

Council Motion
Agenda Item: D-5
December 10, 2017

The Council adopts the following purpose and need statement and initiates an analysis with the following suite of alternatives.

Purpose and Need Statement

Fixed-gear catcher vessels in the Bering Sea and Aleutian Islands (BSAI) and Gulf of Alaska (GOA) discard much of their incidental catch of rockfish (*Sebastes* and *Sebastes spp.*). The greatest amount of discarded rockfish occurs in the GOA hook-and-line fisheries. Requiring the full retention of rockfish could: benefit vessel operators by improving the identification of species when catcher vessels are subject to electronic monitoring; improve data collection by providing more accurate estimates of catch; reduce incentives to discard rockfish; reduce waste; reduce overall enforcement burden; and promote more consistent management between State of Alaska and Federal fisheries.

Alternatives

Alternative 1: No Action (status quo). Most rockfish species would not be required to be retained. Rockfish species not open to directed fishing would continue to be managed by maximum retainable amount (MRA) limits. Once a total allowable catch limit is reached, NMFS places that rockfish species on prohibited species catch (PSC) status and prohibits retention.

Alternative 2: Require full retention of rockfish species by all fixed-gear catcher vessels (hook-and-line, pot, and jig) in the BSAI and GOA.

Alternative 3: Require full retention of rockfish species by hook-and-line catcher vessels in the GOA.

- Option under Alternatives 2, and 3: Require full retention of rockfish even if the species is on PSC status, but prohibit these retained rockfish from entering commerce.

As part of this analysis, the Council requests that staff consider:

- Whether increasing the MRAs for rockfish species would reduce the amount of catch that would need to be monitored to ensure that it does not enter commerce;
- The costs and feasibility of processing, handling, and donating rockfish that are retained in excess of an MRA and that cannot enter commerce.
- Potential inconsistencies between State and Federal management.