

**ACTION PLAN TO REVISE MANAGEMENT OF GRENADIERS IN THE GROUND FISH FMPs FOR
THE BERING SEA/ALEUTIAN ISLANDS AND GULF OF ALASKA
REVISED May 4, 2012**

PROPOSED ACTION The Council initiated action in June 2008 to move grenadiers from the non-specified category to the target category based on recommendations from its Groundfish Plan Teams, Scientific and Statistical Committee, and Non-Target Species Committee. In April 2010 the Council requested that this proposed action be included in a discussion paper, along with other trailing amendments, following final action to approve Annual Catch Limit (ACL) amendments to the Bering Sea/Aleutian Islands (BSAI) and Gulf of Alaska (GOA) groundfish fishery management plans (FMPs) http://www.alaskafisheries.noaa.gov/npfmc/current_issues/ACL/ACL_motion410_discpaper.pdf. A trailing amendment to consider revising management of BSAI and GOA octopuses was prioritized for action in 2011. The joint groundfish plan teams concurred with the lead grenadier assessment author to consider moving GOA grenadiers in the fishery and BSAI grenadiers into the ecosystem component category. The Council may choose to schedule action for grenadiers in 2011.

Grenadiers (or rattails) are deep-sea fishes that are especially abundant on the continental slope, although some species are found at abyssal depths. At least seven species of grenadier are known to occur in Alaskan waters, but only three are commonly found at depths shallow enough to be encountered in commercial fishing operations or in trawl surveys. Giant grenadiers are the most abundant of seven species of grenadiers known to occur in Alaska. It has the shallowest depth distribution on the continental slope. Very little is known about the life history of giant grenadier. The habitat and ecological relationships of giant grenadier are likewise little known and uncertain.

PROBLEM STATEMENT/OBJECTIVE Grenadiers are not included in the groundfish FMPs for either the BSAI or GOA. There are no limits on their catch or retention, no reporting requirements, and no official record of their catch.

Prior to the ACL amendments, grenadiers were considered a non-specified species, which were a “residual category of species and species groups of no current or foreseeable economic value or ecological importance, which are taken in the groundfish fishery as accidental bycatch and are in no apparent danger of depletion” and for which “virtually no data exists (that) would allow population assessments.” Previously the FMPs also defined the “other species” assemblages as including species of “only slight economic value and are generally not targeted upon, but which are either significant components of the ecosystem or have economic potential.” Based on these definitions, Groundfish Plan Teams recommended that grenadiers should be moved into the groundfish FMPs and managed either “in the fishery” or in the ecosystem component category. Because of their abundance on the slope, giant grenadiers are of great ecological importance in this habitat, and they also hold economic potential. In addition, considerable information on giant grenadier exists that can be used for stock assessment (Tier 5 status). In 2010 the joint teams reiterated its previous recommendations that the Council prioritize this for action in 2011. The SSC also has recommended that the Council consider revising management of grenadiers.

ANALYSIS An EA is required to amend the groundfish FMPs to add grenadiers as a target category or to move them to a new ecosystem component category.

RANGE OF ALTERNATIVES

- Alternative 1. (The No Action Alternative) Grenadiers would not be included in the BSAI and GOA Groundfish FMPs.
- Alternative 2. Manage grenadiers in the fishery in the BSAI and GOA Groundfish FMPs.
- Alternative 3. Manage grenadiers in the ecosystem category in the BSAI and GOA Groundfish FMPs.

APPLICABLE LAWS NEPA, MSA

STAFF RESOURCES

NPFMC	Jane DiCosimo
NOAA AKR	Melanie Brown, Tom Pearson, Josh Keaton
NOAA AFSC	Dave Clausen
NOAA Habitat	No habitat implications
NOAA PR	No protected resource implications
NOAA GCAK	Maura Sullivan
HQ	Galen Tromble

TIMELINE TO IMPLEMENTATION

August 2006	<i>interagency staff meeting to draft the action plan for this analysis</i>
October 2006	<i>Council, AP, and SSC reviews action plan and analytical outline</i>
November 2006	<i>AFSC prepares stock assessments for the groups</i>
	<i>- Plan Teams recommend 2007-2008 group OFLs and ABCs for analysis</i>
Dec 2006	<i>SSC recommends 2007-2008 groups OFLs and ABCs for analysis</i>
March 2007	<i>- SF In-Season Management staff prepares discussion paper on:</i>
	<i>1) temporal/spatial fishery interactions between groups and directed groundfish fisheries; and</i>
	<i>2) effects of proposed group ACLs on groups and directed fisheries</i>
	<i>- Non-Target Species Committee, Council, AP, and SSC reviews paper</i>
June 2007	<i>interagency staff meeting to revise the action plan for this analysis</i>
Sept 2007	<i>Groundfish Plan Teams review AKR staff discussion paper on fishery interactions</i>
October 2007	<i>SSC and AP reviews revised action plan and discussion paper</i>
February 2008	<i>Council reviews action plan and discussion papers and identifies preliminary priorities</i>
April 2008	<i>Non-Target Species Committee recommends priorities for action</i>
June 2008	<i>Council reviews committee recommendations and approves draft action plan</i>
June 2009	<i>Interagency action plan meeting</i>
August 2009	<i>AFSC vulnerability analysis released</i>
Nov 2010	<i>Plan Teams review revised joint grenadier stock assessment for use in EA</i>
September 2011	<i>Plan Teams reconfirm interest in proposed action; NMFS AKRO offers to prepare discussion paper on potential management measures if grenadiers are moved to Ecosystem Component Category</i>
June 2012	<i>Council review of NMFS discussion paper</i>
September 2012	<i>Non-Target Species Committee (T)/Plan Team review of paper</i>
?	<i>Council, AP, and SSC reviews initial review draft</i>
?	<i>Council and AP reviews public review draft and selects preferred alternative</i>
?	<i>Submission for NMFS review</i>
September 201?	<i>Plan Teams recommend proposed OFLs and ABCs (T)</i>
October 201?	<i>Council adopts proposed harvest specifications (T)</i>
November 201?	<i>Plan Team recommends final OFLs and ABCs (T)</i>
December 201?	<i>Council adopts final harvest specifications (T)</i>
?	<i>Approval by the Secretary; implementation of FMP amendments</i>

MAJOR ISSUES

- Consideration of best management to protect grenadier stocks
- Economic consequences of potential closures of target fisheries with incidental grenadiers catches
- Temporal/spatial patterns of how fleets shift effort between directed fisheries to avoid incidental catch
- Geographic hotspots where high levels of incidental catches occur
- Would increase workload on NMFS/ Difficulty in managing small TACs and area suballocations