

Meeting Summary

227th Plenary Session
North Pacific Fishery Management Council
Benson Hotel, Portland, Oregon

CONTENTS

B REPORTS..... 3

C1 BSAI TRAWL LIMITED ACCESS YELLOWFIN SOLE FISHERY 3

C3 CRAB PLAN TEAM REPORT; NS RKC OFL/ABC CATCH SPECS 4

C2 GOA TRAWL BYCATCH MANAGEMENT..... 5

D1 BSAI SNOW CRAB BYCATCH DATA EVALUATION..... 9

C4 HALIBUT MANAGEMENT FRAMEWORK 10

D3 HALIBUT/SABLEFISH IFQ PROGRAM REVIEW 12

C5 HALIBUT DECK SORTING 12

C6 OBSERVER COVERAGE ON BSAI TRAWL CV'S 12

C7 EM ANALYSIS..... 13

C8 GOA TENDERING ACTIVITY 15

C9 OBSERVER TENDERING 15

D2 REMOVE WAI RKC STOCKS FROM FMP 16

D4 GROUND FISH POLICY WORKPLAN..... 17

E1 STAFF TASKING..... 17

 OBSERVER PROGRAM 17

 COUNCIL APPOINTMENTS..... 18

Attachments

- 1) Time Log
- 2) Newsletter

The North Pacific Fishery Management Council met in February at the Benson Hotel, Portland, Oregon.
The following Council, NPFMC staff, and SSC and AP members attended the meetings.

Council Members

Dan Hull, Chair	Kenny Downs	Simon Kinneen
Jim Balsiger	Duncan Fields	David Long
Sam Cotten/Karla Bush	Dave Hanson	Bill Tweit
Craig Cross	Roy Hyder	CAPT Phillip Thorne
Lisa Lindeman (NOAA GC)	Andy Mezirow	
Lauren Smoker (NOAA GC)		

NPFMC Staff

Jim Armstrong	Peggy Kircher	Chris Oliver
Shannon Gleason	Maria Shawback	Sam Cunningham
Sarah Murrinan	Diana Evans	Mike Fey (AKFIN)
David Witherell	Jon McCracken	Diana Stram
Steve MacLean	Matt Robinson (Sea Grant Fellow)	Joy Stein

Scientific and Statistical Committee

The SSC met from February 1st to February 3rd, 2016. Members present were:

Farron Wallace, Chair <i>NOAA Fisheries – AFSC</i>	Anne Hollowed <i>NOAA - AFSC</i>	Chris Anderson <i>UAF (Fairbanks)</i>
Sherri Dressel <i>ADF&G</i>	Brad Harris <i>APU (Anchorage)</i>	Lew Coggins <i>U.S. Fish & Wildlife</i>
George Hunt <i>UW (Seattle)</i>	Seth Macinko <i>URI (Rhode Island)</i>	Alison Whitman <i>Dept. F&W (Oregon)</i>
Jason Gasper <i>NMFS SFOS</i>	Matt Reimer <i>UAA (Anchorage)</i>	Gordon Kruse <i>UAF (Fairbanks)</i>
Kari Fenske <i>Dept. F&W (Washington)</i>	Robert Clark <i>ADF&G (Oregon)</i>	

Advisory Panel

The AP met from February 2nd to February 5th, 2016. Members present were:

Ruth Christiansen (Chair)	Jeff Kauffman	Joel Peterson
Kurt Cochran	Angel Drobnica	Theresa Peterson
John Crowley	Alexus Kwachka	Sinclair Wilt
Jerry Downing	Craig Lowenberg	Jeff Stephan
Jeff Farvour	Chuck McCallum	Matt Upton (Co-Vice Chair)
Art Nelson (co-chair)	Dan Donich	Ben Stevens
Paddy O'Donnell	Ernie Weiss (Chair)	John Gruver

B REPORTS

The following reports were given and heavily discussed. Public Comments were not taken on B related items. No action was taken.

- B1 Executive Director's Report – David Witherell
- B2 NMFS Management Report – Glenn Merrill
- B2 Prioritizing Fish Stock Assessments – Dr. Rick Methot
- B2 National Observer Program – Jane DiCosimo
- B2 Update on Stock Assessment – Gene Hanson
- B3 ADF&G Report – Karla Bush
- B4 USCG Report – LCDR Courtney Sergeant
- B6 IPHC Report – Dr. Bruce Leaman & Dr. Ian Stewart
- B7 Protected Species Report - Steve MacLean
- B8 NEPA Training – Gretchen Harrington

C1 BSAI TRAWL LIMITED ACCESS YELLOWFIN SOLE FISHERY

The Council heard a presentation from NPFMC staff Jon McCracken. The following actions were taken:

Mr. Cross made the following motion and was seconded by Mr. Long:

The Council adopts the following purpose and need and alternatives for analysis:

Purpose and Need

The Amendment 80 program assigns a portion of the Bering Sea/Aleutian Islands (BSAI) yellowfin sole total allowable catch (TAC) to a limited access fishery. Amendment 80 catcher processors are precluded from fishing in the limited access fishery, however they are not prohibited from acting as a mothership for catcher vessels in this fishery. Since the implementation of the trawl limited access 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 limited access fishery. In 2015, new vessels entered the limited access fishery. Historic participants are concerned about the impact of these new participants on their access to the yellowfin sole in the limited access fishery.

The Council has recognized the concern of historic participants in the limited access fishery by establishing a control date of October 13, 2015, that may be used as a reference date for a future management action to limit access to the offshore sector of the limited access fishery. Limiting access may help ensure that the limited access fishery continues to provide benefits to historic participants, mitigate the risk that a “race for fish” could develop, and help to maintain the consistently low rates of halibut bycatch in this fishery. The Council also recognizes that when the TAC assigned to the limited access fishery is relatively high, opportunities for new entrants could be provided without unduly constraining historic participants.

Alternatives

1. No Action-Status Quo
2. A catcher vessel may directed fish in the BSAI trawl yellowfin sole limited access 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 directed fishery landing in the yellowfin sole limited access fishery made to a mothership or catcher/processor (suboption a: in any year, or suboption b: in any two years) between 2008 – 2015.
3. The limits on access to catcher vessels established under the provisions of alternative are relieved if the TAC assigned to the trawl yellowfin sole limited access fishery is equal to or greater than:

Suboption a-15000 mt
Suboption b-20,000 mt
Suboption c-25,000 mt

Mr. Kinneen made the following amendment and was seconded by Mr. Fields:

Make Alternative 3 an option of Alternative 2

Alternative 2: A catcher vessel may directed fish in the BSAI trawl yellowfin sole limited access 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 directed fishery landing in the yellowfin sole limited access fishery made to a mothership or catcher/processor between 2008 – 2015.

Suboption 2.1: in any year
Suboption 2.2: in any two years

Option 2.1: The limits on access to catcher vessels are relieved if the TAC assigned to the trawl yellowfin sole limited access fishery is equal to or greater than:

Suboption 2.1.1: 15,000 mt
Suboption 2.2.2: 20,000 mt
Suboption 2.2.3: 25,000 mt

VOTE ON AMENDMENT: Amendment passed no objection February 4, 2016 at 10:58 a.m.

VOTE ON AMENDED MOTION: Motion passed no objection February 4, 2016 at 11:13 a.m.

C3 CRAB PLAN TEAM REPORT; NS RKC OFL/ABC CATCH SPECS

The Council heard a presentation from NPFMC staff Diana Stram. The following actions were taken:

Ms. Bush made the following motion and was seconded by Mr. Kinneen:

The Council adopt the OFL and ABC as recommended by the SSC for NS RKC that would set the OFL at .71 million pounds or .32 thousand metric tons and the ABC would be .568 million pounds which translates to .26 thousand metric tons.

VOTE ON MOTION: Motion passed no objection February 4, 2016 at 11:50 a.m.

C2 GOA TRAWL BYCATCH MANAGEMENT

The Council heard a presentation from NPFMC staff Sam Cunningham and Darrell Brannon. The following actions were taken:

Mr. Cotten made the following motion and was seconded by Mr. Fields:

The following changes to Alternative 3 Element 4 and items for discussion (**bold** indicates insertion and ~~strike out~~ indicates deletion from AP motion).

4. Voluntary inshore cooperative structure

- a. Cooperative eligibility: Shoreside processors with an eligible FPP and harvesters with an eligible FPP and a CV trawl LLP or a CP trawl LLP that did not process catch onboard during the years selected above. Eligible harvesters must have the applicable area endorsement to use PSC apportioned to the cooperative in that area.
- b. PSC species allocated to the cooperative are halibut and Chinook salmon, divided first by area (WG and CG/WY) based on historical PSC use (*options: 2003 – 2012; 2007 – 2012; 2008 - 2012*). Once in the cooperative, PSC can be used to support any target fisheries within the cooperative in that area at any time (no seasonal PSC apportionments). PSC would be apportioned to the cooperatives as follows (a different option may be selected for each area, WG and CG/WY):

Option 1. Equal shares. Annually apportion PSC limits to each cooperative on an equal share basis relative to the number of member vessels in the cooperative.

Suboption: The non-pollock Chinook salmon PSC limit and halibut PSC limit would first be divided between cod and flatfish landings, before allocating equal shares per vessel to each cooperative. ~~A vessel must have historical target cod and/or flatfish landings in order to receive a PSC apportionment associated with the flatfish and/or cod fishery.~~

Option 2. Vessel ~~capacity~~ **dependency**. Apportion (**option: 10-50%**) halibut PSC and Chinook salmon PSC limits to each cooperative on a pro rata basis relative to the ~~capacity~~ **dependency on GOA trawl groundfish by species (pollock, flatfish, and Pacific cod) and area (WG and CG/WY)** of the vessel assigned to the cooperative member's LLP the ~~first~~ **prior year. The remaining PSC would be distributed based on equal shares.**

it enters a cooperative. The vessel capacity to determine the PSC apportionment associated with that LLP does not change in subsequent years. **The vessel's dependency on GOA trawl groundfish, by species and area, is established by affidavit at the time of filing intent to join a cooperative or participate in the limited access fishery. Dependency on GOA groundfish is based on a threshold of (option: 25% - 75%) of total pounds landed, by species and area, in GOA trawl groundfish fisheries.**

~~Suboption 1: Vessel capacity is based on highest GOA groundfish landing associated with the license on which the vessel is designated during 2008—2012 (or most recent 5 years of landings).~~

Option 3 (can be selected with Option 1 or 2 above). Each processor controls a portion of the annual PSC [options: 5% - 20%] within a cooperative associated with its member vessels. Each processor would assign the incremental PSC to vessels in the cooperative under the terms of the cooperative agreement. PSC made available by these agreements cannot be used by vessels owned by the processor (a vessel with more than 10% ownership by a processor using individual and collective rules for determining ownership).

Suboption 1: Cooperatives that consist exclusively of processor-owned vessels are exempt from this prohibition.

Suboption 2: No prohibition on processor-owned vessels using processor-controlled PSC. Processor-owned vessels cannot access an amount of the cooperative's processor-controlled PSC greater than the amount they brought into the cooperative.

- c. Participants can choose to either join a cooperative or operate in a limited access fishery on an annual basis. Harvesters would need to indicate by affidavit their intent to participate in the GOA trawl pollock, Pacific cod, or flatfish fisheries in the upcoming year and be in a cooperative with a processor by November 1 of the previous season to access a transferable PSC allocation. A trawl CV license holder can be in one cooperative per region (WG and CG/WY) on an annual basis.

Option 1: Cooperative formation requires at least [options: 2 – 5] vessels with a CV trawl LLP.

~~Option 2: One cooperative for CG/WY and one cooperative for WG (more than one processor is allowed in each cooperative).~~

- d. Each cooperative would be required to have an annual cooperative contract filed with NMFS by November 1 of the previous year. Cooperative members shall internally allocate and manage the cooperative's PSC allocation per the cooperative contract. Cooperatives are intended only to conduct and coordinate harvest activities of the members and are not FCMA cooperatives.

- e. **Allocate (option: 5%-20%) of the PSC limits (halibut and Chinook) to cooperatives that sign an inter-cooperative agreement to share member vessel bycatch rates on a tow-by-tow basis and provide bycatch reduction incentives at the vessel level. Allocation of PSC is contingent upon agreement to the terms of information sharing within the inter-cooperative agreement. PSC is allocated by area on a pro-rata basis relative to the number of member vessels within each cooperative.**
- e-f. The annual cooperative contract must include:
- Bylaws and rules for the operation of the cooperative
 - Annual fishing plan
 - Operational plan for monitoring and minimizing PSC, with vessel-level accountability
 - Provisions that prohibit, on a species or species group basis (pollock, cod, flatfish), an LLP holder/vessel that has had PSC allocated to the cooperative for that species or species group from receiving economic benefits from the cooperative, **cooperative members, or persons acting on behalf of the cooperative members** for PSC quota use unless **both parties meet the active participation requirements** the vessel actively participates in the fishery for which the cooperative was awarded PSC. Active participation shall be determined by the cooperative agreement but shall not be less than 3 annual deliveries per species or species group (pollock, cod, flatfish).
 - **Provisions that prohibit the cooperative, cooperative members and/or persons acting on behalf of the cooperative members from using or transferring PSC, or otherwise receiving economic benefits from PSC allocated to the cooperative, received on behalf of a vessel unless the vessel actively participates in the fishery for which the cooperative was awarded PSC. Active participation shall be determined by the cooperative agreement but shall not be less than 3 annual deliveries per species or species group (pollock, cod, flatfish).**
 - Specification that processor affiliated harvesters cannot participate in price-setting negotiations except as permitted by general anti-trust law
- f-g. Cooperative members are jointly and severally responsible for cooperative vessels harvesting in the aggregate no more than their cooperative's PSC allowances, as may be adjusted by annual inter-cooperative transfers.
- g-h. Cooperatives will submit a written report annually to the Council and NMFS. Specific criteria for reporting shall be developed by the Council and specified by NMFS as part of the program implementing regulations.
- h-i. Permit post-delivery transfers of annual PSC among cooperatives. All post-delivery transfers must be completed by December 31.

The Council requests staff include a discussion of the following issues in the Draft EIS:

- Value: An examination of the potential and extent of change in LLP value in Alternative 3 as a result of PSC allocations and in Alternative 2 the value of the catch history.

- Active participation requirements: Is the three annual delivery requirement representative of the typical range of participation levels in each GOA trawl fishery (pollock, Pacific cod, and flatfish).
- Consolidation/active participation: Further analysis of the effects of consolidation limits in both alternatives as well as effects on consolidation of active participation requirements.
- Information Sharing Incentives: An evaluation of the factors influencing information sharing within and between cooperatives.
- Observer coverage: An examination of the cost of observer coverage (by area), and a discussion of what would be necessary to deploy EM in the pollock trawl fishery to meet monitoring requirements.
- Cooperative Structure: Can more than one cooperative of vessels be associated with a processor?
- Likelihood of new participants: Additional analysis of vessels with low levels of participation in the past 10 years still eligible to enter GOA fisheries.

Mr. Hyder made the following substitute motion and was seconded by Mr. Tweit:

Strike Alternative 3 from the analysis.

VOTE ON SUBSTITUTE MOTION: Motion failed 5/6 (Mr. Cotten, Mr. Fields, Mr. Kinneen, Mr. Long, Mr. Mezirow, Mr. Hull voting in opposition) February 6, 2016 10:31 a.m.

Mr. Hyder made the following amendment and was seconded by Mr. Fields:

Add the following language (**in bold**) under Alternative 4

ALTERNATIVE 4. Gulf of Alaska Trawl Bycatch Management Program (Alternative 2 **and Alternative 3**) with a Community Fisheries Association allocation or Adaptive Management Program. (*Options 1 and 2 are mutually exclusive.*)

VOTE ON AMENDMENT: Amendment passed unanimously February 6, 2016 11:13 a.m.

Mr. Tweit made the following amendment and was seconded by Mr. Kinneen:

Under Option 2 change from prior year to 3 prior years.

Option 2. Vessel ~~capacity~~ **dependency**. Apportion (**option: 10-50%**) halibut PSC and Chinook salmon PSC limits to each cooperative on a pro rata basis relative to the ~~capacity~~ **dependency on GOA trawl groundfish by species (pollock, flatfish, and Pacific cod) and area (WG and CG/WY)** of the vessel assigned to the cooperative member's LLP the ~~first~~ **3 prior years**

VOTE ON AMENDMENT: Amendment passed unanimously February 6, 2016 11:34 a.m.

Mr. Tweit made the following amendment and was seconded by Mr. Cotten:

Under Option 3 section E add the following option (**in bold**)

PSC is allocated by area on a pro-rata basis relative to the number of member vessels (**option: the number of member vessels that meet the active participation criteria**) within each cooperative.

VOTE ON AMENDMENT: Amendment passed unanimously February 6, 2016 11:36 a.m.

VOTE ON AMENDED MAIN MOTION: Motion passed 7/4 (Mr. Tweit, Mr. Merrill, Mr. Cross, Mr. Hyder voting in opposition) February 6, 2016 at 11:42 a.m.

D1 BSAI SNOW CRAB BYCATCH DATA EVALUATION

The Council heard a presentation from NPFMC staff Dr. Diana Stram. The following actions were taken:

Mr. Cross made the following motion and was seconded by Mr. Mezirow:

Purpose and Need Statement

Management measures in the Bering Sea-Aleutian Island groundfish FMP intended to protect Bering Sea snow crab (*C. opilio*) and their habitat have not been reviewed since they were specified in 1997. Since that time, our ability to model snow crab population dynamics and estimate incidental catch in the groundfish fisheries has improved. Management of the groundfish trawl fisheries has also changed; there is no longer a race-for-fish for some of the sectors that are subject to snow crab PSC limits. Therefore, it is appropriate due to these changes to review and analyze the limits in place and if changes are needed.

Alternatives

Alternative 1: No action

Alternative 2: Revise *C. opilio* PSC limits to be based on the stock assessment model estimate. Remove the minimum and maximum *C. opilio* PSC limit for trawl vessels in the COBLZ, and reduce the *C. opilio* PSC limit to (Option 1: 0.10 %; Option 2: 0.075%, or Option 3: 0.05 %) of the total abundance of *C. opilio*.

Alternative 3: Revise *C. opilio* PSC limits to be based on the stock assessment model estimate. Reduce the maximum and/or minimum *C. opilio* PSC limit for trawl vessels in the COBLZ by (Option 1: 10%; Option 2: 15%; or Option 3: 50%).

Ms. Bush made the following amendment and was seconded by Mr. Fields:

Reorganize Alternative 2 into 3 options

Alternative 2: Revise *C. opilio* PSC limits to be based on the stock assessment model estimate.

Option 1: Remove the minimum and maximum *C. opilio* PSC limit for trawl vessels in the COBLZ.

Option 2: Reduce the *C. opilio* PSC limit to (Option 1: 0.10 %; Option 2: 0.075%, or Option 3: 0.05 %) of the total abundance of *C. opilio*.

Option 3: Revise *C. opilio* PSC limits to be based on the stock assessment model COBLZ by (Option 1: 10%; Option 2: 15%; or Option 3: 50%).

VOTE ON AMENDMENT: Amendment passed no objection February 6, 2016 at 1:44 p.m.

VOTE ON MOTION: Motion passed no objection February 6, 2016 at 1:46 p.m.

Mr. Tweit made the following motion and was seconded by Ms. Bush:

The Council initiate a discussion paper to outline the steps and information needed to consider the appropriateness of revising or implementing PSC limits or other management measures to minimize Bristol Bay Red King Crab PSC in directed groundfish fisheries.

VOTE ON MOTION: Motion passed no objection February 6, 2016 at 1:47 p.m.

C4 HALIBUT MANAGEMENT FRAMEWORK

The Council heard a presentation from NPFMC Executive Director, Chris Oliver. The following actions were taken:

Mr. Kinneen made the following motion and was seconded by Mr. Tweit:

The Council amends the Halibut Management Framework, tasks workgroups, and makes additional requests and direction pursuant to the comments and suggestions recommended by the SSC as noted below:

Framework Additions/Clarifications:

- Modify the research area regarding impacts of short term, medium term, and long term changes in the environment to include a broader range of factors potentially affecting changes in size-at-age such as: prey abundance, competition with other species, fishing, and other factors. This priority should be added to the list of identified research priorities (page 7).

- Include a listing of IPHC and University studies to Attachment 3 (ongoing and future research related to halibut).
- Include both biomass and abundance information in the framework and note that both should be included in future PSC analyses.
- Modify the Discard Mortality Rate Research Priority to include also:
 - Efforts to assess discard mortality rates in situ, including evaluation of sample sizes, data collection and the use of advanced technology,
 - Work to evaluate methods to reduce discard mortality (e.g. excluders, deck-sorting),
 - Efforts to improve information about what is actually being discarded in all fisheries [size, sex, age, maturity, release mortality rates (e.g. sport fishery), etc].

Tasking for DMR and ABM working groups:

- The Council tasks the Abundance-Based Methods and DMR working groups to collaborate with the AFSC Multi-Species Technical modeling team to assess and make recommendations regarding the use of the model in the Council’s halibut bycatch management.

Other requests:

The Council requests that the IPHC provide a conceptual model of the stock assessment workflow with explanations of how information about migration, natural mortality, size/weight at age, and DMRs are parameterized or influence the assessment.

The Council encourages industry to work with the AFSC or other appropriate agencies/organizations to consider development of collaborative research and tagging programs (i.e. wire, PIT or CWT) which could produce important information on halibut movement and the relationship between viability and discard mortality in the near-term.

The Council directs staff to discuss potential options for examining human dimensions for inclusion in the SAFE documents pursuant to the SSC comments.

The Council acknowledges the SSC statement regarding how difficult it is to estimate age-specific natural mortality rates, and that this research priority may not be cost effective, prudent, or appropriate to pursue.

VOTE ON MOTION: Motion passed no objection February 6, 2016 at 2:57 p.m.

(Note: Public Testimony by Dan Falvey on agenda item C7 taken out of order on February 6, 2016 at 2:59 pm.)

D3 HALIBUT/SABLEFISH IFQ PROGRAM REVIEW

The Council heard a presentation from NPFMC staff Sarah Marrinan, and NMFS SeaGrant Fellow, Marysia Szymkowiak. The following actions were taken:

Mr. Balsiger made the following motion and was seconded by Mr. Kinneen:

The Council requests analysts to address the issues raised by the Native Village of Eyak in the IFQ Program review. Specifically, analysts would describe the Native Village of Eyak's proposal for an allocation of IFQ to the tribe, its past litigation on the IFQ Program, and its requests for tribal consultation on IFQ allocations.

VOTE ON MOTION: Motion passed no objection February 6, 2016 at 3:26 p.m.

C5 HALIBUT DECK SORTING

The Council heard a presentation from Amendment 80 member, John Gauvin. The following actions were taken:

Mr. Cross made the following motion and was seconded by Mr. Cotten:

The Council has reviewed the EFP application, and supports the EFP to allow deck sorting of halibut in the BSAI in 2016.

VOTE ON MOTION: Motion passed no objection February 6, 2016 at 4:32 p.m.

C6 OBSERVER COVERAGE ON BSAI TRAWL CV'S

The Council heard a presentation from NPFMC staff Sam Cunningham. The following actions were taken:

Mr. Cross made the following motion and was seconded by Mr. Down:

The Council recommends Alternative 3 with the following suboption as its preferred alternative:

Alternative 3 – Allow trawl catcher vessels currently assigned to partial observer coverage to voluntarily choose full (100%) observer coverage for all fishing in the BSAI, and

Suboption 3 – Vessels must opt-in to full (100%) coverage by October 15 of the previous year.

Mr. Tweit made the following amendment and was seconded by Mr. Fields:

The Council deems proposed regulations that clearly and directly flow from the provisions of this motion to be necessary and appropriate in accordance with Section 303c and therefor the

council authorizes the Executive Director and the Chairman to review the draft proposed regulations when provided by NMFS to ensure that the proposed regulations to be submitted to the Secretary under Section 303c are consistent with these instructions.

VOTE ON AMENDMENT: Amendment passed no objection February 7, 2016 at 9:17 a.m.

VOTE ON MOTION: Motion passed no objection February 7, 2016 at 9:18 a.m.

C7 EM ANALYSIS

The Council heard a presentation from NPFMC staff Diana Evans. The following actions were taken:

Mr. Tweit made the following motion on the Analysis to Integrate Electronic Monitoring into the North Pacific Groundfish and Halibut Observer Program, and was seconded by Mr. Cross:

The Council approves the following purpose and need statement:

To carry out their responsibilities for conserving and managing groundfish resources, the Council and NMFS must have high quality, timely, and cost-effective data to support management and scientific information needs. In part, this information is collected through a comprehensive fishery monitoring program for the groundfish and halibut fisheries off Alaska, with the goals of verifying catch composition and quantity, including of those species discarded at sea, and collecting biological information on marine resources. While a large component of this monitoring program relies on the use of human observers, the Council and NMFS have been on the path of integrating technology into our fisheries monitoring systems for many years, with electronic reporting systems in place, and operational EM in a compliance capacity in some fisheries. More recently, research and development has focused on being able to use EM as a direct catch estimation tool in fixed gear fisheries.

The fixed gear fisheries are diverse in their fishing practices and vessel and operational characteristics, and they operate over a large and frequently remote geographical distribution. The Council recognizes the benefit of having access to an assorted set of monitoring tools in order to be able to balance the need for high-quality data with the costs of monitoring and the ability of fishery participants, particularly those on small vessels, to accommodate human observers onboard. EM technology has the potential to allow discard estimation of fish, including halibut PSC and mortality of seabirds, onboard vessels that have difficulty carrying an observer or where deploying an observer is impracticable. EM technology may also reduce economic, operational and/or social costs associated with deploying human observers throughout coastal Alaska. Through the use of EM, it may be possible to affordably obtain at-sea data from a broader cross-section of the fixed gear groundfish and halibut fleet.

The integration of EM into the Council's fishery research plan is not intended to supplant the need for human observers. There is a continuing need for human observers as part of the

monitoring suite, and there will continue to be human observer coverage at some level in the fixed gear fisheries, to provide data that cannot be collected via EM (e.g., biological samples).

The Council and NMFS have considerable annual flexibility to provide observer coverage to respond to the scientific and management needs of the fisheries. By integrating EM as a tool in the fisheries monitoring suite, the Council seeks to preserve and increase this flexibility. Regulatory change is needed to specify vessel operator responsibilities for using EM technologies, after which the Council and NMFS will be able to deploy human observer and EM monitoring tools tailored to the needs of different fishery sectors through the Annual Deployment Plan.

The Council approves the following alternatives:

Alternative 1: Status quo - EM is not a tool in the Council's Research Plan

Alternative 2: Allow use of EM for catch estimation on vessels in the EM selection pool

Option: Require full retention of key species with associated dockside monitoring

Alternative 3: Allow use of EM for compliance monitoring of vessel operator logbooks used for catch estimation

Note, the Council may select different alternatives for different sections of the fixed gear fleet (e.g., for longline vs pot gear, or by vessel size class), or may choose multiple alternatives for regulatory implementation, but specify annually in the ADP which vessels will be using which EM program.

The Council also directs the EM Workgroup to continue to evaluate the feasibility and potential cost savings associated with EM cooperatives, where a particular group of vessels would contract specifically with an EM provider to meet their monitoring needs over the course of a year, as a potential trailing amendment to this analysis.

VOTE ON MOTION: Motion passed unanimously February 7, 2016 at 10:03 a.m.

Mr. Tweit made the following motion on 2017 Electronic Monitoring Pre-Implementation, and was seconded by Mr. Cotten:

The Council requests the EM Workgroup to continue developing proposals for two separate pre-implementation pools for 2017, for longline and pot vessels.

- The Council endorses the Workgroup's efforts to expand the longline pre-implementation pool in 2017 to 90 vessels, and to remove the constraint that vessels must be less than 57.5 ft LOA. However, first priority in the pool would continue to be given to small longline vessels (40 to 57.5 ft LOA) that have liferaft or bunk space limitations with carrying a human observer.
- The Council also endorses developing a pre-implementation pool for 30 pot vessels (of any length) for 2017.

- For vessels under 40 foot, the Council supports EM Workgroup work in 2017 to undertake a demographic study of the under 40' fleet occur in 2017, to evaluate effort both by the number of trips and vessel length, in order to identify priorities for phase in of coverage. This work would support the development of a plan for specific field research in the under 40 ft fleet in 2018.

VOTE ON MOTION: Motion passed unanimously February 7, 2016 at 10:11 a.m.

C8 GOA TENDERING ACTIVITY

The Council heard a presentation from NPFMC staff Jon McCracken and SeaGrant Fellow at the NPFMC Matt Robinson. The following actions were taken:

Mr. Fields made the following motion and was seconded by Mr. Cotten:

The Council requests NMFS staff include an abbreviated version of the Annual Tendering Report during their Annual In-season Management Report in December.

VOTE ON MOTION: Motion passed unanimously February 7, 2016 at 10:53 a.m.

C9 OBSERVER TENDERING

The Council heard a presentation from NPFMC staff Diana Evans, SeaGrant Fellow at the NPFMC Matt Robinson, and AFSC staff Chris Rilling. The following actions were taken:

Mr. Merrill made the following amendment and was seconded by Mr. Cross:

The Council recommends that NMFS:

- Continue to evaluate observer data from catcher vessels delivering to tenders in the 2015 Observer Program annual report. Specifically, the Council requests NMFS to analyze the performance metrics for catcher vessels delivering to tenders by gear type, or other analyses NMFS considers appropriate to evaluate the quality of observer data from these vessels.
- Evaluate creating a separate stratum in the 2017 Annual Deployment Plan for catcher vessels delivering to tenders (described as Alternative 2 in the discussion paper).
- Move forward now with a proposed rule to require tender vessel operators to create landing reports using tLandings (described as Alternative 4 in the discussion paper). The Council requests that NMFS update the Council on the progress of this rulemaking and notify the Council if any further Council action is necessary to implement this requirement.

Mr. Fields made the following amendment and was seconded by Mr. Cotten:

Add 4th bullet to motion which would include the following language:

- Not exclusively NMFS staff, but all staff, would provide options for changing the definition of a trip, and options for how observers can safely be transported by, and transferred to, tenders.

VOTE ON AMENDMENT: Amendment passed 8/3 (Mr. Merrill, Mr. Cross, Mr. Hyder voting in opposition) February 7, 2016 at 2:31 p.m.

VOTE ON AMENDED MAIN MOTION: Motion passed no objection February 7, 2016 at 2:33 p.m.

D2 REMOVE WAI RKC STOCKS FROM FMP

The Council heard a presentation from NPFMC staff Jim Armstrong. The following actions were taken:

Mr. Fields made the following amendment and was seconded by Ms. Bush:

Purpose and Need

Historically, red king crab stocks in the Aleutian Islands have been defined by existing regulatory boundaries. Limited scientific information is available for Aleutian Islands red king crab to understand stock structure, distribution, and abundance. Information on stock structure continues to be lacking though there are likely distinct groups of red king crab that are geographically separated by deep water trenches in passes between the Aleutian Islands.

Under the BSAI crab FMP, management of red king crab in the Aleutian Islands is divided between a rationalized fishery west of 179° W long. (Petrel Bank District) and an open access fishery between 171° W long. and 179° W long. (Adak District). The State-managed open access fishery east of 171° W long. (Dutch Harbor District) is not included in the crab FMP. These three areas are treated differently and managed separately under State and Federal regulations. Due to low stock abundance, State and Federal managers have not opened any of these three fisheries to directed fisheries for over a decade. This precautionary management has ensured that none of these fisheries are subject to overfishing or are overfished.

Recognizing that any potential open access fishery in the Adak District would be managed by the State, and may occur predominately in State waters, Federal management of this fishery under the FMP may be unnecessary. A reconnaissance survey in the Adak District in 2015 indicates concentrations of red king crab occur in State waters in this area. Removing the Adak District fishery from the FMP would allow the State to provide management in both State and Federal waters that is tailored to a small-boat fishery, if the stock condition improves. It would also allow the State to manage the Adak District and the Dutch Harbor District in close coordination. Removing the Adak District stock from the FMP would not be expected to result in any change

to management practices that would result in additional harvests. The State has consistently demonstrated effective conservation and management of crab stocks within the rationalization program, under the FMP, and exclusively under State management. That sound management would be expected to continue if the stock in the Adak District is removed from the FMP.

Alternatives

1. No Action
2. Remove western Aleutian Island red king crab east of 179° W long. (Adak District) from the BSAI crab FMP.

VOTE ON MOTION: Motion passed unanimously February 7, 2016 at 3:13 p.m.

D4 GROUND FISH POLICY WORKPLAN

The Council heard a presentation from NPFMC staff Jim Armstrong. The following actions were taken:

Mr. Tweit made the following motion and was seconded by Mr. Kinneen:

Council continues to support the use of the groundfish work plan as a tool to communicate to the public about activities the councils undertaking to move toward achieving their management objectives. The council recommends alternative 2 as the presentation format and recommends including a timeline for specific actions to provide information about current and upcoming actions.

VOTE ON MOTION: Motion passed unanimously February 8, 2016 at 8:29 a.m.

E1 STAFF TASKING

The Council heard from NPFMC Executive Director, Chris Oliver. The following actions were taken:

OBSERVER PROGRAM

Mr. Fields made the following motion and was seconded by Mr. Cotten:

Motion to initiate an amendment to the Observer Program that adopts the following Purpose and Need statement with the following Alternative.

Purpose and Need

Resident fishermen in several smaller Alaska communities that are selected to carry an observer often have the observer transported to the community via scheduled air service to board the

vessel for the selected “trip”. Current regulations require that the observer, at the conclusion of the trip, be discharged in a community that has a resident processor possessing a Federal Processing Permit (FPP). Many of these communities do not have a resident processor with a FPP. Consequently, fishermen from communities without a resident FPP experience hardship and inequity in that these fisherman must transport the observer long distances, often in adverse weather, and at significant expense – both in time and money to a port different from the port where the observer started the trip. If an observer is able to travel to a community to board an observed vessel for a trip, the observer should also be able to be discharged in the same community and travel from the community at the end of the trip.

Alternatives

1. No Action
2. An observer may be discharged in a community with a resident processor possessing a Federal Processing License or in the community from which the observer boarded the vessel for a “trip”.

Mr. Cross made the following amendment and was seconded by Mr. Tweit:

Add the following suboption under the Alternatives:

Alternatives

1. No Action
2. An observer may be discharged in a community with a resident processor possessing a Federal Processing License or in the community from which the observer boarded the vessel for a “trip”.
Suboption: in another community with regularly scheduled air service.

VOTE ON AMENDMENT: Amendment passed no objection February 8, 2016 at 11:23 a.m.

VOTE ON MOTION: Motion passed unanimously February 8, 2016 at 11:25 a.m.

COUNCIL APPOINTMENTS

The Chairman made several appointments. Dr. Ian Stewart of the IPHC was appointed to the SSC for a one-year term. Two new members were appointed to the Scallop Plan team, Ken Goldman and Ben Williams. Williams is a fisheries scientist for ADFG in Juneau, and Goldman is a Groundfish and Shellfish research biologist for ADFG in Homer. Additionally, Miranda Westphal was appointed to the BSAI Crab Plan Team. Westphal is the ADFG Area Management Biologist in Dutch Harbor.

THE COUNCIL ADJOURNED ON MONDAY FEBRUARY 8, 2016 AT 11:50 A.M.