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News & Notes

North Pacific Fishery Management Council

October 2014

Council Elections and Appointments

The Council elected Dan Hull as Chairman, and re-elected John Henderschedt as vice-chair. Dr. Jim Balsiger administered the Oath of Office to new Council member Simon Kinneen of Nome, AK, and to re-appointed member John Henderschedt, of WA. Kinneen works for Norton Sound Economic Development Corp, and joins the Council from five years on the Advisory Panel. Henderschedt is serving his third 3-year term on the Council and works for Fisheries Leadership and Sustainability Forum.

Begich addresses Council

Alaska Senator Mark Begich addressed the Council at this meeting commenting on changes in the Magnuson-Stevens Fishery Act,



and other pending national fishery legislation. He discussed the importance of new technology and different types of monitoring, and emphasized supporting small fishing communities and the concerns of local fishermen.

iPads and Meetings

If you use your iPad during a Council meeting, you can download all the materials pre-and post-meeting through a free app called iLegislate. The app is not yet available on other platforms, but the same material is available universally through our website. For details, call the office.



Photo: Sam Cunningham

GOA Trawl Bycatch Management

The Council heard staff presentations reviewing a proposal to address GOA trawl bycatch with voluntary inshore and catcher/processor cooperatives. Updates on Chinook salmon genetic stock identification efforts and a community social science survey were also received.

The Council initiated an analysis of alternatives. The status quo alternative would maintain existing GOA trawl management under the License Limitation Program. Alternative 2 would implement a cooperative catch share program. The Council will consider a range of groundfish target species for allocation to cooperatives. Secondary species could be managed through cooperative allocations, or through MRAs. Cooperatives would have flexibility in how to manage an allocation of halibut and Chinook salmon PSC, determined by the groundfish catch history associated with the co-op's member licenses, with the goal of minimizing PSC levels and rates. The Council included an option to consider "gear conversion" as a method to reduce PSC; this would entail allowing catcher vessels to fish trawl co-op Pacific cod quota with pot gear. Reduced Chinook and halibut PSC limits will also be considered.

While analyzing the current proposal, the Council will work to develop additional alternatives for how inshore co-ops are formed. The Council noted that harvesters could not, under current regulation, be linked via a co-op to a particular shoreside processor based on historical deliveries.

Staff will analyze the addition of either a Community Fishing Association or an Adaptive Management Program to the co-op structure. The alternative to include one of those constructs would be analyzed as a mechanism to promote stability for inshore stakeholders. The Council will consider potential

benefits of the CFA or AMP in relation to stability measures already included in the co-op structure, which include consolidation limits, active participation criteria, and regionalization of cooperative quota.

Future analysis will continue to examine whether any existing regulations could be removed if the proposed program is implemented. Staff will also identify potential effects of implementing the proposed program on NMFS's ability to manage and monitor the CGOA Rockfish Program. Staff contact is Sam Cunningham.

Amendment 80 5-Year Review

As part of the Amendment 80 program developed by the Council and by section 303(A) of the MSA, a 5-year review of the program is required to assess whether the goals of the Amendment 80 program and the MSA are being met or if course corrections are needed. In April of this year, the Council reviewed a draft Amendment 80 program 5-year review. For the October meeting, the Council asked staff to include suggested changes and additions to the document and bring back for a final review. At that meeting, the Council reviewed the revised 5-year review document, and noted that overall the Amendment 80 program has exceeded the Council's expectations and goals for the program by 1) maintaining a healthy marine ecosystem, 2) reducing bycatch, 3) minimizing waste and improving utilization, 4) maximizing benefits to present fishermen, CDQ groups, and nation as a whole, 5) further rationalizing the fishery to mitigate costs of achieving the goals of the program, and 6) minimizing negative impacts on other fisheries. Staff contact is Jon McCracken.

AP/SSC Nominations

The Council is accepting nominations for its Scientific and Statistical Committee, and its Advisory Panel.

SSC nominees should have areas of expertise in biology/stock assessment, marine mammals, statistics, fisheries/resource economics, sociology/anthropology, or other relevant disciplines and be federal employees, state employees, academicians, or independent experts not employed by advocacy or interest groups. SSC members serve one year terms but may be reappointed indefinitely. The SSC advises the Council on all aspects of the decision making process, including stock assessments and annual specifications, protected species interactions, and adequacy of analyses supporting various management actions.

The AP is composed of representatives of the fishing industry and others interested in the management of the North Pacific fisheries, and provides advice from those perspectives. Members of these panels are expected to attend up to five meetings, three to six days in length, each year. There are 8 AP seats up for nomination which serve three-year terms, and one special one-year appointment for GOA issues. AP members eligible for re-appointment and whose terms expire at the end of this year include: John Crowley, Jerry Downing, Jeff Farvour, Chuck McCallum, Teresa Peterson, and Ernie Weiss. Paddy O'Donnell currently serves the special one year appointment. Because of the three term limit, Lori Swanson is ineligible for re-appointment, and nominations are being accepted for that seat as well. Please send letters of interest and/or nominations to npfmc.comments@noaa.gov.

Nominations close December 1.

Observer Program

2015 Annual Deployment Plan

The Council received a presentation on the draft 2015 Observer Annual Deployment Plan (ADP), and unanimously supported the ADP, with specific recommendations. The Council approves assigning observer coverage to vessels through the trip selection pool in 2015, using two strata that separate small and large vessels. The Council supports selection probabilities for the small vessel trip-selection stratum at 12%, and for the large vessel trip-selection stratum at 24%.

The Council also supports only allowing conditional releases in 2015 in the small vessel trip selection stratum, and recommended they be given either for vessels that do not have sufficient life raft capacity to accommodate an observer, or for the third consecutive trip that has been selected for observer coverage. While the Council agreed with the agency that granting conditional releases for vessels with insufficient bunk space to accommodate an observer should no longer be allowed, the Council was concerned about the cumulative burden on a bunk space-limited small vessel of being selected for multiple trips in a row. The Council agrees that electronic monitoring is the long-term solution for vessels that are bunk space-limited, and is hopeful that by 2016 there may be a viable EM alternative available. The Council also requested that the 2014 Observer Annual Report, in June 2015, include information to evaluate a sunset provision for the conditional release for life raft capacity, including the potential for bias, costs to an operator of upgrading to a larger liferaft, and enforcement disincentives from downgrading one's liferaft.

The Council discussed the possibility of defining different strata for deployment, for example, based on gear type, or on fisheries subject to prohibited species cap limits. While the Council ultimately was persuaded that they do not as yet have sufficient information to fully understand the tradeoffs of such a deployment strategy, the Council requests that the 2014 Observer Annual Report provide an evaluation of alternative methods for defining strata.

As in 2014, trawl catcher vessels fishing for Pacific cod in the BSAI will be given the opportunity to opt-in to the full coverage pool by arrangement with the agency. The Council also supports vessels that participate in EM cooperative research being assigned to the no selection pool while participating in such research.

Fixed Gear Lead level 2 Observer Availability

The Council discussed the current shortage of fixed gear Lead Level 2 (LL2) observers for deployment on catcher processor hook-and-line vessels, and

that successful resolution of this issue in the near term will require a cooperative effort from NMFS, the Freezer Longline Coalition (FLC), and the observer providers. The Council has strongly encouraged the FLC and observer providers to meet and collectively work together to resolve this issue, with assistance from the NMFS Observer Program. Owners of FLC vessels are to consider reaffirming their responsibility regarding treatment of observers, and to continue voluntarily taking a second observer for training purpose as possible. Observer providers are to consider incentives to facilitate the retention of trained LL2 observers that include pay, variation in work assignments between trawl and fixed gear vessels, and contract length, as well as suggestions for encouraging a workplace environment to which observers are more likely to return. NMFS is requested to investigate training and deployment requirements and non-regulatory changes that may assist in increasing the pool of available fixed gear LL2 qualified observers, and determine what changes are required to be able to deploy trawl LL2 observers on fixed gear vessels, in the event a fixed gear-trained LL2 observer is not available.

The workgroup is asked to report back to the Council as soon as possible, at which time the Council will consider whether to increase the priority of the discussion paper to initiate regulatory changes to address the LL2 observer shortage.

Electronic Monitoring

The Council endorsed a target date of 2016 for taking the first steps towards operationalizing EM on small fixed gear vessels. The Council understands this to be an ambitious goal, but intends to work towards having an EM alternative in 2016, at least for the vessels for which accommodating an observer onboard is problematic.

The Council's Electronic Monitoring (EM) Workgroup reported on their progress with outlining a framework for the regulatory amendment package to integrate EM as part of the Observer Program, and continuing efforts to refine the 2015 Cooperative Research Plan (CRP) to be responsive to the decision points and information needs of the analytical framework. The Council supports the work of the EM Workgroup, including using a subgroup approach to continue to develop the projects that constitute the CRP. The Council has asked the EMWG to have a complete research plan ready for the SSC to review in February, and the EMWG will report back to the Council on its progress in December.

Final motions are posted online. The Council also reviewed the status of regulatory amendments and other analytical projects affecting the Observer Program, which were presented in a priority list (also available online). Staff contact is Diana Evans.

Halibut Deck Sorting

The Council received an update from the agency and the Amendment 80 industry about progress with developing methods for sorting halibut on deck rather than in the factory, to reduce mortality by returning halibut to the sea more expeditiously. To date, there has been proof of concept testing using both a stereo camera and a motion-compensated scale. The industry is working with the agency to develop an Exempted Fishing Permit to conduct an operational test of the scales on multiple vessels. The purpose of the EFP would be to work out appropriate sampling protocols and monitoring requirements, to evaluate the durability of the technology over a year of fishing, and to test whether and in which fisheries the deck sorting protocol would be preferentially used by vessels.

Implementing management measures to provide opportunities for deck sorting is currently an alternative in the BSAI Halibut PSC limits analysis, tasked for initial review in February 2015. The Council acknowledged at the October meeting that such management measures will not be sufficiently well developed by February to allow staff to fully analyze any halibut mortality reductions that may result from this alternative. The Council will expect the analysis to include a progress report on developing the deck sorting measures. Staff contact is Diana Evans.

AI Pacific Cod Allowance and Delivery

At this meeting, the Council reviewed an analysis of a proposed action to prioritize a portion of the Aleutian Islands (AI) Pacific cod TAC to catcher vessels and designate that Pacific cod TAC be delivered to shoreplants in the AI management area. The proposed action would also limit harvest of the A season trawl catcher vessel sector's Bering Sea (BS) Pacific cod allocation so as not to allow the sector to harvest its entire A season allocation in the BS prior to the end of the A season AI Pacific cod fishery. The intent of this proposed action is to provide stability to shoreplant operations in the AI, which in turn will provide stability to the communities where the shoreplants are located.

After reviewing the document, the Council added two new options to the proposed action and requested the document be brought back for initial review. The first of the new options would suspend the delivery requirement to AI shoreplants for the remainder of the year if less than 1,000 mt of AI Pacific cod directed fishing allowance has been landed by February 28. The second option would also suspend the delivery requirement to AI shoreplants for the year if prior to (options: November 1 or January 20 of each year) neither of the communities of Adak or Atka has notified NMFS of the intent of a local processor in the community to process Pacific cod in the upcoming season. Finally, the Council defined "shore plant" to mean a processing facility physically located on land.

Staff contact for this action is Jon McCracken.

MRA Enforcement Period

The Council reviewed a discussion paper on adjusting the maximum retainable allowance (MRA) enforcement period for all fisheries in the Bering Sea and Aleutian Islands and the Gulf of Alaska from the current instantaneous (at any point in time during a fishing trip) to the time of offload. The intent of the change to MRA enforcement period would be to increase efficiency and reduce regulatory discards.

After reviewing the discussion paper, the Council took no further action on this issue. The Council noted that the complexity of changing the enforcement period for all MRA species in the North Pacific, and the potential changes to fishing behavior for all of these MRA species as result of this action, make it difficult to accomplish in a single action. In addition, implementation of recent Council actions in the BSAI and GOA and work by the Council on the GOA trawl bycatch program complicates changing the MRA enforcement period for all MRA species. Instead, the Council would like to review changes to the MRA enforcement period for MRA species on a case-by-case basis brought forward by the public. Staff contact is Jon McCracken.



Boats in KingCove
Photo: Sam Cummineham

Reducing Skate MRAs in the GOA

The Council reviewed an analysis considering action to slow the harvest rate of skates and decrease the incentive for vessels to top off on skates by reducing the Maximum Retainable Allowance (MRA) to levels that more accurately reflect the intrinsic rate of incidental catch of skates in the GOA. Alternatives that were analyzed in the Draft EA/RIR/IRFA include: 1) the No Action Alternative which would maintain the MRA on skates for all basis at 20%, 2) Reduce the MRA on skates for all basis species to 15%, 3) Reduce the MRA on skates for all basis species to 10%, and 4) Reduce the MRA on skates for all basis species to 5%. After reviewing the Draft EA/RIR/IRFA, reports from the SSC and AP, and public review, the Council selected Alternative 4, reducing the MRA on skates for all basis species to 5% as its Preliminary Preferred Alternative (PPA). The Council also requested that staff address the suggestions from the SSC, as feasible, and directed staff to include data on skate retention against specific basis species in the final review draft. Final action is scheduled for December, 2014. Staff contact is Steve MacLean.

PNCIAC Nominations

The Council is seeking nominations to the Pacific Northwest Crab Industry Advisory Committee, PNCIAC. There are 13 seats available, and each member serves a two year term. Nominations close December 1.

Upcoming meetings

Halibut Charter Implementation

Committee: October 29, 9-5,

Teleconference

Groundfish Plan Team meeting:

November 17-21, 2014. AFSC

EM Workgroup:

November 19-20, Renaissance Madison, Seattle

Crab Modeling Workshop:

January 13-15, 2014 AFSC Seattle

Crab Plan Team meeting:

January 16, 2014 AFSC Seattle (also webconference; information TBA)

Scallop Plan Team meeting:

February 23-25, Kodiak, AK TBA

Charter Halibut

The Council reviewed a discussion paper that presented a series of questions that staff identified related to a proposal from the guided sport (charter) halibut sector to amend Federal fishery regulations that govern the Pacific halibut commercial Individual Fishing Quota (IFQ) fishery. The proposal would amend regulations to allow a non-profit Recreational Quota Entity (RQE) to purchase and retain commercial quota share (QS) on behalf of the charter halibut sector in IPHC Areas 2C and 3A. After reports from staff and the Advisory Panel, and after public testimony the Council initiated an analysis of an action to allow a RQE to hold commercial halibut QS on behalf of charter anglers. The Council also authorized a workgroup to consist of 9 or 10 members, 6 of which will be charter operators, and 3 or 4 will be from the commercial IFQ sector and/or other knowledgeable stakeholders who can contribute to the development of a Recreational Quota Entity program structure for analysis and review by the Council. The Council is soliciting nominations to participate in this workgroup.

Please submit letters of interest by December 1 to:

npfmc.comments@noaa.gov.

Proposed Groundfish Harvest Specifications

The Council recommended proposed harvest specifications for the Bering Sea Aleutian Islands (BSAI) and Gulf of Alaska (GOA) groundfish fisheries for 2015 and 2016. NMFS will publish proposed overfishing levels (OFLs), acceptable biological catches (ABCs), total allowable catches (TACs), and prohibited species catch (PSC) limits. The purpose of the proposed specifications is to allow the public an opportunity to review and comment on potential final specifications for those years that will be decided during the December 2014 meeting. The proposed harvest specifications for the next two years are based on rollovers of the harvest specifications currently in effect for the start of 2015, as no new information was available, with two exceptions, for flatfish species in the BSAI beginning in 2015 and the 2016 halibut PSC limits and apportionments in the GOA in 2016. In the BSAI, Amendment 105, affects the annual harvest specifications for flathead sole, rock sole, and yellowfin sole, beginning in 2015. Under this amendment, an ABC reserve will be specified for the three flatfish species, which will be allocated to CDQ groups and Amendment 80 cooperatives using the same formulas that are used in the annual harvest specifications process. The ABC reserve for each species will be specified by the Council, by evaluating the ABC surplus for the species (i.e., the difference between the ABC and TAC), considering whether the amount needs to be reduced by a discretionary buffer amount based on social, economic, or ecological considerations. The Council will then designate some, all, or none of the ABC surplus as the ABC reserve. The Council should provide its rationale for setting the ABC reserve at a particular level for these three flatfish species each year. In the GOA, proposed specifications for the 2015 halibut PSC apportionments recommended are based on the 2015 apportionments. However, the 2016 halibut PSC apportionments incorporate the reductions in halibut PSC limits, per Amendment 95 and the regulatory revisions that were published earlier this year. Amendment 95 to the GOA FMP will reduce the 2016 GOA halibut PSC limits for the groundfish trawl gear sector and groundfish catcher vessel (CV) hook-and-line gear sector by 15 percent. The 2016 hook-and-line catcher/processor sector's halibut PSC apportionment will be reduced by 7 percent.

The Council also received numerous reports from the GOA and BSAI Groundfish Plan Teams on issues relevant to assessments that will be finalized

in November and form the basis of the specifications the Council will adopt in December. Staff contact is Diana Stram.

BSAI Crab Specifications

The Council received the final 2014 Crab Stock Assessment Fishery Evaluation (SAFE) report and the SSC's OFL and ABC recommendations on 7 crab stocks for 2014/15 fishing year. The SSC had previously recommended OFLs and ABCs for 3 other stocks in the spring. There are 10 crab stocks in the BSAI Crab FMP and all 10 must have annually established OFLs and ABCs. Three stocks (AI golden king crab, Pribilof Island golden king crab and Adak red king crab) had OFLs and ABCs recommended in the spring. Norton Sound red king crab will have specifications set in February given timing issues with opening the winter fishery. The remaining stocks have OFLs and ABCs recommended in the fall. The SSC set OFLs with three stocks be placed in Tier 3 (EBS snow crab, Bristol Bay red king crab and EBS Tanner crab), four stocks in Tier 4 (St. Matthew blue king crab, Pribilof Islands blue king crab, Pribilof Islands red king crab, and Norton Sound red king crab) and three stocks in Tier 5 (AI golden king crab, Pribilof Islands golden king crab, and Adak red king crab).

EBS Tanner crab and Pribilof Islands red king crab are estimated to be above B_{MSY} for 2014/15 while snow crab, Bristol Bay red king crab, and Norton Sound red king crab are all estimated below B_{MSY} . Pribilof Islands blue king crab stock remains overfished and estimated to be well below its MSST. Staff contact is Diana Stram.

EFH 5-year review

During discussion of the Council's Ecosystem Committee report, the Council approved the following motion related to the five-year review of Essential Fish Habitat: "The Council should go on record with the agency as recommending that the timeline for the five year review be extended in order to accommodate incorporating the new data sources, and the necessary SSC reviews into the fishing effects model and the revised species distribution models." The revised schedule calls for the models to be reviewed by the Scientific and Statistical Committee (SSC) in February 2015, and the EFH 5-year review report presented to the Council in October or December 2015. Staff contact is Steve MacLean.

Aleutia Processor QS Allocation

The Council deliberated on a right of first refusal dispute between entities over a transfer of crab processing quota share. Action considered would redress the concern of a specific right holder, Aleutia Corporation, who asserts that a transaction subject to its right of first refusal occurred without the processor quota share holder providing them with proper notification or the opportunity to exercise their right as required under the terms of the right of first refusal. The specific action under consideration would address this right of first refusal grievance by reallocating processor quota share to Aleutia, up to the approximate amount of Bristol Bay red king quota represented by the amount transferred in the transaction that is asserted to have triggered the right. This allocation would be made exclusively from new processor quota share, thus expanding the processor quota pool by a small amount (up to 0.55%), and proportionately distributing the burden across processors. The Council elected not to pursue this action as remedy and instead adopted the status quo as a preferred alternative. Staff contact is Sarah Marrinan.

CDQ Pacific Cod Development

The Council heard an updated report of an analysis that considers regulatory exemptions or modifications that promote the development of a small vessel Pacific cod CDQ fishery.

The Preliminary Preferred Alternative (PPA), as previously established by the Council, would provide for an exemption to the license limitation program (LLP) for hook-and-line vessels less than or equal to 46 ft. LOA that are fishing Pacific cod CDQ, and would move this group of vessels into the partial observer coverage category. The PPA describes the at-sea identification method that would occur in lieu of a Federal license, confirming eligibility for enforcement purposes. Additionally, the PPA outlines the retention and catch accounting process that would take effect in a dual target fishery of Pacific cod CDQ and halibut CDQ/Individual Fishing Quota (IFQ) under this alternative.

At this meeting, the Council considered the inclusion of three new options in the PPA. The first would apply the provision of the PPA that have been considered for the Pacific cod CDQ fishery to all of the groundfish CDQ fisheries (with the exception of sablefish). It is unlikely that a market will develop for these other groundfish species, but this option would allow for this flexibility. Option 2 considers extending a prohibition against discarding legal sized halibut while IFQ fishing to participants of the

CDQ halibut fishery. The third option of the PPA would allow a Pacific cod CDQ directed fishery to occur before, during, and after the halibut CDQ season set by the International Pacific Halibut Commission by using a combination of halibut CDQ and a CDQ group's Prohibited Species Quota (PSQ) to account for halibut caught while Pacific cod CDQ fishing.

However, in public testimony, the CDQ groups explained the truncation of the actual halibut CDQ seasons compared to that allowed by the IPHC (which generally runs mid-March to mid-November). They expressed concern that, due to factors such as ocean and weather conditions, processing capacity, and halibut catch limits, there was diversity across CDQ group (and by year) as to the exact length, and timing of those internally-established seasons. CDQ group representatives suggested a delay in final action on this analysis to allow the possibility of creating a regulatory framework that provided more realistic opportunity for a directed Pacific cod fishery to emerge before and after their internally-established halibut CDQ seasons.

Based on this testimony, the Council's motion carried forward the CDQ group representatives' suggestion to create a sub-option that explored management methods that would allow each group to annually determine a date in which a directed Pacific cod CDQ fishery with a requirement to discard all halibut as PSC would switch over into a dual-target fishery (halibut CDQ/IFQ and Pacific cod); and a date that the fishery would switch back to a Pacific cod CDQ-only directed fishery. A revised analysis will examine the tradeoff between the potential increase in administrative burden versus the benefits and the probability that they would accrue for each CDQ community. Final action is scheduled for February. Staff contact is Sarah Marrinan.

Ecosystem Committee

The Council acted on several actions to give effect to the Council's vision statement which were recommended by the Ecosystem Committee. The Council approved revisiting the groundfish workplan, which identifies priority actions to implement the groundfish management policy objectives, and which has not been updated since 2007. The Council also concurred with planning a discussion of the Council (one or two Council members or staff) with representatives of the North Pacific Research Board, and the AFSC, to inform them of the Council's recently adopted vision statement, and discuss the status of stable funding for long-term ecosystem monitoring that is necessary for continued ecosystem management. Finally, the Council approved approaching its partners on the Alaska Marine Ecosystem Forum, which brings together the Council and Federal and State agencies with a responsibility for marine activities. Council staff will investigate whether there is interest in re-initiating the Forum over the next few months. Staff contact is Steve MacLean.

Crab Right of First Refusal Contract Terms

The Council heard a report from NMFS staff on the BSAI crab rationalization program right of first refusal (ROFR) contract terms. Stakeholders had previously testified in favor of modifying a provision in the ROFR contract terms that states the ROFR applies to, "all processing shares and other goods included in that agreement". Stakeholders were interested in increasing the flexibility in the contract provisions by allowing the PQS holder and ROFR holder the opportunity to renegotiate the terms of the sale under the ROFR terms if they so choose. This revision would allow the PQS holder and the ROFR holder the opportunity to discuss what the ROFR would apply to in the event of a sale which triggers the ROFR.

This addendum issue finalizes a package of ROFR amendments, titled 'Modifications to Community Provisions'. This package seeks to address some of the shortcomings of the crab ROFR that have been highlighted to the Council over a number of years. This package addresses three other actions including 1) increasing the time frame the ROFR holder has to exercise and perform on a ROFR once it is triggered; 2) modifying provisions related to the conditions under which the ROFR may lapse; and 3) a suite of four provisions to provide additional notices from the PQS holder to NMFS and to the right holder in an effort to increase transparency. These amendments will be implemented with the objective of mitigating ROFR disputes in the future. Staff contact is Sarah Marrinan.

Staff Tasking

In addition to discussing the timing and relative priority of previously tasked projects, and tasking for various workgroups and committees, the Council provided clarifications on several important issues. First, the Council re-affirmed their long standing policy on commenting on proposed legislation, whereby if the time for response cannot be accomplished by review during a Council meeting, the Executive Director, and/or the Chair, may respond on behalf of the Council when requested. Second, the Council noted the Secretary of Commerce response to the emergency petition on salmon bycatch and that the response was consistent with Council discussions of the petition. The Council also reviewed committees and committee chairmanship. Several committees that had completed their work were disbanded, including the golden king crab arbitration workgroup, the halibut charter stakeholder committee, the non-target species committee, the Steller sea lion mitigation committee, and the comprehensive data collection committee. Additionally, the Council tasked staff to do the following:

- Send a letter to the NMFS Assistant Administrator regarding the Council's role and public process in the re-examination of critical habitat for Steller sea lions.
- Send a letter to Senator Begich -- at his request -- regarding Council resources and priorities for electronic monitoring, stock assessments, and other issues.
- Send a letter to the Alaska Arctic Policy Commission describing the Council's interest in the Arctic region and requesting a briefing as well as copies of their final report.
- Send a letter to NMFS on observer funding requirements.
- Meet with IPHC Commissioners at the February Council meeting to discuss the 2014 survey results and assessment, the total mortality accounting report, and the draft analysis of BSAI halibut PSC limits.
- Schedule a discussion of Arctic issues with presentations to inform the Council of ongoing activities.
- Schedule a review of the research priorities classification system developed by the SSC workgroup (critical, urgent, essential, important), following a review by the plan teams.
- Provide data analysis of catch, discard, and retention - on a haul by haul basis - to improve understanding of catch of flathead sole and rock sole in the TLAS fishery and pollock in the Amendment 80 fisheries.



Boats in Sand Point
Photo: Sam Cunningham

Bering Sea FEP

In February 2014, the Council reviewed a discussion paper on the development of a Bering Sea Fishery Ecosystem Plan (FEP), and decided to seek public input on what objectives might be, and how the plan could be structured to be of benefit to fishery management decision making. At this meeting, the Council reviewed public comment from the three Council hearings in Nome, Seattle, and Anchorage, as well as written submissions, and opted to continue with development of the FEP. The Council asked its Ecosystem Committee to develop a draft set of goals and objectives for the FEP for Council consideration, informed by public comment and the Committee's recommendations from their September meeting. The approach and format of the FEP should build on existing Council plans and policies, and be action-informing rather than action-forcing. The Council expressed concerns about the time and staff resources that tasking an FEP might entail, and challenged the Committee to bring back a discussion of how a BS FEP might inform the management process, and improve processes and tools for bringing science into management. Staff contact is Diana Evans.

Items of Interest

Nominations sought for two new Task Forces of the Marine Fisheries Advisory Committee.

The Marine Fisheries Advisory Committee (MAFAC) is seeking nominations for two new task forces that are being established to support its advisory work for the Secretary of Commerce on all living marine resource matters that are the responsibility of the Department of Commerce. One task force will focus on climate and marine resources issues and the other on aquaculture issues.

Details on the ideal qualifications and potential work descriptions of the two new Task Forces can be found through these links:

[Aquaculture Task Force](#)

[Climate and Marine Resources Task Force](#)

How to submit a nomination: Nominations for both task forces must be postmarked or have an email date stamp on or before November 17, 2014.

Saltonstall-Kennedy Grant Program

NOAA is announcing the availability of approximately \$18 million to support research projects under the FY2014/2015 Saltonstall-Kennedy Grant Program. The solicitation will be open for 60 days, and closes in early December, with final decisions coming in June 2015. Research priorities for 2014/2015 include to maximize fishing opportunities and jobs, improve the cost effectiveness and capacity for fishery observations, increase the supply, quality and diversification of domestic seafood, and improve the quality and quantity of fishery information from the U.S. territories. Details about these priority areas can be found in the grant solicitation. For further information on research priorities and details on how to apply, please visit the Grants.GOV weblink at:

www.grants.gov/web/grants/search-grants.html?keywords=Saltonstall-Kennedy

DRAFT NPFMC THREE-MEETING OUTLOOK - updated 10/20/2014

December 8-16, 2014 Anchorage, AK	February 2-10, 2015 Seattle, WA	April 6-14, 2015 Anchorage, AK
NPRB Report	IPHC Report/Meeting (?) Halibut total mortality accounting: SSC review	
VMS Discussion paper: Review	AI Pcod Allocation: Initial Review	AI Pcod Allocation: Final Action
Bering Sea Salmon Bycatch: Initial Review	Observer Lead Level 2: Workgroup report	Bering Sea Salmon Bycatch: Final Action (T) Salmon ICA and IPA: Reports from Industry Salmon Bycatch Genetics: Update
Observer coverage on small CPs: Discussion paper	GOA Tending (2015): Discussion Paper	GOA Trawl Bycatch Management: Preliminary Analysis
Electronic Monitoring: Workgroup report; Discuss alternatives	Electronic Monitoring research plan: SSC and Council review Observer coverage on BSAI trawl CVs: Initial Review (T)	Cooperative Reports (AFA, Amendment 80, CGOA Rockfish, and BSAI Crab): Action as necessary
Charter Halibut Management Measures for 2015: Final Action	Bering Sea Halibut PSC: Initial Review Industry sector reports on Bering Sea halibut bycatch	Research Priorities: Review Classification
GOA sablefish longline pots: Initial Review Vessel IFQ Caps: Discussion paper	GOA sablefish longline pots: Final Action Area 4A halibut retention in sablefish pots: Initial Review (T)	BSAI Greenland Turbot Allocation: Initial Review (T) Groundfish Policy and Workplan: Review
Pribilof canyon corals: Receive comments on range of alternatives	CDQ P.cod fishery development: Final Action	Bering Sea FEP: Eco Committee report; goals and objectives
FMP language LLP exemption housekeeping: Initial/Final Action	Norton Sound Red King Crab OFL/ABC Crab modeling report (SSC Only)	Scallop SAFE and plan team report: Adopt OFL/ABC
Crab Workgroup report on regional delivery framework agreement		
Final groundfish harvest specs: Approve; PT reports (w/data tables of TLAS/AM 80 catch)		ITEMS BELOW NOT YET SCHEDULED
GOA Skate MRA revisions: Final Action		BS Slope and Canyon Survey: Final Report (June) Charter Halibut CATCH: Initial Review (June - T) BSAI Crab 10-year Review (2015) EFH 5-year Review (2015) BSAI Crab bycatch limits/area closure evaluation: Disc paper Observer Lead Level 2: Discussion paper Observer Tending: Initial Review Observer Program supplemental EA (June 2015) Halibut Deck Sorting EFP: Review Halibut DMRs 2016-2018; CDQ rates
Appointments to SSC, AP, and PNCIAC	EFH 5-year Review update: SSC only	

AI - Aleutian Islands
AFA - American Fisheries Act
BiOp - Biological Opinion
BSAI - Bering Sea and Aleutian Islands
BKC - Blue King Crab
BOF - Board of Fisheries
CQE - Community Quota Entity
CDQ - Community Development Quota
EDR - Economic Data Reporting
EFH - Essential Fish Habitat
EFP - Exempted Fishing Permit
EIS - Environmental Impact Statement
FEP - Fishery Ecosystem Plan
FLL - Freezer longliners
GOA - Gulf of Alaska
GKC - Golden King Crab
GHL - Guideline Harvest Level

HAPC - Habitat Areas of Particular Concern
IFQ - Individual Fishing Quota
ICA - Inter-cooperative Agreements
IPA - Incentive Program Agreements
LLP - Limited License Plan
MPA - Marine Protected Area
MRA - Maximum Retainable Allowance
PSC - Prohibited Species Catch
RKC - Red King Crab
ROFR - Right of First Refusal
SIR - Supplemental Information Report
SSC - Scientific and Statistical Committee
SAFE - Stock Assessment and Fishery Evaluation
SSL - Steller Sea Lion
TAC - Total Allowable Catch
VMS - Vessel Monitoring System

Future Meeting Dates and Locations
February 2-10, 2015, Seattle
April 6-14, 2015, Anchorage
June 1-9, 2015, Sitka
October 5-13, 2015 Anchorage
December 7-15, 2015, Anchorage
February 1-9, 2016, Portland
April 4 - 12, 2016, Anchorage
June 6-14 , 2016, Kodiak
October 3 -11, 2016 Anchorage
December 5-13, 2016, Anchorage

(T) = Tentative