Attachment B
CARE REPORT TO TSC

Annual Report of the Activities of the Committee of Age-Reading Experts (CARE)

To:	Technical Subcommittee of the Canada-United States Groundfish Committee
From:	Committee of Age Reading Experts (CARE), Calvin L. Blood, International Pacific Halibut Commission, Chairperson
Subject:	Interim Report of CARE activities between June 1996 and May 1997.

The following otolith exchanges have taken place during the time period state above:

Alaska Department of Fish and Game and International Pacific Halibut Commission

The Alaska Department of Fish and Game (ADF&G), Sport Fish Division annually collects otoliths as well as length, sex, and other fishery data from the sport halibut fishery in International Pacific Halibut Commission (IPHC) Regulatory Area 3A (southcentral Alaska). Each year ADF&G and the IPHC exchange otoliths to maintain consistency in age determination between commercial and sport data sets. In 1996 a sample of 118 otoliths, including whole and break-and-burn, were read by a single reader from each agency. The two agencies were in perfect agreement on 67% of the otoliths, and 97% were within +/- 2 years. The agencies are satisfied that assigned ages are consistent and will continue to work together to maintain consistency in methods and results.

Contacts: Scott Meyer, Homer, ADF&G; Cal Blood, IPHC

Oregon Department of Fish and Wildlife and Alaska Fisheries Science Center

In 1996 and 1997 the Cooperative Ageing Project (CAP) unit of the Oregon Department of Fish and Wildlife and age readers from the Alaska Fisheries Science Center (AFSC) in Seattle, Washington met several times to begin training and exchanging test samples on sablefish. The AFSC ageing unit is experienced in sablefish ageing. The comparisons of age-reading results have improved with time and are consistent with the difficulty of reading sablefish otoliths.

Contacts: Bob Mikus, Newport, ODFW; Delsa Anderl, Seattle, NMFS, AFSC

California Department of Fish and Game (CDF&G) and Oregon Department of Fish and Wildlife (ODFW)

In 1996 a Dover sole workshop took place in Eureka, California. Seven age-readers attended, three from CDF&G and four from ODFW. Three age-readers from ODFW are relatively new readers with approximately six months age-reading experience each. Two small samples were aged (12 otoliths from California waters and 10 from Oregon waters). Due to the presence of the three new readers, no one area of difficulty was concentrated on. Dover sole are difficult to read and the chances of reaching 100% agreement in a large group in a short time was virtually impossible. Only discrepancies of 4 years or greater were resolved. A senior age-reader from CDF&G served as the reference point for the group and two conclusions were noted; 1) overall agreement increases and the Covariance and percent Bias move closer to zero in almost all cases, and 2) the rest of the

group tend to age younger than the senior reader as a whole. In general, participants felt they had very good agreement considering the varying skill levels of the group and the difficulty of the species.

Contacts: Bob Mikus, Newport, ODFW; Larry Quirollo, Eureka, CDF&G

California Department of Fish and Game (CDF&G) and Oregon Department of Fish and Wildlife (ODFW), and Washington Department of Fish and Wildlife

In late April of 1997 a Pelagic Fish Ageing Workshop was held at NOAA, NMFS, AFSC in Seattle, Washington. Age determination of Pacific mackerel was the primary focus with CDF&G, ODFW, and WDFW participating in a project funded by the Pacific States Marine Fisheries Commission (PSMFC) to determine the age composition of coastal pelagics in waters of the Pacific northwest, as there is potential for expansion of the Pacific mackerel and Pacific sardine fisheries into these waters in the future. Additonal interest in Pacific mackerel has been triggered by the suspicion that adults are consuming salmon smelts.

Sampling of Pacific mackerel from the commercial Pacific whiting fishery began in Oregon in 1995 and Washington in 1996. Approximately 900 otoliths from these waters have collected to date, and have been read by personnel from ODFW and CDFG. The workshop aimed at addressing discrepancies in age assignments and training of personnel not experienced with age determination of coast pelagics. Time was also spent examining ageing techniques (i.e. fin ray counts, otoliths cross-sections).

Preliminary results indicate the age composition of Pacific mackerel to be significantly older in Oregon and Washington waters than fish landed in the southern California commercial fishery.

Contacts: Bob Mikus, Newport, ODFW; Marci Yaremko, La Jolla, CDF&G

Recommendations from CARE to TSC:

1. In light of the recommendation from the TSC to CARE encouraging the incorporation of precision testing in standard agency protocol, how are these precision results being utilized by agency biometricians/stock assessment personnel? What is considered acceptable error by agency biometricians?

2. TSC needs to proceed with final arrangements for publication and distribution of the Ageing Manual. New revisions will be completed and we would like commitment on this or indication that we need to explore other avenues. We have multiple requests for this document.

3. CARE is exploring the idea of having a Web Page. Will any agency step forward to host and maintain such a page after initial construction? Maintenance may also include an on-line ageing manual and question/answer forum.

Chairperson for next cycle: Cal Blood (International Pacific Halibut Commission)

Vice-Chairperson for next cycle: Kristin Monk (Alaska Department of Fish and Game)

Rapporteur for next cycle: Bob Mikus (Oregon Department of Fish and Wildlife)