

North Pacific Fishery Management Council
December 2007
C-3(a) – GOA Pacific Cod Sector Split

The Council directed staff to continue the analytical process for an amendment to allocate the Western and Central Gulf of Alaska Pacific cod TACs among the various sectors. The Council modified the components and options for analysis:

Purpose and Need Statement

The limited access derby-style management of the Western Gulf and Central Gulf Pacific cod fisheries has led to competition among the various gear types (trawl, hook-and-line, pot, and jig) and operation types (catcher processor and catcher vessel) for shares of the total allowable catch (TAC). Competition for the GOA Pacific cod resource has increased for a variety of reasons, including increased market value of cod products, rationalization of other fisheries in the BSAI and GOA, increased participation by fishermen displaced from other fisheries, a reduced federal TAC due to the state waters cod fishery, and Steller sea lion mitigation measures including the A/B seasonal split of the GOA Pacific cod TAC. Competition among sectors in the fishery may contribute to higher rates of bycatch, discards, and out-of-season incidental catch of Pacific cod.

Participants in the fisheries who have made long-term investments and are dependent on the fisheries face uncertainty as a result of the competition for catch shares among sectors. Allocation of the catch among sectors may reduce this uncertainty and contribute to stability across the sectors. Dividing the TAC among sectors may also facilitate development of management measures and fishing practices to address Steller sea lion mitigation measures, bycatch reduction, and prohibited species catch (PSC) mortality issues.

Component 1

The Western and Central Gulf of Alaska Pacific cod TACs will be allocated among the various gear and operation types, as defined in Component 2.

Component 2: Sector definitions

The Western and Central GOA Pacific cod TACs will be allocated among the following sectors:

- Trawl catcher processors
 - Option: Trawl catcher processors <125 ft
 - Trawl catcher processors \geq 125 ft
- Trawl catcher vessels
- Hook-and-line catcher processors
 - Option: Hook-and-line catcher processors <125 ft
 - Hook-and-line catcher processors \geq 125 ft
- Hook-and-line catcher vessels
 - Option: Hook-and-line catcher vessels <60 ft
 - Hook-and-line catcher vessels \geq 60 ft
- Pot catcher processors
- Pot catcher vessels
 - Option: Pot catcher vessels <60 ft
 - Pot catcher vessels \geq 60 ft
- Jig vessels

Additional option: Combined allocation to the pot and hook-and-line catcher vessel sectors.

Component 3: Definition of qualifying catch

Option 1 All retained legal catch of Pacific cod in the federal and parallel waters fisheries in the Western and Central Gulf of Alaska.

Option 2 All retained legal catch of Pacific cod harvested during the directed Pacific cod fisheries in the federal and parallel waters in the Western and Central Gulf.

Catch will be calculated using Fish Tickets for catcher vessels and Catch Accounting/Blend data for catcher processors.

Under all options, allocations to the trawl sectors will deduct incidental catch allocated to the trawl sector for the Central Gulf Rockfish program.

Further, all sector allocations will be managed to support incidental and directed catch needs.

Component 4: Years included for purposes of determining catch history

Option 1 Qualifying years 1995-2005: average of best 5 years

Option 2 Qualifying years 1995-2005: average of best 7 years

Option 3 Qualifying years 2000-2006: average of best 3 years

Option 4 Qualifying years 2000-2006: average of best 5 years

Component 5: Allocation of Pacific cod to jig sector

Options include setting aside 1%, 3%, 5%, or 7% of the Western and Central GOA Pacific cod TACs for the jig vessel sector, with a staircase provision to increase the jig sector allocation by 1%, 2%, or 3% if 90% of the federal jig allocation in an area is harvested in any given year.

Subsequent to the jig allocation increasing, if the harvest threshold criterion described above is not met during three consecutive years, the jig allocation will be stepped down by 1% in the following year, but shall not drop below the level initially allocated.

The jig allocation could be set aside from the A season TAC, the B season TAC, or divided between the A and B season TACs.

The Council requests that staff work with the State of Alaska and NOAA General Counsel to explore possible options for the jig fishery management structure (both federal and State) that creates a workable fishery that will minimize the amount of stranded quota in the state managed fishery.

Possible solutions that could be explored are as follows:

1. Separate State and federal allocations- manage accounting by seasonal structure.
2. State managed jig Pacific cod fishery- federal management authority goes to the state of Alaska to manage a state gear specific fishery.

Component 6: Management of unharvested sector allocations

Any portion of a CV, CP, or Jig allocation determined by NMFS to remain unharvested during the remainder of the fishing year will become available as soon as practicable to either:

Option 1 Other respective CV or CP sectors first, and then to all sectors as necessary to harvest available TAC, or

Option 2 All sectors

Component 7: Apportionment of hook-and-line halibut PSC (other than DSR) between catcher processors and catcher vessels

Option 1 No change in current apportionments of GOA halibut PSC

Option 2 Apportion the GOA hook-and-line halibut PSC to the CP and CV sectors in proportion to the total WGOA and CGOA Pacific cod allocations to each sector. No later than November 1, any remaining halibut PSC not projected by NMFS to be used by one of the hook-and-line sectors during the remainder of the year would be made available to the other sector.

Option 3 Other apportionment (select amount for each sector). No later than November 1, any remaining halibut PSC not projected by NMFS to be used by one of the hook-and-line sectors during the remainder of the year would be made available to the other sector.

Suboption (can be applied to Options 1, 2, or 3): Change seasonal apportionment by sector.

Other Issues for Analysis

The Council requested that staff include a discussion of cumulative economic and socioeconomic effects of the proposed action, including an analysis of vessel ownership, skipper residency, potential impacts on crew and processors, economic dependency of participants on GOA Pacific cod in comparison to other fisheries, and potential changes in the distribution of landings. Analysis will include a discussion of the likelihood of voluntary harvest cooperative formation within each sector, and the expected effects of cooperative fishing under sector allocations.

The Council also requested that staff discuss interactions between sector allocations and GOA Pacific cod sideboards. The analysis will also include a comparison of the options for defining sectors and qualifying catch in the sector split action and the trawl and fixed gear recency actions and a discussion of the implications of these differences on sector allocations.

The Council requested that staff provide a summary of discarded incidental Pacific cod harvests by year. Finally, the Council requested a description of the State-managed Pacific cod fisheries and a discussion of the overlap in participation in the federal and State-managed GOA Pacific cod fisheries.