

## **Gulf of Alaska Other Species problem statement:**

In May of 2004, a final rule was published that removed skates from the other species complex in the Gulf of Alaska. This rule established ABCs and TACs, based on survey biomass, for Big, Longnose and other skates and thus provided a measure of protection against possible overfishing of skates in the Gulf of Alaska. Those species remaining in the other species complex include sharks, sculpins, and octopi. None of these species are currently the object of a target fishery, although the complex is open for directed fishing. While no ABC or OFL is set for this complex, TAC is defined as 5% of the combined TACs of all other groundfish species in the GOA.

While recognizing that no members of the complex are targeted, the non-target species committee also noted that the removal of skates from the complex resulted in the potential for increased harvest of the remaining other species. This is because the harvest of skates no longer accrues to the other species category. In addition, when a member is removed, the sum of all the single species TACs increases, resulting in an increase of the other species TAC when the 5% default TAC is applied. Ideally, the TAC for the other species complex would be lowered when a member such as skates is removed. Unfortunately, biomass estimates for most of the species in this group cannot be determined reliably by trawl surveys, and the remaining species still exist in a group with TAC determined by the TACs of other groundfish species in the Gulf of Alaska. Lacking any means of determining a survey-based TAC for this group leads to the conclusion that when members are removed, the Council should consider reducing the percentage basis for the other species TAC to something less than 5% of the combined member