

**Council Motion – C2 Skate Egg Concentration HAPCs  
June 9, 2012**

The Council approves the Skate Egg Concentration HAPC EA/RIR/IRFA for release as a Public Review Draft analysis with the changes and edits as outlined by the SSC.

The Council adopts Alternative 2, Options a, d, and e as its preliminary preferred alternative.

**Alternative 2: Identify skate egg concentration HAPC(s):**

The Council may select to identify – individually, severally, or all six of the areas of skate egg concentration as HAPC. At each of the six areas of skate egg concentration, the spatial extent of research bottom trawls containing more than 1,000 egg cases per kilometer squared (km<sup>2</sup>) have been established. Boundary lines are then snapped outward to the nearest minute of latitude or longitude. The intent of Alternative 2 is to identify these areas as HAPCs.

Under Alternative 2, the six proposed areas of skate egg concentration will be identified as HAPC:

Site name	Predominant skate species	Depth of max. egg density (m)	Maximum egg density (eggs/km <sup>2</sup> )	Area of HAPC nm <sup>2</sup>	Boundaries of HAPC (°N latitude or °W longitude)			
					North	South	West	East
1. Bering 1	Alaska	145	800,406	18.4	54°53'	54°49'	165°46'	165°38'
2. Bering 2	Aleutian	380	62,992	17.5	54°38'	54°33'	165°45'	165°34'
3. Bristol	Bering	156	6,188	13.7	55°21'	55°17'	167°40'	167°34'
4. Pribilof	Alaska	205	16,473	1.2	56°11'	56°10'	168°28'	168°26'
5. Zhemchug	Alaska	217	610,064	3.2	56°57'	56°54'	173°23'	173°21'
6. Pervenets	Alaska, Bering, Aleutian	316	334,163	27.7	59°28'	59°22'	177°43'	177°34'

**Option a:** NMFS would monitor HAPCs for changes in egg density and other potential effects of fishing, and the Council would request that industry support collection of data in evaluation of monitoring and management efforts relative to those HAPCs.

**Option d:** Suggest adding research and monitoring of areas of skate egg concentration to the Council's research priority list.

**Option e:** Adopt formatting standards as stated in the final rule implementing Amendment 89 to the BSAI Groundfish FMP.

With the addition of Option a, the intent of this alternative is to monitor the impacts of fishing activities in the proposed HAPC sites, primarily at the population level, and if practicable, develop additional information on fishery interactions with egg concentrations.

The Council also adopted the following modified Statement and Purpose of Need:

*HAPC are geographic sites that fall within the distribution of Essential Fish Habitat for the Council's managed species. The Council has a formalized process, identified in its FMPs, for selecting HAPCs that begins with the Council identifying habitat priorities—here, areas of skate egg concentration. Candidate HAPCs must be responsive to the Council priority, must be rare (defined as uncommon habitat that occurs in discrete areas within only one or two Alaska regions), and must meet one of three other considerations: provide an important ecological function; be sensitive to human-induced degradation; or be stressed by development activities.*

*The candidate HAPC identify sites of egg concentration by skate species (Rajidae) in the eastern Bering Sea. Skates are elasmobranch fish that are long-lived, slow to mature, and produce few young. Skates deposit egg cases in soft substrates on the sea floor in small, distinct sites. A reproducing skate deposits only several egg cases during each reproductive season. Depending on the species, a single egg case can hold from one to four individual skate embryos, and development can take up to three years. Thus, a single egg case site will hold several year classes and species, and eggs growing at different rates.*

*Distinct skate egg deposition sites have been highlighted by skate stock experts while assessing skate information from research survey and catch locations. The scientists noted repeated findings of distinct sites where egg cases recruit to sampling or fishing gear contacting the sea floor: egg case prongs (or horns) entangle in or cases recruits into the gear. These sites are discrete areas near the shelf/slope break that serve as important spawning and embryonic development areas for skate species. It is therefore important to consider: 1) designating these areas as HAPCs; 2) to consider restricting activities which impact the habitat at these sites; and 3) to monitor the continued utility of these sites for skate spawning and embryonic development, and further study for the relationship between the habitat features of these sites and site selection for skate egg deposition.*