

C-3 BSAI Crab ACLs/snow crab rebuilding

The Council adopts the purpose and need statement as amended and the following preferred alternatives for final action, as specified below. Revisions to language in the October 2010 analysis are underlined (additions) and in strikethrough (deletions).

Action 1: Establish Annual Catch Limits (ACLs) for 10 Crab stocks

On January 16, 2009, NMFS issued final guidelines for National Standard 1 of the Magnuson-Stevens Fishery Conservation and Management Act (MSA). They provide guidance on how to comply with new annual catch limit (ACL) and accountability measure (AM) requirements for ending overfishing of fisheries managed by federal fishery management plans. Annual catch limits are amounts of fish allowed to be caught in a year. A legal review of the BSAI King and Tanner Crab FMP found there were inadequacies in the FMP texts that need to be addressed. Several work groups (e.g., ABC/ACT Control Rules, Vulnerability Evaluations) have been created to produce reports on how to carry out the more technical components of the NS 1 guidelines. Statutory deadlines require compliance with the MSA by the start of the 2011 fisheries ~~although these reports have not been finalized.~~

This action is necessary to facilitate compliance with requirements of the MSA to end and prevent overfishing, rebuild overfished stocks and achieve optimum yield. This action also recognizes and maintains the unique joint state-federal cooperative management structure of the BSAI King and Tanner FMP.

Alternative 2- Establish ABC control rule using constant buffer approach

Option 2: ABC = 90% of OFL (10% buffer) for all Tier 5 stocks.

Alternative 3- Establish ABC control rule using variable buffer (P*) approach

Option 1: P* = ~~0.5~~0.49 for all Tier 1, 2, 3, and 4 stocks.

Under Alternative 3 buffers between the OFL and ABC for individual stocks will be based on a P* of 0.49 and the within-model scientific uncertainty in the OFL point estimate (σ_w) for each stock. Additional buffering to account for outside-of-model scientific uncertainty in the OFL point estimate will be accomplished by the State of Alaska as a Category 2 measure, which provides for federal oversight under the FMP, during the annual TAC/GHL specification process.

Factors that influence estimates of scientific uncertainty are currently considered by the State in TAC setting and are time-sensitive. It will not be possible for the CPT and SSC to make recommendations that incorporate all scientific uncertainty based on the best and most timely information available, as is recognized in defining the State's role under the FMP.

The Council encourages the CPT and SSC to identify factors influencing scientific uncertainty that could be incorporated in the ABC control rule, and which are best reserved for State consideration on an annual basis in TAC setting. Less time-sensitive factors could be reviewed during the normal crab assessment cycle (i.e., May CPT and June SSC).

In adopting this preferred alternative the Council requests the CPT and SSC continue work to improve understanding of scientific uncertainty in the estimation of crab OFLs and to ensure that crab stock assessment models and OFLs are risk-neutral. The Council requests that crab assessment and management staff work to evaluate all sources of uncertainty in assessments, develop methods to accurately quantify uncertainty, and to provide for SSC review.

Accountability Measures

The annual TAC for each crab stock will be established by the State of Alaska at a level sufficiently below the ACL so that the sum of State considerations of scientific and management uncertainty in the OFL estimate; the estimated discard mortality in directed crab, groundfish, and scallop fisheries as well as the directed crab fishery removals; and management uncertainty in bycatch estimates does not exceed the ACL. Anytime an ACL is exceeded the overage will be accounted for through a downward adjustment to the TAC for that species during the fishing season following the overage.

Options for modifying the NPFMC review process

Option 1: SSC recommends ABC levels annually at October Council meeting (delayed TAC-setting).

Optimum Yield specification: FMP will be amended to read "OY range 0 to < OFL catch".

Action 2: Rebuilding plan for EBS snow crab stock

Alternative 1: No Action

Option for defining 'rebuilt' as one-year above B_{MSY}