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# ANNUAL CATCH LIMITS AND ACCOUNTABILITY MEASURES

Regional Fishery Management Council Training  
October 2024

# Learning Objectives

1. Describe the ACL and AM requirements
2. Describe the main steps in setting ACLs
3. Demonstrate skills in a test fishery



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# Road Map

- ✓ Guidelines and Requirements
- ✓ Reference Points
- ✓ Performance Standards
- ✓ Exercise



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# Why do We Have ACLs?

## National Standard 1

- Prevent Overfishing
- Achieve Optimum Yield



## MSA Requirement

- Annual Catch Limits (ACL)
- Accountability Measures (AM)



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# Stocks with ACLs

**MSA:** ACLs for “each of its managed fisheries”  
(304(h)(6))

**National Standard Guidelines:** Stocks in need of  
conservation and management (50 CFR 600.305(c))



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# Exceptions to ACLs

- Species with annual life cycles, unless subject to overfishing
- Stocks managed under an international agreement to which the U.S. is party



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# Let's Review, 1!

True or False:

A small commercial fishery with  
no other component or sector  
does not require an ACL



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# Measures To Ensure Accountability

## Management Controls

- Prevent ACLs from being exceeded
- Correct or mitigate any ACL overages

## Address & minimize

- Frequency/magnitude of overage

## Correct problems that caused overage

- In as short a time as possible



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# Types of Accountability Measures

## Inseason

- Monitoring
- Management measures
- Use when possible

## Post-Season

- Operational issues
- Biological consequences



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# Let's Review, 2!

True or False:

Accountability measures must deduct ACL overages the following year



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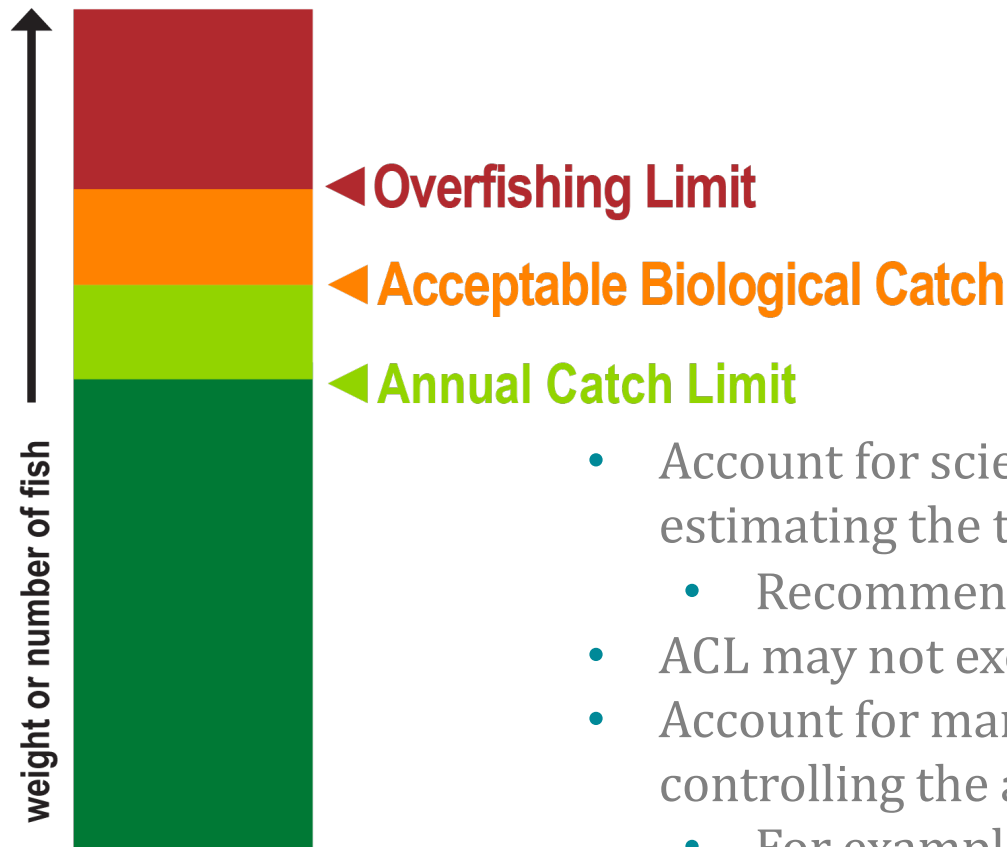
# National Standard 1 Guidelines – ACL Framework

“Conservation and management measures shall prevent overfishing while achieving, on a continuing basis, the optimum yield from each fishery for the United States fishing industry.”



# Know Your Reference Points

## OFL, ABC, ACL, and ACT

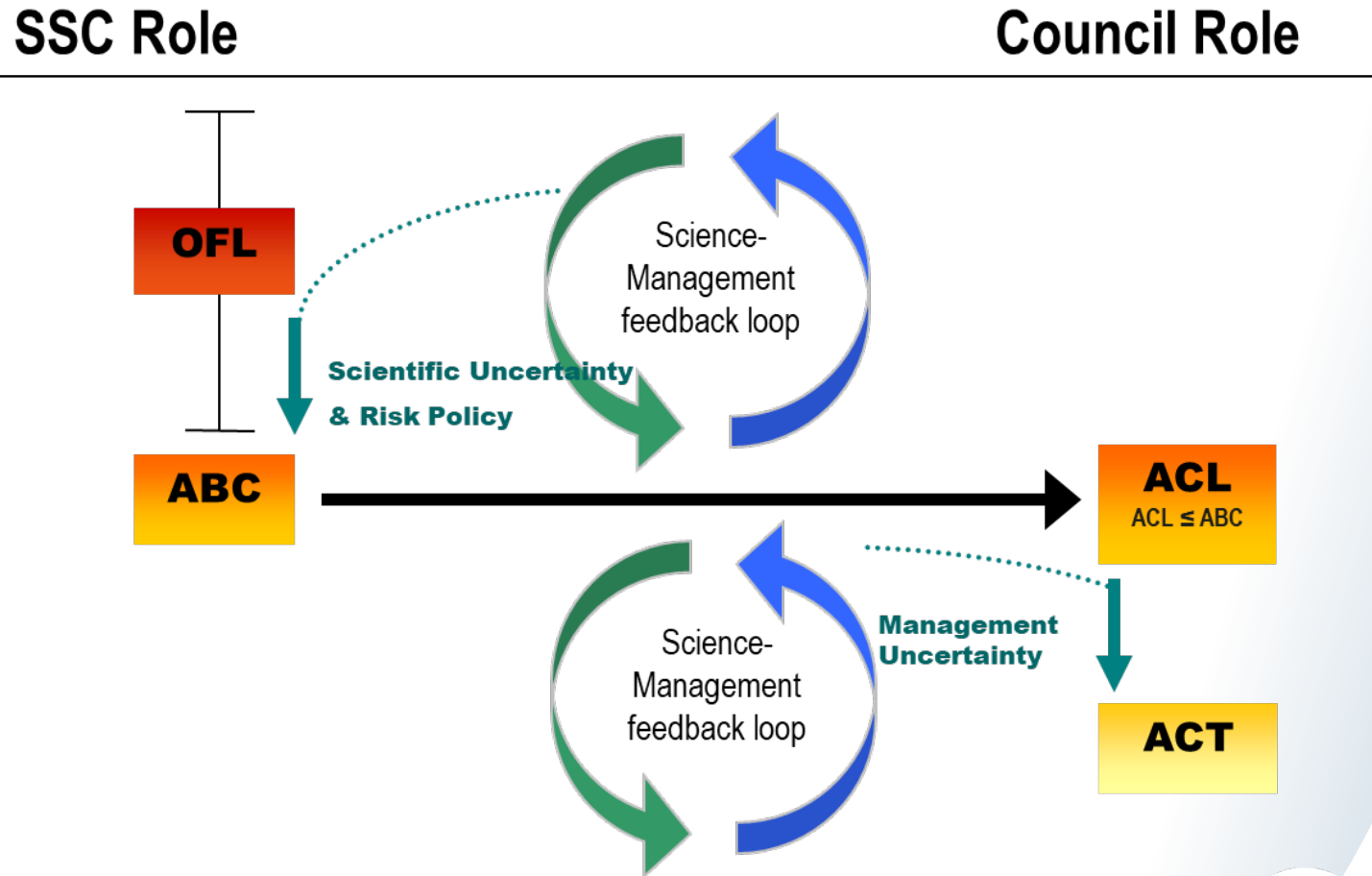


- Account for scientific uncertainty in estimating the true OFL
  - Recommend:  $OFL > ABC$
- ACL may not exceed the ABC
- Account for management uncertainty in controlling the actual catch to the target.
  - For example:  $ACL > ACT$



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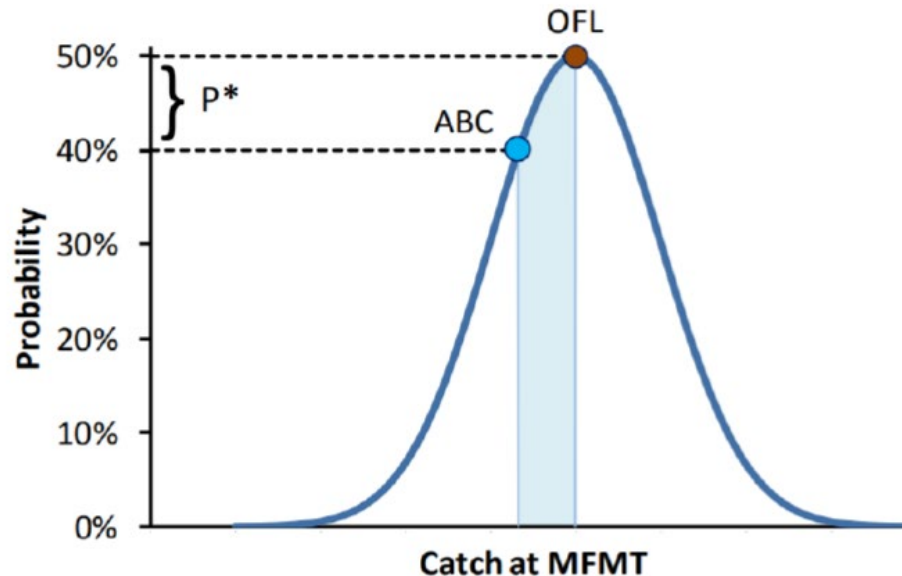
# Roles in Setting ACLs





# Addressing Scientific Uncertainty

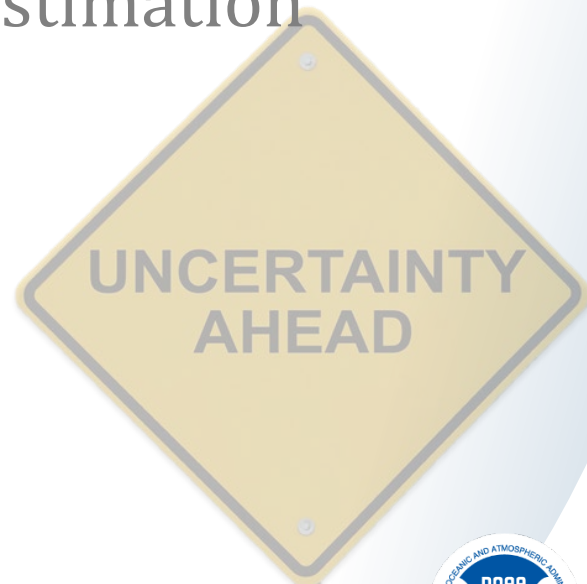
- ABC Control Rule
  - Accounts for scientific uncertainty in the OFL
  - Council's risk policy



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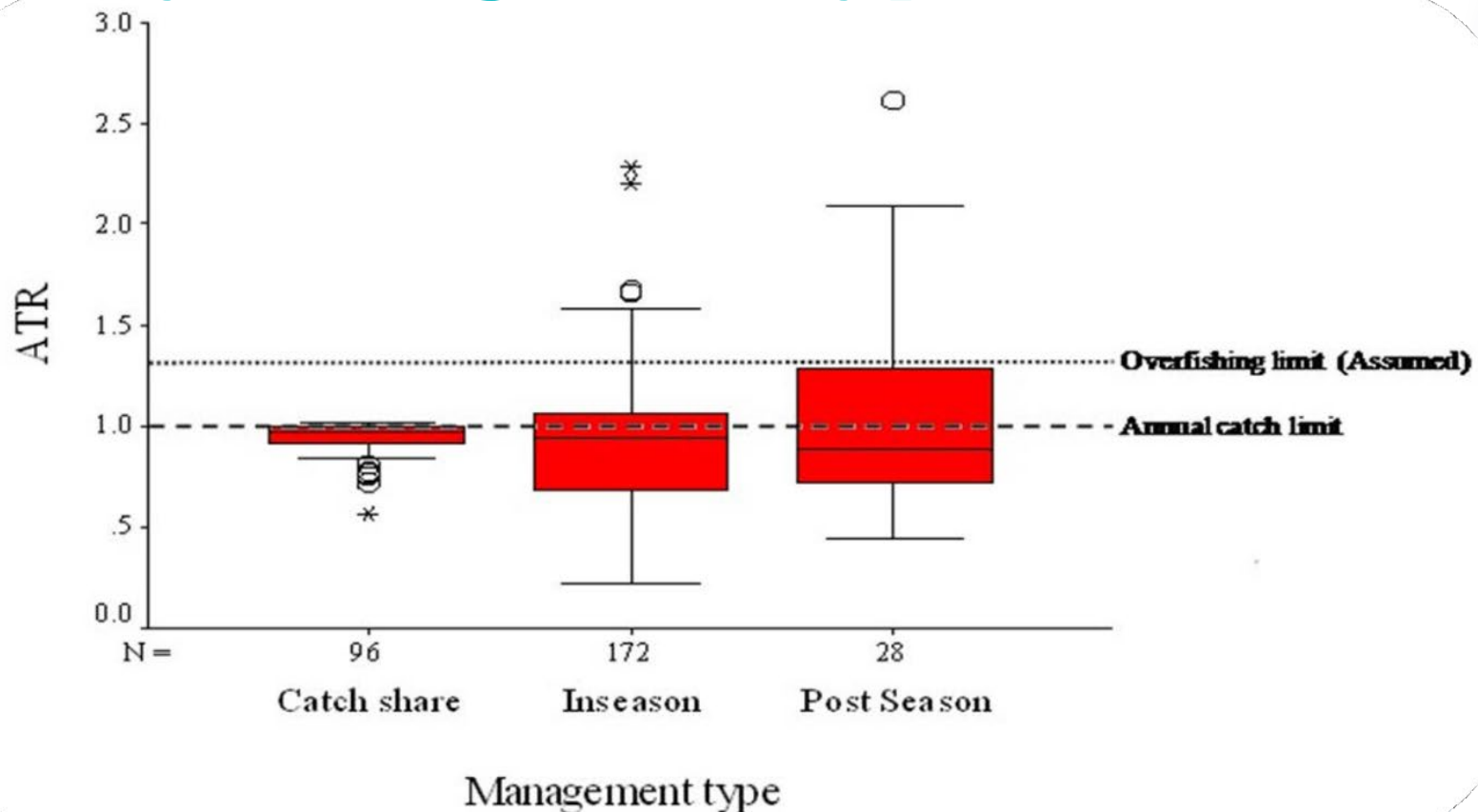
# Addressing Management Uncertainty

- The ability of managers to constrain catch so that the ACL is not exceeded and
- The uncertainty in quantifying the true catch amounts (i.e., estimation errors)



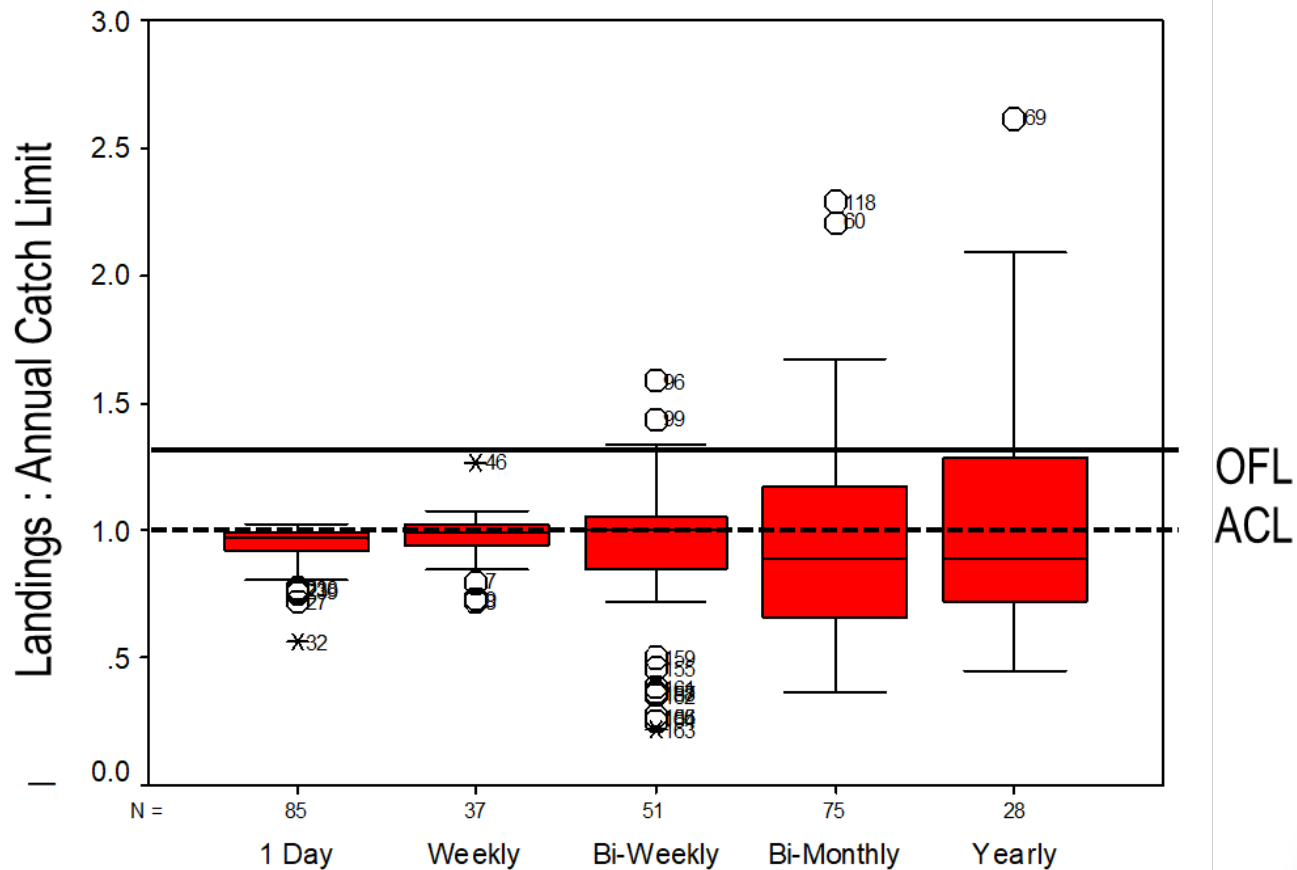
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# Management Uncertainty - By management type



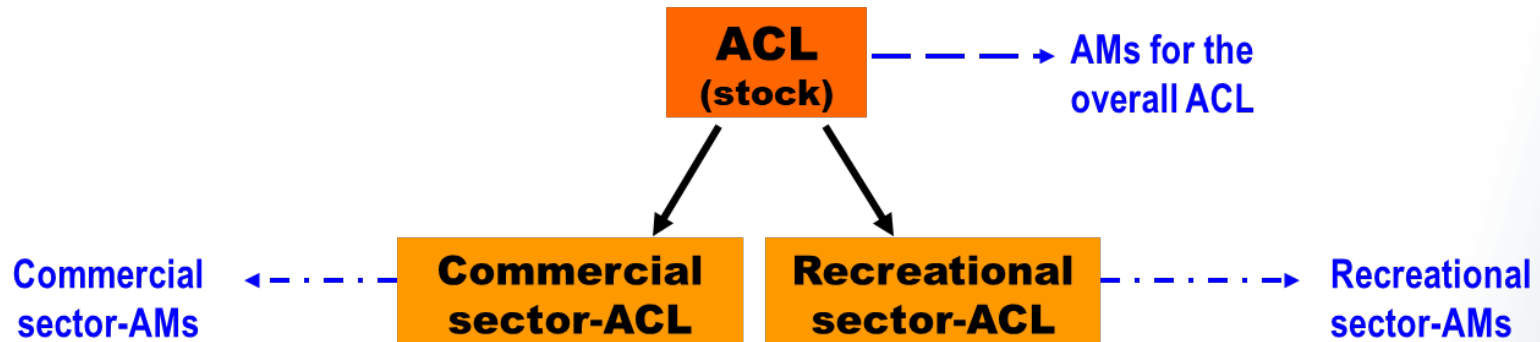
Source: W.S. Patrick et al. / Factors affecting management uncertainty in U.S. fisheries and methodological solutions. Ocean & Coastal Management 71 (2013) 64-72.

# Management Uncertainty - By reporting frequency



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# ACLs and Sectors



- Sub-divide a stock's ACL into “sector-ACLs”
  - Optional
  - Sum must not exceed overall ACL
  - AMs for overall ACL
  - Sector-AMs for each sector-ACL
    - Fair and equitable



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# Overfishing

## - What happens if a stock is found to be subject to overfishing?

### Overfishing

- Ensure ABC is set appropriately.
  - Reevaluate ACLs and AMs.
- NMFS notifies Councils when a stock is subject to overfishing.
  - NS1 Guidelines advise that the Council should:
    - Work with its SSC to ensure that the ABC is set appropriately.
    - Evaluate the cause of overfishing and reevaluate ACLs and AMs to ensure they are adequate.



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# Performance Standards

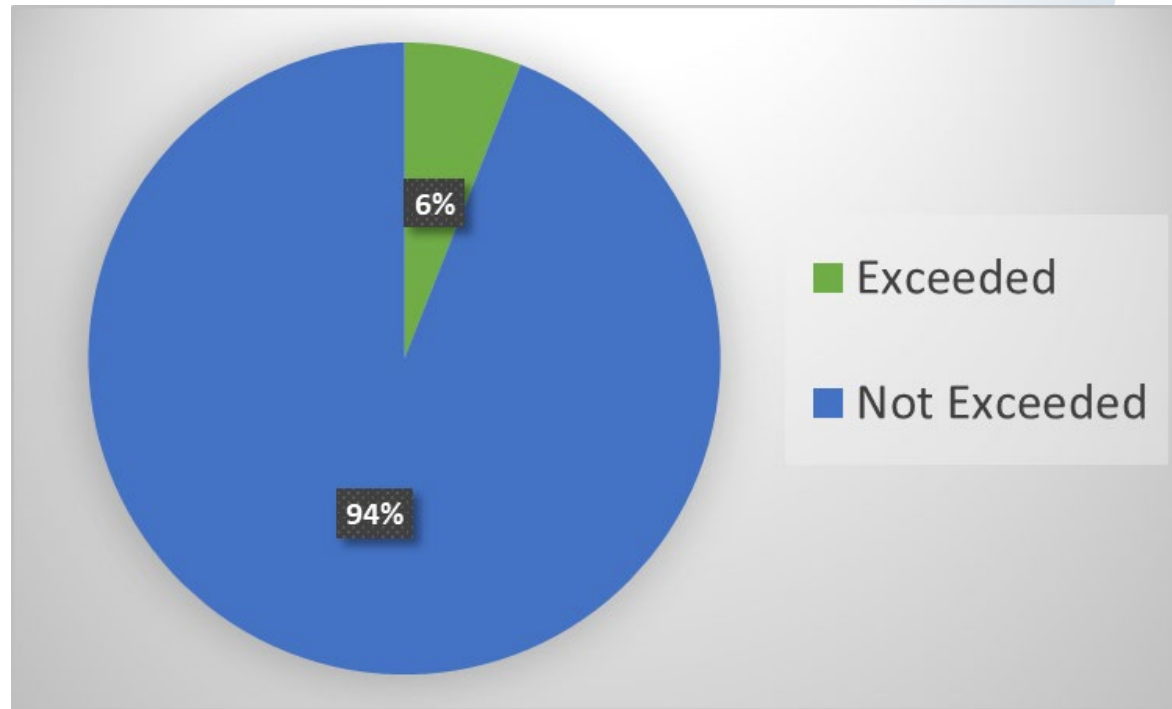
- Uncertainty = chance of overfishing
- To prevent overfishing:
  - Re-evaluate and modify
    - ACLs and AM systems
    - If ACL is exceeded more than once in 4 years
  - Use a higher performance standard
    - If stock is particularly vulnerable to effects of overfishing



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# Tracking Performance

- % ACLs not exceeded
- Ongoing reporting to NOAA
- National



As of June 30, 2024



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# Let's Review, 3!

Q: Which of these is NOT a source of management uncertainty?

- a. Management program type
- ☒ b. Estimated discard mortality
- c. Reporting frequency



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# Let's Review, 4!

True or False:

Where scientific uncertainty exists, ACLs may be set at the same level as the OFL



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# Let's Review, 5!

True or False:

Performance standards are intended to keep overfishing from becoming a chronic condition.



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# Objectives Review 1

## Describe ACL & AM requirements

- MSA Requires:
  - ACLs
    - To end and prevent overfishing;
    - In all managed fisheries;
    - Unless exempted – 2 exceptions
  - Councils may not exceed SSC's ABC recommendations
  - AMs
    - Prevent ACL overages and address any overages



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# Objectives Review 2

## Describe Main Steps in Setting ACLs

- ABC Control Rules
  - Account for scientific uncertainty
  - Incorporate Council's risk policy
- Clearly account for uncertainty
  - Scientific and management
- Performance Standard
  - Re-evaluate ACL/AM setting to improve performance and effectiveness

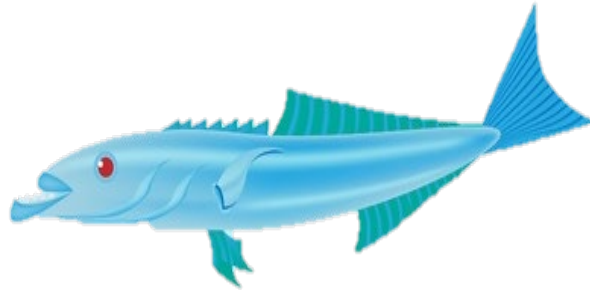
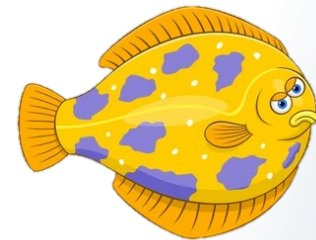


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# Objectives Review 3

## Demonstrate skills in a test fishery

- Prepare to use this information in your test fishery
- Exercise A: Meyer Sole
- Exercise B: Whitebelly Lemonfish



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