met”. The Fisheries Commission requests the Scientific Council to:
- a) Provide advice on the addition of a new intermediate reference point (i.e. B_{isr}) in the NAFO precautionary approach framework to delineate an additional zone between B_{lim} and B_{msy} as proposed by the proposed by the working group
 - b) Taking into consideration the new reference point B_{isr} , provide advice on an updating NAFO PA framework and provide a description for each zone.
 - c) Provide advice on an appropriate selection of the B_{isr} value for Div. 3NO cod and Div. 3 LNO American plaice.
 - d) Review B_{msy} and F_{msy} provided in 2011 for both stocks and quantify uncertainty surrounding these estimates.
7. Fisheries Commission requests the Scientific Council to review the conservation and rebuilding plans of 3LNO American Plaice (NAFO/FC Doc. 11/4, Annex 4) and 3NO Cod (NAFO/FC Doc. 11/4, Annex 5). Through projections and a risk based approach, evaluate the performance of the present rebuilding plans in terms of expected time frames (5 / 10 / 15 years) and associated probabilities to reach indicated limit and target biomass levels and catches. Projections should assume appropriate levels of recruitment and the status quo fishing mortality (3-year average scaled and unscaled) until reaching biomass levels above B_{lim} .
8. Fisheries Commission requests the Scientific Council to evaluate the Harvest Control Rule (HCR) indicated below as an alternative to the HCR of the 3LNO American Plaice (NAFO/FC Doc. 11/4, Annex 4, item 4) and 3NO Cod (NAFO/FC Doc. 11/4, Annex 5, item 4) Conservation Plans and Rebuilding Strategies. Through projections and a risk based approach, evaluate the performance of this HCR in terms probabilities associated with maintaining Biomass above B_{lim} and ensuring continuous SSB growth. SC should provide SSB and associated catch trajectories for 5 / 10 / 15 years. Projections should assume appropriate levels of recruitment and the status quo fishing mortality (3-year average scaled and unscaled) until reaching biomass levels above B_{lim} .

Harvest Control Rule:

- a) When SSB is below B_{lim} :
 - i. no directed fishing, and
 - ii. by-catch should be restricted to unavoidable by-catch in fisheries directing for other species

b) When SSB is above Blim:

If $P_{y+1} > 0.9$ Then $F_{y+1} = F_{0.1} * P_{y+1}$

Else

$F_{y+1} = 0$

$TAC_{y+1} = B_{y+1} * F_{y+1}$

Where:

F_{y+1} = Fishing mortality to project catches for the following year.

P_{y+1} = Probability of projected Spawning Stock Biomass to be above Blim.

B_{y+1} = Exploitable biomass projected for the following year.

9. The Fisheries Commission requests the Scientific Council to conduct a full assessment of 3LNO American Plaice and provide advice in accordance to the rebuilding plan currently in place.
10. On the Flemish Cap, there seems to be a connection between the most recent decline of the shrimp stock, the recovery of the cod stock and the reduction of the redfish stock. The Fisheries Commission requests the Scientific Council to provide an explanation on the possible connection between these phenomena. It is also requested that SC advises on the feasibility and the manner by which these three species are maintained at levels capable of producing a combined maximum sustainable yield, in line with the objectives of the NAFO Convention.
11. Fisheries Commission requests the Scientific Council to define B_{msy} for cod in Division 3M and to propose a Harvest Control Rule (HCR) consistent with the NAFO Precautionary Approach Framework. It also requests the Scientific Council to define the estimated timeframe to reach B_{msy} under different scenarios, consistent with the proposed HCR.
12. Scientific Council is asked to provide, where available, qualitative and quantitative information including possible comparisons on by-catches of various species in directed fisheries on stocks under NAFO management.
13. For the cod stock in Divisions 2J+3KL, the Scientific Council is requested to comment on the trends in biomass and state of the stock in the most recent Science Advisory Report from the Canadian Science Advisory Secretariat.
14. Taking note that recent point estimates for 3NO Witch flounder of the Canadian Autumn survey are 2-3 times higher than in 1994 when the moratorium was first implemented and are among the highest in the times series , and while more variable the recent point estimates of the Canadian Spring survey are about 50% higher than in 1994:
 - a) What are the relative strengths and weaknesses of all the indices of abundance of witch?
 - b) What are plausible reasons for different abundance trends in the spring and autumn surveys of the SAME STRATA, and what are the rationales to support either set of results over the other?
 - c) How might the confidence intervals around the point estimates over the time series affect the interpretations of stock trend and current status?
 - d) What evidence exists (if any) to indicate whether any changes in natural mortality have occurred since the early 1990's, e.g. condition of the fish?
 - e) Is it plausible there may be a different survey catchability for younger/smaller fish relative to older/larger fish (applicable to witch flounder), and how might this affect our interpretation of stock trends and status?
 - f) What might be reasonable options for reference point proxies, with associated rationale, including those based on one or a combination of survey indices?

15. As per the recommendation outlined in the report of the Working Group of Fishery Managers and Scientists on Vulnerable Marine Ecosystems adopted in September 2011, the Fisheries Commission requests the Scientific Council to produce a detailed list of VME indicator species and possibly other VME elements.
16. Given the progress made by Scientific Council on the development of the GIS model for the evaluation of bycatch thresholds for sponges as requested by Fisheries Commission in its 2010 Annual Meeting, and mindful of the need for further refining this modelling framework, as well as exploring its potential utility for its application to other VME-defining species, Fisheries Commission requests the Executive Secretary to provide to the Scientific Council anonymous VMS data in order to further develop the current sponge model as requested by the Fisheries Commission in 2010 and to assess the feasibility of developing similar models for other VME-defining species(e.g. corals).
17. Fisheries Commission requests the Scientific Council to make recommendations for encounter thresholds and move on rules for groups of VME indicators including sea pens, small gorgonian corals, large gorgonian corals, sponge grounds and any other VME indicator species that meet the FAO Guidelines for VME and SAI. Consider thresholds for 1) inside the fishing footprint and outside of the closed areas and 2) outside the fishing footprint in the NRA, and 3) for the exploratory fishing area of seamounts if applicable.
18. Noting Article 4bis - Assessment of bottom fishing of the NAFO Conservation and Enforcement measures. “ The Scientific Council, with the co-operation of Contracting Parties, shall identify, on the basis of best available scientific information, vulnerable marine ecosystems in the Regulatory Area and map sites where these vulnerable marine ecosystem are known to occur or likely to occur and provide such data and information to the Executive Secretary for circulation to all Contracting Parties”.

The Fisheries Commission requests the Scientific Council to produce a comprehensive map of the location of VME indicator species and elements in the NRA as defined in the FAO International Guidelines for the Management of Deep Sea Fisheries in the High Seas. This includes canyon heads and spawning grounds and any other VME not protected by the current closures to protect coral and sponge. This will be used by Contracting Parties to complete impact assessments

19. As stated in the “Reassessment of the Impact of NAFO Managed Fisheries on known or Likely Vulnerable Marine Ecosystems” (NAFO FC WP 11/24), the Scientific Council in collaboration with the Working Group of Fishery Managers and Scientists on Vulnerable Marine Ecosystem will conduct a reassessment of NAFO bottom fisheries by 2016 and every 5 years thereafter. In preparation for reassessments, the Fisheries Commission requests the Scientific Council to develop a workplan for completing the initial reassessment and identifying the resources and information to do so.

Annex1 – Additional guidance in regards to questions 1 and 2.

Mindful of the desire to move to a risk-based approach in the management of fish stocks, Fisheries Commission requests the Scientific Council to provide a range of management options as well as a risk analysis for each option as outlined in the provisions below, rather than a single TAC recommendation.

1. The Fisheries Commission request the Scientific Council to consider the following in assessing and projecting future stock levels for those stocks listed above. These evaluations should provide the information necessary for the Fisheries Commission to consider the balance between risks and yield levels, in determining its management of these stocks:
 - a) The preferred tool for the presentation of a synthetic view of the past dynamics of an exploited stock and its future development is a stock assessment model, whether age-based or age-aggregated.
 - b) For those stocks subject to analytical-type assessments, the status of the stocks should be reviewed and catch options evaluated in terms of their implications for fishable stock size in both the short and long term. As general reference points, the implications of fishing at $F_{0.1}$ and F_{2011} in 2013 and subsequent years should be evaluated. The present stock size and spawning stock size should be described in relation to those observed historically and those expected in the longer term under this range of options.
 - c) For those stocks subject to general production-type assessments, the time series of data should be updated, the status of the stock should be reviewed and catch options evaluated in the way described above to the extent possible. In this case, the level of fishing effort or fishing mortality (F) required to take two-thirds MSY catch in the long term should be calculated.
 - d) For those resources for which only general biological and/or catch data are available, few standard criteria exist on which to base advice. The stock status should be evaluated in the context of management requirements for long-term sustainability and the advice provided should be consistent with the precautionary approach.
 - e) Spawning stock biomass levels considered necessary for maintenance of sustained recruitment should be recommended for each stock, defined in relation to both long-term productivity regimes, and current productivity regimes to the extent these may differ. In those cases where present spawning stock size is a matter of scientific concern in relation to the continuing reproductive potential of the stock, options should be offered that specifically respond to such concerns.
 - f) Information should be provided on stock size, spawning stock sizes, recruitment prospects, fishing mortality, catch rates and catches implied by these management strategies for the short and the long term in the following format:
 - I. For stocks for which analytical-type assessments are possible, graphs should be provided of all of the following for the longest time-period possible:
 - historical yield and fishing mortality;
 - spawning stock biomass and recruitment levels;
 - catch options for the year 2013 and subsequent years over a range of fishing mortality rates (for as many years as the data allow)
 - (F) at least from $F_{0.1}$ to F_{max} ;
 - spawning stock biomass corresponding to each catch option;
 - yield-per-recruit and spawning stock per recruit values for a range of fishing mortalities.
 - II. For stocks for which advice is based on general production models, the relevant graph of production as a function of fishing mortality rate or fishing effort should be provided. Age aggregated assessments should also provide graphs of all of the following for the longest time period possible:
 - exploitable biomass (both absolute and relative to B_{MSY})
 - yield/biomass ratio as a proxy for fishing mortality (both absolute and relative to F_{MSY})
 - estimates of recruitment from surveys, if available.

III. Where analytical methods are not attempted, the following graphs should be presented, for one or several surveys, for the longest time-period possible:

- time trends of survey abundance estimates, over:
- an age or size range chosen to represent the spawning population
- an age or size-range chosen to represent the exploited population
- recruitment proxy or index for an age or size-range chosen to represent the recruiting population.
- fishing mortality proxy, such as the ratio of reported commercial catches to a measure of the exploited population.

For age-structured assessments, yield-per-recruit graphs and associated estimates of yield-per-recruit based reference points should be provided. In particular, the three reference points, actual F , $F_{0.1}$ and F_{max} should be shown.

2. Noting the Precautionary Approach Framework as endorsed by Fisheries Commission, the Fisheries Commission requests that the Scientific Council provide the following information for the Annual Meeting of the Fisheries Commission for all stocks under its responsibility requiring advice:
 - a) the limit and precautionary reference points as described in Annex II of the UN Fisheries Agreement indicating areas of uncertainty (for those stocks for which precautionary reference points cannot be determined directly, proxies should be provided);
 - b) the stock biomass and fishing mortality trajectory over time overlaid on a plot of the PA Framework (for those stocks where biomass and/or fishing mortality cannot be determined directly, proxies should be used);
 - c) information regarding the current Zone the stock is within as well as proposals regarding possible harvest strategies which would move the resource to (or maintain it in) the Safe Zone, including medium term considerations and associated risk or probabilities which will assist the Commission in developing the management strategies described in paragraphs 4 and 5 of Annex II in the Agreement.

3. The following elements should be taken into account by the Scientific Council when considering the Precautionary Approach Framework:
 - a) References to “risk” and to “risk analyses” should refer to estimated probabilities of stock population parameters falling outside biological reference points.
 - b) Where reference points are proposed by the Scientific Council as indicators of biological risk, they should be accompanied by a description of the nature of the risk associated with crossing the reference point such as recruitment overfishing, impaired recruitment, etc.
 - c) When a buffer reference point is identified in the absence of a risk evaluation in order to maintain a low probability that a stock, measured to be at the buffer reference point, may actually be at or beyond the limit reference point, the Scientific Council should explain the assumptions made about the uncertainty with which the stock is measured.
 - d) Wherever possible, short and medium term consequences should be identified for various exploitation rates (including no fishing) in terms of yield, stability in yield from year to year, and the risk or probability of maintaining the stock within, or moving it to, the Safe Zone. Whenever possible, this information should be cast in terms of risk assessments relating fishing mortality rates to the trends in biomass (or spawning biomass), the risks of stock collapse and recruitment overfishing, as well as the risks of growth overfishing, and the consequences in terms of both short and long term yields.
 - e) When providing risk estimates, it is very important that the time horizon be clearly spelled out. By way of consequence, risks should be expressed in timeframes of 5, 10 and 15 years (or more), or in terms of other appropriate year ranges depending on stock specific dynamics. Furthermore, in order to provide the Fisheries Commission with the information necessary to consider the balance between risks and yield levels, each harvesting strategy or risk scenario should include, for the selected year ranges, the risks and yields associated with various harvesting options in relation to B_{lim} .