

Draft Summary

221th Plenary Session
North Pacific Fishery Management Council
Seattle Marriott Hotel, Seattle, WA

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ATTACHMENTS:

- Time Log
- Newsletter

The North Pacific Fishery Management Council met in February at the Renaissance Hotel in Seattle, WA. The following Council, SSC and AP members, and NPFMC staff attended the meetings.

Council Members

Dan Hull, Chair	Craig Cross	Dan Hull
John Henderschedt, Vice Chair	Ed Dersham	Simon Kinneen
Jim Balsiger	Duncan Fields	David Long
Sam Cotten/Nicole Kimball	Dave Hanson	Bill Tweit
	Roy Hyder	Capt Phillip Thorne

NPFMC Staff

Gail Bendixen	Steve MacLean	Joy Stein
Sam Cunningham	Sarah Marrinan	Maria Shawback
Diana Evans	Jon McCracken	Diana Stram
Peggy Kircher	Chris Oliver	David Witherell

Scientific and Statistical Committee

The SSC met from February 2nd through 4th at the Renaissance Hotel, Seattle, WA. Members present were:

Farron Wallace, Chair <i>NOAA Fisheries—AFSC</i>	Robert Clark, Vice Chair <i>Alaska Department of Fish and Game</i>	Milo Adkison <i>University of Alaska Fairbanks</i>
Chris Anderson <i>University of Washington</i>	Sherri Dressel <i>Alaska Department of Fish and Game</i>	Brad Harris <i>Alaska Pacific University</i>
Anne Hollowed <i>NOAA Fisheries—AFSC</i>	George Hunt <i>University of Washington</i>	Seth Macinko <i>University of Rhode Island</i>
Steve Martell <i>Intl. Pacific Halibut Commission</i>	Lew Queirolo <i>NOAA Fisheries—Alaska Region</i>	Kate Reedy <i>Idaho State University Pocatello</i>

Advisory Panel

The AP met February 3-7 in Seattle, WA, and the following members were present for all or part of the meetings

Ruth Christiansen	Jeff Kauffman	Joel Peterson
Kurt Cochran	Mitch Kilborn	Theresa Peterson
John Crowley	Alexus Kwachka	Wilt Sinclair
Jerry Downing	Craig Lowenberg	Jeff Stephan
Jeff Farvour	Chuck McCallum	Matt Upton
Becca Robbins Gisclair	Andy Mezirow	Anne Vanderhoeven
John Gruver	Paddy O'Donnell	Ernie Weiss

B Reports

The following reports were given and briefly discussed. Public Comment was taken on all B items:

B1 Executive Director's Report – Chris Oliver

B2 NMFS Management Report – Glenn Merrill, Jeanne Hansen, Mary Furuness, Chad See: Lead Level 2 Industry Report

B3 ADF&G Report – Karla Bush

B4 NOAA Enforcement Report

B5 USCG Report – Capt. Phillip Thorne, Lt Cdr Corrie Sergent

B7 IPHC Report – Ian Stewart

B8 Protected Species Report - Steve MacLean

B9 NPRB Report – Denby Lloyd

B items

National Marine Sanctuary Motion

2/4/2015 1:30 Bill Tweit

The Council will send a letter to the National Marine Sanctuary Program recommending consultation with the North Pacific Council on any proposed National Marine Sanctuary in the North Pacific during the phase in which a complete application has been accepted but prior to a nomination being accepted on the inventory of areas for potential designation.

The motion passed unanimously.

C1 CDQ Pcod Fishery Development

2/4/2015 2:07 Glenn Merrill

The Council adopts Alternative 4 with Option 1 and sub-Option 3.3 as the preferred alternative.

The Council also amends the Fishery Management Plan for Groundfish of the Bering Sea and Aleutian Islands Management Area (FMP) to authorize the management measures that would be implemented under the preferred alternative. The FMP amendments will:

(1) add reference to the exemption from the License Limitation Program for catcher vessels greater than 32 ft LOA but less than or equal to 46 ft LOA using hook-and-line gear in the groundfish CDQ fisheries, and

(2) allow catcher vessels less than or equal to 46 ft LOA using hook-and-line gear in the groundfish CDQ fisheries to be in the partial observer coverage category.

The motion passed 10/0, with Simon Kinneen recusing himself.

C2 Electronic Monitoring

2/4/2015 4:12 Council Discussion, no motion

C3 Aleutian Islands Pacific Cod Allocation and delivery requirement

2/6/2015 10:20, Nicole Kimball

The Council releases the analysis for public review, with the following changes:

The American Fisheries Act, BSAI Crab Rationalization, and BSAI Amendment 80 management programs provided benefits to processing vessels that were intended to protect their investments in, and dependence on, the respective fishery resources. Each of these programs has also afforded participants opportunities for consolidation, allowing for increased participation in the non-rationalized BSAI Pacific cod fishery in the Aleutian Islands, thus increasing the risk that diminishing the historical share of BSAI cod of other industry participants and communities that depend on shorebased processing in the region may be diminished. The BS/AI cod TAC split and relatively low Pacific cod stock abundance in the Aleutian Islands further increase the need for community protections.

Alternative 1: No Action

Alternative 2: Prior to (options: March 15, 21) the A season trawl CV Pacific cod harvest in the Bering Sea shall be limited to an amount equal to the BSAI aggregate CV trawl sector A season allocation minus the lesser of the AI directed Pacific cod non-CDQ TAC fishing allowance or (options: 3,000 mt, 5,000 mt). Directed fishing for AI Pacific cod is prohibited for all vessels except CVs delivering to shoreplants west of 170° longitude in the AI prior to (options: March 7, 15). ~~Harvest of the AI Pacific cod directed fishing allowance is limited to CVs delivering to shoreplants west of 170° longitude in the AI prior to (options: March 7, 15).~~

The following options are not mutually exclusive:

Option 1: Any amount of the AI Pacific cod non-CDQ TAC above the amount set aside from the trawl CV BSAI allocation may be available to any sector for directed fishing and is not subject to the regional delivery requirement.

~~Option 2:~~ If less than 50% of the AI Pacific cod non-CDQ TAC directed fishing allowance has been landed shoreside by (options: March 7, 15), the restriction on the delivery to other processors and the restriction on the trawl CV sector allocation shall be removed.

~~Option 3:~~ If less than 1,000 mt of the AI Pacific cod non-CDQ TAC directed fishing allowance has been landed shoreside by February 28, the restriction on delivery to other processors and the restriction on the trawl CV sector allocation shall be suspended for the remainder of the year.

~~Option 4:~~ If prior to (options: November 1, January 20), neither the community City of Adak nor the community City of Atka have notified NMFS of the intent to process Pacific cod in the upcoming year

~~season~~, the Aleutian Islands shoreside delivery requirement is suspended for the upcoming year. Cities can voluntarily provide notice prior to the selected date if they do not intend to process.

Shoreplant is defined as a processing facility physically located on land.

The Council also requests staff explore with NMFS whether there is an approach that would allow community notification and application of the regional delivery requirement specific to the processing capacity of the community.

AMENDMENT: Glenn Merrill. 10:34. In Option 2, amend language to add February 28, March 7 and March 15. Option 3, add options: February 21 and 28. In Option 4, strike January 20. The amendment to the motion passed without objection.

AMENDMENT to AMENDMENT: Craig Cross: 10:41. Add December 15 to Option 4. Passed without objection.

AMENDMENT: Bill Tweit. 10:42. Add option 5: Any processor that has processed cod in AI mgmt area in at least 12 years between 2000 to 20014 shall be exempted from these restrictions for processing levels up to 2000MT. Motion passed 6/5, with Kimball, Dersham, Long, Kineen, and Hull voting in opposition.

AMENDMENT to AMENDMENT: Fields. 10:52. Add change in Alternative 2 to include a 7000mt option. The amendment passed without objection.

AMENDMENT: Craig Cross. 11:03 Add March 1 to Alternative 2. Passed without objection.

The amended main motion passed unanimously without objection.

C4 Halibut Total Mortality Accounting

This item was discussed at the SSC only and included in the minutes for that meeting.

C5 Halibut PSC

Halibut deck sorting EFP
2/6/2015 2:30, Bill Tweit

Council has reviewed EFP and endorses to NMFS for their approval. Cross seconded. Kinneen, support motion, and thanks for extra time for presentation, informative, and wants to be as successful as possible. **Motion passes unanimously.**

Initial Draft to Reduce Halibut PSC Limits
2/8/2015 1:30 Duncan Fields

The Council releases the document for public review, after incorporating SSC comments as practicable, with the following modifications to the alternatives.

Alternative 1 No action

Alternative 2 Amend the BSAI Groundfish FMP to revise halibut PSC limits as follows (*more than one option can be selected*).

~~Option 1 Establish seasonal apportionment of halibut PSC in the BSAI trawl limited access sector.~~

Option 2 Reduce halibut PSC limit for the BSAI Trawl Limited Access Sector by:

a) 10 percent b) 20 percent c) 30 percent ~~or~~ d) 35 percent or e) 50 percent

Option 3 Reduce halibut PSC limit for the Amendment 80 Sector by:

Suboption 1 Reducing the halibut PSC limit to Am 80 cooperatives by:

a) 10 percent b) 20 percent c) 30 percent or d) 35 percent or e) 50 percent

Suboption 2 Reducing the halibut PSC limit to the Amendment 80 limited access fishery by:

a) 10 percent b) 20 percent c) 30 percent d) 35 percent e) 50 percent or f) 60 percent

Option 4 Reduce halibut PSC limit for Pacific cod hook and line catcher vessel sector by:

a) 10 percent b) 20 percent c) 30 percent ~~or~~ d) 35 percent or e) 50 percent

Option 5 Reduce halibut PSC limit for Pacific cod hook and line catcher processor sector by:

a) 10 percent b) 20 percent c) 30 percent or d) 35 percent or e) 50 percent

Option 6 Reduce the CDQ halibut PSQ limit by:

a) 10 percent b) 20 percent c) 30 percent ~~or~~ d) 35 percent or e) 50 percent

Option 7 Reduce halibut PSC limit for other non-trawl (i.e., hook and line catcher vessels and catcher processors targeting anything except Pacific cod or sablefish) by:

a) 10 percent b) 20 percent c) 30 percent d) 35 percent or e) 50 percent

AMENDMENT: Dave Long. 1:55.

Add 40% and 45% as options for all sectors. **Passed, with Merrill, Cotton, and Cross voting in opposition.**

AMENDMENT to AMENDMENT: John Henderschedt 2:02.

Eliminate 40%, 45% and 50% in option 3 suboption1. **Failed 3/8, with Tweit, Cross, and Henderschedt voting in favor.**

Amended main motion passed 9/2 with Cross and Henderschedt voting in opposition.

D1 GOA Tendering Discussion Paper

2/8/2015 4:12. Glenn Merrill: The Council will update the tendering report in one year.

The motion passed unanimously.

D2 Workplan for BSAI Crab Rationalization 10-year Program Review

The Council heard a report from staff and commended them on their efforts and are anticipating the final review in April. No action was taken.

D3 Norton Sound Red King Crab OFL/ABC

2/8/2015 4:25 Sam Cotton

The Council adopts the OFL and ABC for Norton Sound Red King Crab as approved by the SSC: a retained catch OFL of 330 tons and an ABC of 262 tons.

The motion passed without objection.

E Staff Tasking

The Executive Director will draft a letter to the USCG Commandant with regards to reduced cutter days and relationship of available assets to increase arctic focus.

The Executive Director will draft a letter to the US Department of State regarding the Council's discussion on the Arctic and potential engagement in issues/forums.

The Executive Director, the Chairman and ViceChairman will discuss funding for electronic monitoring during the upcoming Council Chairman's Committee.

Abundance Based PSC Limits

2/9/2015 2:46 Duncan Fields

The Council requests staff, in consultation with IPHC staff, evaluate possible approaches to link BSAI halibut PSC limits to model-based abundance estimates of halibut in a discussion paper. The Council recommends that the SSC also review this paper.

The motion passed without objection.

100% Observer Coverage

2/9/2015 2:57 Sam Cotton

The Council requests staff develop a discussion paper that evaluates the effects of moving all GOA trawl vessels currently in the partial observer coverage category to the full (100%) observer coverage category. At a minimum, the paper should outline the effect on observer program fee revenues that would support non-trawl fleets that would remain in partial coverage and the potential cost impacts for AFA and non-AFA trawl vessels as a percent of ex-vessel revenue and daily observer costs. The paper should also identify observer companies currently supplying observers to full coverage fisheries and any observer availability issues.

The motion passed 9-2, with Henderschedt and Tweit in opposition.

Critical habitat/SSL issues

Dr. Balsiger noted a letter informing the Council will be drafted stating there will be a peer review before the proposed rule.

A/B Season Split for AI Pcod

2/9/2015 3:20 John Henderschedt

The Council initiate a discussion paper that explores the conservation and management issues related to establishing AB split in AI and would include examining bycatch reduction, management of targeted fisheries as well as issues related to SSL implications. **The motion passed 10/1, with Ms. Kimball in objection.**

Social SAFE Chapter

There was discussion regarding interest in including social science and evaluating how it can be included and incorporated into the SAFE document. No action was taken.

Offload WAI Golden King Crab

2/9/2015 3:39 Simon Kinneen

The Council initiate an amendment analysis to allow partial offload of crab deliveries in W AI Golden king crab delivery. **Motion passed without objection.**

Decksorting 2016 EFP

Dr. Balsiger noted that NMFS and Council staff will be working together to develop the best direction for the 2016 EFP and engaging all parties involved.

Research Priorities

Mr. Merrill noted he will be working with Mr. Tweit and the SSC to develop definitions for the research priorities.

Appointments/ Announcements

Chairman Hull announced the RQE Committee: Ken Dole, Richard Yamada, Andy Mezirow, Bruce Gabrys, Duncan Fields, and will leave two places open for a 3A charter operator and a 2C longline committee member. Mr. Dersham will be the chairman.

Additionally, Gared Bright will be appointed to the IFQ Committee.

The Council also thanked John Henderschedt for his service to the Council and wished him luck in his future position.

The Council adjourned Monday, February 9, at 2:14.

TIME LOG
North Pacific Fishery Management Council
Meeting held in Seattle, Washington
February 4-9, 2014

Wednesday 2-4-15

Call to Order	08:00
Henderschedt resigning	08:03
B1 Executive Director's Report - Chris Oliver	08:06
Doug DeMaster	08:20
Bob Mace Award to Martin Loefflad	08:21
B2 NMFS Management Report - Glenn Merrill	08:24
Litigation update - Maura Sullivan NOAA GC	08:33
Marine Sanctuary presentation - Bill Douros Lisa Wooninck	08:37
B3 ADFG Report - Karla Bush	09:21
B4 USCG Report - Corrie Sergent	09:28
B6 IPHC Report - Bruce Leaman	10:09
Dr. Ian Stewart	10:54
B7 Protected Species Report - Steve MacLean	10:58
Lunch Break	11:52
Public Testimony all B Items	11:35
Merrick Burden	11:38
Frank Kelty	11:39
Tweit motion	11:46
C1 CDQ P. Cod Fishery Development - Sarah Marrinan	11:54
AP report, Ernie Weiss	12:15
Public Testimony C1	12:15
Mateo Paz Soldan, Simeon Swetzoff	12:15
Heather McCarty	12:19
Motion C1	12:22
C2 EM Research Plan - Jennifer Mondragon	12:43
SSC report on EM	01:43
Public Testimony C2	02:15
Nancy Munro	02:15
Dan Falvey, Linda Behnken	02:15
Adjourn for the day	04:28

Thursday 2-5-15

Call to Order	08:05
C3 AI P.cod Allocation & Delivery Requirement	08:06
Staff report, Jon McCracken	08:06
Break for Joint meeting	09:48

JOINT MEETING OF THE NPFMC and IPHC

Call to Order	10:06
Opening Remarks	10:11
Paul Ryall Vice Chair	10:15
Chris Oliver Review agenda	10:24
3. Chris Oliver Brief history of IPHC/NPFMC/NMFS	10:25
Jon Pollard	10:35
4. Glenn Merrill	11:00
4b. Bruce Leaman	11:12
5. Ian Stewart	11:48
Break for lunch	12:10
Start Audio Recording [01:13]	01:13
SSC minutes, Farron Wallace	12:12
Diana Evans 5B	12:25
Farron Wallace SSC	12:45
5C Chris Oliver	01:25
Steve Ignell	01:58
PUBLIC TESTIMONY	02:28
Larry Ward	02:28
Robert Savage	02:32
Jan Standaert	02:32
DSFU reps....Shawn McManus, Brian Harber, Harold Cox, Nel Lead, Adam Westveld, Jason Newell, Sarah Chapman, et. al.	02:34
Paul Clampitt/Ben Clampitt	02:40
Jim Richards	02:42
Jack Knutsen, Tim Knapp	02:46
Lando Echevereio	02:50
Per Odegaard	02:56
John McHenry	02:56
Paul Olson	03:00
Ken Wing	03:02
John Bruce	03:05
John Youngblood	03:09
Dave Hedrick	03:11
Mark Worley	03:15
Henry Mitchell	03:18
Kevin Sather	03:22

Michael Offerman	03:25
Buck Laukitis	03:27
Jon Warrenchuk	03:30
Karen Pletnikoff	03:33
Merca Merculieff, Simeon Swetzof	03:36
John Crowley	03:44
Linda Behnken	03:46
Commissioner/Council comments	03:59
Adjourn for the day	05:46

Friday 2-6-15

Call to Order	08:06
C3 AP report	08:23
Discussion re: outcome/action from joint IPHC/NPFMC meeting	08:24
Public Testimony C3	08:31
Dave Fraser	08:31
Todd Loomis	08:46
Mike Hyde	08:56
Angel Drobnika	09:05
Matt Upton	09:13
Clem Tillion	09:20
Brent Paine	09:28
Chris Woodley	09:51
Chad See, Gerry Merrigan	09:51
Motion on C3	10:20
Full SSC Report	11:14
Farron Wallace	11:14
C5 Coop Reports	12:30
John Gauvin	12:30
Stephanie Madsen, Ed Richardson	01:13
Mark Fina, Jason Anderson	01:29
Stephanie Madsen	01:59
Brent Paine	02:17
Gerry Merrigan and Chad See	02:49
Angel Drobnika and Paul Peyton	03:16
Public Testimony out of order	03:37
Thomas Little	03:37
Adjourn for day	04:54

Saturday 2-7-15

Call to Order	08:06
C5 BSAI Halibut PSC	08:06
Staff report, Diana Evans and Marcus Hartley	08:07
Staff report continued after lunch, Marcus Hartley	12:34
AP report, Ernie Weiss	01:09
FCA Coop Report, Bill McGill	01:17
Public Comment on C5	01:27
Jon Warrenchuk	01:27
Paul Olson	01:36
Rob Sanderson	01:41
Linda Behnken	01:45
Helena Parks	02:21
Rock Loan	02:33
John Nelson	02:41
Lenny Herzog	03:11
Brent Paine	03:15
Donna Parker	03:20
Bill Hayes	03:42
Bob Alverson	03:56
Adjourn for day	05:19

Sunday 2-8-15

Call to Order	08:34
Public Comment C5 <i>continued</i>	08:36
Chris Woodley	08:36
Jeff Favour	08:45
Larry Ward	08:50
Buck Lukatis	08:55
Todd Loomis	09:13
Phil Baker	09:17
Heather McCarty	09:24
Jeff Kauffman	09:45
Mateo Paz Soldon	09:52
Karen Pletnikoff	10:18
Simeon Swetzoff	10:27
Arne Fuglvog	10:48
Henry Mitchell	10:48
Andrew Wilt	10:58
John Youngblood	11:02
Mary Beth Tooley	11:06
John Gauvin	11:17
Bill Orr	11:38
Dennis Moran	11:47
Becca Robbins Gisclair	11:54
Don Ashley	12:00
Angel Drobnika	12:06
Gerry Merrigan, Chad See	12:11
Council action C5	12:19
Frank Kelty, City of Unalaska Public Comment D2 (out of order)	02:16
D1 GOA Tendering	02:23
Jon McCracken, staff report	02:23
AP report, Ernie Weiss	02:38
Public Comment	02:38
Beth Stewart	02:38
Julie Bonney	02:43
Bob Kruger	02:50
D3 Norton Sound Red King Crab, Karla Bush	02:57
AP report, Ernie Weiss	03:08
Adjourn for the day	04:32

Monday 2-9-15

Call to Order	08:00
Ambassador of Oceans and Fisheries, Dave Balton	08:00
Dr. Richard Merrick Climate Science Strategy	08:15
D2 BSAI 10 Year Crab Review – Sarah Marrinan	09:49
Amber Hines	10:26
Ernie Weiss AP report	10:33
Lance Farr PNCIAC	10:38
John Iani	10:38
Council discussion D2	10:56
E1 Staff Tasking - Chris Oliver	11:03
AP report, Ernie Weiss	11:39
Public Comment E1	11:40
Linda Kozak	11:40
Jeff Stephan	11:45
John Gauvin	11:52
Bob Kruger	12:01
Chad See	12:06
Mark Gleason	12:15
Council discussion/action E1	01:00
Council meeting Adjourned	02:14

Dan Hull
Chairman
Chris Oliver
Executive Director

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News & Notes

North Pacific Fishery Management Council

February 2015

Election of Officers

The Council's Advisory Panel unanimously re-elected Becca Robbins-Gisclair as Chairman of the Advisory Panel, and Ruth Christiansen and Ernie Weiss as Co-Vice Chairs. The SSC appointed Farron Wallace as Chairman, and re-appointed Robert Clark as Vice Chair.

Council Reception

Fishing industry groups sponsored a reception for those attending the Council meeting. Thanks to the groups that organized and donated to make the evening a success.

Adios, John Henderschedt

A Council member for 8 years, and on the AP for 3, John Henderschedt has accepted a position with NOAA Fisheries in DC, as Director of International Affairs, Seafood Inspection and Trade. It was noted that he has spent 10 + birthdays at the June Council meeting, and may now have one at home! Best of luck in your new position, John.



Bering Sea Halibut Bycatch

The Council reviewed an analysis to reduce Pacific halibut prohibited species catch (PSC) limits in the BSAI groundfish fisheries. PSC limit reductions are considered for various sectors, including the BSAI trawl limited access sector, the Amendment 80 sector, longline catcher vessels, longline catcher processors, and the CDQ sector (i.e., a reduction to the CDQ's allocated prohibited species quota reserve).

During their review, the Council modified the alternatives under evaluation. A substantive change was to expand the range of potential reduction for each PSC limit under consideration. The draft analysis included potential reductions from zero to thirty-five percent of the existing PSC. The Council expanded the potential reductions to each sector's PSC limit up to 50 percent (the motion with specific break points is posted online). The Council also adopted staff recommendations in the document to align the language of the PSC reduction options to the Council's intent of evaluating a reduced limit for all target fisheries currently subject to halibut limits, and in the same vein, included separate suboptions for Amendment 80 cooperatives and limited access (the latter with a reduction range up to 60 percent).

The Council removed an alternative to implement regulatory measures to allow deck sorting of Pacific halibut on non-pelagic trawl catcher processor vessels, as a means of reducing halibut bycatch mortalities on Amendment 80 vessels. This is consistent with previous discussions that the deck sorting procedures are not yet sufficiently established to allow implementation in regulation.

Instead, the Council supports efforts by the Alaska Seafood Cooperative (one of the Amendment 80 cooperatives) to use deck sorting in 2015 through an exempted fishing permit (EFP). The 2015 EFP builds on previous work, and will allow deck sorting to be used on more vessels in the cooperative. It should inform the question of how effective the deck sorting tool might be in reducing halibut PSC without decreasing groundfish harvest, and whether it is feasible to extend that tool to other vessels.

Further additions were requested in the revised draft, to address a number of issues. As identified by the SSC, the economic model used to evaluate the proposed action needs to be more clearly explained, and should include a discussion of how to interpret the model results in the broader context of Council decisionmaking. This should take into account the impact of changing yields in the halibut fishery on communities in the BSAI, the ability of groundfish fleets to reduce halibut bycatch without foregoing groundfish harvest, and the additional impact of reducing bycatch of halibut under 26 inches, which is not addressed in the model. The Council also asked for more discussion of the status of the halibut stock, especially relative to overfishing thresholds; the differences between the IPHC's harvest policy guidance and that for groundfish in the Council context; and changes in IPHC management and stock assessment both in the recent past, and currently under discussion. Final action on the analysis is scheduled for June.

(continued)

Recreational Quota Entity Workgroup

During Staff Tasking, Chairman Hull announced the formation of the Recreational Quota Entity (RQE) Workgroup. Council member Ed Dersham will be the chairman of the workgroup. The members of the workgroup are:

Ken Dole, Area 2C charter; Richard Yamada, Area 2C charter; Open, Area 2C longliner; Andy Mezirow, Area 3A Charter; Martin Spargo, Area 3A Charter; Bruce Gabrys, Area 3A longliner; Duncan Fields, Community Quota Entity

The Council continues to solicit nominations for the open Area 2C longliner seat. It is anticipated that an organizational meeting will be held around the time of the April Council meeting, the date and location will be announced later. Staff contact is Steve MacLean.

(continued from front page)

The Council also received reports from five BSAI groundfish industry sectors about voluntary efforts to comply with the Council's request to reduce halibut PSC mortality by 10% in the second half of 2014, compared to the 2009 to 2013 average. Representatives of the two Amendment 80 cooperatives, the AFA catcher processor and catcher vessel cooperatives, the freezer longline cooperative, and the CDQ groups all spoke to the Council about the extent to which they had achieved the target for 2014, and their intended bycatch reduction efforts for 2015.

In staff tasking, the Council initiated a discussion paper to evaluate possible approaches to link BSAI halibut PSC limits to model-based abundance estimates of halibut. During the joint IPHC meeting, the Council had reviewed an IPHC discussion paper on abundance-based limits, which concluded that while efforts to scale bycatch with direct metrics of halibut abundance were not promising, linking bycatch limits to metrics from the halibut model had potential. Staff will work with the IPHC to further develop such options.

Staff contact is Diana Evans.

Electronic Monitoring

The SSC and the Council endorsed the EM Workgroup's Cooperative Research Plan for 2015, and provided feedback. 2015 fieldwork will focus both on operational testing of EM camera systems in the under 58 ft longline fleet, as well as further research on EM systems to evaluate whether they will successfully achieve the Council's goal to integrate EM used for catch estimation into the Observer Program. The Council also received the final draft of the Alaska Regional Implementation Plan for Electronic Technologies. The plan addresses proposed costs for Alaska electronic monitoring and reporting programs, including a first estimate of funding needs for the planned 2016 EM pre-implementation.

The Council also received testimony on three grant applications to the National Fish and Wildlife Foundation, for projects that support electronic monitoring development in Alaska. The Council will be writing a letter of support for these proposals. Council staff for this issue is Diana Evans.

Pcod CDQ Development

The Council took final action on a package that would allow small hook-and-line vessel operators, generally fishing for halibut CDQ, more of an opportunity to diversify their operations with Pacific cod CDQ fishing.

The Council chose as the preferred alternative of Alternative 4, with Option 1 and Sub-option 3.3. If approved, this amendment would exempt vessels less than or equal to 46 ft LOA using hook-and-line gear from an LLP license while fishing any CDQ groundfish and it would move these vessels from full observer coverage to partial observer coverage. Rather than being required to purchase an LLP license, interested participants would be placed on an online eligible vessel list by a CDQ manager, and vessels greater than 32 ft and less than or equal to 46 ft LOA would be required to carry a certificate of eligibility (obtained without charge) onboard to signal their exemption. Vessels directed fishing for Pacific cod CDQ would still be required to carry VMS.

The adoption of Sub-option 3.3 adds the flexibility for individual vessel operators to integrate a Pacific cod CDQ fishery before, during, and after their harvest of halibut CDQ. This Sub-option details a procedure that accounts for halibut and allows for directed Pacific cod CDQ fishing to occur even in the event that a participant does not have access to halibut quota (CDQ or IFQ). If halibut quota is not available to a small vessel hook-and-line participant fishing Pacific cod CDQ, they will be required to discard all halibut they catch alongside Pacific cod. At the time of landing, the absence of halibut will signal to the catch accounting system to calculate a small vessel PSC rate. This estimate will be charged to the "small vessel PSC limit" within a group's transferable PSQ. NMFS In-season management and CDQ managers will jointly monitor this account to ensure the prohibition against exceeding the PSQ is not violated. If a participant does have an available quota of halibut and they are retaining both halibut CDQ and Pacific cod CDQ no PSC rate will be estimated for that trip. In this type of dual fishing trip, once the vessel operator begins to retain halibut CDQ or IFQ, they are prohibited from discarding legally-sized halibut for the duration of the trip.

Staff contact is Sarah Marrinan.

Norton Sound Red King Crab

The Council reviewed the final stock assessment for the Norton Sound red king crab stock and accepted the SSC's recommended OFL and ABC for this stock. Due to timing constraints of the opening of the May CDQ fishery, the specification process for this stock has been modified to occur annually in January (Crab Plan Team review and recommendations) and February (SSC and Council recommendations) cycle. The stock is in Tier 4a with estimated biomass above the target B_{MSY} level. The SSC recommended a retained catch OFL of 330 tons and an ABC of 262 tons. This ABC reflects a 20% buffer on the OFL to account for additional uncertainty. The remaining crab stocks will be assessed in June (for 3 stocks) and in October (for 6 stocks). Minutes from the Crab Plan Team meeting and a report from a special crab modeling workshop are available on the Council's website. Staff contact is Diana Stram.

AI Pacific Cod

At this meeting, the Council reviewed an initial review draft of a proposed action to establish an exclusive fishing period for Aleutian Islands (AI) Pacific cod for catcher vessels and designate that the AI Pacific cod be delivered to shoreplants in the AI management area. The proposed action also includes performance measures for AI shoreplants that, if not met, would remove the delivery requirement for the remaining year. The proposed action would also limit harvest of the A season trawl catcher vessel sector's Bering Sea (BS) Pacific cod allocation to prevent the sector from harvest its entire A season allocation in the BS prior to the end of the AI Pacific cod fishery. The intent of the Council's proposed action is to provide stability to shoreplant operations in the AI, which in turn will provide stability to the communities where the shoreplants are located.

After reviewing the document, the Council modified the problem statement and the proposed action, and released the analysis for public review. The problem statement was modified to include the Council's concern of the continued risk of increased processing participation by rationalized sectors in the non-rationalized AI cod fishery, the impacts to the AI shoreside processors and communities, the need for community protections as a result of the recent BS and AI Pacific cod total allowable catch split, and the relatively low Pacific cod stock abundance in the AI.

The Council modified Alternative 2 to clarify the proposed action prohibits directed fishing for AI Pacific cod for all vessels except catcher vessels delivering to shoreplants west of 170° longitude.

The Council also added 7,000 mt harvest limit for the BS A season trawl catcher vessel Pacific cod and a date of March 1 for removing both the BS A season trawl catcher vessel Pacific cod harvest limit and catcher vessel exclusive fishing period and delivery requirement within Alternative 2.

The Council modified the existing options to include additional dates for removing the exclusive fishing period for catcher vessels and shoreside delivery requirement if there is insufficient shorebased processing to allow additional time for at-sea processors to harvest AI Pacific cod.

The Council added two new options for consideration. The new option 1 would clarify that the amount of AI Pacific cod available for the catcher vessel exclusive fishing period is equal to the harvest limit for A season trawl catcher vessel BSAI allocation to be used in the AI, and any amount of AI Pacific cod over that limit would be available to any sector for directed fishing and is not subject to the regional delivery requirement. The new option 5 would provide an exemption from shorebased delivery requirements up to 2,000 mt for offshore processors that have processed AI Pacific cod in at least 12 years between 2000 and 2014.

Lastly, the Council requested staff explore with NMFS whether there is an approach that would allow community notification and application of the regional delivery requirement specific to the processing capacity of the community.

The action is tentatively scheduled for final action during the June 2015 meeting. Staff contact for this action is Jon McCracken.

GOA Tendering

The Council reviewed an updated report on tendering activity in the GOA pollock and Pacific cod. The Council requested an updated report for the February 2016 meeting. The updated report should include 2015 GOA pollock and Pacific cod tendering activity. The Council recognized that recent changes is the GOA pollock and Pacific cod fisheries are potentially linked to the development of a GOA trawl bycatch management action, and therefore noted the importance of continuing to monitor the GOA pollock and Pacific cod fisheries for changes in tendering activity during the 2015 fishing season. Staff contact is Jon McCracken.

GOA Trawl Observers

The Council tasked staff to develop a discussion paper on the effects of moving all GOA trawl vessels into the 100% observer coverage category. Staff will consider how such a requirement might impact the observer fee pool that would support the non-trawl fleet remaining in partial coverage. The paper will characterize potential additional cost to trawl vessels, as a percentage of ex-vessel revenue. Finally staff will identify any challenges faced by the observer companies that service the full coverage fleet in meeting increased demand for observer-days. Staff contact is Sam Cunningham.

Upcoming Meetings

Scallop Plan Team meeting:
Monday February 23rd, 2015.
Anchorage, Old Federal Building

Salmon Outreach at Bristol Bay
RAC meeting: February 24,
Naknek, AK

Salmon Outreach at Yukon
Kuskokwim RAC meeting, Bethel,
AK February 25

Observer Program Southeast
Alaska Outreach Meeting : February
26, 2015; Sitka, AK

Ecosystem Committee meeting:
March 17-18, 2015; Seattle, WA

Recreational Quota Entity
Workgroup: April during the Council
meeting

Enforcement Committee: April 7,
Anchorage

EM Workgroup: April 27, 2015 (T)
Anchorage/teleconference

Crab Plan Meeting: May 4-7, 2015.
Anchorage, AK place TBD

Observer Advisory Committee: May
29, 2015; Anchorage, AK

Groundfish Plan Team Meetings:
September 21-September 24, AFSC

Staff Tasking

In addition to discussing the timing and relative priority of previously tasked projects, and tasking for various workgroups and committees, the Council provided clarifications on several important issues. Additionally, the Council tasked the following be prepared by staff:

- Letter to the USCG Commandant highlighting concerns with potential reductions in C-130 and cutter days.
- Letter to the NOAA regarding funding needs to support implementation of electronic monitoring, incorporating additional information from the upcoming CCC meeting.
- Letter to the State Department regarding Council interest in Arctic issues, including participation in the Arctic Council and other international forums.
- Letter of support for NFWF proposals that advance Council interests, in EM development and implementation.
- Status report on issues raised at joint Council/IPHC meeting after staff coordination among agencies.
- Discussion paper on possible approaches to link BSAI halibut PSC limits to abundance estimates of halibut.
- Discussion paper on the effects of moving all GOA trawl vessels currently in the partial coverage to full (100%) observer coverage category.
- Discussion paper on the conservation and management issues associated with establishing a seasonal split for the AI pacific cod TAC.
- An Amendment package to allow partial offload deliveries of Western AI golden king crab.

BSAI Crab 10-year Review

The Council approved a work-plan for the 10 – year program review of the BSAI Crab Rationalization program. The work-plan included details of the requirements to produce such a review, guidance for establishing the scope, and an annotated table of contents based on the outline of the 5-year program review. The review intends to place most of the focus around the past five years of the program, only expanding the scope to pre-rationalization and full program evaluation as appropriate.

The Council made it clear that they would like the review to take a comprehensive look at the program. They directed the scope to be broad, to provide a basic illustration of the dynamics within the crab program, without necessarily serving as an initial review or discussion paper on one specific issue. If concerns arose based on descriptive information provided additional action may be considered from that point. Additionally the Council encouraged members of the public with specific time-critical concerns to consider other avenues to elicit Council action, such as proposing a discussion paper during staff tasking.

The proposed work-plan is scheduled to be presented to the SSC at the April 2015 Council meeting for additional feedback on the methodology within the established policy scope. This may include a discussion on the methodology and use of extensive interview data collection by the Alaska Fisheries Science Center. The first evaluation of the review is scheduled for February 2016 to incorporate several years of EDR data. Staff contact is Sarah Marrinan.

Joint NPFMC/IPHC Meeting

On February 5 the Council recessed its regular plenary session to hold a joint meeting with the International Pacific Halibut Commission (IPHC). The objectives of the meeting were to gain a better understanding of the respective authorities and responsibilities of the respective management bodies, to facilitate improved communications, and to facilitate a more collaborative approach to overall management of the halibut resources, including objectives relative to management of both the directed fisheries and Council managed fisheries which take halibut as bycatch. The meeting was well attended and public comment was received from nearly 40 persons. The discussions between the Council and the IPHC Commissioners resulted in the identification of a number of common themes and objectives, as well as identification of several items for future analysis and consideration. While a formal schedule for future joint meetings was not identified, it was agreed that future collaboration on these issues will be beneficial to both management bodies. For further details, a meeting summary is posted on both the Council and Commission websites. Council contact is Chris Oliver.

DRAFT NPFMC THREE-MEETING OUTLOOK - updated 2/13/2015

April 6-14, 2015 Anchorage, AK	June 1-9, 2015 Sitka, AK	October 5-13, 2015 Anchorage, AK
National Standard 1 Guidelines: SSC Review	North Pacific Climate Vulnerability Assessment: Review (T)	GOA Trawl Bycatch Management: Preliminary Analysis
GOA sablefish longline pots: Final Action Area 4A halibut retention in sablefish pots: Disc Paper (T)	National Standard 1 Guidelines: Review and Comment	Charter Halibut RQE Program: Initial Review (T)
Bering Sea Salmon Bycatch: Final Action Salmon ICA and IPA: Reports from Industry Salmon Bycatch Genetics: Update	Charter Halibut RQE Program: Preliminary Review (T)	AI Pcod A/B Seasonal Apportionment: Discussion paper
Observer coverage on small CPs: Initial Review	AI Pcod Allocation: Final Action (T)	AFA program review: Review Workplan (T)
Cooperative Reports (AFA, Amendment 80, CGOA Rockfish, and BSAI Crab): Action as necessary	OAC report: Review Observer Program Supplemental EA: Review Observer Program Annual Report: Review Observer coverage on small CPs: Final Action Observer coverage on BSAI trawl CVs: Initial Review (T) 100% Observer coverage for GOA Trawl: Discussion paper	Observer coverage on BSAI trawl CVs: Final Action (T)
Research Priorities: Review Classification, management priorities	Biomass based BSAI Halibut PSC Limits: Discussion paper (T) Bering Sea Halibut PSC: Final Action	WAI GKC Partial Offloads: Initial Review (T)
BSAI Crab 10-year Review: Review methodology (SSC only)	BSAI Greenland Turbot Allocation: Initial Review (T)	Halibut Deck Sorting Scales 2016 EFP: Review
Scallop SAFE and plan team report: Adopt OFL/ABC Scallop Age Structured Model: SSC review	Research Priorities: Determine priorities	BSAI Greenland Turbot Allocation: Final Action (T)
Ecosystem Committee report: Review	BSAI Crab: Plan team report; OFL/ABC for 3 stocks	Groundfish Policy and Workplan: Review
	BS Slope and Canyon Survey: Final Report	Proposed groundfish harvest specs: Approve; PT report
		BSAI Crab SAFE/ specs for 6 stocks: Approve; PT report
		ITEMS BELOW NOT YET SCHEDULED
		Halibut/Sablefish IFQ program review per MSA requirements EFH 5-year Review (December -T) BSAI Crab bycatch limits/area closure evaluation: Disc paper Observer Lead Level 2: Discussion paper for Reg Am Observer Tendering: Initial Review

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
EDR - Economic Data Reporting
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
MPA - Marine Protected Area
MRA - Maximum Retainable Allowance
PSC - Prohibited Species Catch
RKC - Red King Crab
ROFR - Right of First Refusal
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
VMS - Vessel Monitoring System

Future Meeting Dates and Locations

April 6-14, 2015, Anchorage
June 1-9, 2015, Sitka
October 5-13, 2015 Anchorage
December 7-15, 2015, Anchorage
February 1-9, 2016, Portland
April 4 - 12, 2016, Anchorage
June 6-14, 2016, Kodiak
October 3 -11, 2016 Anchorage
December 5-13, 2016, Anchorage

(T) = Tentative