

North Pacific Fishery Management Council

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Meeting Summary

232nd Plenary Session
North Pacific Fishery Management Council
January 30 - February 6, 2017
Renaissance Hotel, Seattle, Washington

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Attachments

- 1) Time Log
- 2) Newsletter

The North Pacific Fishery Management Council met Wednesday, February 1, through Monday, February 6, 2017 at the Renaissance Hotel, Seattle, Washington. The following Council, NPFMC staff, SSC, and AP members attended the meetings.

Council Members

Balsiger, Jim	Hyder, Roy	Peterson, Theresa
Cotten, Sam	Kinneen, Simon	LCDR Corrie Sergent
Cross, Craig	Laukitis, Buck	Smoker, Lauren (GC)
Down, Kenny	Lindeman, Lisa (GC)	Tweit, Bill (Vice Chair)
Hanson, Dave	CAPT Stephen White	
Hartill, Trent (Alt for Cotten)	Merrill, Glenn (Alt for Balsiger)	
Hull, Dan (Chair)	Mezirow, Andy	

NPFMC Staff

Armstrong, Jim	Kircher, Peggy	Shawback, Maria
Cunningham, Sam	MacLean, Steve	Stein, Joy
Evans, Diana	Marrinan, Sarah	Stram, Diana
Fey, Mike (AFKIN)	McCracken, Jon	Witherell, Dave (DD)
Gleason, Shannon	Oliver, Chris (ED)	

Scientific and Statistical Committee

The SSC met from January 30th through February 1, 2017 at the Renaissance Hotel, Seattle, WA.

Members present were:

Members present were:

Farron Wallace, Chair <i>NOAA Fisheries—AFSC</i>	Sherri Dressel, Vice Chair <i>Alaska Department of Fish and Game</i>	Chris Anderson <i>University of Washington</i>
Robert Clark <i>Alaska Department of Fish and Game</i>	Lew Coggins <i>U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service</i>	Jason Gasper <i>NOAA Fisheries—Alaska Region</i>
Brad Harris <i>Alaska Pacific University</i>	Anne Hollowed <i>NOAA Fisheries—AFSC</i>	Gordon Kruse <i>University of Alaska Fairbanks</i>
Dayv Lowry <i>Washington Dept. of Fish and Wildlife</i>	Seth Macinko <i>University of Rhode Island</i>	Franz Mueter <i>University of Alaska Fairbanks</i>
Terry Quinn <i>University of Alaska Fairbanks</i>	Matt Reimer <i>University of Alaska Anchorage</i>	Ian Stewart <i>Intl. Pacific Halibut Commission</i>
Alison Whitman <i>Oregon Dept. of Fish and Wildlife</i>		

Members absent were:

Jennifer Burns <i>University of Alaska Anchorage</i>	George Hunt <i>University of Washington</i>	Kate Reedy <i>Idaho State University Pocatello</i>
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Advisory Panel

The AP met Tuesday, January 31, through Friday, February 3, 2017. Members present were (absent stricken):

Carroll, Shannon	Farvour, Jeff	O'Donnell, Paddy
Christiansen, Ruth	Gruver, John	Peterson, Joel
Cochran, Kurt	Kauffman, Jeff	Stephan, Jeff (Vice Chair)
Crowley, John	Kwachka, Alexis	Stevens, Ben
Donich, Dan	Lowenberg, Craig	Upton, Matt
Downing, Jerry	McCallum, Chuck	Weiss, Ernie (Chair)
Drobnika, Angel	Nelson, Art (absent 12/8)	Wilt, Sinclair

B REPORTS

The following reports were given and discussed. No action was taken.

B1 Executive Director's Report – Chris Oliver
B2 NMFS Management Report – Glenn Merrill
B3 ADF&G Report – Trent Hartill
B5 USCG Report – LCDR Corrie Sergeant
B7 Protected Species Report - Steve MacLean
B8 IPHC Report – Steve Keith & Claude Dykstra
B9 NAVY (GOA Training Report) Chris Rifle, Amy Burt, Andrea Balla-Holden

C1 CDQ OWNERSHIP CAPS

The Council heard a presentation from NMFS staff, Keeley Kent. The following action was taken:

Mr. Kinneen made the following motion which was seconded by Mr. Cross

The Council releases the draft analysis for public review and approves the purpose and needs statement below. The Council also selects Alternative 2 as its Preliminary Preferred Alternative.

Purpose and Need:

This action would revise the American Fisheries Act (AFA) Program and the Crab Rationalization (CR) Program ownership attribution regulations and the Crab FMP to provide for the different requirements for the CDQ groups, as distinguished from other program participants, which is mandated by the Magnuson-Stevens Act (as amended by the Coast Guard Act). Specifically, this action would remove the application of the "10-percent" rule for the CDQ groups and replace it with the proportional "individual and collective" rule. Since the 2006 amendment to the Magnuson-Stevens Act mandating the use of the individual and collective rule for CDQ groups, NMFS implemented this modification in practice by using the individual and collective rule but has not revised the AFA or CR Program regulations or the Crab FMP. This action would revise the regulations and the Crab FMP to make them consistent with the Magnuson-Stevens Act and current practice.

Alternative 1. No action. No change to the regulations governing the ownership attribution method for CDQ groups for excessive share limitations under the AFA Program; no change to the regulations and

the Crab FMP governing the ownership attribution model for CDQ groups for the PQS ownership and IPQ use caps under the CR Program.

Alternative 2: Revise the regulations governing the ownership attribution model for CDQ groups for excessive share limitations under the AFA Program; revise the regulations and the Crab FMP governing the ownership attribution model for CDQ groups for the PQS ownership and IPQ use caps under the CR Program to provide as directed in the Magnuson-Stevens Act.

VOTE ON MOTION: Motion passed with no objection February 1, 2017 at 3:21 p.m.

C2 MIXING OF GUIDED AND UNGUIDED HALIBUT

The Council heard a presentation from NPFMC staff Jon McCracken and NOAA (OLE), Will Ellis. The following action was taken:

Mr. Merrill made the following motion which was seconded by Mr. Laukitis:

Initiate an analysis with the following purpose and need statement and alternatives.

Purpose and Need:

Different regulations apply to guided and unguided (i.e., chartered and non-chartered) halibut fishing trips. Possessing halibut harvested from both guided and unguided trips on the same vessel at the same time presents challenges for accountability and enforcement that cannot be adequately addressed by current regulations. Mixed guided and unguided halibut can occur on multi-day and mothership charter fishing and floating lodges, 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. The potential for mixing guided and unguided halibut exists on every floating lodge and mothership that services halibut harvesters. The number of these operations and the associated halibut harvests remains unknown. The mixing of guided and unguided halibut could expand in the future as charter operators look for ways to maximize halibut harvests for guided and unguided anglers on their vessels.

Once guided and unguided halibut are mixed aboard a vessel, it is difficult to determine which halibut were harvested under the guided regulations and which halibut were harvested under the unguided regulations. The current regulatory structure allows guided and unguided halibut to be mixed on a vessel but does not provide the regulated public or authorized officers with a mechanism to ensure compliance with the more restrictive guided halibut regulations. A regulatory change could ensure proper accounting of guided and unguided catch.

Alternative 1: Take no action

This alternative is the no action alternative. Under this alternative, the current regulatory structure allowing guided and unguided caught halibut to be mixed together on a vessel would continue.

Alternative 2: Prohibit the possession of guided and unguided halibut simultaneously on any vessel

Under Alternative 2, halibut caught under one operation type (guided or unguided) must be offloaded from the fishing vessel and removed from Convention waters in Area 2C or 3A before switching to the other operation type.

Alternative 3: If halibut harvested using sport fishing guide services is possessed with halibut harvested not using sport fishing guide services on Convention waters in Area 2C or 3A, the IPHC annual management measures for guided sport fishing for the area that the halibut was harvested apply to all halibut onboard the fishing vessel.

Suboption 3.1: Include “other fishing facility” as well as “fishing vessel”.

Note on Alternative 3:

The term “fishing vessel” is defined in the Northern Pacific Halibut Act and means: “(1) any vessel engaged in catching fish in Convention waters or in processing or transporting fish loaded in Convention waters; (2) any vessel outfitted to engage in any activity described in paragraph (1); or (3) any vessel in normal support of any vessel described in paragraph (1) or (2)” 16 U.S.C. § 773(f). This would include any vessel and/or floating support facilities that are anchored, or moored, or tethered to shore on convention waters.

VOTE ON MOTION: Motion passed with no objection February 1, 2017 at 4:16 p.m.

C3 AREA 4 HALIBUT IFQ LEASING BY CDQ GROUPS

The Council heard a presentation from NPFMC staff, Sarah Marrinan. The following actions were taken:

Mr. Kinneen made the following motion which was seconded by Mr. Cotten:

The Council selects the following preliminary preferred alternatives, options, and sub-options for Area 4 Halibut IFQ Leasing by CDQ groups to be released for public review and scheduled for final action: **(preliminary preferred alternatives in bold; new language adopted from AP motion underlined).**

Alternative 1. No Action

Alternative 2. Allow CDQ groups to lease halibut IFQ in Areas 4B, 4C and 4D in years of low halibut catch limits in regulatory Areas 4B and 4CDE. Any IFQ transferred to a CDQ group under this provision would be added to their available halibut CDQ, intended to be leased from non-residents for use only by residents of a CDQ community with a halibut CDQ permit and a CDQ hired master permit. No vessel over 51 feet LOA would be eligible to harvest the leased IFQ and vessels would have to comply with IFQ use restrictions.

Option 1. Defining ‘low catch limits’ for the purpose of allowing leases. Designation of low catch limits is independently determined for Areas 4B and 4CDE. The threshold for designating a year of low halibut catch limit in each area is less than:

Sub-option 1. 1 million pounds for area 4B

Sub-option 2. 1.3 million pounds

Sub-option 3. 1.5 million pounds for area 4CDE

Option 2. Any leased Area 4D IFQ, including A class, may be fished in Area 4E. This provision would also allow Area 4D A Class IFQ owned by CDQ groups to be fished in Area 4E when the abundance threshold in Area 4CDE is triggered.

Option 3. Any Area 4B, 4C, or 4D catcher vessel QS transferred after December 14, 2015 may not be leased as IFQ to CDQ groups under this action for a period of:

Sub-option 1. 3 years

Sub-option 2. 4 years

Sub-option 3. 5 years

Option 4. No individual halibut QS holder may lease catcher vessel halibut IFQ to any CDQ group, on a consecutive basis, for more than:

Sub-option 1. 2 years

Sub-option 2. 3 years

Sub-option 3. 4 years

Option 5. Limit the ability to lease Area 4B catcher vessel halibut IFQ to CDQ groups under this action to quota holders that own less than the following total area 4B holdings, inclusive of all class and blocked or unblocked categories:

Sub-option 1. 2,000 lbs

Sub-option 2. 5,000 lbs

Sub-option 3. 7,500 lbs

Mr. Cotten made the following amendment which was seconded by Ms. Peterson:

Add suboption 4 under option 5 to convert to 2016 QS units.

Mr. Merrill made the following amendment to the amendment which was seconded by Mr. Cotten:

Add the following language to suboption 4 (**in bold**):

Option 5. Limit the ability to lease Area 4B catcher vessel halibut IFQ to CDQ groups under this action to quota holders that own less than the following total area 4B holdings, inclusive of all class and blocked or unblocked categories:

Sub-option 1. 2,000 lbs

Sub-option 2. 5,000 lbs

Sub-option 3. 7,500 lbs

Sub-option 4. Convert pounds in **Sub-options 1 through 3** to 2016 QS units

VOTE ON AMENDMENT TO THE AMENDMENT: Amendment passed with no objection February 2, 2017 at 10:48 a.m.

VOTE ON AMENDMENT: Amendment passed with no objection February 2, 2017 at 10:49 a.m.

Mr. Merrill made the following amendment which was seconded by Mr. Laukitis:

Add the following option:

Option 6. Require CDQ groups to report on an annual basis the criteria used to select IFQ holders leasing to a CDQ group, the criteria used to determine who can receive leased IFQ, and the amount and type of IFQ leased.

VOTE ON AMENDMENT: Amendment passed with no objection February 2, 2017 at 10:52 a.m.

Mr. Laukitis made the following amendment which was seconded by Mr. Kinneen:

Replace Option 2 so it reads as follows:

Option 2. Leased Area 4D IFQ may be fished in Area 4E.

Sub-option. Area 4D A Class IFQ owned by CDQ groups may be fished in Area 4E when the abundance threshold in Area 4CDE is triggered.

Sub-option. Any 4D A Class IFQ leased by a CDQ group may be fished in Area 4E when the abundance threshold in Area 4CDE is triggered.

VOTE ON AMENDMENT: Amendment passed with no objection February 2, 2017 at 11:19 a.m.

VOTE ON MAIN MOTION: Motion passed with no objection February 2, 2017 at 11:20 a.m.

C4 IFQ COMMITTEE

The Council heard a presentation from NPFMC staff, Sam Cunningham. The following action was taken:

Mr. Laukitis made the following motion which was seconded by Mr. Down:

The Council requests that staff develop a discussion paper to evaluate the medical lease provision. The discussion paper should address the issues recommended by the IFQ Committee.

Additionally, the Council requests that staff develop a discussion paper to consider revisions to the beneficiary designation provision. Staff should begin with the purpose and need statement and alternatives that were provided by NMFS in the committee briefing materials (page 6-7), but also consider alternative means to define "family member."

The Council also requests that staff assess and report on the amount of small quota holdings that are unused and unfished. This information will assist the committee to further evaluate the effectiveness of the sweep-up provision.

Finally, the Council requests that staff explore the feasibility of developing information on the movement of quota share out of rural communities (population of 1,500 or less). The information should distinguish between quota share that moves out of the community by transfer (sale) to a non-rural entity versus quota that appears to move out of the community because the quota share holder has relocated his/her address or record to a larger community. This information will assist the committee to assess the need for future action to address rural participation in the IFQ fisheries.

VOTE ON MOTION: Motion passed with no objection February 3, 2017 at 11:46 a.m.

C5 BSAI CRAB SPECIFICATIONS FOR NSRKC

The Council heard a presentation from NPFMC staff, Sam Cunningham. The following action was taken:

Mr. Hartill made the following motion which was seconded by Mr. Laukitis:

The Council adopts the 2017 NSRKC SAFE and adopts the OFL of 0.67 million lbs and the ABC of 0.54 million lbs as recommended by the AP and SSC.

VOTE ON MOTION: Motion passed with no objection February 3, 2017 at 1:22 p.m.

C6 BSAI YELLOWFIN SOLE TRAWL LIMITED ACCESS FISHERY

The Council heard a presentation from NPFMC staff, Jon McCracken. The following actions were taken: (Bold underlined text indicates language added/changed from motion proposed during initial review, February 2016)

The Council recommends releasing the BSAI Trawl Limited Access Yellowfin Sole Fishery analysis for public review after including the recommendations provided by the SSC to the extent possible.

The Council revises the alternatives to read as follows:

Alternative 1: No Action – Status Quo

Alternative 2: A catcher vessel may ~~directed fish~~ **target** the BSAI trawl limited access yellowfin sole fishery and deliver its catch to a mothership or catcher/processor only if that catcher vessel is assigned an LLP that is credited with at least **one trip target** ~~directed fishery~~ landing in the **BSAI trawl limited access** yellowfin sole ~~limited access~~ fishery made to a mothership or catcher/processor between:

Option 2

Option 2.1 2008-2015

Option 2.2 2008-2016

Suboption a: in any year

Suboption b: in any two years

If more than one LLP license is assigned to a vessel that made at least one trip target in the BSAI trawl limited access fishery, the vessel owner must specify only one LLP license to receive credit with the landings made by that vessel when more than one LLP license was assigned to the vessel.

Option 3

~~Option 2.3 a: The limits on access to catcher vessels are relieved~~ **Option 3.1 All catcher vessels may target yellowfin sole in the BSAI trawl limited access fishery and deliver its catch to a mothership or catcher/processor** if the TAC assigned to the BSAI trawl yellowfin sole limited access fishery is equal to or greater than:

Suboption ~~2.3.1.1~~: 15,000 mt

Supoption 2-3.1.2: 20,000 mt

Supoption 2-3.1.3: 25,000 mt

Suboption 3.1.4: 30,000 mt

Option 3.2 Catcher vessels that do not meet the landings qualifications established under Option 2, may target yellowfin sole in the BSAI trawl limited access fishery and deliver to a mothership or catcher/processor only for that portion of the yellowfin sole TAC assigned to the BSAI trawl limited access fishery that is equal to or greater than:

Mr. Twiet made the following amendment which was seconded by Mr. Kinneen:

The Council moves to remove option 2.2 under Alternative 2, Option 2.

VOTE ON AMENDMENT: Amendment failed 3/7 (Mr. Merrill, Mr. Cross, Mr. Hyder, Mr. Laukitis, Mr. Mezirow, Ms. Peterson, and Mr. Hull voting in opposition) February 3, 2017 at 6:03 p.m.

VOTE ON MOTION: Motion passed with no objection February 3, 2017 at 6:18 p.m.

D2 STOCK ASSESSMENT PRIORITIZATION

The Council heard a presentation from NOAA Science Advisor, Dr. Richard Methot. The Council also heard the Joint Groundfish Plan Team Report from NPFMC, Jim Armstrong and Crab Stock Prioritization Presentation from NPFMC, Dr. Diana Stram. Actions for this agenda item were up taken under E1 Staff Tasking.

C7 AFA 10-YEAR PROGRAM REVIEW

The Council received a presentation from Marcus Hartley and Gary Eaton of Northern Economics. The following actions were taken:

Mr. Merrill made the following motion which was seconded by Mr. Cross:

The Council accepts the AFA Program review as complete and final with the addition of the corrections and clarifications raised during the staff's presentation in the AP, to the extent practicable. Staff should also include a section that summarizes key findings in the final review.

The Council recommends that staff initiate a discussion paper for an action that would prohibit directed fishing by regulation for those species as listed in the review document where the sideboard limits are not large enough to support a directed fishery and remove the sideboard for that species.

Mr. Cotten made the following amendment which was seconded by Mr. Laukitis:

Include a section describing the amount of Alaska Fisheries Business tax and the Fisheries Resource Landing tax revenues collected by the State from AFA fishing activity, and how those revenues may have changed over time. This would also include the amount and type of revenues distributed to communities adjacent to AFA fishing activity.

VOTE ON AMENDMENT: Amendment passed with no objection February 4, 2017 at 5:24 p.m.

Mr. Tweit made the following substitute motion which was seconded by Mr. Laukitis:
(Added language in **bold**)

The Council **does not** accept the AFA Program review as complete and final **until an SSC review has been provided** with the addition of the corrections and clarifications raised during the staff's presentation in the AP, to the extent practicable. Staff should also include a section that summarizes key findings in the final review.

The Council recommends that staff initiate a discussion paper for an action that would prohibit directed fishing by regulation for those species as listed in the review document where the sideboard limits are not large enough to support a directed fishery and remove the sideboard for that species.

VOTE ON SUBSTITUTE MOTION: Substitute motion failed 4/7 (Mr. Merrill, Mr. Cross, Mr. Down, Mr. Hyder, Mr. Mezirow, Ms. Peterson, and Mr. Hull voting in opposition) February 4, 2017 at 5:56 p.m.

VOTE ON MAIN MOTION: Motion passed with no objection February 4, 2017 at 6:05 p.m.

C8 SQUID TO ECOSYSTEM COMPONENT CATEGORY

The Council heard a presentation from NPFMC staff, Dr. Diana Stram. The following action was taken:

Mr. Merrill made the following motion which was seconded by Mr. Cross:

The Council replaces the purpose and need statement, revises Alternative 2 (as recommended by the AP), adds Alternative 3, and recommends release to the public after the staff address the SSC's recommendations, as appropriate (changes are in **bold and underlined**).

Purpose and Need

Squid are short-lived, highly productive, and an important prey species. No conservation concerns exist for squid populations in the BSAI and GOA. Squid are thought to be substantially more abundant than can be estimated from trawl survey data. Trawl surveys do not employ the proper gear or sample in locations that can provide reliable biomass estimates for most squids. Limited information hinders the development of reliable biological reference points, particularly OFLs and ABCs. As a result, current OFLs for squid are based on average catch calculations that are poorly linked to abundance. OFLs that are not representative of abundance do not achieve management goals for squid and could constrain groundfish fisheries unnecessarily. There are no directed fisheries for squid in either the BSAI or GOA, however squid bycatch is retained in some fisheries and often utilized to prevent waste. **The National Standard 1 guidelines include options to identify non-target species in FMPs (species caught incidentally during the pursuit of target stocks in a fishery) that do not require the establishment of a TAC. These options include identifying species as non-target and in need of conservation and management, or as non-target ecosystem component species, not in need of conservation and management. Identifying squids as a non-target species in the FMPs would more accurately reflect the nature of squid catch while protecting squid from fishing effects and alleviating unnecessary constraints on other groundfish fisheries.**

Alternative 2: Designate squid in both BSAI and GOA FMPs **as non-target** 'Ecosystem Component Species'. **Establishment of** OFL, ABC, **and** TAC will no longer be required.

Remove regulations referring to squids as target species and implement regulations for the groundfish fishery that:

- Prohibit directed fishing for squid
- Establish a squid maximum retainable amount (MRA) when directed fishing for **other fisheries** at a level to discourage retention while allowing flexibility to prosecute **other** fisheries
 - Option 1 MRA = 2%
 - Option 2 MRA = 10%
 - Option 3 MRA = 20%
- Require recordkeeping and reporting to monitor and report catch **and discards** of squid species annually.

Encourage the Alaska Fisheries Science Center to continue to explore methods to estimate squid abundance and assess the squid stocks.

Alternative 3: Designate squid in both BSAI and GOA FMPs as non-target species. Establishment of a squid TAC will no longer be required (OFL and ABC would still be specified).

Remove regulations referring to squids as target species and implement regulations for the groundfish fishery that:

- **Prohibit directed fishing for squid.**
- **Establish a squid maximum retainable amount (MRA) when directed fishing for other fisheries at a level to discourage retention while allowing flexibility to prosecute other fisheries.**
 - **Option 1 MRA = 2%**
 - **Option 2 MRA = 10%**
 - **Option 3 MRA = 20%**
- **Require recordkeeping and reporting to monitor and report catch and discards of squid species annually.**

Encourage the Alaska Fisheries Science Center to continue to explore methods to estimate squid abundance and assess the squid stocks.

Direction to staff (All Alternatives): Request that staff explore whether the provisions in the statutory note to the section 303 of the Magnuson-Stevens Act (p. 79) that does not require the establishment of OFLs, ABCs, and TACs would apply to squid in the BSAI or GOA... "[section 303(a)(15) of the Magnuson-Stevens Act] shall not apply to a fishery for species that have a life cycle of approximately 1 year unless the Secretary has determined the fishery is subject to overfishing of that species."

VOTE ON MOTION: Motion passed with no objection February 5, 2017 at 11:32 a.m.

C9 GOA GEAR SPECIFIC SKATE MRA's

The Council received a presentation from NPFMC staff, Steve MacLean. The following action was taken:

Mr. Down made the following motion which was seconded by Mr. Tweit:

The Council directs staff to prepare an expanded discussion paper regarding Gear and Sector specific MRAs for all GOA skates, and to include a discussion of changing the MRA enforcement period for GOA skates from instantaneous to time of offload.

The expanded discussion paper should include information for all GOA sectors, including CPs and CVs by gear type, for encounter rates of all GOA skates, both GOA-wide and by area, for the years 2012-2016.

The paper should also include additional information on GOA skate stocks, including GOA skate biomass trends and skate encounter rates in GOA surveys (IPHC, AFSC longline and BTS).

VOTE ON MOTION: Motion failed 4/7 (Mr. Merrill, Mr. Cotten, Mr. Kinneen, Mr. Laukitis, Mr. Mezirow, Ms. Peterson, and Mr. Hull voting in opposition) February 5, 2017 at 1:57 p.m.

D1 BRISTOL BAY RED KING CRAB

The Council received a presentation from NPFMC staff, Dr. Diana Stram. The following action was taken:

Mr. Hartill made the following motion which was seconded by Mr. Laukitis:

The Council requests the Crab Plan Team evaluate effects of total red king crab bycatch in the groundfish fisheries on MSST, OFL, ABC, and TAC and provide a summary of discussions during the next Crab Plan Team report to the Council.

VOTE ON MOTION: Motion passed with no objection February 6, 2017 at 8:42 a.m.

E1 STAFF TASKING

In addition to discussing the relative priority of previously tasked projects, the Council clarified direction and tasking for its various committees. The following action was taken:

Mr. Tweit made the following motion which was seconded by Mr. Mezirow:

1. I move that the Council recommend a conditional implementation of the stock assessment prioritization process. The Council remains concerned about any use of this prioritization process to allocate stock assessment resources between regions or to modify the timetable or extent of stock surveys. For that reason, the Council requests that the agency describe how it prioritizes stock assessment funding relative to other fishery research efforts, prior to the AFSC proceeding with the second year of the prioritization process. Additionally, the Council also requests updates on efforts being undertaken nationally to improve the efficiency of stock assessments.
2. The Council endorses the SSC's recommendations on stock assessment prioritization regarding the frequency and format of stock assessments, as well as their recommendations for further

review and timely Plan Team development of an evaluation tool for measuring the costs and benefits of alternative assessment frequencies and a framework for risk assessment, prior to the AFSC proceeding with the second year of the prioritization process.

3. For purposes of evaluating this modification to our stock assessment process, the Council defines success, for alternative assessment frequencies, as follows:
A reduction in the frequency of some targeted stock assessments should provide increased opportunity for stock assessment authors to address analytical priorities (listed below) that have been awaiting attention, while avoiding any measurable decrease in the precision of assessment based products such as OFL and ABC.
4. A review of the degree of success achieved through the proposed target frequencies will be conducted after one complete cycle (4 years) of the modified assessment schedule.
Itemized Analytical Priorities (Initial list, to be refined by the Plan Teams during their 2017 meetings, and then be re-reviewed by the SSC and Council)
 - Development and testing of Next Generation Stock Assessment methods including: climate-enhanced stock assessment models, multi-species models, and advanced analytical modeling approaches.
 - Improved short- and long-term projection models to be used to evaluate the performance of alternative management strategies (e.g., MSEs). This might include evaluations of techniques to formally incorporate uncertainty based buffers for tier 3 stocks and strategies for addressing “choke” species’ stock status including PSC caps.
 - More rapid progress on innovative decision tables or decision theoretic approaches to management, including techniques for testing the utility of ensemble modeling approaches to groundfish management.
 - Research to resolve specific modeling issues such as survey catchability, ideal sample sizes for core data sets.

Mr. Balsiger made the following amendment which was seconded by Mr. Cotten:

(Additions made in **bold**, deletions ~~strikethrough~~)

3. For purposes of evaluating this modification to our stock assessment process, the Council defines success, for alternative assessment frequencies, as follows:
A reduction in the frequency of some targeted stock assessments should provide increased opportunity for stock assessment authors to address analytical priorities (listed below) that have been awaiting attention, while avoiding any ~~measurable~~ **significant** decrease in the precision of assessment-based products such as OFL and ABC.

VOTE ON AMENDMENT: Amendment passed with no objection February 6, 2017 at 10:35 a.m.

VOTE ON MOTION: Motion passed with no objection February 6, 2017 at 10:37 a.m.

THE COUNCIL ADJOURNED ON MONDAY FEBRUARY 6, 2017 AT 11:00 A.M.

TIME LOG
North Pacific Fishery Management Council
Meeting held in Seattle, Washington
Renaissance Hotel
February 1 – 6, 2017

WEDNESDAY FEBRUARY 1, 2017

02/01/2017 08:13:46 AM Call to Order
02/01/2017 08:15:11 AM Approval of Agenda

B1 REPORTS

02/01/2017 08:33:08 AM **B1 Executive Director's Report** – Chris Oliver
02/01/2017 08:47:36 AM **B2 NS 1 Guidelines** – NMFS, Erin Schnettler
02/01/2017 09:19:46 AM **B2 NMFS Report** – Glen Merrill
02/01/2017 09:37:30 AM NOAA GC Update – Lauren Smoker
02/01/2017 09:48:04 AM **B3 ADF&G Report** – Trent Hartill
02/01/2017 09:56:00 AM Break
02/01/2017 10:19:48 AM **B5 USCG Report** – Corrie Sergeant
02/01/2017 10:38:03 AM **B7 Protected Species Report** – Steve MacLean and Dr. Banxton
02/01/2017 10:55:34 AM **B8 IPHC Report** – Steve Keith, Claude Dykstra
02/01/2017 11:36:20 AM **B9 NAVY (GOA Training Report)** – Chris Rifle, Amy Burt,
Andrea Balla-Holden
02/01/2017 12:40:45 PM Lunch Break
02/01/2017 01:32:52 PM B9 Continued
02/01/2017 01:55:33 PM **B Public Testimony**
02/01/2017 01:56:04 PM Natasha Hayden
02/01/2017 02:01:39 PM Christina Hendricksen
02/01/2017 02:15:14 PM Layana DeWilde

*No Reports for B4 and B6 were given but information can be found on the [Agenda](#)

C1 CDQ OWNERSHIP CAPS

02/01/2017 02:48:13 PM **C1 Presentation** – NFMS' staff Keeley Kent
02/01/2017 03:16:18 PM AP Report – Angel Drobnica
02/01/2017 03:21:52 PM **C1 Mr. Kinneen Motion**

NO PUBLIC TESTIMONY WAS TAKEN ON THIS AGENDA ITEM

C2 MIXING OF GUIDED AND UNGUIDED HALIBUT

02/01/2017 03:22:55 PM **C2 Presentation** - NPFMC staff Jon McCracken and Will Ellis
02/01/2017 03:57:44 PM AP Report – Matt Upton
02/01/2017 04:06:24 PM **C2 Mr. Merrill Motion**
02/01/2017 04:18:01 PM Recess

NO PUBLIC TESTIMONY WAS TAKEN ON THIS AGENDA ITEM

THURSDAY FEBRUARY 2, 2017

C3 AREA 4 HALIBUT IFQ LEASING BY CDQ GROUPS

02/02/2017 08:09:25 AM Call to Order
02/02/2017 08:12:44 AM **C3 Presentation** – NPFMC staff Sarah Marrinan
02/02/2017 09:20:18 AM AP Report – Angel Drobnica
02/02/2017 09:29:18 AM **C3 Public Testimony**
02/02/2017 09:31:03 AM Mateo PazSoldon, Simeon Swetzof, Heather McCarty
02/02/2017 09:45:12 AM Matt Robinson
02/02/2017 09:47:39 AM Angel Drobnica
02/02/2017 09:53:14 AM Linda Behnken
02/02/2017 10:02:56 AM Dave Fraser
02/02/2017 10:08:14 AM Break
02/02/2017 10:30:15 AM **C3 Mr. Kinneen Motion**
02/02/2017 11:03:48 AM Stand Down
02/02/2017 11:15:08 AM **C3 Mr. Laukitis Motion**
02/02/2017 11:21:24 AM Lunch
02/02/2017 01:01:24 AM Halibut ABM Workshop
02/02/2017 04:30:24 AM Recess

FRIDAY FEBRUARY 3, 2017

02/03/2017 08:05:04 AM SSC Report – Farron Wallace

C4 IFQ COMMITTEE

02/03/2017 09:12:58 AM **C4 Presentation** – NPFMC staff, Sam Cunningham
02/03/2017 09:38:50 AM AP Report – Matt Upton
02/03/2017 09:52:10 AM Break
02/03/2017 10:09:52 AM **C4 Public Testimony**
02/03/2017 10:10:01 AM Clem Tillion
02/03/2017 10:21:05 AM Alexis Kwachka
02/03/2017 10:28:31 AM Bob Alverson and Mike Offerman
02/03/2017 10:42:33 AM Shawn McManus
02/03/2017 10:48:16 AM Jan Standaert
02/03/2017 10:50:59 AM Natasha Hayden

02/03/2017 11:06:13 AM Gus Linville
02/03/2017 11:14:28 AM Jeff Farvour
02/03/2017 11:27:42 AM **C4 Mr. Laukitis Motion**
02/03/2017 11:47:04 AM Lunch Break

C5 BSAI CRAB SPECIFICATIONS FOR NSRKC

02/03/2017 01:07:32 PM **C5 Presentation** – NPFMC staff, Diana Stram
02/03/2017 01:20:10 PM AP Report – Angel Drobnica
02/03/2017 01:21:56 PM **C5 Mr. Hartill Motion**

NO PUBLIC TESTIMONY WAS TAKEN ON THIS AGENDA ITEM

C6 BSAI YELLOWFIN SOLE TRAWL LIMITED ACCESS FISHERY

02/03/2017 01:29:40 PM **C6 Presentation** – NPFMC staff, Jon McCracken
02/03/2017 02:42:48 PM AP Report – Matt Upton
02/03/2017 03:11:15 PM **C6 Public Testimony**
02/03/2017 03:11:22 PM Don Ashley
02/03/2017 03:18:58 PM Brent Paine
02/03/2017 03:32:40 PM Bob Breskovich
02/03/2017 03:38:41 PM Mike Hyde
02/03/2017 03:59:01 PM Simeon Swetzof, Mateo Paz-Soldan, Ricardo Mercurief
02/03/2017 04:08:49 PM Stephanie Madsen
02/03/2017 04:15:17 PM Donna Parker
02/03/2017 04:24:33 PM Todd Loomis
02/03/2017 04:43:03 PM Jim Johnson
02/03/2017 04:52:27 PM Matt Upton
02/03/2017 04:54:18 PM Dennis Moran, Mike Guy, and Annika Saltman
02/03/2017 05:08:33 PM Patrick O'Donnell
02/03/2017 05:12:49 PM Break
02/03/2017 05:30:46 PM **C6 Mr. Cross Motion**
02/03/2017 06:20:30 PM Recess

SATURDAY FEBRUARY 4, 2017

D2 STOCK ASSESSMENT PRIORITIZATION

02/04/2017 09:08:25 AM **D2 Presentation** – Dr. Methot
02/04/2017 09:42:31 AM Joint Groundfish Plan Team Report – NPFMC Jim Armstrong
02/04/2017 10:32:41 AM Crab Stock Prioritization Presentation – NPFMC Diana Stram
02/04/2017 11:05:22 AM Break
02/04/2017 11:19:44 AM Questions
02/04/2017 11:25:21 AM AP Report – Matt Upton
02/04/2017 11:26:21 AM **D2 Public Testimony**

02/04/2017 11:26:32 AM Gerry Merrigan
02/04/2017 11:33:21 AM Mark Fina
02/04/2017 11:35:31 AM Laona DeWilde

C7 AFA 10-YEAR PROGRAM REVIEW

02/04/2017 01:09:19 PM C7 Public Testimony Frank Kelty (Taken out of Order)
02/04/2017 01:14:15 PM **C7 Presentation** – Marcus Hartley & Gary Eaton
02/04/2017 03:10:22 PM Break
02/04/2017 03:22:43 PM C7 Presentation Continued
02/04/2017 03:55:37 PM AP Report – Matt Upton
02/04/2017 04:03:50 PM **C7 Public Testimony**
02/04/2017 04:04:58 PM John Gruver
02/04/2017 04:06:58 PM Stephanie Madsen
02/04/2017 04:23:37 PM Brent Paine
02/04/2017 04:43:22 PM Donna Parker
02/04/2017 04:55:01 PM Break
02/04/2017 05:03:48 PM **C7 Mr. Merrill Motion**
02/04/2017 05:22:39 PM **C7 Mr. Cotten Motion**
02/04/2017 05:47:20 PM Break
02/04/2017 05:54:57 PM Deliberations Continued
02/04/2017 06:06:03 PM Recess

SUNDAY FEBRUARY 5, 2017

02/05/2017 10:08:10 AM Call to Order

C8 SQUID TO ECOSYSTEM COMPONENT CATEGORY

02/05/2017 10:12:50 AM **C8 Presentation** – NPFMC staff, Diana Stram
02/05/2017 10:46:32 AM RIR Report – Jon McCracken
02/05/2017 11:02:37 AM AP Report – Angel Drobnica
02/05/2017 11:03:34 AM **C8 Public Testimony**
02/05/2017 11:04:00 AM Brent Paine
02/05/2017 11:27:03 AM **C8 Mr. Merrill Motion**

C9 GOA GEAR SPECIFIC SKATE MRAs

02/05/2017 11:37:51 AM **C9 Presentation** – Steve MacLean
02/05/2017 12:05:15 PM Lunch Break
02/05/2017 01:05:00 PM AP Report – Angel Drobnica
02/05/2017 01:08:41 PM **C9 Public Testimony**
02/05/2017 01:08:52 PM Julie Bonney
02/05/2017 01:24:21 PM Chad See and Gerry Merrigan
02/05/2017 01:38:41 PM **C9 Mr. Down Motion**

D1 BRISTOL BAY RED KING CRAB PSC

02/05/2017 02:05:17 PM **D1 Presentation** – NPFMC staff, Diana Stram
02/05/2017 02:40:40 PM AP Report – Angel Drobnica
02/05/2017 02:46:09 PM **D1 Public Comment**
02/05/2017 02:46:49 PM John Gauvin
02/05/2017 02:53:10 PM Executive Session

MONDAY FEBRUARY 6, 2017

02/06/2017 08:41:59 AM Call to Order
02/06/2017 08:45:56 AM **D1 Mr. Hartill Motion**

E1 Staff Tasking

02/06/2017 08:55:59 AM Staff Report – NPFMC Executive Director, Chris Oliver
02/06/2017 09:00:52 AM Break
02/06/2017 09:29:07 AM Ecosystem Committee Report – NPFMC staff, Steve MacLean
02/06/2017 09:54:54 AM B Reports – update from CAPT Stephan White
02/06/2017 10:04:45 AM Tanner Crab Harvest Strategies – Craig Cross
02/06/2017 10:18:48 AM Mezirow addresses registration for self-guided boats
02/06/2017 10:25:14 AM **Mr. Tweit Motion** – Stock Assessment Prioritization
02/06/2017 11:01:31 AM Meeting Adjourned

NO PUBLIC TESTIMONY WAS TAKEN ON THIS AGENDA ITEM

North Pacific Fishery Management Council

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Chris Oliver, Executive Director



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February 2017 Newsletter

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Thank you, Seattle!

The Council members and public enjoyed a spectacular seafood reception at the Renaissance Marriott Hotel in downtown Seattle following the first day of the Council meeting. Many thanks to the fishing industry businesses and groups involved in the North Pacific for hosting the event – a good time was had by all.

Nominations open for Charter Halibut Committee

The Council is seeking nominations for seats to be filled on the Charter Halibut Committee to include a 3A representative from a community that is not on the road system, and a 2C representative from one of the smaller communities to complement representation from Juneau and Sitka. Nominations are open until March 31. Representatives will be named at the April Council meeting. Please send a letter of interest to steve.maclean@noaa.gov.

BSAI Halibut Abundance-based PSC Management Workshop

In conjunction with the February Council meeting, the Council held a public stakeholder workshop to solicit input to identify measurable objectives and appropriate metrics for the development of alternative management measures for BSAI halibut PSC limits. Per Council request, the inter-agency Abundance-Based Management (ABM) workgroup translated the confirmed Council objectives into draft overarching goals to gather stakeholder input on these goals and associated measurable objectives and related performance metrics. The ABM workgroup is continuing to develop a range of alternative control rules along with a range of indices to further the process of developing alternatives for this action. This discussion paper will be presented at the April Council meeting, and will also include the results of the stakeholder feedback from the February workshop. Staff contact is Diana Stram.

C1 CDQ Ownership Caps

The Council made an initial review of an amendment package that would revise the American Fisheries Act (AFA) Program and the Crab Rationalization (CR) Program ownership attribution regulations and the Crab Fisheries Management Plan to provide for the different requirements for the CDQ groups, as distinguished from other program participants, which is mandated by the Magnuson-Stevens Act (as amended by the Coast Guard Act). Specifically, this action would remove the application of the “10-percent” rule for the CDQ groups and replace it with the proportional “individual and collective” rule. Since the 2006 amendment to the Magnuson-Stevens Act mandating the use of the individual and collective rule for CDQ groups, NMFS implemented this modification in practice by using the individual and collective rule but has not revised the AFA or CR Program regulations or the Crab FMP. This action would revise the regulations and the Crab FMP to make them consistent with the Magnuson-Stevens Act and current practice. Final action is scheduled for April. Staff contact is Sarah Marrinan.

C2 Mixing of Guided and Unguided Halibut

At the June 2016 meeting, the Council tasked staff to prepare a discussion paper on the mixing of guided and unguided halibut on the same vessel. Different regulations apply to guided and unguided (i.e., chartered and non-chartered) halibut fishing trips. Unguided sport fishermen may harvest two halibut of any size and they are not subject to an annual catch limit. Charter vessel anglers, or guided fishermen, on the other hand, are subject to regulations developed annually, that may include restrictions on daily bag limit, size, daily closures, and an annual catch limit.

Once guided and unguided halibut are mixed aboard a vessel, determining which halibut were harvested under the guided regulations and which halibut were harvested under the unguided regulations becomes difficult for purpose of accountability and enforcement. Compliance can be maximized and the duration of an at-sea vessel boarding can be minimized when regulations are concise, unambiguous, and require no interpretation by guides, anglers, and authorized officers in the field.

To address the Council’s request, the Enforcement Committee assisted in development of a discussion paper, which was presented at this meeting. After reviewing the discussion paper, the Council initiate an analysis for limiting the mixing of guided and unguided halibut on the same vessel. Alternatives for consideration include: 1) no action; 2) prohibit the possession of guided and unguided halibut simultaneously on any vessel; and 3) if halibut harvested using sport fishing guide services is possessed with halibut harvested not using sport fishing guide services on Convention waters in Area 2C or 3A, the IPHC annual management measures for guided sport fishing for the area that the halibut was harvested apply to all halibut onboard the fishing vessel. A suboption to Alternative 3 would include “other fishing facility” as well as fishing vessel. Staff contact is Jon McCracken.

C3 IFQ Leasing by CDQ Groups

The Council made an initial review of a regulatory amendment package that would allow CDQ groups to lease halibut IFQ in Areas 4B, 4C and 4D in years of low halibut catch limits in IPHC regulatory Areas 4B and 4CDE. In effect, this proposal would allow CDQ groups to lease halibut IFQ for use by residents on vessels less than or equal to 51 ft LOA, subject to IFQ use regulations and the groups’ internal management.

The Council has established this action alternative as their preliminary preferred alternative (PPA), setting a threshold of a 1 million pound catch limit for Area 4B and a 1.5 million pound catch limit for Area 4CDE under which this flexibility would be available to the groups. The preliminary preferred alternative

would also allow Area 4D IFQ that is leased to CDQ groups be fished in Area 4E. The Council added in the consideration of whether this harvest flexibility would also apply to A Class QS in years where the catch limit is set lower than the threshold.

While the action alternative would allow leasing of Area 4B, 4C, and 4D IFQ under specific circumstances, three options are included in the Council's PPA which limit leasing eligibility among QS holders, and mitigate a QS holder's reliance on leasing as a viable business opportunity. Specifically, one option in the Council's PPA would establish a "cooling off" period of five years, during which newly acquired QS could not be leased to a CDQ group. Another option under the Council's PPA would prohibit any QS holder from leasing IFQ to a CDQ group for more than two consecutive years. A third option under the Council's PPA would require that IFQ leasing in Area 4B be restricted to those QS holders that hold less than 7,500 pounds.

This action is intended to bring additional halibut harvesting opportunities into the CDQ communities in times of low halibut catch limits, with the intended beneficiaries being resident of the communities that traditionally rely on halibut CDQ for employment and income. Therefore, the Council added the consideration of a reporting requirement in which CDQ group using this flexibility would specify the criteria used to select IFQ holders leasing to a CDQ group as well as the criteria used to determine who can receive leased IFQ.

Final action on the analysis is scheduled for June. Staff contact is Sarah Marrinan.

C4 IFQ Committee

The newly reconstituted IFQ Committee held its first meeting on Monday, January 30; the minutes from that meeting were subsequently reviewed by the Advisory Panel and the Council. The Committee provided comment on the initial review draft of the Area 4 halibut CDQ leasing action, and then addressed a list of items that the Council had previously tasked to the Committee during its deliberation on the IFQ Program 20-Year Review in October 2016. Those items included sweep-ups of small blocked QS units, medical transfers, survivorship QS leasing provisions, use of hired masters, and rural participation/QS ownership in the IFQ fisheries. On the last topic, the Committee received a presentation from Dr. Courtney Carothers of University of Fairbanks (UAF).

The Committee emerged from the meeting with recommendations for two discussion papers on NMFS regulatory items and specific data requests. The discussion papers will draft Purpose & Need statements and alternatives for action that could address medical leasing and survivorship beneficiary designation provisions in the program. The data requests, which will be reported to the Committee, will include a report on small amounts of QS that have been unused and unfished for an extended period of time and could be swept into blocks for viable use.

The Committee identified areas of key interest that will drive the group's agenda as it plans to meet via teleconference in June 2017 and in person during October 2017. The thematic focus of the October meeting will be rural participation and entry level opportunity in the IFQ fisheries. The Committee will consider information gathered by its members and staff regarding the migration of QS via sale or individual relocation. Staff will also provide information on the itemization of the IFQ Program's cost recovery fees relative to other North Pacific catch share fisheries. Staff contact is Sam Cunningham.

C5 Norton Sound Red King Crab

The final Norton Sound red king crab assessment was reviewed by the SSC, AP and Council in order to set catch specifications for the 2017 fishery. This stock has a separate specifications timing in order to

accommodate the CDQ fishery which can open in early May. The stock is healthy, with an estimated mature male biomass for this stock above its target level ($B_{MSY\ proxy} = 4.62$ million lb) with an OFL calculated by the Tier4a control rule. The SSC recommended an OFL of 0.71 million lb and an ABC of 0.54 million lb which used a 20% buffer from the OFL. The stock is not overfished nor is overfishing occurring on this stock. Staff contact is Diana Stram

C6 BSAI YFS TLA Limited Entry

At this meeting, the Council made an initial review of an analysis of management measures to limit access for trawl catcher vessels targeting Bering Sea and Aleutian Islands (BSAI) trawl limited access (TLA) yellowfin sole for delivery of the catch to a mothership or catcher processor. The management measures under consideration also include an option to remove the limited access provisions for all trawl catcher vessels during period of high total allowable catch assigned to the BSAI TLA yellowfin sole fishery.

Since the implementation of the TLA yellowfin sole fishery in 2008, American Fisheries Act (AFA) and non-AFA catcher vessels, AFA catcher processors, floating processors, and Amendment 80 motherships have participated in the TLA yellowfin sole fishery. In 2015, vessels entered the TLA yellowfin sole fishery that had no previous participation. Historic participants are concerned about the impact of these new participants of their access to the TLA yellowfin sole fishery.

At the February 2016 meeting, the Council indicated that limiting access for catcher vessels in the offshore portion of the BSAI TLA yellowfin sole fishery could have three primary benefits: 1) ensure that the limited access fishery continues to provide benefits to historic participants, 2) mitigate the risk that a “race for fish” could develop; and 3) maintain the consistently low rates of halibut bycatch in this fishery. After reviewing the initial review draft and listening to public testimony, the Council provided some clarification in the proposed management measure and added two new options for consideration. The Council clarified that eligibility to participate in the offshore BSAI TLA yellowfin sole fishery for catcher vessels will be attached to the license limitation program (LLP) license assigned to the vessel that made at least one trip target in the fishery. If the catcher vessels have more than one LLP assigned to the vessel, the vessel owner must specify which license to attached the eligibility.

The first option the Council added expanded the years for eligibility consideration to include 2016. The Council also adjusted the existing threshold option by adding 30,000 mt for consideration. Finally, the Council added a new threshold option that allows non-qualified catcher vessels to target TLA yellowfin sole and deliver to a mothership or catcher processor only for the portion of the yellowfin sole TAC assigned to the BSAI TLA fishery that is greater than or equal to the threshold amount selected by the Council (see final motion for specific threshold suboptions). In addition, the non-qualified catcher vessels would be limited on the amount of halibut PSC assigned to the BSAI TLA yellowfin sole fishery they could utilize. The amount of halibut PSC for the non-qualified catcher vessels would be based on the proportional share of BSAI TLA yellowfin sole that would be available for the non-qualified catcher vessels. Staff contact is Jon McCracken.

C7 AFA Program Review

The MSA requires a formal and detailed review of Limited Access Privilege Programs 5 years after the implementation of the program, and thereafter to coincide with scheduled Council review of the relevant fishery management plan (but no less frequently than once every 7 years). In December 2015, the Council reviewed a workplan for a program review of the American Fisheries Act (AFA) limited access privilege program. In February 2017, the Council reviewed and accepted the AFA program review as completed and final with the addition of an added section describing the amount of Alaska Fisheries

Business tax and the Fisheries Resource Landing tax revenue collected by the State from AFA fishing activity and how those revenues may have changed over time and how its distributed to communities. The Council also noted that the program review should include corrections and clarifications raised during the staff presentation in the AP, to the extent practicable. The future program review will also include a section that summarizes key findings.

The Council also tasked staff to initiate a discussion paper for a management action that would prohibit directed fishing by regulation for those species listed in the review document where sideboard limits are insufficient to support a directed fishery and remove the sideboard for those species. Staff contact is Jon McCracken.

C8 Squid to Ecosystem Component Category

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 (EC) category. Newly revised National Standard 1 guidelines include options to identify non-target species in FMPs (species caught incidentally during the pursuit of target stocks in a fishery) that do not require conservation and management as ecosystem components. Following review of the EA/RIR/IRFA, the Council modified its problem statement, added some clarifications to Alternative 2 (move squid to EC), and added a new alternative that would also designate squids in both BSAI and GOA Groundfish FMPS as non-target species, but still requiring conservation and management. Under this new Alternative 3, a TAC for squids would not necessary, but unlike Alternative 2, this alternative would still require an OFL and ABC. The new alternative includes options for establishing a maximum retainable amount when directed fishing for other fisheries like those in Alternative 2. The Council also encouraged the Alaska Fisheries Science Center to continue to explore methods to estimate squid abundance and assess the squid stocks. Finally, the Council directed staff to explore whether the provisions in the statutory note to the section 303 of the Magnuson-Stevens Act that does not require the establishment of OFLs, ABCs, and TACs would apply to squid in the BSAI and GOA Groundfish FMPs. Staff contact is Diana Stram.

C9 Gear and Sector Specific GOA Skate MRAs

The Council reviewed a discussion paper examining gear and sector specific Maximum Retainable Amounts (MRAs) for Gulf of Alaska skates. Action by the Council in 2014, and implemented in January 2016, revised the MRA for skate species in the GOA from 20% to 5% in order to reduce the likelihood that catch of skates would exceed the Allowable Biological Catch (ABC), resulting in skates being placed on prohibited retention status requiring regulatory discards of all skates caught incidental to other fisheries. Public testimony in April 2016 suggested that the MRA was too low for hook and line cod and IFQ fisheries, and the Council requested a discussion paper to examine available information. Data from 2012 to 2016 suggests that the intrinsic rate of skate catch for hook and line fisheries is near the 5% MRA established by the Council. NMFS in-season management expressed concern that raising the MRA for skates above 5% would result in an increase in retained skates, which would likely result in skates being placed on prohibited retention status earlier in the year. After review of the discussion paper, the Council chose to take no action at this time. As a result, the MRA for skates in all GOA fisheries will remain at 5%. Staff contact is Steve MacLean.

D1 BSAI Crab Bycatch

The Council reviewed a discussion paper on groundfish bycatch management measures for the Bristol Bay red king crab stock. The paper summarized existing measures for BBRKC prohibited species catch (PSC) in groundfish fisheries as well as what data is available on PSC levels, accrual toward current PSC limits, observed data and current or planned research to evaluate efficacy of existing management measures. The Council moved to request the Crab Plan Team evaluate effects of total red king crab bycatch in the groundfish fisheries on MSST, OFL, ABC, and TAC during the May Crab Plan Team meeting and report back to the Council in June. Staff contact for BSAI crab bycatch issues is Diana Stram.

D2 Stock Assessment Prioritization

The Council and SSC received reports from the Groundfish and Crab Plan Teams on their recommendations for applying the National Stock Assessment Prioritization Plan (SAPP). The SAPP, initiated by NMFS Headquarters, envisions the use a common approach by all regions to determine how often their stock assessments will be conducted. While some regions are unable to conduct stock assessments on a regular basis, the North Pacific Council has been fortunate to have stock assessments for all of its managed fisheries either fully or partially updated each year. Given this, application of the SAPP to our region would not increase the frequency of assessments, but instead could be a means to reduce the frequency of some assessments for which there is not a strong need for frequent updating. These assessments would be for stocks with consistently low catches relative to harvest limits and no ongoing management concerns. None of the high value fisheries (pollock, Pacific cod, sablefish, yellowfin sole, rock sole, etc.) were considered for reduced assessment frequency.

The benefits of reduced stock assessment frequency, as suggested by NMFS HQ, include increased opportunities for assessment analysts to address other analytical priorities. As such, the Council defined success for the amended assessment frequencies as follows [paraphrased]: "... increased opportunity for stock assessment authors to address analytical priorities [...] while avoiding any significant decrease in the precision of assessment based products such as OFL and ABC."

Of the 53 groundfish stocks for which harvest limits are specified each year (25 BSAI, 28 GOA) 17 stocks were proposed by the Groundfish Plan Teams for reduced assessment frequency. Similarly, of the 10 crab stocks specified annually, 5 were recommended for reduced frequency by the Crab Plan Team. These are listed in the tables below. The Plan Teams and SSC/Council were in agreement for most of these assessments; the tables indicate where there was disagreement.

The modifications to assessment schedules are expected to go into effect in 2017. NMFS HQ has repeatedly assured the Council that the SAPP is not linked to regional assessment funding. The Council, however, requested that NMFS provide information as to how it prioritizes funding for assessments as a condition for continuing with the revised assessment schedule. Additionally, the SSC and Council called for plan team development of a tool for measuring costs and benefits of reduced assessment frequency, as well as a framework for risk analysis. Finally, the Council recommended that a review be conducted after one complete cycle (4 years) of the revised assessment frequencies.

Table 1. Groundfish Assessment frequency changes – all other stocks (remain at status quo assessment frequency (see agenda item D2).

Groundfish Stock	Assessment Frequency (years)		
	Status Quo	Plan Team	SSC/Council
BSAI Greenland Turbot	1	2	2
BSAI Other Flatfish	2	4	4
GOA Shallow Flatfish	2	4	4
GOA Deep Flatfish	2	4	4
GOA Flathead Sole	2	4	4
BSAI/GOA Sculpins	2	4	4
BSAI/GOA Grenadiers	2	4	4
BSAI/GOA Capelin	2	4	4
AI Pollock	1	4	2
BSAI/GOA Squid	2	4	2
GOA BS/RE Rockfish	2	4	2
BSAI Shortraker Rockfish	2	4	2
BSAI Other Rockfish	2	4	2

The Crab Assessment frequency changes – all other stocks remain at status quo assessment frequency (see agenda item C5).

Crab Stock	Assessment Frequency (years)		
	Status Quo	Plan Team	SSC/Council
Pribilof RKC	1	2	2
Norton Sound RKC	1	2	2*
Pribilof BKC	1	3	3
Pribilof GKC	1	3	3
Western AI RKC	1	3	3

*Pending State cost/benefit analysis

E Staff Tasking

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

- Send a letter to the Alaskan Joint Command thanking them for the presentation on the planned 2017 military training exercise (Northern Edge) in the Gulf of Alaska, and requesting that they provide an update when completed.
- Send a letter to the IPHC requesting that Craig Cross replace Dan Hull as a Council representative on the Management Strategy Advisory Board.
- Request a report in April from NMFS on the status, trends, and plans for research and management of fur seals in the Pribilof Islands.
- Request that the BSAI crab plan team have input into the Alaska Board of Fisheries process as the BOF reviews the Tanner crab harvest strategy.
- Recommend conditional implementation of the stock assessment prioritization process, and requests NMFS report next year on how the funding was prioritized within and among regions, as well as a full review of the process after one full cycle (4 years).

Upcoming Meetings

Scallop Plan Team: Wednesday February 22, 2017, Fishermen's Hall, Kodiak

Joint Groundfish Plan Team EFH Sub-committee: March 6, 1-3

https://npfmc.adobeconnect.com/efh_jpt_2017-03-06/.

Crab Plan Team EFH Sub-Committee: March 7, 1-3

https://npfmc.adobeconnect.com/efh_jpt_2017-03-06/.

EM Workgroup: March 28-29, 8-5, Best Western Kodiak Inn and Convention Center

BS FEP Team: April 24-26, TBD

Crab Plan Team: May 2-5, 2017 in Juneau, AK Federal Building

Observer Advisory Committee: May 23 8:30 – 5, May 24, 8:30 - 1, AFSC Building 4, Seattle

DRAFT NPFMC THREE-MEETING OUTLOOK - updated 2/13/2017

April 3-11, 2017 Anchorage, AK	June 5-13, 2017 Juneau, AK	October 2-10, 2017 Anchorage, Alaska
EM Workgroup Report; Action as necessary Lead Level 2 Observers: Initial Review EFH Omnibus Amendments: Initial Review (Final Action-T) GOA Rockfish Program Review: Review Workplan Pollock ICA/IPA reports Update on salmon genetics BSAI Salmon genetics spatial/temporal distribution: Disc paper Co-op Reports (AFA, Am 80, GOA Rockfish, BSAI Crab) CDQ Ownership Caps: Final Action Halibut Abundance-based PSC limits: Discussion Paper Crab binding arbitration fomula: Discussion paper BSAI Tanner crab custom processing cap: Discussion paper Salmon FMP Amendment: Discussion Paper Programmatic Groundfish Objectives: Review Scallop SAFE and catch specifications: Approve, PT report Lenfest Fisheries Ecosystem Task Force: Report, Eco Cttee Bering Sea FEP: Update and action as necessary Marine Mammals Take Accounting Report Fur Seal Status, Research, Management planning: Report AFSC Research Prioritization Report	Joint Meeting with IPHC (T) Observer disembark location: Initial Review 2016 Observer Annual Report: Review; Action as necessary OAC Report WGOA Pcod A season halibut PSC rates: Discussion Paper WGOA pollock C/D season timing wrt Chinook PSC: Disc paper (T) BSAI YFS TLA Fishery limited entry: Final Action Allocation Policy Directive: Discussion Paper (T) AFA Sideboards: Discussion Paper (T) Area 4 Halibut IFQ Leasing: Final Action Halibut Abundance-based PSC limits: Action as necessary IFQ medical lease provision: Discussion Paper (T) IFQ beneficiary designation provision: Discussion Paper (T) IFQ small unfishable quota: Data review (T) Salmon FMP Amendment: Action as necessary CPT Report; ABC/OFL for 3 stocks: Final Action Squid to Ecosystem Component Category: Final Action GOA Crab habitat conservation measures: Disc paper (T) 5-year research priorities: Finalize	Deep Sea Coral Program Report Lead Level 2 Observers: Final Action 2017 Observer and EM Annual Deployment Plan; Observer Committee and EMWG Reports BSAI Crab SAFE and ABC/OFL 6 stocks: PT Report; final specs Groundfish Harvest Specifications: PT Report; Initial Specs Fixed Gear CV Rockfish Retention: Discussion paper Charter Halibut Annual Permit Registration: Initial Review Mixing of guided and unguided halibut: Initial Review Bering Sea FEP: Initial Review (T) Alaska Climate Integrated Modeling (ACLIM): Update (T) Salmon FMP Amendment: Action as necessary ITEMS BELOW NOT YET SCHEDULED Remove WAI Red King Crab from FMP: Initial Review Charter Halibut Permit Ownership Caps: Disc paper (Dec-T) Charter Halibut Permit Latent Capacity: Disc paper (Dec-T) Stranded Cod in GOA Trawl B Season: Disc paper WGOA pollock trip limits: Disc paper Bering Sea Snow Crab PSC Limits: Initial Review (Feb-T) Observer Insurance Requirements: Disc paper for Reg Am

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

April 3-11, 2017, Anchorage
June 5-13, 2017, Juneau
October 2-10, 2017, Anchorage
December 4-12, 2017, Anchorage
February 5-13, 2018, Seattle
April 2-10, 2018, Anchorage
June 18-26, 2018, Nome (T)
October 1-9, 2018, Anchorage
December 3-11, 2018, Anchorage
February 4-12, 2019, Portland
April 1-9, 2019, Anchorage

(T) = Tentative