Dear Editors,

My colleague and I submit the paper “Are we there yet? The impact of reduced data on the ability to monitor rebuilding for overfished stocks” for publication consideration as an **Original Article** in *Fisheries Bulletin*. We, as the authors, take full responsibility for the content of this paper. This work is not being considered for publication in any other journal. There are no other manuscripts contemplated or in press that we are aware of that contain related or similar information.

The performance of estimation methods to correctly estimate stock size and status depend on data quantity and quality. The loss of data due to harvest restrictions resulting from rebuilding efforts present challenges for the ability to monitor rebuilding progress. The work evaluated the ability to monitor rebuilding when data were rebuked. Retaining data collection at historical levels allowed for improved parameter estimation, which resulted in reduced variability in estimated stock size with larger average catch during rebuilding. In contrast, when data were reduced during rebuilding, the estimates of relative stock size become more variable between assessments, resulting in stocks being declared rebuilt when the true population biomass was still below target. Declaring a stock prematurely rebuilt can have powerful implications for management. Catches are set based upon perceived stock size. An assessment that produces an overly optimistic view of stock size will set catches greater than the true population can support, resulting in overfishing which may result in further reductions in stock size, potentially leading a rebuilt stock being subsequently declared overfished by a future assessment. Continued data collection during rebuilding improved the ability to estimate key parameters, monitor rebuilding progress, and correctly identify when a stock has rebuilt to target biomass. Historical data are not sufficient to achieve these key objectives in the absence of data during stock rebuilding.

Thank you for your consideration of our work.

Best Regards,

Chantel R Wetzel

Fishery Resource Analysis and Monitoring Division

Northwest Fisheries Science Center

NOAA Fisheries

2725 Montlake Blvd. East   
Seattle, WA 98112-2097

Office: (206) 302-1753

chantel.wetzel@noaa.gov