

April 3, 2017

Agenda B-2: NMFS Management Report

Status of Actions Report online

Updated daily at: <https://alaskafisheries.noaa.gov/sites/default/files/reports/amendments.pdf>

Progress on Rulemaking

Highlights on progress since the February 2017 meeting include:

- Final Rule for Bering Sea and Aleutian Islands 2017 and 2018 Harvest Specifications for Groundfish. <https://alaskafisheries.noaa.gov/sites/default/files/82fr11826.pdf>
Effective: February 27, 2017
- Final Rule for Gulf of Alaska 2017 and 2018 Harvest Specifications for Groundfish. <https://alaskafisheries.noaa.gov/sites/default/files/82fr12032.pdf>
Effective: February 27, 2017
- Final Rule for 2017 Halibut Annual Management Measures. <https://alaskafisheries.noaa.gov/sites/default/files/82fr12730.pdf>
Effective: March 3, 2017
- Notice of Availability and Proposed Rule for Amendment 114 to the Fishery Management Plan (FMP) for Bering Sea and Aleutian Islands Groundfish, and Amendment 104 to the FMP for Gulf of Alaska Groundfish – Implement Electronic Monitoring.
Notice of Availability: Comments through May 9, 2017
<https://alaskafisheries.noaa.gov/sites/default/files/82fr13302.pdf>
Proposed Rule: Comments through May 22, 2017
<https://alaskafisheries.noaa.gov/sites/default/files/82fr14853.pdf>

See Attachment 1 for additional detail.

Standardized Bycatch Reporting Methodology Update

On January 19, 2017, NMFS published a final rule that interprets and provides guidance on the requirement that all FMPs, establish a standardized reporting methodology to assess the amount and type of bycatch occurring in a fishery (SBRM). (See the February 2017 B-1 Agenda for the

final rule and Council comments). The Council provided comments on the proposed rule noting that the Annual Deployment Plan (ADP) and other documents that comprise the Council's fishery research plan under the groundfish FMPs describe the process used to establish an SBRM. The final rule notes that Councils may describe the SBRM via non-regulatory mechanisms, noting that the North Pacific Groundfish FMPs have established fishery research plans. Based on an initial review of the final rule, we do not anticipate changes will be required to the groundfish FMPs given the documentation provided through the Council's fishery research plan (i.e., the ADP and associated documents). We will work with the Council to review its other FMPs to determine if revisions to its non-groundfish FMPs may be required. We note that FMPs are not required to be consistent with the regulations established by the SBRM final rule until February 21, 2022. We will provide an update to the Council at a future meeting.

American Fisheries Act (AFA) Groundfish and Non-AFA Crab Sideboard Limits – Discussion Paper

As part of the Council's AFA Program review, NMFS identified an area for improvement in the management of the AFA Program. To streamline the management of the sideboard limits included under the AFA, NMFS recommended prohibiting directed fishing by regulation for those species (and any future break-out or combination of these species) for non-exempt AFA vessels where the sideboard limits are not large enough to support a directed fishery. The Council requested a discussion paper to analyze this proposed action to come back to the Council in June 2017. NMFS also proposes to include the sideboard limits for the GOA non-AFA crab vessels in this discussion paper. The Council will be able to review and decide whether to proceed with this approach once the discussion paper is provided to the Council.

The regulations at 50 CFR 680.22 establish groundfish catch limits for vessels with a history of participation in the Bering Sea snow crab fishery to prevent these vessels from using the increased flexibility provided by the Crab Rationalization Program to expand their level of participation in the GOA groundfish fisheries. The basis for these sideboard limits is described in detail in the final rules implementing the major provisions of Amendments 18 and 19 to the Fishery Management Plan for Bering Sea/Aleutian Islands King and Tanner Crabs (Crab FMP) (70 FR 10174, March 2, 2005), Amendment 34 to the Crab FMP (76 FR 35772, June 20, 2011), Amendment 83 to the GOA FMP (76 FR 74670, December 1, 2011), and Amendment 45 to the Crab FMP (80 FR 28539, May 19, 2015).

These sideboard limits restrict these vessels' catch to their collective historical landings in each GOA groundfish fishery (except the fixed-gear sablefish fishery). The sideboard amounts are published each year in the GOA harvest specifications for groundfish. Since the 2005 implementation of these sideboard limits, the only sideboard limits large enough to support a directed fishery are the Western and Central GOA Pacific cod pot catcher vessel sideboard limits and. All other sideboard limits have been closed for directed fishing. NMFS proposes removing the regulatory requirement to publish the sideboard limits in the harvest specifications, except for Western and Central GOA Pacific cod pot catcher vessels. The non-American Fisheries Act crab vessels that are subject to sideboard limits would be closed for directed fishing by regulation in all other GOA fisheries with sideboard limits. This proposed change would not modify the vessels subject to sideboard limits.

Halibut Decksorting Regulatory Process

Over the past several years NMFS has issued several exempted fishing permits (EFP) to permit otherwise unauthorized sorting of halibut prohibited species catch (PSC) on the deck of non-pelagic trawl catcher/processor vessels while targeting flatfish in the Bering Sea. The EFPs test methods for quickly returning halibut to the water to reduce halibut PSC mortality in non-pelagic trawl fisheries.

One objective of the halibut decksorting EFPs is to develop protocols that can be implemented in regulations in the future. The iterative EFP process has allowed for many process refinements that will provide a robust foundation for a regulated decksorting option in the coming years. NMFS anticipates at least one more halibut decksorting EFP for 2018, with further refinements based on what is learned during the EFP in 2017. Later this year, NMFS will commence an analysis to allow decksorting of halibut on non-pelagic trawl catcher/processors operating in the Bering Sea and Aleutian Islands as an option permitted in regulation. This option could be available for the 2019 fishing year at the earliest.

Staff Changes

Gretchen Harrington has been selected to serve as the Acting Assistant Regional Administrator (ARA) for the Habitat Conservation Division for a six-month detail. The detail started on April 1, 2017 when Jeanne Hanson stepped down as the ARA.

Gretchen has 19 years of experience with NMFS, and has been involved extensively in the Council process. She has been a team leader or team member on dozens of complex, controversial, and high profile projects during that time. We are looking forward to working with Gretchen in her new role leading the Habitat Conservation Division. Gretchen will continue to coordinate with Sustainable Fisheries staff on the ongoing electronic monitoring proposed and final rule making process, and on the salmon FMP.

A general note for the Council... Adequate staffing is an increasing challenge for the Alaska Region. Currently, the Sustainable Fisheries and the Information Services Division have extensive staff vacancies. Both of these divisions provide many of the essential analytic, regulatory, management, and data processing needs for the Council and the fishing industry. Sustainable Fisheries will have 13 positions vacant out of 37 approved staff positions by the end of May due to retirements, transfers, or staff detailed elsewhere in the Alaska Region. This represents nearly 35 percent of our total approved staff positions. ISD currently has an even higher vacancy rate of nearly 50 percent of all approved staff positions. Speaking for Sustainable Fisheries, we have been able to adapt to many of these vacancies in the short-term by shifting duties to remaining staff, prioritizing projects, and exploring other efficiencies. We are not likely to be able to meet the same level of service in the long-term or if vacancies increase. We will continue to advise the Council and public at future meetings about our efforts to meet our obligations and any necessary reductions in service.

Attachment 1 -- Status of Regulatory Actions

Changes since February 2017 are noted in **Bold Red Text**, EOC = End of Comment [period]

Action Status	Lead Council, SF, and GCAK Staff	Date of Council Final Action	Start Regional Review	Received by GCAK	Transmittal Date of Action to NMFS HQ for Review	Notice of Availability (FMP) Published in Federal Register	Proposed Rule Published in Federal Register	Final Rule or Notice of Approval Published in Federal Register
FMP Amendments								
Amendments 114 (BSAI) and 104 (GOA) Electronic Monitoring (EM) Decision Date: June 8, 2017	Evans Harrington/Watson Meyer	December 2016	PR: 2/7/17	PR:2/8/17	PR: 3/3/17	Mar 10, 2017 82 FR 13302 EOC: 5/9/17	Mar 23, 2017 82 FR 14853 EOC: 5/22/17	
Regulatory Amendments								
Bering Sea and Aleutian Islands 2017 and 2018 Harvest Specifications for Groundfish	Stram Whitney Sullivan	- NMFS -	PR: 10/25/16 FR: 1/13/17	PR: 10/28/16 FR: 1/17/17	PR: 11/23/16 FR: 2/8/17	N/A	Dec 6, 2016 81 FR 87863 EOC: 1/5/17	Feb 27, 2017 82 FR 11826 Effective: 2/27/17
Gulf of Alaska 2017 and 2018 Harvest Specifications for Groundfish	Armstrong Davis Sullivan	- NMFS -	PR: 10/20/16 FR: 1/13/17	PR: 10/26/16 FR: 1/16/17	PR: 11/18/16 FR: 2/8/17	N/A	Dec 6, 2016 81 FR 87881 EOC: 1/5/17	Feb 27, 2017 82 FR 12032 Effective: 2/27/17
Authorizing a Recreational Quota Entity (RQE) to hold halibut QS	Marrinan Scheurer Lepore	December 2016						
Annual Halibut Management Measures	Scheurer Lepore/Pollard	- IPHC – January 2017	FR: 2/17/17	FR: 2/21/17	FR: 2/23/17	N/A	N/A	Mar 7, 2017 82 FR 12730 Effective: 3/3/17

Attachment 2 Inseason Management Report

Catch during 2017 is through March 25, 2017 and is compared to catch during 2016 through March 26, 2016. All catch amounts are in metric tons. More information from catch reports and information bulletins are available at: <https://alaskafisheries.noaa.gov/fisheries-catch-landings>

Bering Sea and Aleutian Islands

Bering Sea Pollock

The 2017 Bering Sea pollock TAC is 1,345,000 mt compared to 1,340,000 mt in 2016. NMFS reallocated 1,900 mt of CDQ and 9,000 mt of Aleut Corporation pollock TAC from the Aleutian Islands to the respective Bering Sea TACs.

Bering Sea	2017 A season allocation	2017 A season catch	2017 percent taken	2016 A season allocation	2016 A season catch	2017 percent taken
Inshore	263,765	203,705	77%	232,551	196,343	84%
C/P	211,012	187,803	89%	186,042	172,744	93%
Mothership	52,753	41,400	78%	46,510	44,780	96%
CDQ	61,380	60,755	99%	54,360	54,195	100%
Total	588,910	493,663	84%	519,844	468,062	90%

Salmon in the Bering Sea Pollock Fisheries

Species	Chinook				Non-Chinook			
	2017		2016		2017		2016	
Amount	#	Rate ¹	#	Rate ¹	#	Rate ¹	#	Rate ¹
CDQ	2,110	3.44%	1,243	2.27%	242	0.39%	415	0.76%
Non-CDQ	18,185	4.14%	13,970	3.33%	1,583	0.36%	3,158	0.75%
Total	20,295	4.06%	15,213	3.21%	1,825	0.36%	3,573	0.75%

¹Rate is number of salmon per metric tons of groundfish.

Aleutian Islands Pacific cod

In 2017, the non-CDQ allocation of Pacific cod in the Aleutian Islands remains open with 29% of the 14,016 mt TAC taken compared to the 2016 closure on March 22. Seven vessels have targeted Pacific cod in 2017 compared to 14 vessels in 2016.

BSAI Pacific cod by Sector

BSAI Sector	2017				2016			
	A Season Allocation	Catch Mar 25	A season closed	# of vessels Mar 25	A Season allocation	Catch Mar 26	A season closed	# of vessels Mar 26
CDQ	15,369	13,218	n/a	35	16,147	15,203	n/a	33
Hook-and-line C/P	52,893	39,102	n/a	28	55,581	41,178	n/a	29
Pot C/P	1,629	1,648	Jan 25	4	1,712	1,724	Jan 29	4
Pot CV >= 60 ft	9,123	9,377	Jan 25	30	9,587	6,624	Jun 10	15
Hook-and-line/Pot CVs < 60 ft	5,959	6,396	Jan 29	22	6,226	6,163	Feb 5	19
Jig	96	0	n/a	0	136	0	n/a	0
Trawl CV	34,962	37,151	Feb 23	95	36,732	37,763	Mar 9	93
AFA C/P	3,688	3,142	n/a	16	3,874	2,330	n/a	15
Amendment 80 C/P	21,485	8,195	n/a	17	22,573	13,759	n/a	18
Total	145,204	118,229		247	152,568	124,744		226

¹In 2017 NMFS reallocated 1,700 mt and in 2016 NMFS reallocated 1,750 mt of the A season jig allocation to the hook-and-line or pot gear less than 60 ft length overall allocation.

Pacific cod - Trawl catcher vessels

In 2017, 57 trawl CVs targeting Pacific cod reported 34,801 mt relative to 53 trawl CVs targeting Pacific cod reported 36,193 mt in 2016. The 2017 B season opens April 1 to 3.

BSAI Flatfish (includes CDQ)

In 2017 most flatfish total catch is lower relative to 2016, except for Alaska plaice and yellowfin sole.

Species	2017			2016		
	Catch	TAC	% Taken	Catch	TAC	% Taken
Alaska plaice	4,038	11,050	37%	1,673	14,500	12%
Arrowtooth flounder	238	11,900	2%	592	14,000	4%
Flathead sole	2,275	14,500	16%	3,206	21,000	15%
Greenland turbot	15	3,719	0%	14	2,873	0%
Kamchatka flounder	31	5,000	1%	60	5,000	1%
Other flatfish	412	2,125	19%	511	2,500	20%
Rock sole	14,934	47,100	32%	21,834	57,100	38%
Yellowfin sole	28,387	154,000	18%	25,220	144,000	18%
Total	50,330	249,394	20%	53,110	260,973	20%

BSAI Atka mackerel and Pacific ocean perch (includes CDQ)

Species	2017			2016		
	Catch	TAC	% Taken	Catch	TAC	% Taken
Atka mackerel	15,345	65,000	24%	15,744	55,000	29%
Pacific ocean perch	744	34,900	2%	1,454	31,900	5%

Gulf of Alaska**Pacific cod - Western GOA**

Sector	2017				2016			
	A season allocation	Catch March 25	A season closed	# of vessels March 25	A season allocation	Catch March 26	A season closed	# of vessels March 26
Hook-and-line C/P	2,700	2,490	n/a	5	2,982	1,268	n/a	3
Hook-and-line CV	173	44	n/a	4	192	57	Mar 11	3
Jig	381	48	n/a	5	595	52	n/a	7
Pot CV/CP	4,904	5,190	Feb 16	35	5,417	5,755	Feb 19	36
Trawl CV	6,861	7,489	Mar 8	29	7,579	7,295	Mar 12	25
Trawl C/P	223	n/a	n/a	<1	246	21	n/a	< 3
Total	15,242	15,261		78	17,011	14,448		74

Pacific cod - Central GOA

Sector	2017				2016			
	A season allocation	Catch March 25	A season closed	# of vessels March 25	A season allocation	Catch March 26	A season closed	# of vessels March 26
Hook-and-line C/P	1,347	850	n/a	7	1,504	580	n/a	3
Hook-and-line CV <50 ft	3,056	1,743	n/a	44	2,411	2,014	Mar 11	45
Hook-and-line CV >=50 ft	1,840	397	n/a	15	1,354	611	Mar 11	19
Jig	199	16	n/a	18	422	231	n/a	47
Pot CV/CP	7,349	6,082	Feb 23	55	8,028	8,026	Mar 31	59
Trawl CV	5,433	1,157	n/a	46	7,738	3,754	n/a	43
Trawl C/P	657	n/a	Jan 20	<1	734	0	Jan 20	0
Total	19,881	10,245		185	22,190	15,216		216

In 2017, NMFS reallocated 1,500 mt from the trawl CVs to pot CV/CPs and plans to reopen pot gear in April. In 2016, pot CV/CP closed February 1 and reopened March 12, jig closed March 1 and reopened March 19. In 2016, NMFS reallocated of 1,700 mt from hook-and-line CVs to pot CV/CP (1,500 mt) and Jig (200 mt).

GOA Pollock

All areas reached the A season TACs. For the B season, some Area 620 pollock is expected to be unharvested, and Areas 610 and 630 are expected to harvest close to the TAC by May 31.

2017 Seasons	610	620	630	640
A season allocation	2,232	34,549	11,014	7,492 (annual)
A season catch	2,591	35,908	11,857	0
A season closure	January 29	February 28	February 19	n/a
B season allocation	2,232	39,420	6,143	n/a
B season catch	848	18,266	2,753	n/a
B season closure	March 12 reopened March 23-27 reopened April 4	n/a	n/a	n/a

Implementation of pot gear for IFQ sablefish fishery in the GOA

Eleven vessels have registered and received pot tags. Currently effort is low and confidential. For up to date information see IFQ Sablefish Pot Tag Registrations on our website.

Salmon PSC in the GOA

In 2017, Chinook salmon PSC is higher by 9,379 salmon relative to 2016 for fisheries with PSC limits. The trawl CV non-Rockfish Program/non-pollock fishery may reach the limit by late April based on current PSC rates. NMFS is assessing potential reallocations from other sectors.

Chinook Salmon	2017 Limit	2017 PSC (Rate ²)	2016 PSC (Rate ²)
Total	n/a	12,553 (15%)	3,174 (5%)
Western GOA pollock	6,684	528 (8%)	850 (11%)
Central GOA pollock	18,316	9,571 (52%)	2,311 (5%)
Western/Central trawl CV ¹	3,060	2,321 (76%)	13 (0%)
Western/Central trawl C/P ¹	4,080	133 (3%)	0

¹Includes incentive buffers for 2017 Western/Central trawl CV limit (360 Chinook), and 2016 and 2017 Western/Central trawl CP limit (480 Chinook).

Non-Chinook Salmon	2017 PSC (Rate ²)	2016 PSC (Rate ²)
Total	16 (0.02%)	20 (0.03%)

²Rate is number of salmon per metric tons of groundfish.

Halibut Mortality Data

In 2017 relative to 2016, the total halibut mortality is 216 mt lower in the BSAI, and 326 mt lower in the GOA. In the BSAI, the largest halibut mortality decreases are in Amendment 80 rock sole (147 mt) and trawl CV Pacific cod (45 mt) targets. The 2017 rock sole catch is also lower by almost 7,000 mt. In the GOA, the largest halibut mortality decreases are in the non-pollock trawl (229 mt) and hook-and-line CV Pacific cod (94 mt) targets. In 2017, the GOA trawl sector has focused on pollock that has low halibut PSC rates. Harvest of non-pelagic trawl groundfish is lower in 2017 than in 2016. The GOA hook-and-line CVs have actively worked to avoid halibut PSC.

Area, Gear, and Sector	2017			2016		
	Halibut mortality	Groundfish	Rate	Halibut mortality	Groundfish	Rate
BSAI Total	624	626,360	0.10%	840	674,076	0.12%
Amendment 80	199	60,080	0.33%	382	78,763	0.48%
BSAI trawl limited access	332	438,890	0.08%	344	470,434	0.07%
Non-trawl Pacific cod	63	48,563	0.13%	75	51,514	0.15%
Non-trawl Other	0	0	0%	0	0	0%
CDQ	30	78,827	0.04%	39	73,365	0.05%
GOA Total	199	92,607	0.21%	525	71,918	0.73%
Trawl, Non-pelagic	116	13,469	0.86%	345	15,525	2.22%
Trawl, Pelagic	0	71,971	0.00%	1	49,796	0.00%
Hook-and-line CP	15	3,727	0.40%	17	2,225	0.59%
Hook-and-line CV	68	3,441	1.98%	162	4,372	3.61%