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News & Notes

North Pacific Fishery Management Council

June 2009

Farewell to Council Member Gerry Merrigan

The Council hosted a reception to thank Gerry Merrigan for serving as a Council member for the past 3 years. Many members of the Council family showed up for a roast and toast, and more than once, 3M post it notes were mentioned. Gerry's contribution to fisheries management is appreciated, and we look forward to working with him again in different capacities.



Gerry Merrigan with Arne Fuglvoag



Council Members and guests waiting to toast Gerry applaud.



F/V Willow: Jeb Morrow

BSAI Crab Stock Status

The SSC reviewed draft stock assessments for 8 BSAI crab stocks and made recommendations on OFL Tier levels for all stocks. For those stocks for which OFLs must be determined in the spring to allow for a summer fishery (Norton Sound red king crab and AI golden king crab) the SSC recommended the OFLs for the upcoming crab season. For the remaining 6 stocks, the SSC made recommendations on Tier levels and model parameterization, understanding that the resulting OFLs will be calculated using updated summer trawl survey information at the end of the summer. Those OFLs will be reviewed by the Crab Plan Team in September prior to NMFS determination of OFLs for the 09/10 crab fishing season and TAC determination by the State. The Council will review the final BSAI Crab SAFE report including final OFLs for all stocks at the October 2009 meeting. The draft Crab SAFE report is available on the Council website.

The Council was informed of progress towards rebuilding for those stocks under rebuilding plans: EBS snow crab, Pribilof Islands blue king crab and St. Matthew blue king crab. For EBS snow crab, the draft stock assessment presented rebuilding trajectories that do not indicate that the stock will be rebuilt by the end of the rebuilding time frame under the current harvest strategy. The Council requested that NOAA GC provide a letter by August 1, 2009 detailing what the implications are of not rebuilding this stock during the specified time frame and what options will be available to the Council should this occur. The final EBS snow crab assessment will be available in September following incorporation of the

2009 summer trawl survey data and will provide updated estimates of stock recovery and progress towards rebuilding. In light of the concerns expressed regarding possible harvest constraints, NMFS and the State of Alaska will delay TAC-setting and IFQ-issuance until after the SSC has reviewed the final snow crab assessment at the October 2009 meeting and further guidance has been received on the legal implications of stock rebuilding.

Although 5 years remain under the current rebuilding plan for the Pribilof Islands blue king crab stock, there is as yet no indication of stock recovery despite stringent directed fishery closures. Additional alternatives including area closures in groundfish fisheries are proposed for Council consideration from the crab plan team which could be evaluated in a revised rebuilding plan. Further discussion of these proposed alternatives and affected fisheries will occur at the October 2009 Council meeting. Progress towards rebuilding for the St. Matthew blue king crab stock continues and the stock may be rebuilt if the estimated biomass continues above B_{MSY} for the second consecutive year depending upon the final assessment in September 2009. The Council also tasked staff to provide a discussion paper on crab bycatch in groundfish fisheries by species and gear type as well as existing limits in conjunction with the new process of annual total catch OFLs for BSAI crab stocks. This paper is to be discussed at the September crab plan team meeting and provided for the Council in conjunction with the BSAI crab stock status report in October. Staff contact is Diana Stram.

Ecosystem Committee

The Council tasked the Ecosystem Committee with reviewing upcoming Council actions on reviewing essential fish habitat, setting priorities for habitat areas of particular concern, and identifying marine protected areas to be nominated for the national registry. The Committee will meet on these issues prior to the December Council meeting.

Rural Community Outreach Committee

The Council Chair announced appointments to the newly formed Rural Community Outreach Committee. Per the Council's February 2009 motion, the committee will have three primary tasks: 1) to advise the Council on how to provide opportunities for better understanding and participation from Native Alaska and rural communities; 2) to provide feedback on community impacts sections of specific analyses; and 3) to provide recommendations regarding which proposed Council actions need a specific outreach plan and prioritize multiple actions when necessary. Note that this committee is not intended as the primary mechanism for community input on specific Council actions, instead, it is intended to assist the Council in improving the overall outreach process and analyses relevant to community and Native concerns.

Committee members are as follows: Eric Olson (Chair), Duncan Fields (Council member), Pete Probasco, Paula Cullenberg, Jennifer Hooper, Ole Olsen, and Tom Okleasik. The intent is to have a committee meeting over the summer and report back to the Council in the fall/winter. The committee is no-host, as are all Council committees, so members must pay for their own travel and accommodations. Staff contact is Nicole Kimball.

GOA Pacific Cod Parallel Waters

At its June meeting, the Council reviewed a discussion paper that examined options for addressing management issues in the GOA Pacific cod parallel waters fishery within the context of the proposed Pacific cod sector allocations. Sector allocations may provide stability to long-term participants in the fishery by reducing competition among sectors for access to the GOA Pacific cod resource. However, if entry into the parallel waters fishery remains open, the objective of stability may not be achieved.

There are currently no limits on entry into the parallel waters groundfish fisheries, and no limits on the proportion of the GOA Pacific cod TAC that may be harvested in parallel waters. Vessels fishing in Federal waters are required to hold an LLP license with the appropriate area, gear, and species endorsements, but vessels fishing in State waters are not required to hold an LLP license. If sector allocations are established, an increase in parallel waters activity by new entrants that do not hold LLP licenses has the potential to erode the catches of those participants who contributed catch history to the allocations and depend on the GOA Pacific cod resource.

The discussion paper reviewed two options for the parallel fishery that were included in Component 10 of the sector split motion. Under Option 1, the Council could recommend that the Alaska Board of Fisheries establish parallel waters catch caps for the Western and Central GOA to limit parallel waters catches in those management areas. Under Option 2, the Council could limit access to the parallel fishery by requiring that Federally-permitted vessels also hold an LLP with the appropriate area, gear, and species endorsements in order to participate in the parallel fishery.

At the June meeting, the Council made several revisions to the parallel waters options in the sector split motion. Option 1 was revised so that the Council could recommend management measures to the BOF that limit access to the parallel fishery (i.e., vessel length limits, gear limits, and exclusive registration), but the Council removed the option to recommend a parallel waters catch cap. The Council revised Option 2 to make the language consistent with the alternatives in the BSAI parallel waters motion. While parallel waters catch caps have the potential to limit the erosion of the sector allocations, they could also limit access by those participants who have historically fished mainly in the parallel fishery. Option 2 may limit the potential for new entrants who do not hold GOA LLP licenses from entering the parallel fishery.

The Council is scheduled to receive an Initial Review draft of the GOA Pacific cod sector split analysis in October 2009, and the revised parallel waters options will be incorporated into that

document. The revised sector split motion is available on the Council website (note that only Component 10 has changed). Staff contact is Jeannie Heltzel.

GOA Vessel Capacity

The Council has expressed interest in exploring ways to limit entry of high capacity 58 ft to 60 ft LOA pot and hook-and-line vessels into the GOA Pacific cod fisheries. One approach identified in the fixed gear recency action was to add a vessel capacity endorsement (i.e., length-to-width ratio or simple gross tonnage) to fixed gear licenses. Currently, LLP licenses have a maximum length overall (MLOA) designation, but there is no limit on the width or tonnage of the vessel that may be assigned to a license.

At its April 2009 meeting, the Council reviewed a discussion paper prepared by NMFS that described regulatory, enforcement, and safety concerns with the proposed LLP capacity endorsement. As a result of the concerns expressed in the discussion paper, public testimony, and during AP and Council deliberations, the Council removed the capacity endorsement component from the fixed gear recency motion. The Council requested that staff bring back a revised discussion paper to the June meeting describing potential ways to address the capacity issue within the fixed gear fleet, including alternative length-to-width ratios and any other solutions to the vessel capacity issue suggested by the public (e.g., trip limits or other output controls). The Council reviewed this discussion paper in June, which provided additional background information on the dimensions of vessels that have recently participated in the GOA Pacific cod fisheries and data on trip sizes in the fisheries.

Based on concerns raised during public testimony and Council deliberations, the Council decided to take no further action on this agenda item. Specifically, the Council expressed concern that the purpose and need for the proposed action had not been clearly identified. In addition, limiting the length-to-width ratio of vessels raised enforcement and safety concerns. Trip limits were not considered a desirable approach due to the potential for increased discards and fuel use. Gear limits were not favored by industry participants. The Initial Review draft of the GOA Pacific cod sector split analysis will include additional information on catches by fixed gear vessels 50 ft to 60 ft LOA by width, which the Council could use to consider approaches other than vessel dimension restrictions on LLP licenses to the vessel capacity issue. Staff contact is Jeannie Heltzel.

Chum salmon bycatch

The Council reviewed a discussion paper outlining background data and information on chum (non-Chinook) salmon bycatch in the EBS pollock fishery and the draft suite of alternatives for analysis of bycatch management measures for chum salmon in this fishery. These alternatives were last modified by the Council in April 2008. Since that time the Council has focused intensively on the Chinook Salmon Bycatch Management Measures EIS upon which it took final action in April 2009. The Council received a scoping report from NMFS on comments received during the public scoping period for this forthcoming analysis of chum salmon bycatch measures.

The Council revised its current suite of alternatives and requested that staff extensively expand upon the discussion paper to update all data as available as well as include calculations of relative cap levels and sector-specific bycatch as noted and discuss implications of the revised suite of alternatives, particularly as it relates to the Council's final action on Chinook bycatch management. Implementation of Chinook bycatch measures in the pollock fishery will occur in January 2011. The Council requested that the Salmon Bycatch Workgroup convene a meeting to review and discuss the paper and the current suite of alternatives. The workgroup report will be provided to the Council in conjunction with the review of the discussion paper at the December 2009 Council meeting. A date for the workgroup meeting has not yet been established but will likely be in late October-early November. The full Council motion and revised suite of alternatives, information on the workgroup meeting and the discussion paper (when it is available in the fall) are posted on the Council website. Staff contact is Diana Stram.

Chinook Bycatch Data Collection

At the June meeting, the Council received a report from its Comprehensive Data Collection committee, which met on May 27th in Seattle to discuss collection of data to be used to assess whether the newly adopted Chinook salmon bycatch program is achieving its intended effects. Based on this report and a committee recommendation, the Council advanced for analysis four data collection programs that would supplement existing data sources.

The Council discussed the purpose of the proposed action, including the need to verify and supplement conclusions drawn by industry in the Incentive Plan Agreement (IPA) annual reports. The focus of a data collection program would be to (1) evaluate the effectiveness of the IPA incentives, the hard cap, and the performance standard in terms of reducing salmon bycatch, and (2) evaluate how the Council's action affects where, when, and how pollock fishing and salmon bycatch occur. The Council requested that the analysis include draft statements of these objectives that the Council may consider including in its purpose and need statement.

The alternatives advanced for analysis include the status quo, and four alternatives which would collect some or all of the following elements: price and quantity of salmon and pollock quota transactions, surveys of skippers indicating the rationale for inseason choices of pollock fishing grounds, surveys of the cost of inseason movements, surveys of roe quality, quantity, and price, and surveys of

vessel operating daily costs (such as labor and observer costs). The Council indicated that it supports moving forward with a data collection program to make implementation of the program possible at the time Amendment 91 is implemented or as soon as practicable. During deliberations, the Council, AP, and SSC all noted that the scope of this data collection may be need to be limited to ensure the data collection program can be implemented with Amendment 91 in 2011.

The Council asked that the analysis describe how each of the alternatives meet the objective of evaluating the effectiveness of the IPAs. In addition, the analysis should discuss the feasibility of each alternative, including the effects of each alternative's scope on the timeliness of implementation. Finally, the analysis should include a discussion of how existing data sources may be used to evaluate the effectiveness of the IPAs to inform the Council as it develops a plan to independently verify that IPAs are creating the intended incentives.

Initial review of this analysis is scheduled for October 2009. During the summer, public stakeholder workshops will be held to develop survey instruments, including the methodology for conducting surveys, the timing of surveys, and the information that is feasible to collect. Meeting dates and locations will be announced soon. The data collection motion is posted on the Council website. Staff contact is Jeannie Heltzel.

Review of groundfish management policy

The Council conducted their annual review of the groundfish management policy at this meeting, as well as the groundfish workplan which lists priority actions to implement the management policy. The Council chose not to make any changes to the policy or the workplan at this time. As it has now been five years since the completion of the programmatic groundfish FMP SEIS, which contained the analysis supporting the Council's adoption of the current groundfish management policy, the Council also reviewed a staff discussion paper evaluating how groundfish fishery management and environmental conditions have changed over the last five years. The Council concluded that the current approach to groundfish fishery management is still adequately captured in the 2004 programmatic evaluation. Nonetheless, the Council encouraged Council and NMFS staff to begin internal planning to develop options for updating the programmatic review, and to be prepared to discuss such options at the next annual review. The management policy, workplan, and staff discussion paper are available on the Council website. Staff contact is Diana Evans.

NOAA Strategic Plan

The Council received a presentation on the development of the NOAA Next Generation Strategic Plan, which is currently being updated. The plan is intended to establish NOAA's long-term vision and goals, as well as short-term objectives and strategies. Through July 31, 2009, NOAA is seeking input from the Council and the public on potential strategic goals, objectives, and strategies for NOAA. Using this input, the agency will develop a draft plan that is scheduled for public review in December 2009. Comments on the plan may be submitted through the project website (http://www.ppi.noaa.gov/PPI_Capabilities/ngsp.html) or by contacting Amy Holman, the NOAA Alaska Regional Coordinator (amy.holman@noaa.gov)

Upcoming Meetings

Plan Team Meeting Dates:

Groundfish Plan Team meeting, September 16-18, and November 16-20; and Crab Plan Team meeting September 14-16, 2009; all at AFSC, Seattle.

Salmon Bycatch Workgroup Meeting: TBA (after Sept.)

Rural Community Outreach meeting, TBA, Anchorage

CIE Review of Bristol Bay Red King Crab - June 29 - July 2, AFSC, Seattle

IFQ Implementation Team: Sept 30, Anchorage Hilton

Non-Target Species

Committee: Sept. 15, AFSC, NMML, Seattle

Observer Advisory Committee: September 21-22, AFSC, Seattle

BSAI Pacific Cod Parallel State Waters Fishery

At the June meeting, the Council took final action on a regulatory amendment package that limits access by Federally-permitted pot and hook-and-line CPs to the BSAI Pacific cod parallel State waters fishery and precludes those vessels from fishing past the end of the sector closures. In 2008, five pot and hook-and-line CPs participated in the BSAI Pacific cod parallel State waters fishery that do not hold the permits, licenses, and endorsements necessary to participate in the BSAI Pacific cod fishery in Federal waters. This vessel activity may be circumventing the intent of previous decisions made by the Council regarding license limitation and endorsements, sector allocations, and catch reporting.

The Council took the most comprehensive action available, and selected Alternatives 2, 3, and 4, after making revisions to Alternatives 2 and 4. Alternative 2 requires vessels that hold an FFP or LLP to also hold the appropriate Amendment 67 Pacific cod endorsement and area (BS or AI) endorsement in order to participate in the BSAI Pacific cod parallel State waters fishery as a pot or hook-and-line CP. In addition, Alternative 2 also requires vessels that have an FFP to have a BSAI area designation, CP designation, and pot or hook-and-line gear designation on the FFP. The Council's action complements the December 2008 action by the Alaska Board of Fisheries (BOF) that limits the size of vessels using hook-and-line gear in the BSAI Pacific cod parallel State waters fishery to 58 ft LOA. The BOF action applies to all hook-and-line vessels, including those that are not Federally-permitted, but does not apply to vessels using pot gear. The vessel size restriction took effect on June 1, 2009.

The Council action also addresses a related management issue which first occurred in 2008, when several pot CPs (including both Amendment 67 endorsed and non-endorsed vessels) continued to fish in the BSAI Pacific cod parallel State waters fishery after the pot CP sector closure. This fishing activity occurred during the 2008 B season and again during the 2009 A season. Alternative 3 requires Federally-permitted pot and hook-and-line CPs to adhere to seasonal closures of their respective sectors.

Finally, the Council considered two alternatives (Alternatives 4 and 5) that preclude catcher processors from surrendering or reactivating the Federal fisheries permit (FFP) more than once within a specified time period (1 year, 18 months, or the 3-year term of the permit). Currently, the FFP may be surrendered, reactivated, and amended on an unlimited basis, and this ability allows vessels to circumvent the licensing and sector closure requirements proposed in Alternatives 2 and 3. The distinction between the alternatives is that Alternative 4 applies specifically to FFPs that also have a CP operation type designation, BSAI area designation, and a pot or hook-and-line gear designation, and Alternative 5 applies to all FFPs with a CP designation. The Council selected Alternative 4 in order to limit the scope of the FFP restrictions to the sectors identified in the problem statement, and selected the 3-year period. Under Alternative 4, the CP designation, BSAI area designation, and pot or hook-and-line gear designation on the FFP may not be removed from the FFP during the 3-year term of the permit. Any other endorsements or designations carried on the FFP may be amended or removed at any time. The final motion is posted on the Council website. Staff contact is Jeannie Heltzel.

MPA Nomination Process

The Council reviewed a letter from NMFS requesting the initiation of a consultation process with the Council on potential nomination of sites to be included in the National System of Marine Protected Areas. The Council directed staff to collaborate with NMFS staff on a discussion paper that evaluates issues regarding the MPA nomination process and potential sites for inclusion in the national system. In addition, the paper will include a review of those sites for which boundaries are subject to change in the foreseeable future, as well as the individual sites within the locations identified on the eligible MPA list. The Council is scheduled to review this discussion paper in December. Staff contact is Dave Witherell.

BSAI Crab Program

The Council received several staff reports concerning various aspects of the Bering Sea and Aleutian Islands crab rationalization program. The first report summarized the status of the analysis of alternatives for providing an exemption to regional landing requirements in the event that compliance with those requirements is prevented by unavoidable circumstances. The exemption is intended to address safety risks, potential loss of resource (through excessive deadloss), and extreme economic hardships that may arise if deliveries under regional landing requirements applicable to Class A individual fishing quota (IFQ) are delayed or prevented by extreme icing or other uncontrollable circumstances. To avoid potentially insurmountable administrative burdens the alternatives would establish a system of civil contracts between harvesters, processors, and regional representatives, as the means of defining the exemption. The Council received an analysis of alternatives at its February 2009 meeting. At that time, the Council requested stakeholders to propose revisions to alternatives to address concerns raised in public testimony. At this meeting, stakeholders had preliminary suggestions concerning possible revisions, but failed to reach any consensus concerning changes to the alternatives. As a result, the Council took no action on this matter, but strongly urged stakeholders to exercise their collective best efforts to arrive at a consensus recommendation for a preliminary preferred alternative prior to the October meeting.

The Council also received a discussion paper concerning certain aspects of the community right of first refusal on processor quota shares. The paper was specifically intended to shed light on issues that some stakeholders believe limit the effectiveness of the right in protecting communities. Based on public testimony and the recommendation of the Advisory Panel, the Council elected to advance three possible changes to the right of first refusal for analysis. The first alternative would remove any lapse of the right, which occurs under current rules, if the processor shares are used outside of the community for three consecutive years or if a community representative elects not to exercise the right on an applicable transfer. Under the second alternative, community representatives holding the right would have an additional 30 days to exercise the right and perform under the contract. The third alternative would limit the application of the right to assets located in the community benefiting from the

right. Under the current structure, a community representative that exercises the right must accept the contract on its terms, which may include assets that are not located in the subject community. A preliminary review of this analysis is scheduled for the October meeting.

After receiving a discussion paper concerning unutilized quota in the Western Aleutian Islands golden king crab fishery, the Council requested industry to continue the development of a possible exemption to regional landing requirements that would apply, if processing capacity is unavailable in the West region of that fishery. Proposals are requested for the October meeting. The Council took no action after receiving discussion papers concerning leasing practices in the fisheries (and the effects of those practices on crew) and the extinguishment of processor shares. Lastly, the Council received a brief scoping report on the upcoming 5-year review of the program. In response, the Council requested staff to provide an outline of that review at its October meeting. Staff contact is Mark Fina.

Trawl sweep modification

The Council released for public review an analysis evaluating the requirement for elevating disks on non-pelagic trawl sweeps for vessels targeting flatfish in the Bering Sea subarea. The gear modification is expected to reduce adverse impacts on benthic habitat.

The analysis also includes a provision to create a Modified Gear Trawl Zone (MGTZ) to the east of the St Matthew Island Habitat Conservation Area (HCA), which is currently part of the Northern Bering Sea Research Area, and as such is closed to nonpelagic trawl fishing. All nonpelagic trawl vessels fishing in the MGTZ would be required to use the modified sweeps, regardless of target species. An option in the analysis could potentially extend the boundary of the St Matthew Island HCA eastwards, in order to assure that the HCA adequately protects blue king crab in that area. This option would reduce the proposed size of the MGTZ.

The Council directed staff to address changes to the document identified by the SSC before releasing the analysis, and asked the Crab Plan Team to provide input on the appropriate boundary for the St Matthew HCA at their September meeting. Staff contact is Diana Evans.

Permit Fees

The Council reviewed a draft analysis that was proposed by NMFS to implement cost recovery for issuing fishing permits. This action would conform North Pacific fisheries to a national policy directive (#30-120) which called for a uniform national policy of charging applicants for the costs of processing permit applications. The proposed action would exempt subsistence halibut permits and includes options to exempt 1) programs that already undergo cost recovery (e.g., halibut/ sablefish and crab QS programs), 2) exempted fishery permits, and 3) the prohibited species donation program. The Council released the analysis for public review and scheduled final action for its October 2009 meeting. Contact Ben Muse at the NMFS Alaska Region for more information.

HAPC Process

The Council opted to postpone a decision on whether to set priorities for identifying habitat areas of particular concern (HAPCs) pending the completion of the five-year essential fish habitat (EFH) review that is scheduled to come before the Council in December 2009. HAPCs are geographic sites that fall within the distribution of EFH for the Council's managed species. The Council chose to synchronize the timing of the two actions so that the results from the five-year review can be considered in setting HAPC priorities, and the HAPC proposal cycle that might result. Staff contact is Diana Evans.

Annual Catch Limits

Revised guidelines for National Standard 1 (overfishing) of the Magnuson-Stevens Act advises the Council on new requirements for setting annual catch limits and accountability measures. NOAA and Council staffs have developed action plans for revising our fishery management plans. Based on recommendations from the SSC and an ad hoc working group of members of the groundfish, crab, and scallop plan teams and SSC, the Council requested that the Alaska Fisheries Science Center conduct two analyses to review whether our FMPs comply with the new requirements. One analysis will review uncertainty is incorporated into groundfish control rules and its implications for appropriate crab control rules. Analyses will also examine potential application of uncertainty corrections for crab and scallop stock assessments. A second analysis will examine whether management of some stocks under the target, other species, forage fish, and prohibited species categories included in the BSAI and GOA groundfish FMPs would be improved under a new ecosystem component category. These reports will be released on August 1 and reviewed during the Non-target Species Committee meeting on September 15, the

groundfish and crab plan team meetings on September 16, and the October 2009 Council meeting. The Council will incorporate the findings and committee recommendations into its action plans for amending four of its FMPs.

A preliminary review of the groundfish FMPs suggest amendments to create an ecosystem category and six housekeeping amendments would be required. Initial review and final action for those groundfish FMP amendments is scheduled for December 2009 and February 2010, respectively, in order to meet a statutory deadline for implementation prior to the start of the January 2011 fisheries. Deadlines of October 2011 and June 2011 for the crab and scallop FMP amendments also require Council action in 2010. FMP amendments for crab and scallop are more substantive in that they modify the current shared state and federal management responsibilities for establishing catch specifications for these stocks. Additional discussion of proposed alternative ABC control rules for crab stocks will occur at the next crab plan team meeting on September 14-16, 2009 and during a joint meeting with the groundfish plan teams on September 16th. The action plans for the ACL amendments are posted on the Council website. Staff contacts are Jane DiCosimo (groundfish) and Diana Stram (crab and scallop).

BSAI Skates

The revised guidelines also require similar life histories for species that are managed under assemblages. This requires the Council to amend the groundfish FMPs to revise management of skates, squids, sharks, sculpins, and octopods. BSAI squids and GOA skates already are managed under separate specifications and bycatch allowances. The Council revised the alternatives for management of BSAI skates at this meeting; final action is scheduled for October 2009. The Council will also review a draft analysis to revise management of squid in October, with final action in December. The action plans and analyses will be posted on the web as they become available. Contact Jane DiCosimo for more information.



Observer Advisory Committee

In June, the Council Chair announced appointments to the newly constituted Observer Advisory Committee (OAC), adding representatives from the <60' catcher vessel sector and another observer contractor. Members are as follows: Denby Lloyd (Chair), Bill Tweit (co-Chair), Paul MacGregor, Julie Bonney, Kenny Down, Bob Alverson, Todd Loomis, Kathy Robinson, Tracey Mayhew, Jerry Bonggen, Brent Paine, Christian Asay, Theresa Petersen, Matt Hegge, Michael Lake, and Ann Vanderhoeven.

The next OAC meeting will be September 21-22, at the AFSC in Seattle. A formal agenda will be posted on the Council website when the dates are confirmed. The primary task at the meeting will be to review the NMFS implementation plan for observer restructuring, per the Council's request in December 2008. This will be a major agenda item for the Council at its October 2009 meeting, which will include review of the OAC report with recommendations and feedback on the plan. Note that the Council motion requesting the implementation plan and approving the suite of restructuring alternatives is posted on our website.

The committee is no-host, as are all Council committees, so members must pay for their own travel and accommodations. Staff contact is Nicole Kimball.

Rockfish Program

At its June meeting, the Council reviewed a description of the alternatives for developing a new Central Gulf of Alaska rockfish program to replace the rockfish pilot program, which is set to expire after the 2011 fishing season. At its February 2009 meeting, the Council tasked staff to provide a description of four alternatives that range from taking no action and allowing the program to expire, to redesigning elements of the existing program to satisfy concerns expressed by stakeholders. Those alternatives specifically included:

1. No action, under which the fishery would revert to management under the License Limitation Program,
2. the current rockfish pilot program
3. a variation on the existing program with changes to address issues that arise under the limited access privilege program requirements of the newly reauthorized Magnuson-Stevens Act, and
4. a variation on the existing program with changes to address stakeholder concerns.

At this meeting, the Council adopted a problem statement and a suite of elements and options for analysis. The following is the problem statement adopted by the Council:

The intent of this action is to retain the conservation, management, safety, and economic gains created by the Rockfish Pilot Program to the extent practicable, while also considering the goals and limitations of the Magnuson-Stevens Fisheries Conservation and Management Act Limited Access Privilege Program (LAPP) provisions.

The existing CGOA Rockfish Pilot Program (RPP) will sunset after 2011. Consequently, if the management, economic, safety

and conservation gains enjoyed under the RPP are to be continued, the Council must act to create a long term CGOA rockfish LAPP. For both the onshore and offshore sectors, the RPP has improved safety at sea, controlled capacity of the fleets, improved NMFS' ability to conserve and manage the species in the program, increased vessel accountability, reduced sea floor contact, allowed full retention of allocated species and reduced halibut bycatch. In addition, the rockfish fishery dependent communities in the CGOA and qualified processors have benefited from stabilization of the work force, more shoreside deliveries of rockfish, additional non-rockfish deliveries with the RPP halibut savings, and increased rockfish quality and diversity of rockfish products. Moreover, the CGOA fishermen and qualified processors have benefited from the removal of processing conflicts with GOA salmon product. The Council needs to resolve identified issues in the management and viability of the entry level fishery.

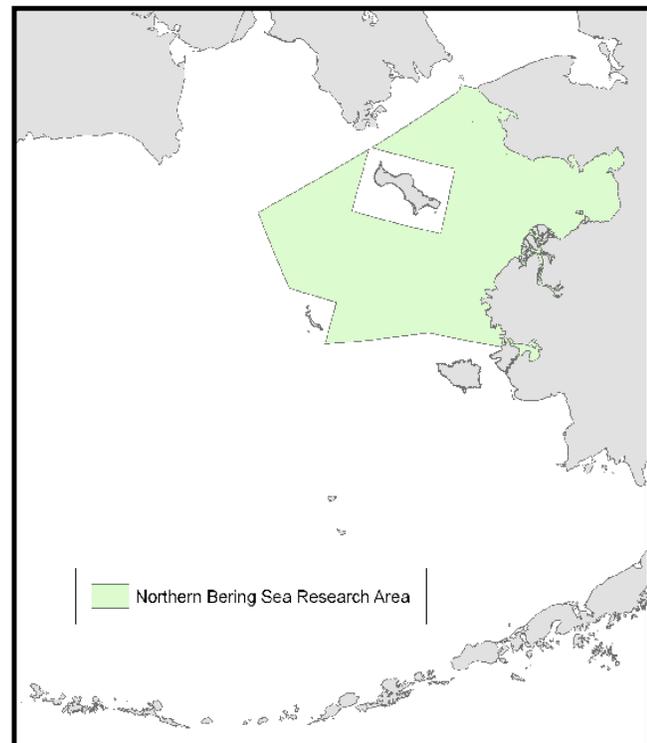
The suite of elements and options adopted by the Council include options for continuing the entry-level set aside or graduating the current trawl vessels to the primary program thereby limiting the set-aside to fixed gear only. Also included in the elements and options are alternative structures to address shore-based processor concerns, including options that would allocate harvest shares to qualified processors or establish harvesters cooperative/processor associations that could be severed by a harvester subject to a harvest share forfeiture. The elements and options also include management changes for some secondary species (currently allocated under the pilot program), port specific landing requirements, changes in catch history qualifying years, share duration limits, and sideboards modifications. A complete copy of the elements and options is provided on the Council website. The Council will review a preliminary analysis at the October meeting. Staff contacts are Jon McCracken and Mark Fina.

Northern Bering Sea Research Plan

The Alaska Fisheries Science Center (AFSC), at the request of the Council, is developing a scientific research plan for the Northern Bering Sea Research Area (NBSRA) to study the effects of bottom trawling on the benthic community. The NBSRA was established by the Council and became effective in 2008, and is currently closed to bottom trawl fishing. The primary goals of the plan would be to investigate the effects of bottom trawling on bottom habitat, and provide information to help with developing future protection measures in the NBSRA for crab, marine mammals, endangered species, and the subsistence needs of western Alaska communities.

Cynthia Yeung is the AFSC lead for developing the plan, and presented an outline of the research plan to the SSC. The outline and SSC presentation are posted on the Council website. In addition to other comments about the incorporation of available baseline data into the research plan, the SSC recommended that the AFSC convene a workshop with subsistence users and other stakeholders, to determine what species and areas are important for northern Bering Sea communities.

The Council identified that extending the NMFS trawl survey into the NBSRA, and initiating fieldwork that would result in bottom habitat mapping of the area were priority issues to help complete the research plan. The Council approved a motion to write two letters to that effect, one to NMFS and one to the North Pacific Research Board, respectively. Consequently, the Council agreed that the timeline for the completion of the research plan may need to extend beyond the two years identified in the Council's original motion. Staff contact is Diana Evans or Nicole Kimball.



DRAFT NPFMC THREE-MEETING OUTLOOK - updated 6/11/09

October 1, 2009 Anchorage, AK Hilton Hotel	December 7, 2009 Anchorage, AK Hilton Hotel	February 8, 2010 Portland, OR Benson Hotel
<p>GOA P. cod sector split: Initial Review AI Processing Sideboards: Initial Review</p> <p>Permit Fees: Final Action</p> <p>CGOA Rockfish Program: Preliminary Review Electronic Monitoring EFP Phase 2: Report Observer Program Implementation Analysis: Review; OAC Report; and action as necessary (T)</p> <p>BSAI Crab Regional Delivery Relief: Identify PPA BSAI Crab ROFR: Initial Review BSAI Crab WAG: Review Proposals BSAI Crab 5yr Review: Review Outline</p> <p>Salmon Bycatch Data Collection: Initial Review (T) Salmon Bycatch Sampling: Report</p> <p>ACL Requirements: Action as necessary</p> <p>BS Bottom Trawl Sweeps: Final Action</p> <p>GOA Tanner & Chinook Bycatch: Discussion Paper St Matthew+Pribilof BKC& opilio rebuilding: Action as nec. BSAI Crab: Approve SAFE and OFLs; PSC discussion paper</p> <p>BSAI Skates Complex: Final Action BSAI/GOA Squid Complex: Initial Review Groundfish Proposed Catch Specifications: Approve</p> <p>5-Year Research Priorities: Approve</p>	<p>MPA Nomination Process: Discuss & action as nec. (T)</p> <p>GOA P. cod sector split: Final Action AI Processing Sideboards: Final Action (T) Am 80 Lost Vessel Replacement: Initial Review</p> <p>CGOA Rockfish Program: Action as necessary</p> <p>BSAI Crab Regional Delivery Relief: Final Action (T) BSAI Crab Amendment package: Review Progress</p> <p>Halibut/Sablefish IFQ Proposals: Review & action as nec. CQE Program: Review Salmon Bycatch Data Collection: Final Action (T) BS Chum Salmon Bycatch: Committee Report/ Discussion paper</p> <p>Groundfish ACL Requirements: Initial Review</p> <p>Bristol Bay Trawl Closure & Walrus: Discussion Papers (T) Heigermeister Is. Walrus protection: Discussion Paper</p> <p>BSAI/GOA Squid Complex: Final Action Groundfish Final Catch Specifications: Approve</p> <p>EFH 5-Year Evaluation/HAPC Criteria: Review (T)</p>	<p>BS&AI P.cod Split: Discuss plan/action as necessary (April)</p> <p>GOA P.cod sideboards for crab vessels: Initial Review (T)</p> <p>Am 80 Lost Vessel Replacement: Final Action Am 80 Cooperative Formation: Final Action</p> <p>CGOA Rockfish Program: Action as necessary</p> <p>Observer Program Analysis: Progress Report</p> <p>BS Chum Salmon Bycatch: Action as necessary</p> <p>Groundfish ACL Requirements: Final Action</p> <p>BSAI/GOA Octopus management: Initial Review</p> <p>AI FEP addendum: Review/Discuss (T) Northern BS Research Plan: Review Progress</p>

AI - Aleutian Islands

GOA - Gulf of Alaska

SSL - Steller Sea Lion

BOF - Board of Fisheries

FEP - Fishery Ecosystem Plan

CDQ - Community Development Quota

VMS - Vessel Monitoring System

EFP - Exempted Fishing Permit

BiOp - Biological Opinion

(T) Tentatively scheduled

TAC - Total Allowable Catch

BSAI - Bering Sea and Aleutian Islands

IFQ - Individual Fishing Quota

GHL - Guideline Harvest Level

EIS - Environmental Impact Statement

LLP - License Limitation Program

SAFE - Stock Assessment and Fishery Evaluation

MPA - Marine Protected Area

ACL - Annual Catch Limit

HAPC - Habitat Areas of Particular Concern

Future Meeting Dates and Locations

*October 1-, 2009 in Anchorage (AP, SSC start on THURSDAY)
(Council on Saturday)*

December 7-, 2009 in Anchorage

February 8-, 2010 in Portland OR

April 6-, 2010 in Anchorage (start on Tuesday)

June 7 -, 2010 in Sitka

Oct 4-, 2010 in Anchorage (Captain Cook)

Dec 6- 2010 in Anchorage Hilton