



NORTH PACIFIC FISHERY MANAGEMENT COUNCIL

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Action Memo

File Number:BYC 18-005

Agenda Date4/2/2018

Agenda Number:C6

Dan Hull, Chairman
David Witherell, Executive Director

SUBJECT:

GOA CV Chinook PSC limit adjustments - Initial Review

STAFF CONTACT: Sam Cunningham (NPFMC)

ACTION REQUIRED:

- Review initial analysis
- Consider release for public review and/or identification of a preliminary preferred alternative, especially new information on Chinook salmon fisheries and new Option 4 under Alternatives 2 and 3.
- For the action alternatives, clarify whether increase to Chinook salmon PSC limit (Options 1-3) would affect the application of the incentive buffer (Alternative 2) and/or the maximum inseason reallocations allowed under GOA Groundfish FMP Amendment 103 (Alternatives 2 and 3).

BACKGROUND:

The Council is considering an action that would modify the Chinook salmon prohibited species catch (PSC) limits for the non-pollock catcher vessel (CV) groundfish trawl fisheries in the Gulf of Alaska (GOA). Alternative 2 could increase the annual Chinook PSC limit for the non-pollock non-Rockfish Program CV sector from 2,700 fish by 1,000, 2,000, or 3,000 fish (Options 1-3) or it could allow for year-to-year rollovers of unused Chinook PSC (Option 4). Alternative 3 could increase the Chinook PSC limit for the Rockfish Program CV sector from 1,200 fish to 300, 600, or 900 fish (Options 1-3) or it could allow for year-to-year rollovers of unused Chinook PSC (Option 4). Under either action alternative, the Option 4 has three suboptions that would cap the rollover at 25%, 50%, or 75% of the sector's base annual PSC limit.

The Council reviewed a previous version of this analysis in February 2018, and requested a second initial review draft that includes, among other items, additional information on the status and management of Chinook salmon fisheries. The bulk of that new information is contained in Section 3.3 of this document. New or enhanced information is provided on Chinook salmon abundance, Chinook PSC size-at-capture, regional stock of origin identification, Chinook salmon stock status, and hatchery production. Section 4.5.1 includes additional description of observer sampling protocols in the GOA trawl fishery and sources of within-year and annual variation in Chinook PSC estimation. Section 4.6 includes additional information on revenues and participation in commercial and non-commercial Chinook salmon fisheries.

The Council's Purpose and Need statement (Section 1.1) notes that Chinook salmon PSC levels in the GOA trawl fisheries have continued to display wide variation from year-to-year since the implementation of non-pollock PSC limits in 2015. Moreover, the expansion of observer coverage onto vessels less than 60' LOA and the continued collection of genetic data from trawl-caught Chinook salmon has provided new information and context to the issue that was not available when the Council took action on PSC limits in 2013 (GOA

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Groundfish FMP Amendment 97). Finally, the non-Rockfish Program GOA trawl fisheries operate under a limited access management structure where harvesters must compete for a share of the available catch without formalized cooperative tools to best minimize and utilize PSC. For these reasons, the Council is considering modifications to PSC limits that account for the best available information about the fishery and for expected variability in annual Chinook encounter levels, while remaining within the overall GOA trawl PSC bounds that minimize the probability of the fishery jeopardizing the Chinook salmon resource.

As action alternatives are refined, the Council should specify whether any increase to the existing Chinook salmon PSC limits would affect the application of incentive and flexibility measures that are currently in place. Current regulations include a bycatch avoidance incentive for the non-Rockfish Program CV sector, in which successful Chinook avoidance in one year can lead to a slightly higher limit in the following year. The level of the performance standard and the size of that earned "incentive buffer" are linked to the sector's base PSC limit (currently 2,700 Chinook). Regulations also allow NMFS to make inseason Chinook PSC reallocations from other GOA trawl sectors to the non-Rockfish Program and Rockfish Program CV sectors. The maximum reallocation that a sector can receive in one year is linked to that sector's base PSC limit (currently 2,700 and 1,200 Chinook, respectively). The Council could choose to leave maximum incentive buffers and inseason reallocation caps at their current levels or allow them to increase in proportion to any change made to base PSC limits under Options 1-3 of the action alternatives.