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News & Notes

North Pacific Fishery Management Council

June 2016

Thank you Kodiak

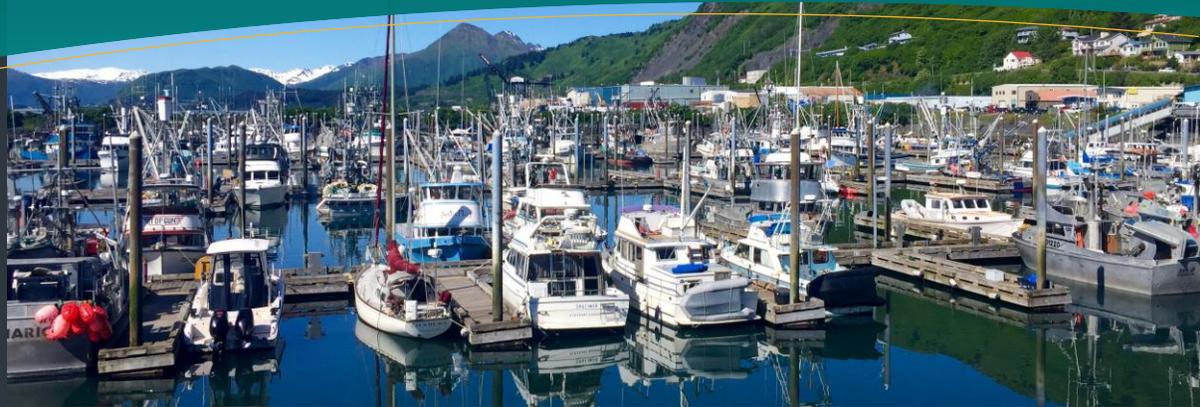
Thank you to the many businesses and organizations that made the Council meeting a success in Kodiak. Active public participation in the meetings, events planned around the Council meeting week, and perfect summer weather was much appreciated by all who attended.

Fields, Long, and Thorne leave Council

Duncan Fields, of Kodiak, David Long of Wasilla, and Capt. Phil Thorne of the USCG were honored at a reception hosted by the Council, the City and Borough of Kodiak, and the Chamber of Commerce, thanking them for their commitment to Alaskan communities and to managing and conserving Alaskan fishery resources. Best of luck to them in their future endeavors.



Chairman Hull presents Duncan Fields with a plaque thanking him for his service in the Council process.



GOA Trawl Bycatch Management

For the second time in 2016, the Council received a discussion paper, as well as staff and stakeholder reports, that further define the action alternatives under consideration for a new cooperative management program structure for the GOA groundfish trawl fisheries. This effort is part of an iterative process through which the Council will arrive at a range of alternatives containing the elements of a program that results in equitable outcomes across sectors, maintains fishery participation in dependent communities, is practical to manage and enforce, and can be objectively analyzed. At this meeting, the Council defined an "overarching goal" for the program consisting of three central components: bycatch management, increased groundfish utilization, and maintaining opportunities to enter the fishery by — potentially — limiting any groundfish harvest privileges that might be allocated. This overarching goal was added to the 14 program goals and objectives that the Council had previously defined, and is not a replacement for any of those goals.

The Council has put forward two contrasting action alternatives that define allocations to participants. Alternative 2 allocates groundfish (target and secondary species) and prohibited species (halibut and Chinook salmon) to GOA trawl LLP licenses. Groundfish allocations would be based on groundfish catch history and PSC species would be allocated in proportion to groundfish allocations. Alternative 3 allocates only prohibited species, and only defines a cooperative structure for the inshore sector (CPs would be managed under sector-level PSC limits). PSC allocations are based on several factors that do not rely on, or do not rely heavily on, catch history. The Council clarified that its other action alternative (Alternative 4) could be selected in conjunction with Alternative 2, but could not be selected on its own or with Alternative 3. Alternative 4 would set aside a portion of allocated species

(groundfish and PSC) for use under a Community Fisheries Association (CFA) or an Adaptive Management program.

Motions were passed to amend each of the action alternatives in minor ways that clarify its intent regarding the proposed program elements. These amendments result in a lengthy final motion which is available on the Council's website, but they do not significantly alter the management approaches being considered. The amended version of Alternative 4 provides a more fully described vision of a CFA, which can now be analyzed with greater specificity. Many of the refinements to the defined CFA structure were drawn from a stakeholder proposal, which was developed in response to a specific Council request.

The Council received a great deal of public testimony on the merits of the action alternatives, and the overall objectives of the program. The Council passed a motion directing staff to move beyond examining the structure of the alternatives and the consistency of the proposed mechanisms with the Council's intent, and to begin analyzing the relative impacts of the alternatives on the identified stakeholder groups. At staff tasking, the Council stated its intent to review the preliminary analysis that will be available at its December 2016 meeting. That paper will focus on impacts of the alternatives, but will not be a draft EIS. That analysis and public input before and during the December Council meeting is hoped to help the Council solidify the elements of all the alternatives so that a draft EIS can be developed.

During the summer, NMFS will publish a Federal Register Notice announcing a new public scoping opportunity on the Council's purpose and need statement, goals and objectives for the program, and the alternatives. NMFS will produce a scoping report to summarize the public comments at an upcoming Council meeting. Staff contact is Sam Cunningham.

Staff Tasking

In addition to discussing the relative priority of previously tasked projects, the Council initiated a new project and clarified direction and tasking for its various committees. The Council also took the following actions:

- Approved new members for the Plan Teams and SSC.
- Directed staff to submit comment letters on the draft guidance for review of catch share programs, and the national implementation plan for ecosystem-based fisheries management.
- Approved Terms of Reference for the Enforcement Committee and tasked staff to pull together information on two enforcement issues (co-mingling of halibut and donation to foodbanks) for review at a future meeting.
- Passed a Council statement that supports development of electronic monitoring for GOA trawl fisheries, and encourages the industry to develop pilot projects and cooperative research needed to build a foundation for development of EM in these fisheries.

Upcoming meetings

BS/RE Spatial Management:
July 21, 1-5:30 pm (AFSC Seattle)

EMWG: July 26-28, (Coast Hotel, Anchorage), August 25 (teleconf)

BSAI Abundance-based Halibut PSC workshop:
September 12 (AFSC Seattle)

BSAI and GOA Groundfish Plan Teams:
September 13-16 (AFSC Seattle)

Observer Advisory Committee:
September 19-20 (TBD Seattle)

Crab Plan Team:
September 19-23 (AFSC Seattle)

Observer Issues

Annual Report

The Council reviewed the 2015 Annual Report for the North Pacific Observer Program, and made recommendations for the 2017 Annual Deployment Plan, which will be developed over the summer. The Annual Report provides a scientific evaluation of the deployment of observers in 2015, to assess whether the objectives of the Observer Program have been met. The report also includes descriptive information on the program, including enforcement trends and outreach efforts, and agency recommendations. In general, the Council supports continuing with observer deployment similar to the 2016 Annual Deployment Plan (ADP), which deployed observers by gear strata (pot, longline, and trawl), with different selection rates for each gear type. For 2017, however, the Council has recommended that the agency consider two new strata as well: vessels delivering their catch to tender vessels, and small catcher processors that are subject to partial coverage. An evaluation of the ramifications of deploying into these additional strata will be included in the draft 2017 ADP, for Council review in October. The Council also commended the agency on the Annual Report, noting that it gets better every year, and identified minor enhancements for the future. The Council also acknowledged the SSC and Observer Advisory Committee (OAC) comments about the agency's encouraging work with preliminary methods for estimating variance associated with observer data, and looks forward to further developments.

The Council continues to be concerned about the timeliness of receiving the observer fees from the Office of Management and Budget, which are essential to uninterrupted observer deployment in the partial coverage category. While this is not the first time the Council has highlighted this issue, the Council authorized sending another letter to express concern. The Council also heard that NMFS headquarters is positioning itself to stop providing financial support for at-sea observer days, and will write a letter to NMFS outlining how the supplemental NMFS funding has strengthened the partial coverage program in the last four years, and what could be achieved should this supplement continue to be forthcoming.

Regulatory Amendments

The Council reviewed the prioritized list of analytical projects related to the Observer Program, and agreed with OAC recommendations about relative priorities. In response to public testimony, the Council requested that NMFS postpone action on a

recent application from AIS, Inc. (the partial coverage observer provider) to be a full coverage observer provider until October; after the observer fixed gear lead level 2 availability discussion paper is prepared. The Council additionally asked that the paper, which includes an option encouraging AIS to become a full coverage provider as a means to addressing the potential shortage of qualified lead level 2 observers, evaluate whether there are unfair competitive advantage issues to consider with respect to having an observer provider participating in both the partial and full coverage programs.

Electronic Monitoring

While the Council did not receive a direct presentation on electronic monitoring (EM) at this meeting, the SSC reviewed some components of the upcoming analysis to integrate EM into the Observer Program, currently scheduled for initial review in October, and provided feedback to analysts. In response to public testimony, the Council also provided a letter of support for a National Fisheries and Wildlife Foundation grant proposal, which requests funding to support pre-implementation of EM for pot vessels in 2017, and aligns with the Council's previously-discussed intentions for EM work in 2017.

The Council also provided an intent statement that electronic monitoring technologies would be incorporated into the observer requirements for the GOA trawl bycatch management program as it moves forward. It was noted that while the Council's immediate priority and staff time is focused on the fixed gear fisheries, it may be productive for industry to begin to develop pilot projects for monitoring GOA trawl fisheries, and the Council would support that pilot work in advance of the Council establishing a trawl Cooperative Research Program. Staff contact is Diana Evans.

Appointments

The Council made several appointments this meeting. **Matt Kopec** of Whitter Marine Charters has been appointed to the Charter Implementation Committee. **Ben Williams**, of ADF&G in Juneau, and **Dr. Patrick Lynch** of NOAA Fisheries in Silver Spring, MD, were appointed to the GOA Groundfish Plan Team. **Dr. Alan Hicks** of the IPHC has been appointed to the BSAI Groundfish Plan Team to replace Dr. Ian Stewart, who is currently serving on the SSC. **Dr. Lew Coggins** has been appointed to the SSC, filling a long-vacant USFWS seat. Coggins has been serving recently as an alternate for Dr. Terry Quinn.

Tanner Crab Custom Processing Exemption

The Council took final action to exempt custom processing arrangements for Bering Sea Tanner crab from processing quota use caps. The Council also initiated a discussion paper to review additional solutions to the Tanner crab custom processing use cap issue, including: (1) raise the Tanner crab IPQ use cap to 40%; (2) A share to B share conversion, and (3) apply exemption only in years when capacity to process is not sufficient (i.e., when there are less than four processors).

The Council's preferred alternative is directly responsive to the situation in the Tanner crab fishery that occurred during the 2014/2015 crab season that has resulted in an inability for harvesters to fully harvest the Tanner crab resource, and for IPQ holders to fully receive and process Tanner crab at crab processing facilities currently operating. The Council's preferred alternative complements and follows the management approach the Council recommended and NMFS implemented under an emergency rule that was effective for the 2015/2016 crab fishing year. Staff contact is Jon McCracken.

Stock Structure & Spatial Management

The Council will be hosting a public workshop to discuss stock structure and spatial management with a specific focus on identifying additional tools to manage the BSAI Blackspotted/Rougeye rockfish complex. The workshop will be held at the Alaska Fisheries Science Center on July 21. An agenda and webex information for the meeting will be available on the Council's website in early July. Staff contact is Diana Stram.

Save the Date

The Council is scheduling a celebration and banquet **DECEMBER 8** to celebrate the 40th anniversary of the MSA and the Fishery Management Councils. Because of timing, the celebration will be in conjunction with the December Council meeting also starting December 8. The SSC will begin December 6, a **TUESDAY**, and the AP will start **WEDNESDAY**, December 7. Please note the schedule change.

Crab Management

The Council approved SSC OFL and ABC recommendations for 3 BSAI crab stocks and received recommendations from the SSC and the Crab Plan Team on model scenarios and other items taken up at their spring 2016 Crab Plan Team (CPT) meeting. OFLs and ABCs were established for the Pribilof Island Golden King Crab, Aleutian Island Golden King Crab and Western Aleutian Island Red King Crab stocks. The SSC and CPT also reviewed and made recommendations on model scenarios for snow crab, Bristol Bay Red King Crab, Saint Matthew Blue King Crab (in a new generalized modeling framework (GMACs)) and Tanner crab. Final specifications for the six remaining BSAI crab stocks will be made in the fall following incorporation of the summer survey data. The SAFE chapters for the three stocks assessed at this time, as well as the Crab Plan Team report, are available on the Council's website. Staff contact is Diana Stram.

Crab 10-Year Review

The Council approved the 10-year review of the BSAI crab rationalization program as final and complete with the incorporation of SSC suggestions. The review document and its associated appendices are intended to provide a broad, yet comprehensive understanding of the dynamics of the fisheries. The review process gives the Council and the public an opportunity to consider the program as a whole, as well as nuanced elements and impacts of the program.

Given the testimony of stakeholders, the Council initiated a discussion paper focused on the arbitration system. The discussion paper will analyze the changing operational costs of crab IFQ holders and the impacts of such cost changes on the crab harvesting and processing sectors, given an ex-vessel price that is rooted in the historical distribution of the first wholesale value. The discussion paper will review the criteria used by the non-binding price formula arbitrator to allow the Council to determine if operational cost changes to the participants in the crab fisheries should be considered in setting the non-binding price formula or under contract arbitration.

In addition, the Council made a motion to have the Council Chair, Executive Director, and Chairman of the SSC work together to develop a proposal to establish a Social Science Plan Team and to outline the scope of its work. Their proposal would be brought back to the Council for its review and consideration. Council staff is Sarah Marrinan.

Squid to Ecosystem Component

The Council reviewed an EA/RIR/IRFA to evaluate moving squid stocks in both the BSAI Groundfish FMP and the GOA Groundfish FMP into the Ecosystem Component category. Under current National Standard 1 Guidelines, if a species requires conservation and management, it is classified as being "in the fishery". If a species does not require conservation and management, it may be moved into the "ecosystem component" category. Following review and discussion of some issues in need of clarification in the alternatives and analysis, the Council moved to modify its problem statement and to restructure Alternative 2. These revisions are reflected in the Council motion on the website. The Council requested that the analysis be revised to analyze the new alternatives, potential changes in National Standard 1 Guidelines, and addresses SSC comments to the extent practicable with another initial review scheduled for February 2017. Staff contact is Diana Stram.

Enforcement Committee

During staff tasking, the Council tasked the Enforcement Committee to initiate a discussion paper to review regulations to ensure the proper disposition/accounting of halibut in guided, unguided, and subsistence fisheries. Possessing charter harvested and non-charter harvested halibut on the same vessel at the same time presents challenges for accountability that cannot be overcome with the current regulatory tools. This occurs on multi-day and "mothership" charter fishing, and to a lesser extent on vessels that are owned by self-guided fishing operations that also provide sport fishing guide services to their clients that request them.

The Council also tasked the Enforcement Committee to initiate a discussion paper to examine requirements for a regulatory amendment to allow donation of fish seized by law enforcement officers to local food banks or the SeaShare program to avoid wastage.

Finally, the Council approved two changes to the Enforcement Committee Term of Reference. The first change was to include safety at sea in the Establishment and Statement of Purpose for the committee. The second change allows the committee to be chaired by any member of the Enforcement Committee, as elected biennially by the committee, rather than a member of the Council, as appointed by the Council Chair. A copy of the revised Enforcement Committee Terms of Reference is available on the Council's website. Staff contact is Jon McCracken.

Research Priorities

At each June meeting, the Council, in conjunction with its Scientific and Statistical Committee, reviews research projects necessary to support near- and long-term management actions. The development of research priorities is a statutory obligation under the Magnuson Stevens Act, and the identified set of priorities applies to the upcoming five-year period; this year's review will apply to 2017-2021. Other contributions to the annual review include recommendations from the Council's Plan Teams, which are compiled at their meetings during the preceding year. At this June Council meeting, existing research priorities were reviewed and their ranking was updated, with the Council's anticipated management concerns for the upcoming five-year period. Additionally, the status of research was updated to reflect current progress on specific research topics. New research priorities suggested by the Plan Teams (9) and the SSC (6) were also reviewed and adopted by the Council. In adding these projects to the existing list, the Council now has a total of 143 active or pending research projects connected to management in the upcoming five-year period. In accordance with the Magnuson Stevens Act, these compiled priorities will be communicated to the Secretary of Commerce, as well as relevant funding agencies, the AFSC, and the NMFS Regional Office.

Beyond the compiling of needed research projects, the Council reviewed issues related to the web-based research priority database and instructed staff to explore potential improvements to its functionality. Finally, the Council recognized that improved coordination with lead funding agencies associated with Alaska fisheries research would greatly serve the utility of its annual review. In the coming months, Council staff will work with NPRB and AFSC staff to explore ways to integrate the organization and monitoring research activities within recognized research themes as a means to improve coordination and communication. Staff contact is Jim Armstrong.

The distribution of the Council's 143 active and pending research priorities in relation to the Council's four priority rankings and research theme.

Research Theme	Priority				Total
	Critical	Urgent	Important	Strategic	
Assessment Inputs		18	24	5	47
Ecosystem Assessments		1	10	4	15
At Sea Survey	7	4	3		14
Habitat		2	5	1	8
Protected Species		4	2	2	8
Halibut		4	3	1	8
Economic Analysis	1	2	1	3	7
PSC Management		6	3		9
Management		5		1	6
Communities		1	4		5
Climate Change			1	5	6
Steller Sea Lion		3	1		4
Fishery Interactions		2	1		3
Data Quality		1		2	3
Total	8	53	58	24	143

Call for Nominations

The Council is seeking nominations for an active observer to participate on the Observer Advisory Committee. The Committee generally meets twice a year, in May and September, and the next meeting is scheduled in Seattle for September 19-20. Please contact diana.evans@noaa.gov if you are interested. Nominations will be accepted until July 29. The Council is also seeking nominations for an Area 3A charter representative that does not hold Halibut Quota Share for membership of the Recreational Quota Entity Committee. This committee will provide ongoing input to the Council on the RQE program structure, with meetings twice a year. The next RQE meeting is scheduled for December 2016. Interested parties should contact steve.maclean@noaa.gov by July 29.

DRAFT NPFMC THREE-MEETING OUTLOOK - updated 6/20/2016

October 3-11, 2016 Anchorage, AK	December 6-14, 2016 [SSC starts Tues, AP on Wed, Council on Th] Anchorage, AK	January 28-Feb 7, 2017 Seattle, WA
Stock Assessment 101 Training	40 Year Anniversary Celebration Banquet - Thursday, Dec. 8	
EM Integration: Initial Review	GOA Trawl Bycatch Management: Preliminary Analysis	Observer discharge location: Discussion paper
Observer Program 2017 Annual Deployment Plan: Review; OAC rpt Observer Lead Level 2: Discussion paper	2017 Charter halibut management measures: Final action	EM Integration: Final Action (T)
Area 4 Halibut IFQ Leasing: Initial Review	Charter Halibut permit leasing: Discussion paper	BSAI YFS TLA Fishery limited entry: Initial Review
Halibut/sablefish IFQ Program 10-year Review: Review Draft	Charter Halibut RQE Program: Final Action	GOA Gear Specific Skate MRAs: Discussion paper
BSAI Crab: Plan team report, OFL/ABC for 6 stocks	Deck Sorting EFP: Report on preliminary results	BSAI Crab Specs for NSRKC: Final OFL/ABC specifications BSAI Crab Modeling Report (SSC only)
AFA 10-year Review: Review Draft (T)	Groundfish Harvest Specifications: Final specifications	Remove WAI Red King Crab from FMP: Initial Review
BSAI Halibut Abundance-based PSC: Discussion paper		Bristol Bay red king crab PSC: Discussion paper
Halibut DMRs methodology: Discussion paper		
Stock Structure Report		Squid to Ecosystem Component Category: Initial Review
Groundfish Harvest Specifications: Proposed specs		
EFH Descriptions: Review updated report; Identify EFH EFH non-fishing effects report: Review and approve	EFH Effects of Fishing Criteria: Discussion paper (T)	
	BSAI Salmon genetics spatial/temporal distribution: Disc paper (T)	
		ITEMS BELOW NOT YET SCHEDULED
		Crab binding arbitration formula: Discussion paper
		Observer deployment trip determination and transfer: Disc paper
		EFH Effects of Fishing: Review Report (April -T)
		Bering Sea FEP: Review Draft FEP
		BSAI Tanner crab custom processing cap: Discussion paper
		Bering Sea Snow Crab PSC Limits: Initial Review
		Observer Insurance Requirements: <i>Disc paper for Reg Am</i>

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

October 3 - 11, 2016 Anchorage
December 6-14, 2016, Anchorage
January 28 – February 7, 2017, Seattle
April 3-11, 2017, Anchorage
June 5-13, 2017, Juneau
October 2-10, 2017, Anchorage
December 4-12, 2017, Anchorage

(T) = Tentative