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**North Pacific Fishery Management Council
Steller Sea Lion Mitigation Committee Meeting
January 6-8, 2008
Nexus Hotel and
Alaska Fisheries Science Center, Seattle**

Minutes

The Steller Sea Lion Mitigation Committee (SSLMC) convened in Seattle at the Nexus Hotel (January 6) and the Alaska Fisheries Science Center (January 7-8, 2008). Committee members present were: Larry Cotter (Chairman), Julie Bonney, John Gauvin, John Henderschedt, Dan Hennen, Frank Kelty, Kris Norosz (for Terry Leitzell), Steve MacLean, Stephanie Madsen, Max Malavansky Jr, and Beth Stewart. Also present were Bill Wilson (Council staff); Dr. Doug DeMaster (NMFS AFSC); Kaja Brix, Lisa Rotterman, Kristin Mabry, Steve Lewis, and Melanie Brown (NMFS AK Region staff); Earl Krygier, (ADF&G); Mel Morris (Chairman, Alaska Board of Fisheries); John Lepore (NOAA General Counsel AKR); several AFSC and NMML scientists; and several members of the public. Kaja Brix introduced a new staff member of NMFS Protected Resources Division, Dr. Lisa Rotterman, who is the new Steller sea lion coordinator for NMFS AK Region.

Bill Wilson reviewed the agenda (attached), the work schedule for the coming several days, and the handout materials provided to each committee member. The minutes of the SSLMC's October 16-18, 2007 meeting were reviewed and approved.

Mr. Cotter reviewed the main goals of this SSLMC meeting. The SSLMC must now work through proposals with a goal of developing a draft package of recommendations for the Council. The schedule calls for a preliminary package by the April 2008 Council meeting, and a final package by June 2008. Mr. Cotter noted that the Committee should develop an initial set of recommendations by March, at which time it can compare these recommendations with the final SSL Recovery Plan, due to be completed in March. Then in May the draft status quo Biological Opinion (BiOp) will be available, and the SSLMC will meet to review it and compare the BiOp with the Committee's recommendations and make changes as appropriate. The recommendations from the SSLMC's May meeting will go to the Council for approval at the Council's June meeting. Kaja Brix reported that NMFS PR intends to keep on schedule and have the final SSL Recovery Plan completed by early March 2008, and the draft status quo Biological Opinion by early May 2008.

Mr. Wilson and Ms. Brown presented the current EIS schedule, which reflects recent Council action in December 2007 that approves publishing the Notice of Intent (NOI) to prepare an EIS in December so that the scoping period is longer and covers the period of time at least 30 days after the final SSL Recovery Plan is released and during the April 2008 Council meeting. Mr. Wilson reviewed the NOI, and noted the desirability of having the SSLMC develop some recommended alternatives for analysis in the EIS. NEPA requires an analysis of several reasonable alternatives, in addition to status quo, and it would be helpful to NMFS if the SSLMC developed alternatives in addition to a preferred package of recommendations.

Ms. Madsen suggested that the current schedule will be difficult to maintain, since the Council is scheduled to complete a large number of tasks at a single meeting – the June 2008 meeting. The Committee discussed alternatives to the schedule, including perhaps a special Council meeting to provide more time to complete these tasks. Mr. Cotter suggested that the Committee press on and work toward completing a near-final package of recommendations for Council review in April 2008. By presenting a preliminary package of possible SSL protection measure changes in April, this would give the Council an additional meeting to become familiar with the SSL issues and an early view of what the SSLMC will likely eventually recommend in June. The general Committee discussion was in agreement with asking the Council to consider spending some time at their April meeting going through SSL issues, the final SSL Recovery Plan, and the SSLMC's preliminary recommendations for changes in SSL protection measures. This would help the Council prepare for another major review of SSL issues at its June meeting, when the Council will review the draft status quo BiOp, and select alternatives for the EIS analysis and select the Council's preliminary preferred alternative. By addressing SSL issues in April, the SSLMC felt that the Council would be more prepared to complete the tasks identified for their June meeting.

Mr. Wilson and Mr. Morris reviewed actions taken by the Alaska Board of Fisheries (BOF) at their November 2007 meeting. These actions relate to several proposals being considered by the SSLMC. The BOF approved a revised definition of the pollock trip limits for the GOA (proposal # 34), rescinded the 2007/2008 state water pollock fishery in the Aleutian Islands (proposal # 35), disapproved a proposal for a maximum vessel size limit for the Aleutian Islands state waters P. cod fishery (proposal # 36), and disapproved a proposed pot-only A season fishery on B season quota in the Aleutian Islands state waters P. cod fishery (proposal # 37). Mr. Wilson reported that NMFS recently advised the Council that a modified Aleutian Islands Kanaga Sound pollock fishery in state waters would not be considered *de minimus*, and further analysis is recommended through the SSLMC process. This proposal continues to be considered by the SSLMC and will be folded into the consultation process. Mr. Cotter reminded the Committee that all of these proposals remain on the SSLMC's list for further review, but during the course of this meeting their status will be clarified.

The SSLMC discussed the EIS scoping process, and some asked whether there will be community meetings to reach out to these areas to facilitate receiving comments from more rural parts of Alaska. Mr. Lepore noted that the NOI states that the scoping process will include all SSLMC meetings and Council meetings between now and April 21, 2008; no additional scoping meetings are envisioned at this time. The Agency envisions funneling public input through the SSLMC and Council meeting process, since these are forums for reviewing SSL data and fishery interactions information. All comments concerning the scope of issues to be addressed in the EIS and the identity of significant issues related to the proposed action must be submitted in writing to NMFS, as provided in the NOI, to be considered by NMFS. Minutes from the SSLMC and Council meetings concerning these issues will be provided to NMFS for review.

Ms. Madsen suggested that the more important element of the SSLMC's work will be consideration of the draft BiOp in May 2008. The draft status quo BiOp will be a key document that will inform the SSLMC's final proposal review process. She questioned whether there would be sufficient time to review the BiOp and develop recommendations for Council review by June if the BiOp is not available until May. The Committee discussion was sympathetic and generally in agreement with concerns over this tight schedule, but most acknowledged that the SSLMC must accept this schedule and do its best to mesh its work with the schedule. By bringing SSL issues to the Council in April as well as June could help inform the Council and facilitate its making a decision in June on EIS alternatives.

Resource DVD and Data Set Review

Mr. Lewis and Ms. Mabry led the SSLMC through the contents of the new resource DVD handed out at this meeting. This DVD contains all of the information on previous CDs or DVDs, and adds the data sets requested by the SSLMC at its October 2007 meeting. It also contains the goals and objectives statements submitted by proposers (those in hand as of January 4, 2008), some new publications, and the presentations given at SSLMC meetings since the last DVD was handed out.

Mr. Lewis and Ms. Mabry noted the disclaimer for the DVD: the data sets contained on the DVD are for SSLMC use only, are only partial data sets, do not contain confidential data which would be used by NMFS analysts in the EIS, and do not contain all data sets or information the analysts would use in the EIS. The DVD is to inform the Committee and its decision making process, and should not be used for other purposes. [Opening the DVD package constitutes acknowledgement of the disclaimer and agreement to the terms of the disclaimer.]

The SSLMC was advised that many of the data sets on the resource DVD require an understanding of the methods of data collection or reporting that underpin the numbers. Thus, there are caveats that must be considered when using these data sets, including, for example:

- Some data may be from multiple reporting methods (State statistical area, VMS data, observer data)
- There may be no data for some years when multiple years are aggregated or averaged
- Some data are confidential and thus are omitted
- Some fishing sectors may not have operated in all areas, years, fisheries
- Some data sets report target catch that may be multiple species
- Some data may be for overlapping geographic areas
- Some data for the GOA may be before, or after, the 2005 changes in SSL protection measures
- CPUE data may be weighted to facilitate comparisons across time or area

As an exercise for how to use the data sets on the new DVD, the Committee reviewed an example proposal, Proposal # 4. This exercise led to an overnight assignment for Committee members: to specify if any additional data sets are needed to evaluate any of the proposals. Mr. Cotter noted that the Committee needs to be clear on all proposals to be sure all data needed for final evaluations are in hand, either on the resource DVD or in data sets to be provided by staff. Then the process will proceed through evaluation of proposals, merging or modifying proposals, eliminating proposals that will likely not be viable under current understanding of SSL/fishery interactions, and through the final process of retaining proposals that optimize economic and fishery return yet minimize SSL and related environmental impacts. This process will include a tradeoff process and development of recommendations that, in the aggregate, have cumulative effects that the SSLMC believes will remain under the bar of jeopardy and/or adverse mod. Mr. Cotter noted that this proposal review, tradeoffs analysis, and development of recommendations will likely continue through two additional meetings: one in March and another in May 2008. Final recommendations, based on the above process, including comportsing the package of recommendations with the final SSL Recovery Plan and the draft status quo BiOp, will be submitted to the Council for their review at their June 2008 meeting.

Proposal Data Review

The Committee reviewed all proposals to finalize data needs and to identify data sets that need to be assembled. The following summarizes those discussions. Attached is an updated table of data needs for each proposal; this table will be more comprehensive than the list below as it contains not only this list but all previous data sets identified at previous SSLMC meetings.

Proposal 1 (combined with 29)

The proponents note that industry will provide a consensus request for the number of days to begin the BSAI pollock A season earlier than the current January 20 start date. Pollock roe maturation varies from year to year, so industry seeks flexibility in setting the A season opening date; ideally the start date could shift from year to year, within a specified window of time, and be determined within coops if allowed to do so. Proponents suggest opening the A season earlier could benefit SSLs by moving fishing further away from the SSL weaning season.

Data needs:

- Already have most of the data needed (Wilson 2005 paper)
- Industry will bring data on pollock roe if requested
- New pollock roe report on the DVD will be helpful – may not need more roe data
- Already have some bycatch data – need more on Chinook bycatch by week in A season
- Need data on when pollock vessels begin fishing sideboards in BSAI and GOA
- Need to address shoreside impacts
- Number of AFA C/Vs that participate in non-pollock fisheries in BSAI and GOA

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- Adak Fisheries to provide information on AI cod fishery to evaluate impacts of an earlier BSAI pollock fishery

Proposal 2 (combined with 27)

Proposal will change (framework) the A/B BSAI pollock TAC split so that if overall TAC is < 1.3 million mt the A/B split would be 45/55 % versus the current 40/60 %; the 40/60 split would be retained for BSAI TACs > 1.3 million mt. An additional feature of this proposal is that the 5 % shifted into the A season would be restricted to harvest outside SSL CH (e.g. the SCA). Proponents need to specify the regulatory “teeth” that would be imposed to effect an early closure of B season to reflect any early start to the A season.

Data needs:

- Similar to needs for Proposal #1
- Pollock harvest data for inside/outside the SCA in the A season
- Bycatch of salmon other than Chinook by week in the B season and A season (helpful for # 1 also)
- Number of vessels that fish species other than pollock that could fish into sideboards earlier (primarily the cod fishery and the yellowfin sole fishery in the BSAI)
- The Amendment 80 analysis
- Number of vessels that currently can fish GOA sideboards and the regulations that accompany the sideboard fisheries
- Chinook salmon bycatch rates in the A and B seasons for the last 10 years to look at annual variability
- Some suggested coastwide Chinook salmon production data would be helpful in evaluating annual bycatch data
- Consider any products from the Council’s Chinook salmon bycatch committee that is working on changes to bycatch regulations

Proposal # 3

This would start the C/P pot cod fishery in the BSAI 15 days earlier, providing additional safe fishing days. This proposal would likely have little effect on SSLs, other fisheries, etc.

Data needs:

- Have some of the data with the proposal submission
- Some data will be confidential given the small number of participants in this fishery
- Weekly landings for this sector and for other sectors
- If need confidential data, ask the proponents to waive confidentiality restrictions

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Proposal # 4

Proposal would shift some of the TAC in the BSAI H&L C/P cod fishery from the B season to the A season. Additional TAC would be fished only outside SSL CH.

Data needs:

- Have most of the data needed (provided by proposer in original submission)
- Updated seabird incidental take data

Proposal # 8 (new modifications)

This proposal has been modified from what was originally submitted. The proposal is to change the Atka mackerel fishery management in the Aleutian Islands to allow directed fishing for Atka mackerel between 10 and 20 nm of SSL sites in two discrete Bering Sea areas. The purpose is to increase the fishing grounds available to the 541/BS mackerel fishery. Proponent indicates this will result in more Atka mackerel fishing in areas where SSL numbers are increasing and less fishing in areas where SSL numbers are decreasing.

Data needs:

- Seguam and Akutan SSL sites trend data
- Atka mackerel harvest data in both areas
- Halibut bycatch data in this fishery for recent years
- Atka mackerel TACs by subareas
- Proponent would provide additional Sea State data on halibut bycatch for 2007

Proposal # 33

This proposal is a result of combining proposals 7 and 24. The proposal would change SSL regulations affecting the Atka mackerel fishery in AI sub-areas 542 and 543 to allow inter-cooperative agreements to control daily and weekly harvest rates at less than or equal 2001-2007 catch rates in lieu of HLA regulations. This proposal provides a new approach to managing harvest rates, but retains the 60/40 inside/outside CH limits, and may result in lowered catch rates than have occurred in recent years.

Data needs:

Proposer to provide suggested rate limits for analysis
Daily/weekly Atka mackerel catch data in AI
Number of LLPs that would qualify for this fishery as proposed
Final 2003 BiOp Supplement
Fritz and Lowe 1998
McDermott et al. 2005

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Proposal # 9

This proposal affects the > 60' C/V pot cod fishery in the BSAI, and changes the TAC split from 51/49 to 80/20 in the A/B seasons. Data needed to evaluate this proposal are in hand.

Proposal # 10

This proposal has been merged with Proposal # 17; so # 17 will be retained for further analysis, with separate subareas as options.

Proposal # 11

Change the seasonal allocation in the Area 610 GOA pollock A/B/C/D splits to 1/3, 1/3, 1/6, 1/6. This would change the current split among seasons that is based on biomass levels in regions determined by the Plan Team.

Data needs:

- SSL site data (trends, counts) in Area 610
- Pollock harvest data (rates) for C/V sector
- Pollock biomass distribution data for recent years
- Number of LLPs endorsed for western and central GOA C/V pollock
- AEB will provide TAC revenue data

Proposal # 12

Change the Jude Island haulout closure from 20 to 10 n mi to allow pollock fishing in Pavlof Bay and adjacent areas from 10-20 n mi; the area opened would be limited to only the Pavlof Bay area.

Data needs:

- Pollock harvest data pre-SSL closure in Pavlof area
- Detailed map of current, and proposed, fishing areas around the Jude Island SSL site
- SSL trends and counts for Jude Island

Proposal # 13

Change the Bogoslof cod < 60' longline and jig fishery exemption area cap to a larger cap amount. Split the cap allocation between jig and longline gear. Allocate 1 % of the cod TAC to this exemption area fishery. Option to provide an allocation to pot vessels. This fishery provides a safer area for small vessels fishing out of Unalaska.

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Data needs:

- Have most of data needed as provided with the proposal
- Sector data (jig and longline) for past years – some may be confidential – may need confidentiality waived by participants

Proposal # 14

Aggregate the GOA pollock seasonal TACs in A and B or the C and D seasons into two annual allocations when pollock biomass (TACs) are small.

Data needs:

- Martin Dorn modeling and analysis data for effects of aggregating A&B and C&D apportionments under various GOA pollock biomass assumptions
- Request Dr. Dorn to update model and analysis to include pollock growth and pollock size in fishery harvest

Proposal # 15

Allow pollock trawling to 3 n mi in the A/B season and to 10 n mi in the C/D season at Cape Ugat.

Data needed:

- SSL site data at Cape Ugat
- Harvests of pollock in Cape Ugat area – historic and recent (before 2000 and after 2003)

Proposal # 16

Open the GOA pollock C season later to avoid conflict in processing the end of the season pink salmon harvests and the beginning of the C season pollock harvests in Kodiak.

Data needed:

- Chinook salmon bycatch data August 25-September 1
- Harvests of pollock in the C season in GOA

Proposal # 17 (merged with # 10)

Change the cod TAC allocations in the central and western GOA for all gear types from 60/40 to as close as possible to 100/0. This proposal acknowledges that the Council is considering a GOA cod split, but this analysis and decision is well into the future.

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Data needs:

- Cod harvest data for Areas 630, 620, and 610, by gear type

Proposal # 18

Allow cod trawling to 10 n mi in the A season (January 20-June 1) around the Chernabura SSL rookery. Proponents of this proposal were absent.

Data needs:

- Map of area involved
- SSL data at Chernabura
- Pre 2000 and post 2003 cod trawl harvest data in Area
- Pot harvest data by zone around Chernabura
- Need proponents to present and debate proposal at March 2008 meeting

Proposal # 19

Change the Dalnoi Point trawl closure to 0-20 n mi with option to 10 n mi.

Data needs:

- Harvests (catch rates, weekly) by zone around Dalnoi for all species trawl fisheries (Atka mackerel, cod, pollock)
- Bycatch rates (all PSC) by zone around Dalnoi, by gear type, time of year, pre 2000 and post 2003
- SSL data for Dalnoi and other Pribilof Island sites to show recent years' trends

Proposal # 20

Relax the Spitz Island closure to allow jig and pot cod fishing to the beach in a parallel fishery. BOF would also have to approve. Options would be an opening in winter only or summer only.

Data needs:

- SSL data for Spitz
- Pot and jig cod fishery harvest data for area (obtain from proponents) to identify the highest possible effort that might result from this action (worst case)
- Map with details of this area
- Number of pot and jig vessels that have LLPs endorsed for this fishery
- Look at the changes made in 2005 and how many vessels participated in the newly-relaxed fishery at Kak Island for comparison
- If some data are confidential, ask proponents to waive confidentiality

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Proposal # 21

Change the current 0-20 n mi cod fixed gear (pot and jig only) closure at Sutwik SSL site to 0-3 n mi for < 60' vessels only. Option would be relaxing the closure in winter only or summer only. This proposal would also require BOF approval.

Data needs:

- SSL data for Sutwik
- General cod harvest data by sector in area
- Number of vessels that participate in the Chignik state waters cod fishery (obtain from ADF&G)

Proposal # 22

Change the pollock fishery SSL restrictions in the AI region to mirror the AI cod SSL restrictions. Option would be to change restrictions by subarea (541, 542, 543), to limit vessel effort and harvest effort in relaxed zones, or to consider only the Kanaga and Atka "boxes" as outlined in the proposal.

Data needs:

- Have most of data needed in the proposal package
- Proportion of areas open in CH in other areas around Alaska and the percent of pollock harvested inside and outside CH in these areas (to look at the parity issue)
- Where pollock fishing occurred pre 2000 in the AI and the percent of pollock harvested inside and outside what is now CH, but was not CH then, in the AI

Proposal # 23

Examine the options before the Council to split the BSAI cod TACs into AI and Bering Sea apportionments in the context of the SSLMC analyses and the accompanying consultation. The SSLMC discussed the efficacy of undertaking an analysis of a BSAI cod split. Since it is before the Council at its February 2008 meeting, the SSLMC agreed to wait until the Council decides how to proceed.

Proposal # 25

Allow C/V Atka mackerel fishing to 10 n mi at the Kasatochi SSL site in Area 541.

Data needs:

- It is likely there will only be confidential data available on the fishery in this area (some C/V cod fishery incidental harvest of Atka mackerel but discarded but recorded by observers)

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- Need waiver of confidentiality if this is an issue or cannot further evaluate this proposal

Proposal # 26

Establish A and B seasons for trawl C/V cod fishery in the BSAI instead of the current A/B/C seasons. Transfer TAC from the C season apportionment to the A season, resulting in a new A/B season apportionment of 89/11.

Data needs:

- CPUE and harvest and harvest rate data in the BSAI cod trawl C/V sector in the A, B, and C seasons
- Local depletion study report for cod at Cape Sarichef (Connors....)
- Amendment 85 analysis
- Halibut bycatch rates in the C and the A seasons

Proposal # 28

Extend the BSAI pollock B season to December 1 (from the current November 1). Proponents indicate this is a low priority proposal. SSLMC will retain this proposal, but may give it low priority. No additional data needs.

Proposal # 30 (BOF # 6)

Open a State waters or a State parallel pelagic trawl pollock fishery between 149 and 150 degrees in the GOA outside 3 n mi of Rugged, Chiswell, and Seal SSL sites.

Data needs:

- NMFS PR analysis of this proposal from 2 years ago
- Harvest data from old ADF&G Commissioner's permit fishery in this area

Proposal # 31 (BOF # 182)

Change the allocation of the Federal TAC from 25 % to 50 % in the western GOA state waters cod fishery. Currently about 60 % of the cod in the wGOA are harvested from state waters.

Data needs:

- Look at this proposal in context with the overall SSLMC proposal review in terms of impacts on SSLs. Report back to the BOF later.

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Proposal # 32 (BOF # 185)

Limit the wGOA cod trawl fishery in state parallel waters to < 60' vessels year round.

Data needs:

- Harvest rate data in this area by vessel size
- Look at this proposal in context with the overall SSLMC proposal review in terms of impacts on SSLs. Report back to the BOF.

Proposal # 34 (BOF # 395)

GOA pollock trip limits. Approved by the Council and approved by the BOF. Remove from further SSLMC consideration.

Proposal # 35 (BOF # 396)

Rescind the 2007/2008 AI pollock fishery in state waters. The BOF closed this fishery. The SSLMC recommends sending a letter to the BOF asking their intentions for further consideration of this proposal by the SSLMC.

Proposal # 36 (BOF # 397)

Limit cod fishing in AI state waters for all gear to vessels < 60'. The BOF disapproved of this proposal. The SSLMC recommends sending a letter to the BOF asking their intentions for further consideration of this proposal by the SSLMC.

Proposal # 37 (BOF # 398)

Authorize a pot only cod fishery later in the A season that fishes on the B season TAC. The BOF disapproved this proposal. The SSLMC recommends sending a letter to the BOF asking their intentions for further consideration of this proposal by the SSLMC.

General Discussion

Dr. Hennen noted that some proposals being considered may have synergistic effects such as multiple proposals that would move TAC from late in the fishing year to earlier in the fishing year. The Committee should be aware of these synergistic or cumulative effects in its deliberations.

The Committee reviewed a listing of additional data sets that will be needed to help inform the proposal analysis process at the next meeting. Mr. Wilson will be the point of contact for additional data and will distribute these data to the Committee as they are received in the coming weeks. Some of these data will be generated by NMFS staff, while other data have been requested from proposers.

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Some felt that it would be helpful if each Committee member, or each proposer, brought to the next SSLMC meeting a statement of the specific concerns they might have with each proposal; statements of the issues of concern could help focus the discussions and lead to mitigating measures for those proposals.

Proposals That May Merit More Immediate Council Attention

The SSLMC has identified several proposals that likely have little impact on SSLs, or may be perceived as SSL friendly, and that could improve fishery management and also benefit the industry. The Committee believes that these proposals could be moved forward for Council consideration now, and not continue through the SSLMC review process and the longer-term consultation. These include a proposal for improved Atka mackerel fishery management in the AI region using cooperatives (Proposal # 8), and a proposal for a very minor change in fishing season start date for the C pollock season in the GOA (Proposal # 16). These proposals would have no impact on SSLs, would improve management, would make the fishery more efficient and less burdensome, and could benefit SSLs. Some felt that such proposals ought to be forwarded immediately, while others noted that this could slow the consultation process by diverting agency attention and agency staff to these proposals and adversely affect the consultation schedule. The SSLMC agreed to support this concept, but the Committee would not forward these proposals but would support the individual proponents of these proposals to do so on their own. Mr. Cotter agreed to inform the Council of these proposals and the Committee's discussions at the Council's February 2008 meeting.

BOF Proposals

The SSLMC noted that some of the proposals under consideration by the Committee were submitted by the Alaska Board of Fisheries (BOF) and the SSLMC believes that the BOF should be contacted for clarification of BOF intent for these proposals when they were originally submitted. These are SSLMC Proposals 35, 36, and 37 (BOF Proposals 396, 397, and 398, respectively). At their November 2007 meeting in Homer, the BOF took action on these three proposals: the BOF rescinded a state waters pollock fishery near Adak (Proposal 396), and disapproved a proposal for a vessel size limit in the AI state waters cod fishery (397), and disapproved a proposal for a pot cod fishery in the AI A season that would fish on the B season TAC (398). The SSLMC felt unclear on whether the BOF would like these issues to be further considered by the SSLMC. Mr. Cotter agreed to look into how best to contact the BOF for clarification.

Next Meeting and Work Schedule

The SSLMC will meet during the week of March 10-14, 2008 in Anchorage. The location of this meeting will be announced soon. This meeting will begin proposal analysis, categorization, consolidation, modification, and removal of some from further consideration. The final SSL Recovery Plan will be reviewed and discussed at this meeting, and the proposals still under active consideration will be evaluated with the conclusions presented in the final recovery plan. The SSLMC will develop an initial set of

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recommendations based on the work completed in the March meeting; this will be presented to the Council at its April 2008 meeting. The Council will be provided with a detailed overview of proposals that may be recommended to the Council, including the rationale and justification developed by the SSLMC.

The SSLMC will then meet to complete the proposal review process during the week of May 12-16, 2008 in Seward at the Alaska Sea Life Center. At this May meeting, the SSLMC will receive the draft status quo BiOp and prepare comments for the Council. The SSLMC will further evaluate proposals still under consideration in light of information presented in the BiOp. The SSLMC will then develop a final set of recommendations based on all of the Committee's previous work, including proposal review by the Proposal Ranking Tool, analysis of proposals using all available information and new data on SSLs and SSL/fishery interactions, comparing proposals with the final SSL Recovery Plan and the draft status quo BiOp, consideration of public comment and input during SSLMC meetings over the past 2 years, and its own knowledge and consideration of information gathered during PowerPoint presentations from SSL and fishery researchers, reviewing new scientific publications, consideration of the large number of publications in the SSL Compendium compiled by Drs. Loughlin and Tagart, and many other information and data sources. This final set of recommendations, and the rationale and justification for them, as well as the record built during the proposal review process, will be presented to the Council at its June 2008 meeting. The intent will be that this set of recommendations would be modified, and then approved by the Council as the "proposed action" for analysis in a supplemental draft EIS.

Adjourn

The Committee adjourned at 3:30 p.m. January 8, 2008.

Bill Wilson

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North Pacific Fishery Management Council
Steller Sea Lion Mitigation Committee Meeting
January 6-8, 2008
Hotel Nexus, Seattle – January 6
[2140 North Northgate Way (I-5 Exit 173)]
Alaska Fisheries Science Center, Seattle – January 7&8

Purpose: Receive databases requested at last meeting, proceed with proposal analysis, work toward developing an initial package of recommendations for Council review.

AGENDA

January 6 - 8:30 AM – 5:00 PM – Nexus Hotel

1. Introductions and Opening Remarks, Announcements, Agenda Approval (Cotter)
2. Minutes of Last Meeting (Wilson)
3. Update on November 2007 Board of Fisheries and December 2007 Council Meetings, Including EIS Schedule (Wilson, Brown)
4. Development of Alternatives/NEPA/NOI Review (Brown/Wilson)
5. Review Proposal Statements on SSLMC's Goal and Objectives
6. Receive and Discuss Databases Requested for Proposal Review (Mabry, Lewis, Miller, Brown)
7. Identify Additional Information Needs or Data Requests

January 7 – 8:30 AM – 5:00 PM – AFSC

8. Continue Review of Databases
9. Analyze Proposals and Evaluate Tradeoffs

January 8 – 8:30 AM – 5:00 PM - AFSC

10. Continue Proposal Analysis – Develop Initial Recommendations
11. Define Additional Data Needs
12. Discuss Committee Meeting Schedule
13. Action Items, Closing Remarks, Adjourn (Cotter)

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Public comment periods will be provided during the meeting.

Contact Bill Wilson at the Council offices if you have questions: 907-271-2809 or bill.wilson@noaa.gov

Proposal Summary List (January 6-8, 2008)

Proposal #	Description	Sector	Area	Proponent
1/29	Start pollock A season 5-15 days earlier	AFA pollock trawl	BSAI	APA/UCB
2/27	Framework pollock A/B TAC apportionment: 45/55 % if BSAI TAC <1.3 M mt; 40/60 % if BSAI TAC >1.3 M mt	AFA pollock trawl	BSAI	APA/UCB
3	Start C/P Cod fishery B season 17 days earlier	C/P cod pot	BSAI	Trident
4	Allow H&L C/P cod fishery to harvest 70% in A season, 30 % in B season from current 51/49%; additional A season harvest outside CH only	C/P cod H&L	BSAI	NPLA
8	Allow directed fishing for Atka mackerel between 10 and 20 nm of SSL sites in two discrete Bering Sea areas. The purpose is to increase the fishing grounds available to the 541/BS mackerel fishery	Atka mackerel trawl	EBS	H&G W.G.
9	Change A/B season cod apportionment in pot C/V >60' sector from 51/49 to 80/20 %	C/V cod pot	BSAI	UFMA
11	Change pollock ABCD season apportionment in GOA Area 610 to 1/3, 1/3, 1/6, 1/6	Pollock trawl	WGOA	AEB
12	Open a portion of Jude Is. closure outside 10 nm for pollock trawling (open Pavlof Bay)	Pollock trawl	WGOA	AEB
13	Increase harvest cap for Bogoslof exemption area for <60' jig and H&L sector to no more than 1% of the BSAI cod TAC; consider allowing pot vessels also; consider jig set aside of 10% of the cap	Cod jig, H&L; pot(?)	BSAI	UNFA
14	Aggregate GOA pollock A and B season TACs and aggregate C and D season TACs when GOA pollock TACs are low	Pollock trawl	GOA	AGDB
15	Allow pollock trawling to 3nm at Cape Ugat (Area 620) during A & B seasons and to 10 km in C & D seasons	Pollock trawl	CGOA	AGDB
16	Change GOA pollock C season start date from Aug 25 to Sept 1 (the humpy proposal)	Pollock trawl	GOA	AGDB
17/10	Change GOA cod (all gear) A/B seasonal TAC apportionments from current 60/40 to up to 100/0	Cod fixed/trawl	GOA	AGDB/AEB
18	Allow cod trawling to 10 nm Jan 20 to June 1 at Chernabura (WGOA)	Cod trawl	WGOA	WGF
19	Change groundfish trawl closure around Dalnoi Pt from 0-3 to 0-20 n mi (option 0-10 n mi)	Groundfish trawl	EBS	St. George
20	Remove Spitz Is. 0-3 n mi closure to allow fishing to the beach for cod jig and pot gear	Cod jig/pot	CGOA	Chignik
21	Change Sutwik Is. 0-20 n mi closure to 0-3 n mi for cod jig and pot gear	Cod jig/pot	CGOA	Chignik
22	Change pollock fishery geographic closures in AI to match the cod fishery closures in the AI; option	Pollock trawl	AI	AEC/Adak Fish

Proposal #	Description	Sector	Area	Proponent
	to change by subarea; option to limit harvest in relaxed zones; option to open only the Kanaga and Atka "boxes"			
23	Split cod TAC apportionment between AI and BS	Cod (all sectors)	BSAI	AEC/Adak Fish
25	Allow C/V Atka mackerel fishing to 10 n mi at the Kasatochi SSL site in Area 541	Atka mackerel trawl	AI	AEC/Adak Fish
26	Change A/B/C seasonal BSAI cod trawl C/V apportionment from 74/11/15 to an A/B seasonal apportionment of 89/11	Cod C/V trawl	BSAI	UCB
28	Extend end of BSAI pollock B season from Nov. 1 to Dec. 1	Pollock trawl	BS	UCB
30*	Open closed areas >3 nm from Rugged, Chiswell, & Seal SSL sites between 149 & 150 in state waters to pollock trawling	Pollock trawl	CGOA	ADF&G
31*	Change allocation of cod in WGOA state waters fishery from 25% to 50% of Federal WGOA TAC	Cod jig, pot	WGOA	Sand Point
32*	Limit vessels to <60' in WGOA cod fishery in state waters	Cod jig, pot, H&L, trawl	WGOA	King Cove
33/7/24 33a/7/24	Change SSL regulations affecting Atka mackerel fishery in AI sub-areas 542 and 543 to allow inter-cooperative agreements to control daily and weekly harvest rates at less than or equal 2001-2007 catch rates in lieu of HLA regulations; option (a) to change date of fishery end	Atka mackerel	AI	H&G W.G./AEC & Adak Fish
35* BOF	Authorize AI state waters pollock fishery in Adak area	Pollock trawl	AI	BOF
36* BOF	Limit AI state waters cod fishery (all gear) to vessels <60'	Cod (all sectors)	AI	BOF
37* BOF	Allow AI state waters pot cod fishery late in A season harvesting B season pot TAC	Cod pot	AI	BOF

* SSLMC recommendations to be advisory; will require BOF approval

Detailed List of Data Needs for Proposal Review

Proposal #	Description	Data Needs
<p>1/29 NO MODEL SCORE</p>	<p>Pollock A starts 10-15 days earlier</p>	<p>How many AFA C/V or C/P boats can fish groundfish in the BSAI and/or GOA after they finish fishing BS Pollock in the A season (john h) (Refer to bill's white paper)</p> <p>Cod in BSAI – additional effort earlier in season; yellowfin sole under amendment 80; 72 hour stand-down, exclusive registration, trip limits – lots of regs to move effort into GOA</p> <p>How many vessels can do this?? 679.23 (H) stand-down provisions for catcher vessels for Pollock or cod (I) CV exclusive fishing seasons for pollock</p> <p>My notes say to delete the first three items in this block.</p> <p>Salmon bycatch – bycatch rate and numbers per day (obs data) and by WED over several years b/c lots of yearly variability (last 10 years?) break out by CP/CV/MS Need halibut bycatch data also</p> <p>Paul M says they will provide economic data if needed (refer to bill's paper?) table 9 from Scott's PDF</p> <p>Adak will provide info on AI cod fishery impacts</p>
<p>2/27 Net=..0063</p>	<p>Reapportion TAC from B to A, magnitude of shift depending on total TAC (BSAI pollock trawl) From 40-60 to 45-55 5% more in A season</p>	<p>**Check to see how much of A season Pollock annual TAC is harvested inside CH - SCA. Does it meet the 40% threshold?? During the past 5 years Talk to in season management about whether SCA limit has been met in recent years.</p> <p>How many CVs harvest only Pollock versus multi-species harvest for fishing in GOA</p> <p>Actual pollock harvests in SCA last 5 yrs and what % relative to the 28% cutoff</p>
<p>3 .0000006</p>	<p>CP Cod Start date shifts 17 days earlier</p>	<p>Weekly harvest amount by this sector during B season of past 5 years. CP pot cod BSAI. Compare to other sectors if time.</p>

Proposal #	Description	Data Needs
Net= -.00000007		
4 Net=.0051	Reapportion TAC from B to A (BSAI cod - LL CP) A = 1/1 - 2/18 B = 8/15 - 10/21	Incidental take of seabirds in BSAI CP HAL cod A season versus B season last 10 years
7+24 now 33	See Proposal 33	See proposal 33
8 Total -0.0087	Allow directed fishing for Atka mackerel between 10 and 20 nm of SSL sites in two discrete Bering Sea areas. The purpose is to increase the fishing grounds available to the 541/BS mackerel fishery and allow the industry to continue to shift mackerel fishing from the Western AI into the 541/BS region where SSL counts are increasing.	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Historical catches of Atka mackerel in Bering Sea (Akutan and Cape Sarichef) prior to expansion of Aleutian Islands mackerel fishery (joint venture through 2000) 2. Current catch of mackerel in Bering Sea since prohibition on directed mackerel fishing 3. ABC, TAC, and catch of mackerel in the three AI sub areas (541, 542, 543) for last five year. These numbers are presented in our proposal but should be confirmed. They should illustrate the recent trend towards maximizing the area 541 TAC and catch which effectively allows TAC and catch for other AI sub-areas to be lower. 4. SSL count trends at rookeries and haulouts for sites adjacent to Bering Sea mackerel fishing areas proposed to be opened from 10-20 nm. These can be compared to counts at sites in 542 and 543 where TAC and catch is lower with maximization of 541/Bering Sea catch 5. Halibut PSC tradeoffs: Mackerel fishing in Bering Sea is known to have higher halibut PSC than for Aleutian Islands areas. Proposal mentions this but argues that halibut bycatch agreements under use of Sea State allow for effective avoidance of halibut and control of bycatch rates. Data from Sea State should be available to demonstrate this.
9 Net=-.00000002	Shifting 29% TAC from B to A (BSAI cod - pot CV >= 60 ft) A = 1/1 - 2/3 B=9/1-12/31	BSAI cod weekly harvest in A and B season BSAI compared to TAC by gear (especially pot) and C/P and C/V

Proposal #	Description	Data Needs
<p>11 Net=.0140</p>	<p>Increase pollock TAC in A,B by 1/3 (total) (WGOA) A=3/10 B=3/10-5/31 C=8/25-10/1 D=10/1-11/1 Area 610</p>	<p>Number of CV WGOA CGOA amount of effort that could shift from one season to another if larger A season allocation</p> <p>SSL data for 610 (counts) Pollock harvest rates for CV harvest sector 610</p> <p>Beth will provide tax revenue data.</p> <p>Number of LLPs endorsed for WGOA and CGOA C/V (trawl) groundfish Data from RAM</p> <p>Biomass trends for recent years in SAFE. Melanie</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1) Weekly directed pollock catches for area 610 by vessel size classes. 2) Map of area 610 catches inside and outside critical habitat showing sea lion rookeries and haulouts. 3) Catch rate data for each apportionment. 4) Increase A season proportion might draw more participants. So looking at potential number of licenses that would be available. 5) Pollock distribution is based on hydroacoustic surveys, and this would set an arbitrary level. 6) AEB will supply tax revenue data.
<p>12 .0041 Net=.0028</p>	<p>Open Jude Is. to 10 nm for pollock trawling 9 rooks in WGOA - Jude = 14% of sites AEB to provide description</p>	<p>Alternative to open only Pavlof Bay portion. – see map from Beth</p> <p>Pollock harvest data prior to SSL closure – pre-2000</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1) A detailed map with the pollock catches in Pavlof Bay 1995-2000 using ADF&G stat areas. 2) A detailed map showing the relationship between Pavlof Bay and the Jude Island closure (see attached) 3) SSL counts for Jude Islands.
<p>13</p>		<p>Table from Frank on DVD. He will send additional info on number of boats.</p>

Proposal #	Description	Data Needs
No MODEL SCORE	Removing/increasing catch limits on fixed gear cod (<60ft) fishing in Bogoslof closure area (1 of 9 rooks in EAI)	Catch data for the area (by jig and LL) # vessels that participated Cod TACs for past (5?) yrs to see what 1% will amount to
14 Total .0744	Aggregate A and B and C and D pollock seasons when TAC is low (GOA) A=1/20-3/10 B=3/10-5/31 C=8/25-10/1 D=10/1-11/1	Pollock harvest in A/B/C/D seasons Dorn presentation - Request to update model with seasonal changes in energy density of pollock, size range of pollock preferred by SSLs, and seasonal growth of pollock Julie to provide seasonal chart – opening dates if seasons are combined
15 .0023 Net=.0015	Allow trawl pollock fishing to 3nm of Cape Ugat during A and B and to 10 km in C and D (CGOA)	Harvest of Pollock pre 2000 and after 2003 in zones around C. Ugat actual catch in area 620 compared to quota 2004 forward compare 95-2000 to the latter data
16 .000037 Net=.000037	Move pollock C season start date back to 9/1 (from 8/25) Includes pot, longline, trawl, jig	Chinook salmon bycatch 8/25 to 9/1 Rates and numbers Rate in GOA Pollock trawl total Harvest of Pollock trawl in C season in GOA
17/10 Total .021 SQ .00000013	Re-apportionment of cod TAC in GOA. 17A 100% in A, 17B 80 % in A (both gear types) A fixed=1/1-6/10 A trawl=1/20-6/10 B fixed=9/1-12/31 B trawl=9/1-11/1 SQ = 60/40	Cod harvest data for WGOA CGOA A and B season harvest by WED 1) Weekly directed P. cod catch in the Western Gulf federal fishery, by gear type and vessel size classes for the years 1995-2006 (or whatever the most recent data is). 2) Map of directed P. cod catches inside and outside critical habitat in the Western Gulf federal fishery for the same time period showing haulouts and rookeries. Halibut PSC

Proposal #	Description	Data Needs
<p>18 .027 Net=.0017</p>	<p>Allow Cod trawl fishing to 10 nm from 1/20-6/1 and to 20 nm from 6/1 - 11/1 at Chernabura (WGOA)</p>	<p>Map of area involved SSL data at Chernabura Pre 2000 and post 2003 cod trawl harvest data Pot harvest data by zone around Chernabura</p>
<p>19 total Net=-.0042</p>	<p>Extend closures around Dalnoi Pt (from 3) Pribis 20nm year-round</p>	<p>Catch rates for Pollock, cod in 3-10 and 10-20 from 2000 – 2007, by gear type and sector by WED compare to 95-2000</p> <p>Bycatch rate by PSC species by gear type, time of year, by zone, pre-2000 and post 2003</p>
<p>20 Total .0007</p>	<p>Open Spitz Is. H/O to beach for jig and pot gear WGOA Now closed to 3nm</p>	<p>Pot and jig cod fishery harvest data for this area (conf so get from proposer) Endorsed vessels. LLP Vessels registered to fish in state fishery</p> <p>Look at KAK island – how many took advantage of new opening and started fishing there. Since 2005.</p>
<p>21 Total .0035 SQ .0005</p>	<p>Open Sutwik to 3nm for cod pot and jig gear CGOA Now closed to 20nm</p>	<p>Look at participation in state waters cod fishery – Chignik</p> <p>Cod harvest data by sector</p> <p>Look at KAK island – how many took advantage of new opening and started fishing there. Since 2005.</p>
<p>22 Total .0448 SQ .0004</p>	<p>Have pollock SSL geographic restrictions in AI region mirror the geographic SSL protection measures for the cod fisheries</p>	<p>Pollock harvest locations pre 1999? in AI Where were removals before the closures. Compare harvest outside versus inside</p> <p>Include Pollock restrictions during HLA fishery? Proposer also requests: * % of total area of SSL CH in areas (inside 1000 meters) for WAI, CAI, EAI, EBS, WGOA, CGOA, EGOA (by SSL area definitions, not fish management area definitions) by:</p> <p>Rookery 0-3, 3-10, 10-20 Haulout 0-3 (not Rookery 0-10), 3-10 (not Rookery 0-10) Foraging Area (not Rookery 0-10 or Haulout 0-3)</p>

Proposal #	Description	Data Needs
		<p>State water (not Rookery 0-10 or Haulout 0-3)</p> <p>* % of total area of SSL CH in areas WAI, CAI, EAI/EBS, WGOA, CGOA, EGOA (by SSL area definitions, not fish management area definitions) broken out by "Open to Pollock vs Closed to Pollock" by</p> <p>Rookery 0-3, 3-10 and 10-20 Haulout 0-3 (not Rookery 0-10), 3-10 (not Rookery 0-10) Foraging Area (not Rookery 0-10 or Haulout 0-3)</p> <p>* % of total pollock catch 2002-2006 in areas EAI/EBS, WGOA, CGOA, EGOA (by SSL area definitions, not fish management area definitions) broken out by "Open to Pollock vs Closed to Pollock" by</p> <p>Rookery 0-3, 3-10, 10-20 Haulout 0-3 (not Rookery 0-10), 3-10 (not Rookery 0-10) Foraging Area (not Rookery 0-10 or Haulout 0-3) Outside CH</p> <p>* % of total pollock catch and average CPUE in the 1990's of SSL CH in areas WAI, CAI, (by SSL area definitions, not fish management area definitions) broken out by</p> <p>Rookery 0-3, 3-10, 10-20 Haulout 0-3 (not Rookery 0-10), 3-10 (not Rookery 0-10) Foraging Area (not Rookery 0-10 or Haulout 0-3) Outside CH State water (not Rookery 0-10 or Haulout 0-3)</p> <p>* % of total pollock catch and average CPUE in the 1990's of SSL CH in areas 541/542/543 and by 2 degree longitude blocks broken out by</p> <p>Rookery 0-3, 3-10, 10-20 Haulout 0-3 (not Rookery 0-10), 3-10 (not Rookery 0-10) Foraging Area (not Rookery 0-10 or Haulout 0-3) Outside CH State water (not Rookery 0-10 or Haulout 0-3)</p>

Proposal #	Description	Data Needs
		* Pollock summer bottom trawl survey biomass distribution by 541/542/543 and by finest strata used in survey/stock assessment process. (the last one is probably an AFSC task.)
23 NO MODEL SCORE	TAC allocation split for cod between AI and BS	Look at options before Council Wait for Council action in Feb 2008 before considering this proposal further
25 Total .0057	Allow AM fishing to 10 nm from Kasatochi. CAI rook winter	Data are likely confidential (some C/V cod fishery incidental catch of Atka mackerel but discarded) May be observer data May need waiver of confidentiality
26 .0063	Transfer the BSAI cod trawl CV C apportionment (3.3%) to A. A=1/20-3/8 C=7/19-8/31	Catch rates by season Is C season fish being left in the water? Look at amendment 85 analysis Lower halibut bycatch rate in winter? Seasonality of halibut bycatch BSAI trawl CV cod CPUT BSAI trawl CV cod in A, B, and C season Localized depletion study (Conners) Look at amend 85 analysis
28 .00000006 Net =-.00000006	Extend BS pollock B season till 12/1 A=1/20-4/1 B=6/10-11/1	Low priority

Proposal #	Description	Data Needs
<p>30 total .0132</p>	<p>Open closed areas >3 nm from SSL sites in EGOA near Seward Haul outs Rugged Is. HO, Seal Rx Kenai, Chiswell Rk.</p>	<p>look at informal consultation from 2004. ask earl for state documents. Harvest data from ADF&G commissioner’s permit fishery.</p> <p>NMFS PR analysis of this proposal from 2 years ago,</p>
<p>31 NO MODEL SCORE</p>	<p>Shift TAC in area M into state waters, subsection of WGOA</p>	<p>NMFS’ analysis of proposal (See NMFS letter to BOF)</p>
<p>32 NO MODEL SCORE</p>	<p>Restrict large vessels from cod fishing in State water WGOA area 610. winter</p>	<p>All WGOA cod harvest rate by vessel size, all gear types # pot vessels >60’?</p>
<p>33/7/24 New Joint Proposal combining former 7 and 24</p> <p>33a/7/24</p> <p>NO MODEL SCORE</p>	<p>Change sea lion regulations affecting HLA Atka mackerel fishery in AI sub-areas 542 and 543 to allow inter-cooperative agreements to control daily and weekly harvest rates at 2001-2007 levels in lieu of current HLA mackerel (platoon) management.</p> <p>Option (a): Change end</p>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Daily/Weekly mackerel catch rates in each specific HLA fishery area (HLA in 542 and HLA in 542). Weekly average, highest week, and daily average and highest day for each year since HLA regulations were put in place. This information is needed to set weekly and daily catch limits that will be managed under cooperative agreements for inside HLA fishery. Some of the above information has already been put together (pre-HLA regulations through 2003) in <u>Final June 2003 Supplement SSL Analysis</u>. 2. deleted 3. <u>The Final June 2003 Supplement SSL Analysis</u> also has detailed discussion of the intent of the current temporal and spatial protections in place for AI Atka mackerel and the degree to which fishery performance measures up these objectives. 4. “Fritz, L.W. and Lowe, S.A. (1998) Seasonal distributions of Atka mackerel

Proposal #	Description	Data Needs
	date of fishery	<p>(Pleurogrammus monopterygius) in commercially-fished areas of the Aleutian Islands and Gulf of Alaska". NOAA Tech. Memo. NMFS-AFSC-92, 29 pp. This NMFS internal publication looks at CPUE trends in fishery and uses Leslie model regressions to estimate degree to which fishery may create localized reductions in SSL prey base. This paper spawned the idea behind controlling daily removal rates to reduce chance of localized depletion by fishing at a rate that is closer to the replenishment rate for the specific localized fishing areas.</p> <p>5. "Estimating movement and abundance of Atka mackerel (Pleurogrammus monopterygius) with tag-release-recapture data" (McDermott et al. 2005 in Fish. Oceanogr. 14 (Suppl. 1), 113-130, 2005). This paper estimates local abundance of Atka mackerel through a mark and recapture technique. While authors focus on efficacy of trawl exclusion zones, localized mackerel abundance estimates are also useful for looking at how harvest rates may affect prey field for SSL.</p>
35 BOF	2008 AI pollock fishery, 3,000 mt limit within current SSL protection measures. Up for BOF action in Nov. Fishery may not occur if BOF stops it.	Intent for further consideration of this proposal to be clarified by BOF
36 BOF	AI P. cod state waters vessel size limit to < 60 feet.	Intent for further consideration of this proposal to be clarified by BOF
37 BOF	AI P. cod seasonal harvest shifting B season harvest into A season. West of 170W	Intent for further consideration of this proposal to be clarified by BOF