

**Sustainable Fisheries Committee Report
April 3, 2017
David Walker – Chair**

The agenda and the minutes of the October 5, 2015 Committee meeting were approved as written.

Effectiveness of Techniques to Reduce Barotrauma Effects

Dr. Greg Stunz gave a presentation on the results of research into the effectiveness of various types of devices to reduce barotrauma and improve survival of released red snapper. Based on both laboratory studies, using compression chamber and field studies, both rapid descent and venting tools (when used properly) resulted in high survival in depths down to 40 to 50 meters. However, non-vented and non-descended fish showed poor survival when caught at 60 meters, and all fish showed poor survival (over 80% mortality) when caught at depths greater than 80 meters. Although venting tools can be effective, they are often improperly used. In addition, the fish may face predators during its descent, and may face stress due to differences in water temperature at the surface vs. at depth, particularly in the summer. For these reasons, Dr. Stunz recommended the use of rapid descent tools over venting tools. Following Dr. Stunz's presentation, the Committee passed the following motion.

By a voice vote with one opposed, the Committee recommends and I so move, to instruct staff to develop an action to require either descending devices or venting tools on board vessels possessing reef fish in federal waters to reduce discard mortality.

Options Paper on ABC Control Rule Revisions

Mr. Atran reviewed a preliminary options paper on possible revisions to the ABC control rule to improve accounting for uncertainty in setting ABC. These revisions included several approaches to determining P* (probability of overfishing) or Q* (a qualitative adjustment to setting ABC). Additional possible revisions included alternatives regarding construction of probability density functions (PDFs). Options for add-ons to the ABC control rule were also discussed, including carry-over of unharvested quota, phase-in of changes to ABC, and consideration of socioeconomic factors when setting ABC. Mr. Ryan Rindone provided additional details about the actions to allow carry-over of unharvested quota. The SSC was to have reviewed the options at last week's SSC meeting, but ran out of time. They will review the options paper at their next meeting in May.

Madam chair, this concludes my report.