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# News & Notes

North Pacific Fishery Management Council

October 2015

## Council Elections and Appointments

The Council re-elected Dan Hull as Chairman, and Bill Tweit as vice-chair. Dr. Jim Balsiger administered the Oath of Office to new Council member Andy Mezirow, and to re-appointed members Dan Hull and Craig Cross. Mezirow owns and operates Crackerjack Charters out of Seward and has served on the AP as well as participated in the Halibut Charter Implementation Committee meetings. Cross is serving his 2<sup>nd</sup> 3-year term on the Council and works for Aleutian Spray Fisheries out of Seattle, and Hull is serving his 3<sup>rd</sup> 3-year term and participates in the longline and gillnet fisheries in Cordova.

The Council also appointed Kari Fenske to fill a position on the SSC for the Washington Department of Fish and Wildlife, where she is a part of the Marine Fish Science Team. Lew Coggins has also been appointed to the SSC from the USFWS, where he is a fishery biologist for the Yukon Delta National Wildlife Refuge.



## Pribilof Canyon Corals

The Council reviewed a report from NMFS on the occurrence of deep-sea coral habitat in the eastern Bering Sea slope and canyons. The NMFS conducted a line-transect survey in 2014 along the Bering Sea slope and canyons using an underwater, stereo, drop camera. A total of 250 transects were completed and more than 250,000 photos were analyzed to estimate coral, sponge, and sea whip abundance, distribution, height, and vulnerability to anthropogenic damage.

The survey results validated the modeled predictions of coral abundance and confirmed that densities of corals in the Eastern Bering Sea were low, even where they occurred (around Pribilof Canyon and the slope area to the northwest of the canyon). The average transect-wide density of corals in the Eastern Bering Sea was 0.005 individuals/m<sup>2</sup>, and the maximum density was 0.28 individuals/m<sup>2</sup>. These estimates are substantially lower than the average (1.23 individuals/m<sup>2</sup>), and maximum (3.85 individuals/m<sup>2</sup>) densities found in the Aleutian Islands where the Council enacted protections for deep-sea corals in 2005. Coral densities differ among the different areas in Alaska because of differences in the amount of suitable substrates available for colonization. Camera surveys in the Aleutian Islands, Bowers Bank, and Gulf of Alaska found rocky habitat on 63%, 42%, and 58% of transects, respectively, compared to 18% in the Eastern Bering Sea.

To determine vulnerability of corals to fishery impacts, the AFSC modeled the upper quartiles of coral height and density. Because the corals in the Eastern Bering Sea are relatively small (averaging 8 inches or less in height for most taxonomic groups), and the occurrence is low, vulnerability of corals to fishery related impacts are lower than in other places in Alaska. This low vulnerability was supported by survey observations showing little damage due to fishing. Although direct evidence of fishing (trawl

tracks, trawl net, pot and longline gear) occurred on 32 (24%) transects and damaged invertebrates (sea whips, sponges, corals) occurred on 68 (27%) transects, damaged taxa and direct evidence of fishing occurred on only 8 (3%) transects. This suggests that direct evidence of fishing damage to invertebrates was rare, and it is likely that much of the damage that was observed was not of anthropogenic origin.

After reviewing the report, and based upon a review by the Scientific and Statistical Committee, the Council concluded that scientific evidence (from trawl surveys, the NOAA stereo-camera survey, and a third party video transect survey) does not suggest that there is a risk to the deep-sea corals present in Pribilof and Zhemchug Canyons and adjacent slope areas under current management. The evidence shows low occurrence and density of deep-sea corals, lack of substrate to support corals, and low vulnerability to fishery impacts of existing deep-sea corals in these areas. To be responsive to its stated need to evaluate historical and current patterns of fishing effort, the Council requested that NMFS provide updated data on the distribution, intensity, and depth of fishing effort in locations of known and predicted coral abundance. The Council also requested that AFSC continue to monitor the coral communities in the Bering Sea, by reporting in the Ecosystem SAFE chapter:

1. Changes in coral frequency, composition, and distribution in the trawl survey,
2. Changes in trawl and fixed gear effort in areas of model predicted coral abundance.

This concludes a nearly decade-long public process at the North Pacific Fishery Management Council to understand the distribution and abundance of deep-sea corals in the Bering Sea, and to determine whether additional measures are needed at this time to protect corals in the Bering Sea, similar to measures implemented to protect corals in the Aleutian Islands and Gulf of Alaska. Staff contact is Steve MacLean.

# AP/SSC Nominations

The Council is accepting nominations for its Scientific and Statistical Committee and 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: Art Nelson (finishing out the year for Becca Robbins Gisclair), Dan Donich (finishing out the year for Andy Mezirow), John Gruver, Mitch Kilborn, Craig Lowenberg, Joel Peterson, and Anne Vanderhoeven. Paddy O'Donnell currently serves the special one year appointment. Please send letters of interest and/or nominations along with a resume to [npfmc.comments@noaa.gov](mailto:npfmc.comments@noaa.gov).  
**Nominations close December 1.**

# Observer Actions

## **2016 Annual Deployment Plan**

The Council reviewed the Draft 2016 Observer Annual Deployment Plan (ADP), received a report from its Observer Advisory Committee (OAC), and provided recommendations to NMFS. The Council supports the ADP's continuing recommendation to use the trip selection method to assign observers to vessels, and concurs with deploying exclusively into three gear strata in 2016, for trawl, longline, and pot gear (regardless of vessel length). The ADP will use an optimal allocation method to deploy observers among the strata, with preliminary selection rates of 29% for trawl vessels, and 14% each for hook-and-line and pot vessels.

The 2016 ADP also expands the "No Selection Pool" to include an EM Selection pool of fixed gear vessels that elect to opt-in and participate in electronic monitoring (EM) research, in addition to vessels fishing with jig gear and vessels less than 40 feet length overall. The Council agreed that for 2016, no conditional releases or temporary exemptions from observer coverage will be granted for limited bunk space or liferaft capacity, as the EM pre-implementation pool provides a monitoring alternative for these vessels. The Council recommended, however, that a limited exemption be continued in 2016, where ODDS programming prevents a small vessel from being selected for a third consecutive observed trip. A second area where the Council recommendation differed from the draft ADP was with respect to reducing the number of trips that can be logged at one time in ODDS, from three to two. The Council heard testimony from stakeholders that in some fisheries, being able to log three trips is critical in a race for fish situation, to avoid delays associated with the potential 72 hour lag time between logging a trip and obtaining an observer. The Council recommended no changes to ODDS for 2016, but asked the agency to further evaluate the scope of potential data bias associated with this issue and the third consecutive trip exemption in the next Annual Report, as well as alternate solutions.

The Council supports retaining Chinook salmon sampling protocols as in 2015, and also continuing to allow trawl catcher vessels fishing for Pacific cod in the BSAI the opportunity to opt-in to the full coverage pool by arrangement with the agency. The Council also supports a change in the 2016 ADP whereby vessel operators and processors will be asked to fill in the ODDS trip tracking number when reporting deliveries in eLandings. Linking the ODDS

trip with eLandings will help NMFS better understand how well observer coverage is distributed across fisheries. Outreach this winter will focus on this and other observer program changes, and meetings are planned for Seattle, Homer, Anchorage, Kodiak, Petersburg, and Sitka. The most current meeting information can be found at <http://alaskafisheries.noaa.gov/sustainablefisheries/observers/>.

Finally, the Council requested that in preparation for the development of the 2017 ADP, the agency evaluate different weighting schemes for optimal allocation among gear strata, such that discards are weighted more heavily than retained catch. The Council anticipates that information to allow Council feedback could be included in the Annual Report.

Staff contact is Diana Evans.

## **Observer Coverage for BSAI Trawl CVs**

The Council completed initial review of an action that could alter the observer coverage requirements for trawl catcher vessels that target non-pollock species in the BSAI area. The Council considered how to allow CV owners to select the observer coverage category that best suits their fishing plan and enables them to comply with cooperative bycatch management goals, without creating undue burdens on other vessels or on the Observer Program itself. Duplicative requirements for some vessels to provide observers with data logging technology were also discussed.

The Council added a new suboption for consideration at final action, and identified a preliminary preferred alternative in order to focus further analysis and public comment on a particular approach. The new suboption relates to Alternative 3, which is the preliminary preferred alternative. Alternative 3 would provide the owner of any BSAI trawl catcher vessel with the choice to be in the full coverage category for the upcoming year; an owner could choose a different category from one year to the next, depending on his or her business plan. With the additional suboption, the Council will consider whether the deadline for this annual determination will be July 1 of the year preceding the one in which the categorical selection will apply, or October 15. Staff contact is Sam Cunningham.

## Electronic Monitoring

The Council approved the 2016 Electronic Monitoring (EM) Pre-implementation Plan as recommended by the Council's Fixed Gear EM Workgroup. The plan defines EM deployment in 2016 for vessels that meet the Council's priority criteria, namely longline vessels, 40-57.5 feet length overall, which have trouble carrying an observer due to insufficient life raft or bunk space capacity. The EMWG proposes a 60-vessel EM pool for these vessels in 2016, with four deployment time periods and a 30% target coverage level in each deployment period. Vessels participating in the EM pool will be placed in the "No Selection Pool" for human observer coverage in 2016.

There are currently 56 longline vessels in the 40-57.5 feet size class that have opted into the EM pool, by responding to a letter sent by the NMFS Observer Program earlier this year. Now that the Council has finalized the program rules for 2016 pre-implementation, those vessels will be contacted to confirm their placement in EM selection pool, or to give them an opportunity to tell NMFS they would prefer to return to the human observer pool. There is also room within the Council's approved EM selection pool to accommodate a small number of additional vessels that meet the Council's priority criteria. In 2016, vessels in the human observer pool will not be granted conditional releases or temporary exemptions for limited bunk space or liferaft capacity, as the EM pre-implementation pool provides a monitoring alternative. Any vessels that are interested in participating in the EM pre-implementation program in 2016 should contact Liz Chilton at the Observer Program by November 20, at (206) 526-4197, or by email at [elizabeth.chilton@noaa.gov](mailto:elizabeth.chilton@noaa.gov).

The Council also concurred with EM Workgroup recommendations to continue other EM research and development in 2016, within the confines of the budget. Research projects include developing other EM technologies, expanding EM into other fixed gear sectors, and developing infrastructure to integrate EM data into the observer database. Three to five 40-57.5 ft longline vessels are being solicited to test stereo cameras in 2016, and will be placed into the "No Selection Pool" in addition to the 60 pre-implementation vessels. Pot cod EM research will continue into 2016 through a NFWF grant to the North Pacific Fishing Association. Vessels that are interested in using EM in the future are also encouraged to contact the Observer Program, so that the EM Workgroup can continue to build the list of vessels who might eventually participate in the EM program.

Staff contact is Diana Evans.

## Other observer items

The Council also received a status report on all the observer analytical projects under staff tasking, and received recommendations from the OAC about observer regulatory amendments. The Council had previously tasked a discussion paper to evaluate regulatory and non-regulatory solutions to the shortage of fixed gear lead level 2 observers, and under staff tasking, asked staff to address additional solutions proposed by the OAC. The Chair also appointed Luke Szymanski, of AIS, to the Observer Advisory Committee. Staff contact is Diana Evans.

## Staff Tasking

In addition to discussing the relative priority of previously tasked projects, the Council initiated several new projects and clarified direction and tasking for its various committees. Additionally, the Council tasked staff to do the following:

- Send a letter to the USFWS suggesting that 1) the new take guidelines for short-tailed albatross be robust to population growth, and 2) extend the deadline for re-consultation if necessary to ensure that all existing information is considered, and 3) the Council should have an opportunity to review proposed changes (if any) to the take guidelines;
- Provide comments on NOAA's Habitat Enterprise Strategic Plan;
- Activate a small spatial management/stock structure workgroup consisting of Council staff, NMFS staff, other plan team members, and SSC members, with an initial focus on BSAI RE/BS rockfish;
- Prepare a discussion paper to evaluate methods for limiting access to groundfish fisheries in the Al offshore sectors, and establish a control date of December 31, 2015 for future management actions that limit participation in those fisheries;
- Prepare a discussion paper that would evaluate participation and effort in the Bering Sea yellowfin sole trawl limited access fishery in response to a potential need to limit entry in the offshore sector in that fishery. The Council established a control date of October 13, 2015 for any action considering future participation in the offshore sector of this fishery;
- Initiate an analysis to move squid in the BSAI and GOA into the ecosystem component category, with no catch specifications required;
- Include additional information in the previously tasked Lead Level 2 discussion paper to help guide the Council in developing alternatives for a potential regulatory amendment package;
- Revise the draft Halibut Management Framework for public comment at the December meeting.

### The Charter Halibut

**Implementation Committee** will meet on October 21, in Anchorage and via teleconference, to recommend 2016 charter halibut management measures for analysis. Results of the analysis will be presented to the committee on December 8, 2014, in Anchorage, where the committee will select charter halibut management measures for recommendation to the Council for implementation in 2016. The Council is soliciting nominations for an Area 3A charter halibut representative to serve on the Charter Halibut Implementation Committee. Please submit nominations to [npfmc.comments@noaa.gov](mailto:npfmc.comments@noaa.gov) by November 15, 2015. Staff contact is Steve MacLean.

### The Recreational Quota Entity

**Committee** will meet on December 7 2015, in Anchorage, to review the initial review draft of the RQE Analysis. The Council is soliciting nominations for an Area 3A charter halibut representative to serve on the Recreational Quota Entity Committee. Please submit nominations to [npfmc.comments@noaa.gov](mailto:npfmc.comments@noaa.gov) by November 15, 2015. Staff contact is Steve MacLean.



## Upcoming meetings

### Charter Halibut Implementation

**Committee:** October 21, via Teleconference, 1pm – 5pm. 907-271-2869

**Ecosystem Committee:** October 29, 1pm to October-30; NMFS, 222 W 7<sup>th</sup> Ave, Anchorage

**EM Workgroup:** November 2-3, Marriott Hotel, Anchorage. 12.30p-5p Monday, 8a-5p Tuesday.

**Groundfish Plan Team meetings:** November 16-20, AFSC, Seattle.

The agenda for the meeting is posted on the Council's website. PLEASE NOTE: Beginning October 10th, US Driver's licenses will be accepted for admittance to the NOAA facility only if they are Real ID compliant. Alternative identification, such as a passport, will be required if a license is non-compliant. For more information see <http://www.dhs.gov/real-id-public-faqs>

### Recreational Quota Entity

**Committee:** December 7, 1-5 pm, Anchorage Hilton.

### Charter Halibut Implementation

**Committee:** December 8, 1-5 pm, Anchorage Hilton.

**IFQ Committee:** December 8, Anchorage Hilton

**Enforcement Committee:** December 8, Anchorage Hilton

**EM Workgroup:** January 2016, Dates and location TBD.

**Crab Plan Team meeting:** January 11-13, Anchorage AK. Place TBD.

**Crab Modeling workshop:** January 14-15, Anchorage AK. Place TBD

## Halibut Framework

At this meeting the Council reviewed a draft halibut management Framework discussion paper, which attempts to provide an improved structure for informing Council decision-making on halibut issues, and to provide better coordination with IPHC management processes. The Council requested staff to expand on this draft Framework in several areas (motion is posted on the Council's website), for consideration at its upcoming December meeting where stakeholder input and Council discussion is expected to further refine this evolving management Framework. Council contact is Chris Oliver.

Related to the halibut management Framework, the Council received an update at this meeting regarding the ongoing initiatives by the industry to effect deck sorting of halibut to reduce overall mortality. This work is being conducted through Exempted Fishing Permits (EFPs) which are reviewed by the Council and approved by NMFS. Mr. John Gauvin provided an overview of current and projected EFP activities, including ongoing discussions between EFP applicants and NMFS regarding the specific monitoring requirements needed for the deck sorting EFPs, as well as monitoring requirements associated with potential regulatory allowances of deck sorting. In order to facilitate these ongoing discussions, the Council expressed its desire to be periodically updated on the progress of those discussions, and volunteered Council member Craig Cross to participate in those discussions, as necessary, in order to keep the Council apprised of the status of the deck sorting initiatives. Council contact for this issue is Diana Evans.

## Crab Management

The Council took final action to approve the annual BSAI Crab stock assessment and fishery evaluation (SAFE) report and to establish final specifications (overfishing limits and acceptable biological catch) for 6 annually surveyed crab stocks. EBS Tanner crab and Pribilof Islands red king crab are estimated to be above target biomass levels ( $B_{MSY}$ ) for 2015/16 while Saint Matthew blue king is estimated below  $B_{MSY}$ . Pribilof Islands blue king crab stock remains overfished and estimated to be well below its MSST. The BSAI Crab SAFE report and SSC recommendations to the Council on crab specifications are posted on the Council's website. The Council requested that the Crab Plan Team give considerations to options for modifying the

timing of the stock assessment process to allow additional review time following the availability of the summer survey data each fall. The Crab plan team will discuss this at their January meeting and provide recommended options to the Council for February. Staff contact is Diana Stram.

## Groundfish Specifications

The Council received reports from the Joint, BSAI and GOA groundfish plan teams on a variety of upcoming assessment related issues and adopted proposed specifications for 2016-2017 for BSAI and GOA groundfish. These proposed specifications are only used to inform the proposed rule for final specifications. Final specifications for 2016-2017 will be established at the December Council meeting following updated stock assessments reviewed by the Plan Teams in November and the SSC in December.

It is the Council's intent to review BSAI species specification setting in December recognizing a shared responsibility with the IPHC to maintain a viable commercial halibut fishery in Areas 4CDE for the sustained participation of Saint Paul and other Western Alaska communities. Further, it is the Council's intent to continue to minimize bycatch by assessing the adequacy of the Amendment 80 cooperatives bycatch savings agreements(s) as well as actual halibut bycatch savings up to the December specifications setting as the Council determines final species specifications for the 2016 season.

In conjunction with groundfish specifications the Council took two additional actions. The first was to initiate an amendment analysis to move squid species into the Ecosystem Component of the FMPs in both the BSAI and GOA. The Council's problem statement and alternatives for analysis are posted on the Council's website. The second action was to initiate an internal workgroup of Plan Team, SSC, Regional office and Council staff to provide recommendations on the application of the Council's spatial management policy to stock structure and spatial issues. The Joint Groundfish Plan Teams have requested clarification on a number of issues with the respect to the application of the management policy. The workgroup will meet prior to the November Plan Team meeting and provide recommendations on progress at that time. The Council specifically requested that the workgroup prioritize discussions of management options for the BSAI Blackspotted/Rougheye rockfish complex.

Staff contacts for groundfish are Diana Stram (BSAI) and Jim Armstrong (GOA).

# WAG Crab Exemption

The Council heard a staff presentation on proposed amendment that would exempt harvesters in the Western Aleutian Islands golden king crab (WAG) fishery from the regulation that prohibits the continuation of a fishing trip subsequent to a partial offload of crab in the Crab Rationalization program.

In effect, this action would allow vessels harvesting WAG to deliver partial offloads of crab to the live crab market in Adak, opportunistically; when the markets and commercial airlines allow for it, and subsequently continue fishing. While the processing plant in Adak does not currently have the product volume or rate of product supply required to justify accepting and processing a full offload from catcher vessels prosecuting this fishery, the processor can accept small deliveries of live crab product to be packed and shipped by the commercial airline. Eliminating the full offload requirement for this fishery could allow vessels a better opportunity to supply small deliveries of WAG to Adak, without subsequently incurring the harvest inefficiency costs associated with traveling significant distances to deliver a partially-full vessel of WAG.

The draft analysis for Public Review was expanded primarily in two ways for final action: 1) It includes a more thorough description justifying why it is not believed that illegal discarding of crab is a common occurrence in the rationalized fisheries and why it is not expected that this action would encourage illegal discarding of crab; and 2) the analysis is expanded in its discussion of the state observer program and its discussion of why this action is not expected to motivate harvesters to conduct non-representative fishing when observers are present.

The Council took final action by selecting this regulatory exemption for the WAG fishery as a preferred alternative. Staff contact is Sarah Marrinan.

# AI Pacific Cod Processing

At this meeting, the Council took final action to provide stability to Aleutian Islands (AI) shoreplant operations and the communities dependent on shoreside processing activity. Specifically, the Council recommended that prior to March 21, the A season trawl catcher vessel (CV) Pacific cod harvest in the Bering Sea shall be limited to an amount equal to the Bering Sea and Aleutian Islands (BSAI) aggregate CV trawl sector A season allocation minus the lesser of the AI directed Pacific cod non-community development quota (CDQ) total

allowable catch (TAC) or 5,000 mt. In addition, directed fishing for non-CDQ AI Pacific cod is prohibited for all vessels except CVs delivering to shoreplants west of 170° longitude in the AI prior to March 15, unless restrictions preventing stranding of AI Pacific cod TAC are removed earlier.

In their preferred alternative, the Council included Option 1 which allows for any amount of the AI directed Pacific cod non-CDQ TAC about the amount set aside from the trawl CV BSAI allocation to be available to any sector for directed fishing and is not subject to the regional delivery requirement.

To assist in preventing stranding of AI Pacific cod TAC, the Council included Option 3. Under that option, if less than 1,000 mt of the AI Pacific cod non-CDQ TAC has been landed at AI shoreplants by February 28, the restriction on delivery to other processors and the restriction on the trawl CV sector allocation shall be suspended for the remainder of the year.

Finally, the Council included Option 4 in their preferred alternative, as another measure to prevent stranding of AI Pacific cod TAC. If prior to November 1, neither the City of Adak nor the City of Atka have notified NMFS of the intent to process non-CDQ directed AI Pacific cod in the upcoming year, the AI shoreside delivery requirement and restriction on the trawl CV sector allocation is suspended for the upcoming year. Cities can voluntarily provide notice prior to the selected date if they do not intend to process AI Pacific cod.

The Council's purpose is to provide community protection measures in the AI through prioritizing AI Pacific cod for all catcher vessels delivering to AI shoreplants under small AI Pacific cod TACs, while allowing opportunities for all sectors in the AI Pacific cod fishery later in March and during periods of high AI Pacific cod TACs. The Council noted that this recommendation strikes a balance between providing community protections and ensuring that the harvest sector has an opportunity to achieve optimum yield.

Finally, during staff tasking, the Council requested staff prepare a discussion paper looking at methods for limiting access to groundfish fisheries in the offshore sectors in the AI. As a reference for future management actions that limit offshore participation in the AI groundfish fisheries, the Council included a control date of December 31, 2015. The Council also clarified that this tasking is to be combined with a previous Council tasking in February 2015 to prepare a discussion paper on the conservation and management issues associated with establishing a seasonal split for the AI Pacific cod TAC.

Staff contact for this action is Jon McCracken.

# GOA Trawl Actions

## GOA Trawl Bycatch Management Program

The Council reviewed a discussion paper on elements of the previously proposed framework for a new GOA trawl management structure, which was set forth in October 2014. The Council took action to add several options to the pre-existing Alternatives (Alternative 2 and 3), and to add Alternative 4 to the range for analysis. The current range of Alternatives includes:

Alternative 1: No action;

Alternative 2: Voluntary Inshore and Catcher/Processor cooperatives with transferrable annual allocations of PSC, target, and secondary species, full observer coverage, community stability measures for Inshore cooperatives, and opportunities for gear conversion;

Alternative 3: Options to allocate between 5% and 15% of allocated fishing quota to either a Community Fisheries Association or an Adaptive Management program;

Alternative 4: Voluntary Inshore cooperatives with transferrable annual PSC allocations, and full observer coverage.

For Alternative 2, the Council expanded the range of potential reductions to the GOA trawl halibut PSC limits for analysis, and added suboptions that further define how the program might place a portion of each cooperative's annual PSC allocation under the control of the processor member. Alternative 4 has many elements in common with Alternative 2. Under Alternative 4, allocations of PSC quota to cooperatives would be made on the basis of either (1) equal shares relative to the number of vessels in a cooperative, or (2) based on the capacity of the vessels in a given cooperative. The primary difference from Alternative 2 is that Alternative 4 would not allocate groundfish harvest privileges to the cooperatives. Elements that are specific to the CP sector or to the allocation of groundfish species are not included in Alternative 4. Similarly, elements of Alternative 2 that establish measures to protect communities from potential adverse impacts associated with groundfish allocation are not part of Alternative 4. However, Alternative 4 does contain elements that could restrict PSC quota transferability and limit fleet consolidation.

The Council tasked the drafting of a work plan that details how staff will develop an Environmental Impact Statement. That plan will be presented to the Council at the December 2015 meeting, and will include the identification of key personnel, information gaps, and the prioritization of analytical tasks that might receive interim review and public feedback.

### Observer Coverage on GOA Trawl CVs

The Council reviewed a discussion paper that identified potential effects of requiring 100% observer coverage on GOA trawl catcher vessels, while the fishery remains managed under a limited access structure. The paper considered effects on CV operations, Observer Program administration, and the partial coverage category. The Council did not recommend any further action at this time, but the provided information was noted as useful for future consideration in the context of developing the GOA Trawl Bycatch Management program.

## GOA Chinook Salmon Reapportionment

The Council reviewed a preliminary draft of an RIR/IRFA on Alternatives that would provide the NMFS Regional Administrator with greater in-season flexibility to reapportion Chinook salmon PSC limits between GOA trawl sectors. The purpose of the action is to prevent sector closures, when practicable, without permitting the total amount of Chinook salmon PSC to exceed the existing limit for the GOA trawl fishery as a whole. The Council added one option to the action Alternative, to be analyzed for the next round of review. That option would provide NMFS in-season managers with flexibility in how they apply the "Chinook PSC rollover" provision for the Central GOA Rockfish Program, which was established under GOA Groundfish FMP Amendment 97. Rather than automatically moving Chinook salmon PSC from the Rockfish Program CV sector to the non-pollock CV sector on October 1 of each year, the option would allow NMFS in-season managers to determine an appropriate amount to roll over based on anticipated Rockfish Program CV effort levels for the part of the season that falls after October 1. Staff contact for all GOA trawl actions is Sam Cunningham.

## Council Record Maintained Online

For those interested, all documents related to a council meeting can now be found online through the Council's website and linked through items on the agenda. Items handed out during meetings, as well as Council motions, are also posted to the agenda and are accessible. Audio of the meetings will be available through an online storage site, box.net, and are also available through links on the agenda.

Meeting items are also available to those who use mobile devices through the app iLegislate on google play or itunes. If you are interested in any of these online items and want more information, give the office a call or email [maria.shawback@noaa.gov](mailto:maria.shawback@noaa.gov).



*North Pacific Fishery Management Council's Scientific and Statistical Committee.*



**DRAFT NPFMC THREE-MEETING OUTLOOK - updated 10/20/2015**

December 7-15, 2015 Anchorage, AK	February 1-9, 2016 Portland, OR	April 4-12, 2016 Anchorage, AK
North Pacific Climate Vulnerability Assessment: Review	NEPA Training for SSC, AP, and Council (T)	
BS FEP: <b>Discussion paper, Ecosystem Ctte Report</b>	Redesignation of SSL CH: Agency progress report (T)	EFH 5-year Review: <b>Review Draft Report (T)</b>
GOA Trawl Bycatch Management: <b>Review workplan</b>	GOA Trawl Bycatch Management: <b>Action as necessary (T)</b>	GOA Trawl Bycatch Management: <b>Action as necessary (T)</b>
Halibut Management Framework: <b>Review and Next Steps</b> Biomass based BSAI Halibut PSC Limits: <b>Discussion paper</b> Am 80 Coop Reports on 2016 Halibut PSC Management Plans	BS TLAS YFS Fishery Limited Entry: <b>Discussion Paper (T)</b> Halibut Deck Sorting Scales 2016 EFP: <b>Review</b> Deck Sorting Implementation Industry Workgroup Report (T)	Halibut DMRs methodology: <b>Discussion paper</b> Charter Halibut RQE Program: <b>Final Action (T)</b>
Charter Halibut RQE Program: <b>Initial Review</b> Charter Halibut Measures for 2016		
Halibut/Sablefish IFQ program review: <b>Review outline; Ctte Report</b> Halibut retention in sablefish pots: <b>Discussion paper</b> Area 4 Halibut Leasing Options for CDQ Vessels: <b>Disc paper</b>	Halibut/Sablefish IFQ program review: <b>Ctte Rep/Workplan</b>	Salmon genetics spatial/temporal refinement: <b>Disc Paper</b> Pollock ICA Reports Co-op Reports (AFA, Am 80, GOA Rockfish, BSAI Crab)
Observer Annual Deployment Plan: <b>Update on Final ADP</b> AFA program review: <b>Review Workplan</b>	Observer coverage on BSAI trawl CVs: <b>Final Action</b> EM Analysis: <b>Review Alternatives and Methods</b> GOA tendering activity: <b>Annual Review</b>	AI groundfish offshore sector limited access, and AI Pcod A/B season split: <b>Discussion paper (T)</b>
GOA Salmon PSC Reapportionment: <b>Initial/Final Review</b>		Observer Tendering: <b>Initial Review (T)</b>
Final groundfish harvest specs: <b>Approve; PT report</b> Halibut DMRs 2016-2018: <b>Review and approve</b>	BSAI snow crab bycatch data evaluation: <b>Disc paper (T)</b> WAI RKC Stocks in FMP: <b>Discussion paper</b> BSAI Crab 10-year Review: <b>Review Report (T)</b>	Scallop SAFE and catch specifications: <b>Approve, PT report</b>
Bristol Bay RKC Savings Area EFP: <b>Review and Approve</b>	Crab Plan Team Report Crab Modeling Workshop Report (SSC Only) NS RKC OFL/ABC Catch Specifications: <b>Approve</b>	Squid to Ecosystem Component Category: <b>Initial Review (T)</b>
Enforcement Precepts: <b>Enforcement Ctte Review</b>	Groundfish Policy and Workplan: <b>Review</b>	<b>ITEMS BELOW NOT YET SCHEDULED</b> EM Integration: Initial Review (October 2016) Observer Lead Level 2: <b>Discussion paper</b> Observer Insurance Requirements: <b>Disc paper for Reg Am</b>

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  
EM - Electronic monitoring  
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  
MRA - Maximum Retainable Allowance  
PSC - Prohibited Species Catch  
RKC - Red King Crab  
RQE - Recreational Quota Entity  
SIR - Supplemental Information Report  
SSC - Scientific and Statistical Committee  
SAFE - Stock Assessment and Fishery Evaluation  
SSL - Steller Sea Lion  
TAC - Total Allowable Catch  
TLAS - Trawl Limited Access Sector  
YFS - Yellowfin sole  
VMS - Vessel Monitoring System

**Future Meeting Dates and Locations**

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**