

**DRAFT ACTION PLAN TO REVISE MANAGEMENT OF SQUID IN THE GROUND FISH FMPs FOR
THE BERING SEA/ALEUTIAN ISLANDS AND GULF OF ALASKA
June 17, 2009**

PROPOSED ACTION The Council initiated action in April 2005 to eliminate the “other species” category and set annual catch limits (ACLs) for skates¹, squids², octopods, sharks, and sculpins (and grenadiers), based on recommendations from its Groundfish Plan Teams, Scientific and Statistical Committee, and Non-Target Species Committee. The Council separated this comprehensive analysis into analyses for each group in February 2008. In June 2008 the Council identified a proposed action to revise management of squids as its second priority in managing other species. Actions for the other groups are scheduled in 2009 and 2010. Housekeeping amendments³ to revise federal fishery regulations will be prepared separately.

PROBLEM STATEMENT/OBJECTIVE The groundfish fishery management plans (FMPs) require that an ACL be set for the “other species” assemblage. Management of the assemblage, however, may not offer sufficient protection from overfishing of the component groups because its ACL is set equal to the total of the estimated ACLs for all the groups. Therefore, each group (or species within a group) is vulnerable to overfishing because it is managed under an ACL that is set above the level deemed appropriate for that group (or species). Current management of squids in the GOA also no longer complies with national ACL policy for assemblages.

The proposed action is intended to enhance their protection based on 1) the lack of a reliable estimate of biomass (thus its Tier 5 status), 2) unusual life history; and 3) parity with the BSAI Groundfish FMP. Squids are highly productive, short-lived animals. They display rapid growth, patchy distribution and highly variable recruitment. They may spend most of their life in a juvenile phase, maturing late in life, spawning once, and dying shortly thereafter.

ANALYSIS An EA is required to amend the groundfish FMPs to remove squids from the GOA other species assemblage or to move BSAI and GOA squids to a new ecosystem component category.

RANGE OF ALTERNATIVES

Alternative 1. (The No Action Alternative) Squids would continue to be managed as a target category in the BSAI Groundfish FMP and part of the “other species” assemblage in the GOA Groundfish FMP.

Alternative 2. Move squids from the “other species” assemblage to the “target species” category in the GOA Groundfish FMP.

⁴Alternative 3. Move BSAI and/or GOA squids to a new ecosystem category in the Groundfish FMPs.

APPLICABLE LAWS NEPA, MSA

¹ Skates are a separate ACL category in the GOA. An FMP amendment to set separate ACLs for BSAI skates is scheduled for final action in October 2009 and could be in effect by the 2011 fishing year.

² Squids are a separate ACL category in the BSAI.

³ In June 2009 the Council added an alternative to set ACLs for BSAI skates and take no action on the other species maximum retainable allowances (MRA) in the BSAI skate analysis and clarified that it would not revise the MRAs for the remaining groups in the other species assemblage

⁴ Alternative 3 is included pending the AFSC vulnerability analysis (to be released on August 1, 2009).

STAFF RESOURCES

NPFMC	Jane DiCosimo
NOAA AKR	Melanie Brown, Tom Pearson, Kristin Mabry, Josh Keaton
NOAA AFSC	Dr. Olav Ormseth
NOAA Habitat	No habitat implications
NOAA PR	Kaja Brix
NOAA GCAK	Clayton Jernigan
HQ	No national policy implications

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>
December 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>
September 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	Interagency action plan meeting and Council data request to AKRO
August 1, 2009	AFSC vulnerability analysis released
August 2009	Internal Review of draft EA
September 2009	Release of initial review draft EA Plan Team reviews draft analysis and provides recommendation
October 2009	Initial Review of draft EA
December 2009	Final Action/Selection of Preferred Alternative
January 2010	Submission for NMFS review
Early 2010	Approval by the Secretary; implementation of amendments
September 2010	Plan Team recommends proposed OFLs and ABCs for 2011/2012
October 2010	Council adopts proposed ACLs
November 2010	Plan Team recommends final OFLs and ABCs for 2011/2012
December 2010	Council adopts final ACLs for 2011/2012
January 1 2011	Groundfish fisheries open under 2010/2011 ACLs
February 2011	Final ACLs for 2011/2012 are implemented

MANAGEMENT ISSUES

- Protect GOA squid from overfishing and to meet ACL requirements
- Would allow ACLs to be set for squid species
- Protection of ecosystem components
- Difficulty in managing small TACs and area suballocations
- Complex temporal/spatial patterns of how fleets shift effort between directed fisheries
- Geographic hotspots where high levels of incidental catches occur
- Would increase workload on NMFS
- No enforcement or legal issues identified