



D6 Tier system and harvest control rule adjustments

June 2025 Council Meeting

Action Memo

Council Staff: Dr. Diana Stram
Action Required: 1. Hold harvest control rule workshop (SSC only)
2. Approve workplan for next steps

BACKGROUND

SSC Workshop

The SSC is hosting a public workshop to discuss and solicit input on adjustments to current Groundfish and Crab fishery management plan (FMP) harvest specification Tier-levels and resulting harvest control rules (HCRs) for determination of the overfishing level (OFL) and acceptable biological catch (ABC). Per the Council's [request](#), the goal of this workshop is to develop a scope of work and Terms of Reference for a workgroup (or several coordinated teams) to prepare a discussion paper of proposed HCR adjustments for consideration and recommendations by the Plan Teams/SSC/AP/Council.

This workshop is structured around a series of presentations (see [Overview of workshop](#)) to solicit dialogue on the adequacy of the current HCRs and the potential for improvement either within the current FMP structure (for the ABC) or by amending the FMPs to modify either OFL or ABC HCRs. For context, an overview of the current groundfish and crab HCRs and the SSC and Council's flexibility to make adjustments with and without amending the FMP is attached to the eAgenda. Several workshop discussion questions have been developed by staff and the SSC, as shown below. These questions are not intended to limit the discussion, but to propose broad topics that may be considered in conjunction with the workshop discussion of future plans.

In light of recent national discussions on diminishing NMFS staff resources to support assessment efforts, the SSC may also wish to discuss how best to prioritize any recommended workplan in conjunction with the scope of proposed work. Specifically, if there is a recommendation for modified HCRs (with or without an FMP amendment) or other aspects of estimation of stock productivity, consideration could be given to specific stocks that should be addressed sooner and others that may be of lower priority.

Workshop Discussion questions:

- What are the objectives we are trying to achieve by modifications to Tier systems or HCRs?
 - Consideration of major vs minor tweaks
 - What kind of analyses are needed to inform decisions?
- What is F_{MSY} in a changing climate?
- Consideration of climate-informed biomass targets
 - what is the precedent for B_{50} in other regions?
 - Should target biomass levels differ by groups of stocks (e.g., flatfish vs gadids?)
- Productivity paradox and moving away from spawner per recruit (SPR) ratio? (for example, the EBS Pollock is now Tier 3 status)
- Pros and cons of considering groundfish and crab HCRs simultaneously versus separately

Next steps

This workshop is part of the Council's [Climate Workplan](#). Following the workshop, staff will provide the Council with an update on progress towards this and other aspects of the workplan, timeline, and plans for the future to continue to develop actions to implement the workplan in conjunction with on-going efforts by NMFS under the Changing Ecosystems and Fisheries Initiative (CEFI).