

How Can Managers Use Precautionary Management Advice?

Andrew A. Rosenberg¹

NMFS, Northeast Regional Office, 1 Blackburn Dr., Gloucester, MA 01930.

E-mail address: Andy.Rosenberg@noaa.gov.

There has been an extraordinary amount of activity over the last five years concerning the development of a precautionary approach to fishery management. The language and sentiment of the precautionary approach is contained in the new U.N. Straddling Stocks agreement, the FAO Code of Conduct for Responsible Fisheries, and the U.S. Sustainable Fisheries Act. On the scientific side, there are a number of technical consultations, conferences and papers developing the structure for giving precautionary management advice. This is a natural extension of the body of work concerning incorporating uncertainty and risk assessment into fishery management advice that has developed over the past decade or so.

The challenge is, as always, turning the advice into management measures which provide real benefits from healthier resources, environments and industries. In order to implement a precautionary approach it will be necessary to focus attention on at least four areas: pre-agreed management measures, default actions that will take place if agreement can't be reached, a mechanism for incorporating new information, and the ability to make rapid adjustments both up and down, in a precautionary manner. In this talk I will use examples from the New England groundfish fishery, scallop fishery, lobster fishery and summer flounder fishery to illustrate my points. None of these fisheries currently use precautionary management, but each contains some elements which may be important to moving in that direction.

¹ Current address: Deputy AA for Fisheries, 1315 East-West Hwy, Silver Spring, MD 20910.