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CLARIFICATION ON MSC PA SCORES FOR THE MEXICAN GROUPER FISHERY (CAMPECHE BANK, YUCATAN, MEXICO)

An MSC Pre-Assessment (MSC PA) of the Mexican grouper longline fishery that takes place in Campeche Bank in the state of Yucatan in Mexico was hired in March 2014 by Sea Delight Ocean Fund, with financial support from the Resources Legacy Fund's Sustainable Fisheries Fund. Intertek Fisheries Certification conducted the MSC PA using the MSC Certification Requirements (MSC CR) version 1.3 that were in force at the time. The MSC PA final report was received in June 2014, before the MSC CR version 2.0 were released to the public on 1st October 2014 and became effective on 1st April 2015 (see MSC CR v.2.0, page 6).

The MSC CR v2.0 brings the change of assessing non-target species depending on whether they are under management (primary) or not (secondary), instead of on whether they are retained or discarded. Therefore, old Performance Indicators related to components 2.1 (retained non-target species) and 2.2 (bycatch species) had to be re-assessed in order to have scores that reflect the situation of the fishery against the current requirements.

The Mexican grouper fishery in Yucatan is a multi-specific fishery where 21 species of groupers from 5 distinct genus and other related species are fished (see MSC PA PDF page 10, paragraph 1; MSC PA PDF page 16, paragraph 5; and CONAPESCA document PDF page 47, section 7.3.2)¹. On the other hand, the management system for the grouper fishery includes not only groupers but also "associated species" such as species from the Lutjanidae and Serranidae families (see CONAPESCA document PDF page 17, section 4.1; and pages 54 onwards). Therefore, it is highly likely that all species considered as "retained" by Intertek are primary; and that some species considered as "bycatch" are primary as well.

It should be noted that the MSC PA did not offer a list of these species and, in addition, with the information available at present, it is not possible to assess whether any of the non-target primary and secondary species would be considered "main" as defined by the MSC (species representing 5% or more of the total catch of the fishery, or vulnerable species representing 2% or more of the total catch), or "minor" (less than the aforementioned thresholds).

¹ All named documents are available to viewers in the Documents Section of FisheryProgress.com.

Given all of the above, the decision was made to use a precautionary approach when transitioning scores from v1.3 to v2.0: The scores of similar PIs in the Retained and Bycatch components in the original MSC PA were compared, and the most precautionary score was taken as valid for both the Primary and Secondary PIs. In this way, scores are never over-estimated.

This gives as a result the scores provided in the Indicators Section of the Mexican grouper FIP profile available online at FisheryProgress.com, as follows:

- PI 2.1.3 **YELLOW** instead of green
- PI 2.2.1 **RED** instead of green
- PI 2.2.2 **RED** instead of green.

In regards to PI 2.5.3, Intertek Fisheries Certification made a mistake when coloring the summary table (see MSC PA PDF page 28): It is shown as red in the summary table, but in Appendix 1 where the scoring rationale is provided, a GREEN/pass score was provided (see MSC PA PDF page 52). However, even if a red score is not applicable (see IFC's rationale at MSC PA PDF page 52), a green score would not be consonant with the current state of affairs either, given that scoring guideposts "(d) information relevance" and "(e) monitoring" of the MSC standard might not be achieved (see MSC CR v.2.0 page 157). This observation is supported by the scores and rationale provided by the CB when scoring Information PIs 2.1.3, 2.2.3 and 2.3.3. Given that it is evident that improvements are still needed for this PI, CeDePesca has assigned a score in the range of YELLOW for PI 2.5.3 ("pass with condition"). That is:

- PI 2.5.3 **YELLOW** instead of green.

All of the above was fully taken into account by CeDePesca when setting the 2015-2016 FIP Action Plan. In the case of the MSC FIP Benchmarking Tool (MSC BMT) that is available at CeDePesca's public report for this FIP, advances to the scoring were still provided using MSC CR v1.3 to allow for direct comparisons. The MSC BMT is updated annually, in October, and the next issue -to be published in October 2016- will be completed using scores transitioned to version 2.0 of the MSC Certification Requirements as described in this document.

References:

CONAPESCA. 2016. Ordenamiento pesquero de mero y especies asociadas de la Península de Yucatán - Borrador. 188 pp.

Intertek Fisheries Certification. 2014. Pre-Assessment Report for the Campeche Grouper Fishery - Final. 62 pp.

MSC. 2014. MSC Fisheries Certification Requirements and Guidance - version 2.0. 540 pp.