

Council Motion
Agenda Item C-6: Squid to Ecosystem Component
June 11, 2017

The Council adopts the following purpose and need statement and recommends Alternative 2, Option 3 as its preferred alternative: designate squid in both the BSAI and GOA FMPs as non-target 'Ecosystem Component Species' and maintain the current MRA of 20%.

Purpose and Need

Squid are short-lived, highly productive, and an important prey species. No conservation concerns exist for squid populations in the BSAI and GOA. Squid are thought to be substantially more abundant than can be estimated from trawl survey data. Current OFLs for squid are based on average catch calculations that are poorly linked to abundance. Although limited life-history information exists, the best available scientific information suggests that squid biomass estimates are substantial underestimates of true biomass. Squid are currently managed as target species despite being caught only incidentally under status quo, and an annual OFL, ABC, and TAC for the squid complex is specified separately for the BSAI and GOA. While there are no directed fisheries for squid in either the BSAI or GOA, squid bycatch is retained in some fisheries and often utilized to prevent waste. If the total TAC of squid is caught, retention is prohibited for the remainder of the year.

The purposes of this action are to identify the appropriate level of conservation and management required for squid and to accurately classify the squid complex in the BSAI and GOA groundfish FMPs based on the best available scientific information. The revised National Standard 1 (NS1) guidelines include options for classification and management of target and non-target species in FMPs. Options for classification and management of non-target stocks include identification of the species as “non-target species in need of conservation and management,” or as “non-target ecosystem component species, not in need of conservation and management.”

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

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

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

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