

Signed, Dan Hull, Chairman: *Dan Hull*

Approved : October 14, 2014

Minutes June 2014

219 Plenary Session  
North Pacific Fishery Management Council  
Nome, Alaska

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### ATTACHMENTS:

Sign-in Sheet

Time Log

AP and SSC Minutes

Newsletter

The following Council, SSC, AP, and NPFMC staff attended the meetings.

#### **Council Members**

Eric Olson, Chair	Craig Cross	David Long
John Henderschedt, Vice Chair	Ed Dersham	Bill Tweit
Jim Balsiger	Duncan Fields	RADM Tom Ostebo/LT Tony Kenne
Cora Campbell/Nicole Kimball	Dave Hanson	
	Roy Hyder	
	Dan Hull	

#### **NPFMC Staff**

Gail Bendixen	Peggy Kircher	Diana Stram
Sam Cunningham	Sarah Marrinan	David Witherell
Jane DiCosimo	Chris Oliver	
Diana Evans	Maria Shawback	

#### **Advisory Panel**

The following members were present for all or part of the meetings from the 3-6<sup>th</sup>. (absent ~~stricken~~):

Ruth Christiansen	Heath Hilyard	Paddy O'Donnell
<del>Kurt Cochran</del>	Jeff Kauffman	Joel Peterson
John Crowley	Mitch Kilborn	Theresa Peterson
Jerry Downing	<del>Alexus Kwachka</del>	Sinclair Wilt
Jeff Farvour	Craig Lowenberg	Lori Swanson
Becca Robbins Gisclair	Brian Lynch	Anne Vanderhoeven
John Gruver	Chuck McCallum	Ernie Weiss

#### **Scientific and Statistical Committee**

The SSC met from June 2<sup>nd</sup> through 4<sup>th</sup> at the Nome Mini Convention Center and Nome Elementary School, Nome, AK

Members present were:

Pat Livingston, Chair <i>NOAA Fisheries—AFSC</i>	Robert Clark, Vice Chair <i>Alaska Department of Fish and Game</i>	Chris Anderson <i>University of Washington</i>
Jennifer Burns <i>University of Alaska Anchorage</i>	Alison Dauble <i>Oregon Dept. of Fish and Wildlife</i>	Sherri Dressel <i>Alaska Department of Fish and Game</i>
Anne Hollowed <i>NOAA Fisheries—AFSC</i>	George Hunt <i>University of Washington</i>	Gordon Kruse <i>University of Alaska Fairbanks</i>
Seth Macinko <i>University of Rhode Island</i>	Steve Martell <i>Int'l. Pacific Halibut Commission</i>	Franz Mueter <i>University of Alaska Fairbanks</i>
Lew Queirolo <i>NOAA Fisheries—Alaska Region</i>	Terry Quinn <i>University of Alaska Fairbanks</i>	Kate Reedy <i>Idaho State University Pocatello</i>
Matt Reimer <i>University of Alaska Anchorage</i>	Farron Wallace <i>NOAA Fisheries—AFSC</i>	

## B Reports

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

B-1 Executive Director's Report – Chris Oliver

B2 NMFS Management Report – Glenn Merrill

B3 ADF&G Report – Karla Bush

B4 NOAA Enforcement Report – Matt Brown and Nathan Lagerwey

B5 USCG Report – Capt. Phillip Thorne

B7 Protected Species Report - Chris Oliver

### COUNCIL DISCUSSION/ACTION

There was discussion regarding a rollover provision for halibut and the state of halibut stocks in the Bering Sea. Mr. Fields stated he would like to comment and advise NMFS. Mr. Tweit preferred to discuss during the Staff Tasking agenda item. There was discussion regarding where it would be more appropriate on the agenda to have a discussion. **Mr. Fields moved to add to the agenda under D1 Halibut, a discussion relating to the requested halibut rollover/PSC apportionments discussion.** The motion was seconded. Mr. Fields noted that the discussion will also cover tools and procedural mechanisms the Council may use to address the crisis in Bering Sea Halibut. Mr. Henderschedt noted the rollover does not fit entirely in the D1 agenda item, but will support the motion. **The motion passed without objection.**

## C-1 Crab Management

### BACKGROUND

*The Crab Plan Team met in Juneau, AK from May 5-8, 2014 to review stock assessment issues and approaches and to provide recommendations for OFL and ABC specifications for 3 of the 10 stocks. Recommendations and discussions on issues and model formulations for other stocks and additional CPT agenda topics are included in the attached CPT Report. There are 10 crab stocks in the BSAI Crab FMP and all 10 must have annually established OFLs. Seven of the ten stocks will have OFLs and ABCs established in the fall following the summer survey information availability. Two of the ten stocks (Norton Sound red king crab and AI golden king crab) have OFL and ABC recommendations put forward at this time in order to have approved OFLs and ABCs prior to the summer fisheries for these stocks. The Western Aleutian Islands (Adak) red king crab OFL and ABC are recommended based on Tier 5 formulation (average catch). The draft sections of the SAFE report introduction contain the OFL and ABC recommendations for these stocks.*

Diana Stram gave the staff report. The AP did not take up this agenda item, and the SSC gave its report. There was no public comment.

### COUNCIL DISCUSSION/ACTION

**Ms. Campbell moved to accept the Crab SAFE and adopt the OFLs and ABCs recommended by the SSC for Norton Sound Red King Crab, Aleutian Islands Golden King Crab, and Adak Red King Crab. The motion was seconded.** Ms. Campbell thanked everyone for their work in improving the models and addressing mortality. **The motion passed unanimously by roll call vote.**

## C2 Observer Program Annual Report

### BACKGROUND

*As part of the Council's final motion recommending the restructured Observer Program in October 2010, the Council requested that the agency provide an annual report on the observer program. The May 2014 report is the first report that assesses a full year of fishing under the new program (in 2013). Among the most important goals for restructuring the Observer Program were to reduce bias and expand observer coverage to a broader range of participants in the groundfish and halibut fisheries. Therefore, the Annual Report for the first year of the restructured program will focus primarily on evaluating how the actual deployment of observers in 2013 compared with planned deployment as described in the 2013 annual deployment plan. In addition, the Annual Report will provide information about other aspects of the program in 2013, including the fee collection program, program costs, contract issues, catch and bycatch estimates, coverage rates, outreach, and enforcement.*

Diana Evans gave the staff report on this agenda item. Martin Loefflad reviewed the ADP, and Jennifer Mondragon provided an overview on the annual report. The AP and SSC gave the reports on this agenda item, and public comment was heard.

### COUNCIL DISCUSSION/ACTION

**Dan Hull moved, which was seconded by Mr. Long, that the Council requests NMFS and AFSC develop the draft 2015 ADP for Council review with the following considerations.**

**1. The Council supports NMFS recommendations to move participants in the vessel selection pool into the trip selection pool.**

**The Council requests NMFS and AFSC analyze the 2013 vessel selection pool data to determine whether a vessel length other than 40' better defines the new trip selection sample frame in the 2015 ADP, in order to consider removing provisions for conditional release except for life raft capacity. The Council requests this information in order to make recommendations to NMFS as part of the draft 2015 ADP review. The Council is concerned with potential bias introduced in the partial coverage category through conditional releases.**

**2. The Council requests NMFS maintain a higher observer coverage rate for all trawl vessels and fixed gear vessels over 57.5' in the revised trip selection pool in order to expand coverage on PSC limited fisheries, consistent with past Council recommendations.**

**3. The Council requests NMFS take the following SSC and OAC recommendations into consideration in the development of the draft 2015 ADP and the 2014 Annual Report, as well as ongoing agency evaluations and improvements to the program.**

- **Provide additional information on observer rates and coverage by gear type, in addition to numbers of trips and deployment.**
- **Examine potential associations of PSC with trip attributes on observed vessels.**
- **Continue the evaluation of PSC and bycatch estimation from observed vessels to the entire fishery.**
- **In the annual report, include a section outlining changes to the program that have been made in the current year's ADP.**
- **Begin to address the question of how and when the program transitions to optimization of observer coverage according to particular fishery data and management needs.**
- **Recommend the agency work with fishermen and processors in the development of a trip identifier.**

- **Provide more detailed program cost information in order to assess inefficiencies in the program, especially in contrast to observer day costs in the full coverage category. In addition, evaluate ways to achieve cost efficiencies in the partial coverage category.**
- **Include <40' vessels in electronic monitoring testing to the extent possible.**

**4. The Council appreciates the development of performance metrics and encourages NMFS to continue to develop tools to evaluate data quality and deployment performance.**

**5. The Council continues to support supplementary Federal funding for the Observer Program in order to provide bridge funding between calendar years and cover collected fees that have been set aside due to sequestration rules.**

Mr. Hull spoke to the motion and noted that the OAC and SSC have been complimentary on the first annual report and that it is a good start. He supports NMFS' recommendation to move participants from the vessel selection pool to trip selection, in order to remove the sampling frame problem, which is a significant source of bias in the program. Another source of bias is the use of the conditional release policy, but there are no solutions apparent. The Council initially recommended the release policy in IFQ holders because of operational and practical problems with carrying observers for the long coverage period in the vessel selection pool; this was a policy choice. Mr. Hull discussed various possible approaches, and is asking for more information on conditional release by vessel length, to see if more refined data can help the Council make a policy decision. He hoped that vessels that have had hardship with the vessel selection pool will be challenged to see how to make the observer program work in the trip selection pool.

He continued, noting that he wants to maintain high coverage rates for trawl vessels and larger fixed gear vessels, consistent with past years. He recommended taking the OAC, SSC, and AP recommendations and requesting NMFS incorporate them into the program, and stated there is still a need for additional funding for the program for the next few years. Mr. Hull, along with NMFS staff, answered questions of clarification.

**Mr. Henderschedt motion to amend paragraph 1 to read as follows:**

**The Council requests NMFS and AFSC analyze the 2013 vessel selection pool data as well as likely changes in the burdens associated with carrying an observer placed on vessels in a trip selection pool to determine whether a vessel length other than 40' better defines the new trip selection sample frame in the 2015 ADP, in order to consider removing provisions for conditional release.**

**The motion was seconded.**

Mr. Henderschedt spoke to the motion, noting that it is not intended to change the intent, or presuppose the outcome, of the existing motion, but to acknowledge that the transition from vessel selection to trip selection pool requires reconsidering the Council's policy on conditional releases. Policies applied in considering conditional releases are unclear, and conditions for requesting a conditional release are different in vessel vs. trip selection. He noted that over time, the Council should work to eliminate the need for conditional releases. Mr. Hull stated his agreement, and **the amendment passed without objection.**

**Mr. Fields moved the following amendment: the Council request an analysis that the restructured observer program be modified to exclude all trawl vessels, and the trawl vessels currently included in the program be required to have 100% coverage for any groundfish fishing. The motion was seconded by Mr. Long.**

Mr. Fields spoke to his motion, noting that he wants an economical solution, and currently the cost is in excess of \$1000 a day, whereas a pay as you go system is 1/3 of that cost. He also noted that this would be a savings to the Bering Sea trawl catcher vessel fleet that is currently paying for and voluntarily committing to 100% observer coverage. He noted that with increased observer coverage, the Council would be immediately responsive to the need to have more coverage and higher rates, and that although some Council members might feel that this should only happen in the GOA package, he thought this would be a transitional opportunity for training observers. Also, with an independent analysis of 100% trawl observer coverage, the Council will have a better understanding of the observer component, rather than packaging it together with the GOA bycatch action. Discussion ensued about how this amendment fit with the main motion, and Mr. Fields, with the agreement from the second, withdrew the amendment. **The main motion, as amended, passed without objection**

**Mr. Fields made the following motion: the Council request an analysis that the restructured observer program be modified to exclude all trawl vessels, and the trawl vessels currently included in the program be required to have 100% coverage for any groundfish fishing. The motion was seconded by Mr. Long.**

Mr. Dersham stated that he will be opposing the motion, and that the issue of 100% observer coverage on trawl vessels is already initiated. Adding this separate analysis would inevitably delay the GOA trawl bycatch reduction package. There was discussion, and clarification from NMFS staff regarding process and workload. Mr. Merrill noted that NMFS will be covering the trawl observer issue in the fall including how removing the trawl vessels would affect the remainder of the restructured component of the observer program. Separating the issue will add additional work and may not get the Council where it wants to go. Mr. Fields noted his interest is for the fleet to be tracked 100% and removed from the partial coverage portion of the observer program.

Discussion continued and Mr. Tweit noted that continued progress on the GOA Trawl PSC reduction package is the highest priority, and the Council must consider the best use of staff time. Mr. Balsiger stated that while he supports the motion and wants to move forward with 100% coverage in the GOA trawl fleet, and the best way to do that is with the GOA Trawl bycatch analysis. The motion failed 10-1, with **Mr. Fields voting in favor.**

**Mr. Cross moved, which was seconded, that the Council urge the NPGOP to develop a system that accurately credits observers for sampling any set or haul. This needs to include a system whereby second observers voluntarily placed as second observers on fixed gear vessels are credited for sampled sets that will accrue toward LL2 certification. Identify the problems with accomplishing this, and report back to Council on progress on this item.**

Mr. Cross noted that if sufficient observers are not available, the cost of not fishing is problematic for the industry. The observer program hasn't found an answer to the certification problem. The cooperative has responded and will begin putting a second observer on boats and will try and increase the pool of LL2 certified observers. There was discussion regarding the logistics, and it was generally agreed that longer term solutions would also be discussed under the staff tasking agenda item. Mr. Tweit noted observer program issues will be starting to accumulate, and the Council may want to develop a priority system for ranking. **The motion passed without objection.**

## **C3 GOA Tendering**

### **BACKGROUND**

*At the December 2013 meeting, the Council initiated a regulatory amendment to change the deployment*

*of observers on catcher vessels in the partial coverage observer category while delivering to tender vessels. The Council initiated the amendment package based on information in the 2014 Annual Deployment Plan (ADP), which identified that tender activity in the GOA may represent an important source of variance and/or bias in catch data from the partial coverage category. Specifically, the analysis considers deploying observers for catcher vessels from tenders, and allowing catcher vessel observers to monitor deliveries on tenders.*

*The analysis has been scheduled for preliminary review at the June 2014 Council meeting. In the course of preparing the analysis for this meeting, staff has determined that rather than present the document in the form of an incomplete initial review draft, it will be more effective to structure it more like a discussion paper, and highlight the topics where the Council could provide policy guidance that will help streamline the analysis. The document also provides some of the preliminary analytical information on tender vessels and safety considerations, which will be included in the complete initial review draft.*

Diana Evans and Sally Bibb gave the staff report on this agenda item. The AP gave its report, and the SSC did not address this agenda item. Public comment was taken.

#### COUNCIL DISCUSSION/ACTION

**Mr. Hull made the following motion, which was seconded: The Council requests NMFS evaluate and report back on tendering data for the first part of 2014 before prioritizing this package relative to other proposed observer program regulatory amendments. Additionally, the Council supports Alternative 2, option 2, the option to allow observers to monitor trawl offloads at the tender in order to census salmon, be removed from this amendment package, and considered as part of the GOA trawl bycatch management package.** Mr. Hull spoke to the motion, noting that it is consistent with OAC recommendations and in the observer annual report the data indicated that there were no apparent bias problems with delivery to tenders for 2013 as a whole. It makes sense to include it with the GOA trawl bycatch package at this time. **The motion passed without objection.**

## C4 Electronic Monitoring

#### BACKGROUND

*The Council appointed an Electronic Monitoring Workgroup at the April 2014 meeting, and the group met for the first time May 15-16, 2014 in Anchorage. The group agreed on overall goals and objectives for the various components of the Cooperative Research Program, including summaries of the four tracks, and how the tracks will be integrated. There was a discussion of the timeline for the program, and how it will merge into a Council amendment and regulatory implementation process. The group also identified some preliminary protocols to ensure consistently gathered data from the various EM research projects. The minutes of the meeting include recommendations to the Council and the agreed-on overview of the program.*

Diana Evans gave the staff report on this agenda item and Lori Swanson gave the AP report. Public comment was taken.

#### COUNCIL DISCUSSION/ACTION

**Mr. Hull made the following motion, which was seconded: The Council supports the conceptual approach of the cooperative research program (CRP) described in the EM workgroup documents, and encourages the industry, agencies and EM providers to continue their work to complete the study designs and data review protocols, and ongoing field work in all tracks.**

The Council also requests the SSC review the entire package of completed study designs, data review protocols, the goals of each track and their relation to each other, in order to evaluate the ability of the CRP to provide the information and results necessary to develop a regulatory amendment package for integrating EM into the Observer Program.

2. The Council requests staff continue developing decision points and timelines for the Council process, in order to prepare to initiate a regulatory amendment package.
3. The Council supports continued field work on deploying EM after June 2015, while the analytical and regulatory process is under way, to sustain capacity and continue to resolve implementation issues.
4. The Council requests NMFS provide information on funds available for each of the four research tracks to be able to evaluate prioritization of CRP efforts in the event that funding sources fall short of levels necessary to complete them as currently designed.
5. The Council requests AFSC, as time permits, assess the ways in which EM can meet monitoring objectives for the pot and trawl fisheries, in order to facilitate integration of independently funded EM projects into the Council process at some point in the future.

Mr. Hull spoke to the motion, stating that it will be important for the Council to consider the SSC review as the project is developed. Regarding continued fieldwork, he noted that field services are one of the critical elements of a successful EM program. Understanding the funding is useful for the research tracks. With respect to integrating data from other projects, he noted that in discussions with the EM workgroup, data from individual projects may be integrated, but it remains unclear how independent projects can be included. Mr. Hull answered questions of clarification on the motion. There was brief discussion, and the **motion passed without objection.**

## C5 Bering Sea Salmon Bycatch

### BACKGROUND

*The Council has been iteratively addressing Bering Sea Chinook and chum salmon bycatch management revisions in recent years. The Bering Sea Chinook bycatch management program, implemented in 2011 under Amendment 91 to the BSAI groundfish FMP, established a system of PSC limits (divided by sector and season) and provided for industry-developed incentive plan agreements (IPAs) by sector in order to have increased flexibility in operations and management of incentives within sectors. Since 2011 three IPAs have been in operation, each designed to keep Chinook PSC levels below the performance standard implemented under Amendment 91 (47,591 Chinook salmon annually) while allowing for sectors to reach the sector-specific portion of the higher (60,000 fish) cap in 2 of 7 years as needed in years of high bycatch. Neither the sector-specific performance standards nor overall PSC limits have been approached since the program's inception in 2011.*

*The Council last reviewed Chinook salmon bycatch management in October 2013 after requesting a detailed staff analysis of fleet, sector and vessel performance under Amendment 91 as well an updated analysis of adult equivalence (AEQ) with particular emphasis on western Alaskan AEQ and impact rates of the fishery on WAK stocks. Overall bycatch has been much lower than historical levels in recent years. However, given continuing concerns regarding poor returns to western Alaskan Chinook salmon stocks, the Council continues to focus on potential improvements to Chinook bycatch management in the Bering Sea. Additionally, the Council is interested in moving forward with a more comprehensive concurrent management of Chinook and chum salmon bycatch management in the Bering Sea pollock fishery.*



*In October, the Council made a number of requests of both staff and IPA representatives for inclusion in a discussion paper. Main themes of the items in the Council's motion included the following:*

- 1. Chum salmon: Discussion of the regulatory changes needed to incorporate Bering Sea chum salmon bycatch avoidance into the Chinook salmon Incentive Plan Agreements (IPAs). The objectives of this action are to prioritize Chinook salmon bycatch avoidance, while preventing high chum salmon bycatch and focusing on avoidance of Alaska chum salmon stocks, and allowing flexibility to harvest pollock in times and places that best support those goals.*
- 2. Chinook salmon: Evaluation of possible measures to refine Chinook salmon bycatch controls in the Bering Sea pollock fisheries. These considerations included:*
  - a. Modification in IPAs to impose restrictions or penalties on vessels with consistently high Chinook PSC rates relative to other vessels fishing at the same time.*
  - b. Requiring use of salmon excluders when Chinook encounter rates are high (through IPAs or in regulations)*
  - c. Requiring a lower Base Rate (for rolling hot spot closures) starting in September (through IPAs or in regulations)*
  - d. Provisions to shorten the pollock fishery when pollock catch rates decline and Chinook rates increase in October (through IPAs or in regulations)*
  - e. Closing the fishery to a sector (or cooperative) if their Chinook rate exceeds a specified threshold in September or October through IPAs or in regulations)*
  - f. Modification of the PSC accounting period for application of the Chinook PSC limit*

*Two discussion papers have been prepared to address the Council's request. The first discussion paper, 'Bering Sea Chinook and chum bycatch discussion paper,' provides: 1) updated analyses building upon the October analysis of fleet, sector and vessel performance under Amendment 91, 2) a summary of AEQ analysis and impact rates, and 3) an assessment of all the elements listed in the Council's motion but the provisions that would be put forward within the IPAs themselves to address modifications for Chinook bycatch reduction. Due to the timing of the availability of feedback from the IPA representatives, a second discussion paper was prepared, 'Bering Sea Chinook bycatch Incentive Plan Agreement (IPA) feedback,' which summarizes the feedback from the IPAs and provides, to the extent possible, a concise discussion and analysis of the possible impacts of proposed IPA modifications and lists questions for further clarification or consideration by the Council. This second paper is meant to complement the broader discussion and analysis contained in the first paper, and focusses only narrowly on those aspects put forward by the IPAs, specifically addressing primarily the provision to include vessel restrictions or penalties on vessels with consistently high Chinook PSC rates and issues related to requiring salmon excluder usage.*

*At this meeting the Council will review both discussion papers and may elect to move forward with an analysis for a comprehensive salmon bycatch management program for both Chinook and chum salmon in the Bering Sea pollock fishery. The Council may wish to consider a number of aspects such as the purpose and need for action, alternatives for consideration (to address the purpose and need), the analytical document necessary for evaluation of such modifications, and a time frame for review of alternative management approaches.*

Diana Stram gave the staff report on this agenda item and reviewed the discussion paper with the Council. Katie Howard (ADFG) gave an overview of Western Alaska stock status, Jim Ianelli (AFSC) gave an overview of the AEQ analysis, and Alan Haynie reviewed the efficacy of some of the IPA proposals.

Representatives of the IPAs (James Mize, John Gruever, Stephanie Madsen, and Amanda Sterne) reviewed the IPA written reports, and SSC and AP reports were given on this topic. Public comment was taken.

#### COUNCIL DISCUSSION/ACTION

Ms. Campbell made the following motion:

**The Council initiates an analysis of Chinook and chum salmon bycatch measures in the Bering Sea pollock fishery with the following purpose and need statement and alternatives:**

**Purpose and need statement:** *The current chum salmon bycatch reduction program under Am 84 does not meet the Council's objectives to prioritize Chinook salmon bycatch avoidance, while preventing high chum salmon bycatch and focusing on avoidance of Alaska chum salmon stocks; and allow flexibility to harvest pollock in times and places that best support those goals. Incorporating chum salmon avoidance through the Incentive Plan Agreements (IPAs) should more effectively meet those objectives by allowing for the establishment of chum measures through a program that is sufficiently flexible to adapt to changing conditions quickly.*

*Chinook salmon are an extremely important resource to Alaskans who depend on local fisheries for their sustenance and livelihood. Multiple years of historically low Chinook salmon abundance have resulted in significant restrictions for subsistence users in western Alaska and failure to achieve conservation objectives. The current Chinook salmon bycatch reduction program under Am 91 was designed to minimize bycatch to the extent practicable in all years, under all conditions of salmon and pollock abundance. While Chinook salmon bycatch impact rates have been low under the program, there is evidence that improvements could be made to ensure the program is reducing Chinook salmon bycatch at low levels of salmon abundance. This could include measures to avoid salmon late in the year and to strengthen incentives across both seasons, either through revisions to the IPAs or regulations.*

**Alternatives:** (Note: action alternatives are not mutually exclusive.)

**Alternative 1. No action.**

**Alternative 2. Remove BSAI Am 84 regulations and incorporate chum salmon avoidance into the Am 91 Incentive Plan Agreements. Revise regulations at 50 CFR 679.21(c)(13) to include associated reporting requirements for chum salmon. Revise regulations at 50 CFR 679.21(c)(12)(iii)(B)(3) to include chum salmon bycatch avoidance as follows:**

***(3) Description of the incentive plan.***

***The IPA must contain a written description of the following:***

***(i) The incentive(s) that will be implemented under the IPA for the operator of each vessel participating in the IPA to avoid Chinook salmon and chum salmon bycatch under any condition of pollock and Chinook salmon abundance in all years;***

***(ii) The incentive(s) to avoid chum salmon should not increase Chinook salmon bycatch;***

***(iii) The rewards for avoiding Chinook salmon, penalties for failure to avoid Chinook salmon at the vessel level, or both;***

***(iv) How the incentive measures in the IPA are expected to promote reductions in a vessel's Chinook salmon and chum salmon bycatch rates relative to what would have occurred in absence of the incentive program;***

*(v) How the incentive measures in the IPA promote Chinook salmon savings and chum salmon savings in any condition of pollock abundance or Chinook salmon abundance in a manner that is expected to influence operational decisions by vessel operators to avoid Chinook salmon and chum salmon; and*

*(vi) How the IPA ensures that the operator of each vessel governed by the IPA will manage that vessel's ~~his or her~~ Chinook salmon bycatch to keep total bycatch below the performance standard described in paragraph (f)(6) of this section for the sector in which the vessel participates; and*

*(vii) How the IPA ensures that the operator of each vessel governed by the IPA will manage that vessel's chum salmon bycatch to avoid areas and times where the chum salmon are likely to return to Western Alaska.*

**Alternative 3. Revise Federal regulations to require that IPAs include the following provisions:**

**Option 1.** Restrictions or penalties targeted at vessels that consistently have significantly higher Chinook salmon PSC rates relative to other vessels fishing at the same time. Include a requirement to enter a fishery-wide in-season PSC data sharing agreement.

**Option 2.** Required use of salmon excluder devices, with recognition of contingencies.  
Suboption: Required use of salmon excluder devices, with recognition of contingencies, from Jan 20 – March 31, and Sept 1 until the end of the B season.

**Option 3.** A rolling hotspot program that operates throughout the entire A and B seasons.

**Option 4.** Salmon savings credits last for a maximum of three years.

**Alternative 4. Revise the Bering Sea pollock fishery seasons:**

**Option 1.** Change the start date of the Bering Sea pollock B season to June 1.

**Option 2.** Shorten the Bering Sea pollock fishery to end on [suboptions: October 1 or October 15].

**Alternative 5. Revise Federal regulations to lower the performance standard under Am 91 in years of low Chinook salmon abundance per the options below. Low abundance is defined as  $\leq 500,000$  Chinook salmon, based on the total Chinook salmon run size index of the coastal WAK aggregate stock grouping in a [option: year or average of two years]. Sectors that exceed the applicable performance standard, in 3 out of 7 years, would be held to their proportion of the hard cap of 47,591 in perpetuity.**

**Option 1.** 25% reduction (36,693)

**Option 2.** 60% reduction (19,036)

Suboption: Apply the reduction [25% or 60%] to the B season portion of the performance standard only.

**Analysts should also provide data and considerations to inform an approach to differentially apply the reduction in the performance standard among the CV, CP, and MS sectors under Alternative 5.**

**Analysts should also develop and include recommended changes to Federal reporting requirements that would be necessary to evaluate the effectiveness of any of the alternatives.**

Ms. Campbell spoke to the motion, noting that public testimony emphasized it is a difficult time in regards to the in-state salmon fisheries. She noted that escapement needs are met, but not enough to

meet subsistence. There is no commercial harvest, no sport harvest, and no subsistence harvest of Chinook salmon. Directed salmon users are making sacrifices for returns for future generations. The Council recognizes its responsibility to minimize bycatch of salmon in federal managed fisheries.

In this motion, she stated she has included the ideas from the analysis for conserving salmon that are worth consideration. The incentive to avoid Chinook is effective at every level of Chinook and pollock abundance.

She discussed the season dates in Alternative 4, noting that opening the fishery earlier could shift the fishery so there is less fishing in October, thus avoiding bycatch, and having an option of an earlier season end date is also worth consideration in the analysis.

Alternative 5 is focused on the performance standard. It is focused reducing the performance standard in times of low salmon abundance, which would affect the IPAs. She noted this was the original intent of Am 91 (to keep bycatch low under all conditions) and the Council has received varied levels of responses in terms of steps taken to avoid salmon. Alternative 5 and the performance standard take a critical look at whether incentives are working as intended. She stated all users should share the burden of conservation.

Ms. Campbell answered questions of clarification for each alternative.

**Mr. Henderschedt moved to amend, which was seconded, to add in Option 4, Alternative 3 at the end of the sentence: “for savings credit based IPAs.”** He noted that it was for clarification only for the two IPAs that are in effect. There are no expectations that an at sea processor IPA would need to be generating savings credits. **The amendment passed without objection.**

**Mr. Henderschedt moved to add under Option 5, Alternative 3: Restrictions or performance criteria used to ensure that Chinook salmon PSC bycatch rates in month of October are not significantly higher than those achieved in preceding months.** He spoke to the motion, stating that the motion is a counterpart to Alternative 4 Option 2, that would be achieved through regulations. By creating this option, the opportunity would allow the industry to achieve similar outcomes through IPA provisions. There was discussion regarding the definition of “significantly higher,” and Mr. Henderschedt stated he didn’t want to establish benchmarks that the IPAs would develop them. **The amendment passed without objections.**

**Mr. Henderschedt moved to amend, which was seconded, to add in Alternative 5: “Analysts should also provide data and considerations to inform an approach to differentially apply, “the seasonal adjustments under alternative 4, and the reduction in the performance standard among the CV, CP, and MS sectors under Alternative 5.** Mr. Henderschedt stated that he is seeking to establish a parallel path with Alternative 5, and since the Council has regulatory and IPA provision-based vehicles for addressing seasonal issues, it makes sense to have a provision in this section to respond to IPA development, or failure, to respond to that differentially. He realized it is more of an enforcement and record-keeping issue and gives the flexibility to respond at sector level. **The amendment passed without objection.**

**Mr. Fields moved, which was seconded, under Alternative 4, option 2, to extend range of the seasonality from Sept 15 to October 1 or October 15.** Mr. Fields spoke to the motion, noting that the initial analysis has a broader range, and the analysis shows a substantial uptick of bycatch rates in early fall. Mr. Tweit noted the Council has always considered October. Mr. Henderschedt stated that the seasonal differential does not only focus on bycatch rates, but also on bycatch harvest. Mr. Cross noted that this motion would be taking away flexibility, and changing the dates decreases the window. Mr.

Olson noted he will be supporting this amendment for analysis. **The amendment passed 6/5 by roll call vote with Hyder, Tweit, Cross, Dersham, and Henderschedt voting in opposition.**

**Mr. Fields moved to amend in Alternative 5, Applicable performance standard: Add two options, 3 out of 7, or 2 out of 3 years. The motion was seconded.** He spoke to the motion noting that 3 out of 7 years in a crisis situation is too long. Discussion ensued regarding productivity and ability for the IPAs to make changes. Mr. Henderschedt noted he will not be supporting the motion, and that it undermines a constructive process for IPAs to develop meaningful measures to reduce bycatch. Mr. Cross noted the industry needs to have the ability to make the rules work, and this is punitive. Ms. Campbell noted that the industry needs to work within Amendment 91 to minimize bycatch as quickly as possible and that the motion did not intend to change the fundamental structure of the IPAs, which are based on incentives and penalties linked to the current provision (3 out of 7 years). Mr. Fields responded to the concerns, stating that bycatch could substantially exceed the options outlined in years 1 and 2. This amendment could provide a good range in an analytical package, and hopes the analysis could point out possible scenarios where the industry bycatch could exceed the options that are outlined. **The motion failed 10/1, with Mr. Fields voting in favor.**

Mr. Fields noted his frustration with the timeframe of the Council's actions to impact Western Alaska stocks. Ms. Campbell stated she expects most immediate changes to take place within the IPA framework.

**Mr. Tweit moved, which was seconded, to add the following provision in Alternative 5: Analysts should also describe potential methods for addressing the time lag between the population vulnerability to marine fisheries bycatch and to the population statistics and trigger.** He spoke to the motion, noting that it is to encourage analysts to research what timing triggers adult recovery to avoid the unfortunate situation of a decrease in Chinook abundance in the ocean before it is seen on land. He would like to know if there are ways to make population forecasts more timely and effective. **The amendment passed without objection.**

There was discussion on the main motion. Mr. Fields noted this motion displays a policy shift which is to move management into IPAs, and strongly supports this. He also noted peer pressure works, but not all the time, and incentives need to be in place that work all the time, and supports the language in option 1. He noted the Commissioner has done good job in negotiating substantial reductions, but there is still much to be done to improve escapements of salmon to protect stocks.

Mr. Henderschedt noted that he will be supporting the motion, and is uncomfortable with some of the unknowns relative to outcome. The Council can manage a bycatch reduction that has kept bycatch low, has data to make improvement where necessary, and has the collective intelligence and a spirit of innovation responsive to changing status of stocks and true to the obligation to achieve Optimum Yield. This motion reflects balance. He stated that if the measures the Council has in place result in leaving pollock in water, then it is not a success.

Mr. Tweit stated that the Council is faced with balancing very different food needs. He stated that he is supporting the motion, and that his biggest worry is of unintended consequences. He thanked those who participated in the Council meeting by providing public testimony. Mr. Dersham noted that he supports the motion, and the best feature is tying the performance standard to abundance. He would like more information on the social and cultural issues, and noted his disagreement to some SSC comments in regard to this area. Mr. Dersham would like to put pressure on the coops, and wants to reach out to the outlier vessels to bring them into compliance.

Mr. Hull noted that the Council has granted industry some responsibility in co-management and that without those efforts, putting together a solution would be more difficult. The Council is providing

tools for industry to reduce bycatch, and Alternative 5 is good for a shift in extremes for the industry itself to determine the best way to achieve reductions. IPAs can do that.

Mr. Fields noted that the industry should have adequate incentives to preserve Chinook. It is incumbent on the Council to set goals and make industry achieve them. He will do everything to preserve the resource to get as much escapement as possible up the river, and once the escapement is reached, then the Council can discuss balance. Mr. Olson thanked the Commissioner, and agrees with Mr. Hull that this is a good step and encourages the industry to continue efforts to lower bycatch. In the future the Council may want to re-evaluate Amendment 91 to make sure it is the correct structure. **The motion passed unanimously by roll call vote.**

## **D1 Halibut PSC, and D2 Sector Reports on BSAI Halibut PSC measures**

### **BACKGROUND**

*In February 2014, the Council reviewed a discussion paper on a number of issues related to usage of Pacific halibut prohibited species catch (PSC) in the Bering Sea/Aleutian Islands (BSAI) groundfish fisheries. As one of several next steps to address halibut PSC usage in the BSAI fisheries, the Council requested a report from International Pacific Halibut Commission (IPHC) staff on the status of the halibut resource and the impact of halibut PSC in the BSAI trawl and fixed gear groundfish fisheries on halibut stock biomass, the reproductive potential of the halibut stock, and short and long-term halibut yields to the directed halibut fisheries. This report was posted in mid-May. IPHC staff will present its findings.*

Jane DiCosimo gave the staff report on this agenda item and Dr. Ian Stewart (IPHC) gave an overview of the status of the halibut stock in the North Pacific. Representatives from each sector of the 5 BSAI groundfish sectors (American Fisheries Act Catcher Processor, American Fisheries Act Catcher Vessel, Amendment 80, Freezer Longline Cooperative, and Community Development Quota) on progress for voluntarily implementing measures in their cooperative and/or inter-cooperative agreements to minimize halibut PSC, including:

- Development of effective and verifiable measures for halibut avoidance and
- Individual accountability and use of incentives to reduce PSC.

The AP gave its report, and public comment was taken. The SSC had given its report earlier.

### **COUNCIL DISCUSSION/ACTION**

**Mr. Hull made the following motion, which was seconded: The Council requests all industry sectors (Amendment 80, Trawl Limited Access, CDQ and HAL CV and CP) undertake voluntary efforts to reduce halibut mortalities in the BSAI resulting from halibut PSC use, as well as discards in the directed halibut fishery, by 10% each from the current 5-year average levels, through the 2014-15 fishing seasons. To evaluate progress in these efforts, the Council also requests industry to report back to the Council on measures that are being implemented and developed and, to the extent possible, the effectiveness of those measures in terms of absolute reductions in halibut mortalities.**

**The Council strongly encourages NMFS to continue working closely with the Amendment 80 sector to develop deck sorting procedures and technologies that could reduce halibut mortalities, in order to initiate regulatory changes for a full-scale program.**

**The Council requests NMFS work together with the IPHC to provide halibut bycatch and discard size data from the Observer Program in a form that can be better incorporated into IPHC stock assessments.**

The Council requests NMFS evaluate the potential for the Amendment 80 flatfish flexibility program, a change to the Amendment 80 trawl season opening date from January 20 to January 1, and changes to the current Amendment 80 area closures, to reduce halibut PSC use.

The Council adopts the following purpose and need statement for an analysis to reduce halibut PSC limits and other sources of mortalities in the BSAI fisheries.

**Purpose and need:**

*Halibut is an important resource in the Bering Sea and Aleutian Islands that supports commercial and subsistence fisheries. Halibut is also incidentally taken in commercial groundfish fisheries managed by the Council, and in the directed halibut fishery.*

*Declines in halibut exploitable biomass since the late 1990s have raised concerns about levels of halibut PSC in the BSAI groundfish fisheries. This decline is particularly pronounced in BSAI Areas 4A, 4B, and 4CDE. These areas have incurred major reductions in halibut harvest limits since 2003. BSAI halibut Prohibited Species Catch (PSC) in non-directed fisheries have not declined at a rate proportional to harvest reductions in the directed fishery, and the effect of bycatch on the directed fisheries in Area 4CDE is the most pronounced. The IPHC uses the previous year's actual bycatch amount to set the following year's halibut harvest limits; thus, short-term reductions in BSAI halibut PSC could have immediate implications for directed halibut users. Under National Standard 8, the Council must consider the sustained participation of communities when making fisheries management decisions.*

*The Council recognizes that efforts by various sectors of the industry in recent years have reduced halibut PSC; however, the current low status and continued declines in the halibut resource require immediate action by the Council and industry. Additional regulatory measures to avoid halibut, and further minimize halibut bycatch mortality would help to improve halibut stock conditions, could provide additional harvest opportunities in the directed halibut fishery, and be consistent with objectives under National Standard 9.*

*A range of management options are available to reduce halibut bycatch in the BSAI groundfish fisheries. These include reducing existing halibut PSC limits in the trawl and hook-and-line fisheries and changes in vessel operations that allow halibut to be returned to the sea sooner, thereby reducing halibut mortality.*

**Alternatives**

*More than one Alternative listed below may be selected (e.g., The Council could select Alternatives 2 and 3).*

**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. Apportions the BSAI trawl limited access sector halibut PSC limits between AFA vessels and non-AFA trawl catcher vessel sectors. The halibut PSC would be apportioned based on historic use by these vessel categories from 2009 – 2013.**

**Suboption: Cap the halibut PSC limit for the apportionment to the Pollock/Atka Mackerel/other species category.**

**Option 3. Reduce halibut PSC limit for the BSAI Trawl Limited Access Sector by:**

**10 percent b) 20 percent or c) 30 percent**

**Suboption: Apply reductions to AFA vessels and non-AFA trawl catcher vessels separately if separate halibut PSC limits are established for these sectors (see Option 2)**

**Option 4. Reduce halibut PSC limit for the Amendment 80 Sector by:**

**a) 10 percent b) 20 percent or c) 30 percent**

**Option 5. Reduce halibut PSC limit for hook-and-line catcher vessel sector by:**

**10 percent b) 20 percent or c) 30 percent**

**Option 6. Reduce halibut PSC limit for hook-and-line catcher/processor sector by:**

**10 percent b) 20 percent or c) 30 percent**

**Option 7. Reduce the CDQ halibut PSQ limit by:**

**10 percent b) 20 percent or c) 30 percent**

**Alternative 3. Implement measures in the Amendment 80 sector to provide opportunities for deck sorting of halibut, or other handling practices that may provide an opportunity to reduce mortality of halibut that cannot be avoided.**

**As part of this analytical package include a review of:**

- **The levels of groundfish catch and halibut bycatch by groundfish sectors, and the size and age distribution of that bycatch, in the existing IPHC area (Closed Area) that is closed to the directed halibut fishery in the Bering Sea.**
- **Whether a halibut PSC limit would be appropriate to limit halibut bycatch in the directed sablefish IFQ fishery.**
- **Potential implications of a halibut IPA on existing and anticipated Chinook and chum salmon PSC management measures (i.e., IPAs).**
- **The range of potential approaches to establishing a halibut PSC limit based on projections of total biomass, projected spawning biomass, or other appropriate indices of abundance and productivity.**

**Further development of these alternatives and options could occur after Council review of an expanded IPHC discussion paper on the biological and management issues surrounding the accounting and management of all sizes of halibut that is anticipated to be completed later this year.**

Mr. Hull spoke, saying there are a number of challenges in developing this motion as there are a lot of sectors involved and unknowns regarding halibut stocks and IPHC involvement. The motion combines requests that have been made from industry to encourage progress, and industry would be reporting on that progress. The Council's default position for halibut is as a bycatch species and that is not acceptable. The motion proposes in the analytical package a purpose and needs statement drawn from reports and presentations that have been received, and identifies actions and outcomes the Council should consider. Seasonal apportionments and apportionments between sectors could better facilitate management of halibut PSC. Reductions would examine how PSC limits compare to actual use. Mr. Fields noted his intent was to provide an opportunity for sectors to explore ways to reduce bycatch through the IPAs before the Council considers setting up a regulated structure, which may be complicated to analyze/implement within the context of the existing IPAs. The abundance based



approach will depend on work from IPHC, and constructed to protect appropriate age-classes to maintain productivity. The IPHC stated their intent to complete full paper on biology and management issues of halibut which can inform the Council to better manage halibut for all users. Mr. Hull answered questions of clarification on the motion.

**Mr. Henderschedt moved to amend the first paragraph of the motion to read as follows: (New language is underlined, removed language is stricken:**

**The Council requests all industry sectors (Amendment 80, Trawl Limited Access, CDQ and HAL CV and CP) undertake voluntary ~~continue~~ efforts to reduce halibut mortalities in the BSAI resulting from halibut PSC use, as well as discards in the directed halibut fishery, ~~by 10% each from the current 5-year average levels, through the 2014-15 fishing seasons.~~ To evaluate progress in these efforts, ~~t~~**The Council also requests industry to report back to the Council on measures that are being implemented and developed and, to the extent possible, the effectiveness of those measures in reducing halibut bycatch rates or absolute halibut mortality. in terms of absolute reductions in halibut mortalities.****

Mr. Henderschedt spoke to the motion, saying he is sensitive to the need to reduce bycatch mortality and is balancing expectations among stakeholders. Future actions are a continuation of present and past efforts to reduce bycatch. There is no analysis relative to foregone catch, and asking for voluntary performance to evaluate bycatch without specific criteria is not effective. He wanted to ensure the Council makes calculated steps that can be evaluated in an analysis of potential impacts. (is this correct?) There was discussion, and Mr. Hull noted that sectors have ongoing efforts to reduce bycatch, and while he understands the need to manage expectations, and his intent in the motion is to be clear as possible along with voluntary efforts and feedback.

**Mr. Fields moved a substitute amendment to have the first paragraph read as follows:**

**The Council requests all industry sectors (Amendment 80, Trawl Limited Access, CDQ and HAL CV and CP) undertake voluntary efforts to reduce halibut mortalities in the BSAI resulting from halibut PSC use, as well as discards in the directed halibut fishery by 10% each from the current 5-year average levels, through the 2014-15 fishing seasons. To evaluate progress in these efforts, the Council also requests industry to report back to the Council on measures that are being implemented and developed and, to the extent possible, the effectiveness of those measures in reducing halibut bycatch rates or absolute halibut mortality as well as reduction of bycatch rates. Moved and seconded. It was noted this was a substitute motion. Mr. Fields spoke to it, and noted that it is voluntary, and important to establish a target. By removing a target we cannot evaluate success because there is no benchmark. Mr. Henderschedt stated he is uncomfortable with evaluating "voluntary" regulations. **The vote on the substitute amendment failed 5/6 with Campbell, Hull, Olson, Fields and Long voting in favor.****

Ms. Campbell stated that the Council needs to give industry a clear expectation of what it expects from the voluntary efforts to reduce bycatch. **Vote on the amendment failed 5/6, with Campbell, Dersham, Fields, Hull, Long, Olson voting in opposition.**

**Mr. Dersham moved to amend, which was seconded, to take the word "EACH" after 10%.** He stated the motion is making a statement; that the goal is 10%, but understanding each sector may not get to 10%. There was brief discussion regarding the 10%, and it was agreed that it was 10% globally, although some sectors may have a harder time reaching that goal. Mr. Henderschedt noted his opposition. **The amendment passed with Mr. Tweit and Mr. Henderschedt in objection.**

**Mr. Henderschedt moved to amend, in alternative 2, to strike option 2 in its entirety, as well as the sub option under option3, which is directly related to option 2.** Mr. Henderschedt spoke to the

motion, stating that the option he is deleting avoids significant allocation decisions as well as analytical work. The choice of years would have to be examined more closely, as well as an examination of intra-sector halibut performance. Removing the option would allow for a more straight forward process. Mr. Cross agreed that the main focus would be to reduce PSC, and elaborating on other factors may sidetrack the main goal. **There was brief discussion, and the amendment passed without objection.**

**Mr. Henderschedt moved to amend, which was seconded, in Alternative 3: strike in bullet 3, “implication of Halibut IPA” and replace with “impacts of efforts to remove halibut PSC mortality.”**

Mr. Henderschedt spoke to his motion noting there are no alternatives for creating IPAs, and no models for IPAs that analysts can use. Efforts that are taking place are more valuable to review, as well as dynamics that arise when doing multi-species bycatch management. **The amendment passed without objection.**

**Mr. Henderschedt moved to add a 5<sup>th</sup> bullet in the list under Alternative 3. It would read:**

**Current protocols for rolling unused halibut between sectors, and the effect of these protocols on the achievement of OY, and/or reductions of halibut PSC bycatch mortality. The amendment was seconded.** Mr. Henderschedt spoke to the motion, stating that this issue was identified earlier: what impacts do our actions have in achieving bycatch and bycatch mortality? The amendment is intended to be neutral and not focused on achievement of OY, or reduction of bycatch mortality, just recognition of balancing. **There was brief discussion, and the motion passed without objection.**

**Mr. Fields moved to amend, adding an expand range, an option d: 40% on options 3-7. The amendment was seconded.**

Mr. Fields noted he is offering a range to understand what the Council will be analyzing. The expanded range has support, both in the AP and IPHC paper. The illustrated reduction in bycatch in the different areas makes it important to consider expanded range. **The motion failed 4/7, with Cross, Dersham, Henderschedt, Hyder, Long, Tweit, and Merrill voting in opposition.**

**Mr. Fields moved to amend by adding 35% to the range analyzed. The amendment was seconded by Mr. Hull.** Mr. Fields spoke to the motion, noting that he wants to expand range for analysis. Mr. Henderschedt stated that there is little stock in choosing the right number, but more on performing best we can. There is no value in establishing a cap, and no reason to expand an existing range. Mr. Merrill stated the range is responsive to the concerns the industry has raised.

Mr. Tweit noted additional measures can be added further on. Mr. Fields is concerned the Council will have to close a directed fishery for halibut in the future. This is a problem and the Council should consider it seriously and a 10% reduction is not sufficient or responsible.

Ms. Campbell stated she would be in favor to expand the range where it would have meaningful impact in analysis. **The amendment passed 7/4, with Cross, Hyder, Henderschedt and Tweit voting in opposition.**

**Mr. Dersham moved to amend the motion by adding another bullet point to say: “an overview of available subsistence info for areas 4 C,D,E”** He spoke to the motion and stated that it is important to have that information, whatever it may be. **The amendment passed without objection.**

**Mr. Merrill moved to amend by adding a final bullet to say, “fishing practices that reduce halibut bycatch in the directed halibut fishery.”** He spoke to the motion, stating there is a desire for all industry sectors to look at methods that look at halibut discards, and provide info to what types of tools that exist to reduce bycatch. **The amendment passed without objection.**

Mr. Dersham spoke to the main motion. The Council should do everything can to move deck sorting along, and is hopeful to get an EFP in water by next year. The Council doesn't have to wait for the analysis to proceed with decksorting, and hopes the entire package can be biomass-based in the future.

Mr. Tweit noted the directed fishery needs as much help as it can, and the groundfish fishery is an indispensable partner. The Council needs to recognize its best efforts that have been taken to date.

Mr. Henderschedt has expressed concerns regarding a voluntary approach, but the overarching goals and objectives of this motion make it important to move forward. Although he will support motion, he expressed concern that the Council may not be able to manage the situation. While the Council can focus on what to do, it should also focus on what it can learn relative to the underlying cause

Mr. Fields will support the motion, but with reluctance. He stated the motion doesn't go far enough, fast enough and wishes there were more tools available to address concerns. The industry, which is a hardworking, innovative industry, is still taking 5-6 million lbs. of halibut on an annual basis. He appreciates a need for conservation, and that this is a tepid step in right direction.

There was brief discussion as to how this motion will compete, if at all, with the GOA Trawl bycatch reduction package. It will be discussed during staff tasking.

**The amended main motion passed without objection.**

**Mr. Tweit moved the Council re-apportion 60MT of halibut PSC currently available to the Bering Sea Pacific cod fishery to the Bering Sea YFS fishery.** The Council has gone through this item in detail in the B reports. The apportionment is needed to allow participants in the limited access fishery to best avoid halibut mortality by allowing a choice between YFS and cod fisheries. He noted variations can cause stranding and fluctuations of halibut, and this motion will allow for adjustment. **The motion passed without objection.**

## C-6 Crab ROFR Contract Terms

### BACKGROUND:

*To protect community interests, the Bering Sea/Aleutian Islands Crab Rationalization Program required holders of most processor shares to enter into agreements granting community-designated entities a right of first refusal (ROFR) on certain transfers of those shares. In February 2013, the Council recommended a package of changes to the ROFR provisions in the FMP and in Federal regulations. These changes were intended to improve the ability of community entities to exercise ROFR and maintain crab processing activity in their community. Among these changes the Council considered revising the application of ROFR to apply only to the processor quota shares (PQS) (Alternative 2), or to PQS and assets based in the community (Alternative 3). At the time, the Council chose to maintain the status quo for these two alternatives, in which current ROFR provisions in the BSAI Crab FMP require a community entity exercising the ROFR to accept all terms and conditions of a proposed sale of PQS to a non-ROFR buyer.*

*In June 2013, the Council received public testimony from ROFR community representatives indicating that some PQS and ROFR holders were considering the use of private contractual agreements to address remaining community protection issues, including contractual provisions that would limit the assets to which the ROFR would apply. The community representatives asked the Council to clarify whether current ROFR provisions authorize private contractual agreements with provisions that differ from the required ROFR contract terms. In response to this testimony, the Council requested that staff prepare a discussion paper examining this question.*

*In December 2013, the Council reviewed the discussion paper, which concluded that the current ROFR contract provisions do not provide for a re-negotiation of the terms and conditions of the proposed sale transaction. The paper noted that the ROFR contract provisions could be revised in the FMP to allow for such flexibility. After reviewing the discussion paper and receiving public testimony in support of modifying ROFR contract provisions, the Council initiated this analysis as an addendum for initial review to consider allowing for negotiated contracts that apply ROFR.*

*The action alternative in the current addendum for initial review proposes that in ROFR contracts, the right of first refusal applies to all the assets of a company included in a proposed sale (the “underlying agreement”), or to any subset of those assets, as otherwise agreed to by the PQS holder and the community entity. If the Council chooses the action alternative, changes could be incorporated into the Council’s preferred alternative for additional revisions to ROFR provisions, as selected at its February 2013 meeting. The Council will consider the alternatives analyzed in this document, and any measure selected would become part of the proposed rule to be developed from the existing preferred alternative.*

Rachael Baker gave the staff report on this agenda item. Representatives from the AP and SSC had given the reports, and public comment was taken.

#### COUNCIL DISCUSSION/ACTION

**Mr. Merrill moved, which was seconded, to recommend the document go out for public review, to include the SSC’s comments, and accept alternative 2 as the Preliminary Preferred Alternative.** Mr. Merrill spoke to the motion, and stated the motion is consistent with the AP motion and public comment. The SSC made comments which may be difficult to include. Alternative 2 clarifies where the Council intends to go on the issue in the future. **The motion passed without objection.**

## C7 Pacific Cod CDQ Fishery Development

### BACKGROUND

*In October 2013, representatives from the Community Development Quota (CDQ) groups introduced a proposal to make regulatory changes or exemptions that would encourage local development and participation in the harvest of CDQ Pacific cod allocations in both a directed CDQ Pacific cod fishery and while targeting CDQ and Individual Fishing Quota (IFQ) halibut. As a result of this testimony, the Council requested a staff discussion paper, presented in February of 2014. In February, the Council initiated an analysis, establishing a purpose and needs statement and alternatives.*

*The purpose of this action is to create a regulatory structure for the harvest of CDQ Pacific cod that promotes harvest opportunities for the CDQ small vessel fleets, and effectively allows CDQ and IFQ halibut harvesters, less than or equal to 46’ in length the ability to retain CDQ Pacific cod in excess of the 20 percent MRA of halibut. The difference between the vessel requirements for directed CDQ halibut fishing and directed CDQ Pacific cod fishing means that any Pacific cod caught in the halibut fishery is generally not able to be retained by small vessels for commercial use. Adjusting the regulations for these fisheries could reduce Pacific cod discards and increase efficiency in the halibut CDQ fishery. Particularly in light of recent declines in halibut quota, CDQ fleets would benefit from the ability to retain their allocation of Pacific cod for commercial sale to supplement their income from CDQ halibut harvest. This action would be in line with Magnuson-Stevens Fishery Conservation and Management Act (MSA) policy objectives of supporting employment and growth in the communities.*

Sarah Marrinan and Sally Bibb gave the staff report on this agenda item and answered questions from the Council. The AP and SSC gave the reports, and public comment was taken.

## COUNCIL DISCUSSION/ACTION

Mr. Merrill moved, which was seconded, to Release the draft EA/RIR/IRFA for public review after revising Alternative 4 to incorporate elements 1(i) through (ix) in the “NMFS Recommendations” document. Under the revised Alternative 4, also analyze the following two options, which are not mutually exclusive:

**Option 1:** Apply the proposed management measures to all vessels ≤46’ using hook-and-line gear while directed fishing for any groundfish species allocated to the CDQ Program, except sablefish.

**Option 2:** Expand the current prohibition against discarding legal sized halibut while IFQ fishing to people fishing for halibut CDQ while the CDQ group has remaining halibut CDQ.

In addition, the Council requests staff to analyze the AP recommendation that “Any vessel authorized to fish CDQ cod, and who participates in an IFQ halibut trip, and does NOT wish to retain groundfish as required under this program, must be removed from the CDQ group’s list of eligible vessels for the duration of that IFQ halibut trip.” The analysis should provide a recommendation about whether this additional requirement needs to be specified in regulation as a type of “check-in, check-out” requirement, or if this issue can be addressed by the existing proposal to let the CDQ groups decide when to add or remove vessels from their list of eligible vessels.

With these revisions, Alternative 4 is the Council’s preliminary preferred alternative. Mr. Merrill spoke to the motion, stating that the motion combines all regulations that need to be dovetailed to provide for a pcod fishing for a small boat fleet in CDQ program. It is understood that in difficult economic conditions, all options need to be available, and if conditions change, the options can be re-evaluated. Mr. Merrill answered questions of clarification on the motion. There was discussion regarding analysis of individuals assigned to be fishing on behalf of a CDQ group, and it was agreed it would be reviewed.

Mr. Henderschedt moved to amend by adding option 3: In a situation when there is no halibut available (either CDQ or IFQ) to fund the CDQ small boat Pacific cod fishery, another workable alternative would need to be developed, such as a mutually acceptable halibut PSC discard rate system. He spoke to the motion noting that the issue needs to be discussed. There are many scenarios, but most concerning are CDQ groups in areas where there is clear distress relative to fishery resources are unable to use their own CDQ halibut bycatch. The Council needs to explore why it is a problem. There was brief discussion understanding that this addition would slow down the analysis, but that this information would be valuable. **The amendment passed without objection. Vote on the main amended motion passed without objection.**

## D6 Bering Sea Trawl Salmon Excluder EFP

### BACKGROUND

*In December 2013, Mr. John R. Gauvin (Gauvin and Associates, LLC) submitted an application requesting an exempted fishing permit (EFP) to continue research on salmon bycatch reduction devices in the Bering Sea pollock trawl fishery. The purpose of the EFP would be to improve performance of the salmon excluder device developed under EFP 11-01 in 2011 and 2012. The objective is to significantly reduce chum and Chinook salmon bycatch in the pollock trawl fishery without significantly reducing pollock catch rates. The EFP would allow for testing of the salmon excluder device from January 2015 through June 2016, for several weeks in each pollock A and B seasons. Testing in the A season is expected to*

*examine the performance of the excluder primarily with Chinook salmon and roe-bearing pollock, testing in the B season would be with both Chinook and chum salmon and pollock that are not roe-bearing. EFP fishing would be conducted with one or two vessels in each season. The EFP would be subject to modification bending new, relevant information regarding the 2015 and 2016 fishery, including pollock harvest specifications or restructuring of the salmon bycatch management program.*

*To test the salmon excluder device, exemptions from existing regulations for salmon bycatch management, observer requirements, several closure areas, and total allowable catch (TAC) amounts for groundfish would be necessary. Taking salmon during the experiment is critical for determining the effectiveness of the device. Salmon taken during the experiment would not be counted toward the Chinook or chum salmon bycatch limits under § 679.21(e)(1)(vii) and (f)(2). The amount of Chinook or chum salmon bycatch by the pollock trawl fishery during the EFP period could potentially approach or exceed the Chinook or chum salmon bycatch limits. If the EFP salmon were counted toward the salmon bycatch limits, exceedance of the bycatch limits could create a burden on the pollock trawl fishermen that are not participants in an intercooperative agreement for chum salmon or incentive plan agreement for Chinook salmon bycatch reduction by causing an earlier closure of the Chum Savings Area or violating the plan agreement for Chinook salmon.*

John Gauvin gave the report on this agenda item. Pat Livingston gave the SSC report, and the AP had a brief written report. There was no public comment.

#### COUNCIL DISCUSSION/ACTION

**Mr. Henderschedt moved, which was seconded, to approve the request for the experimental fishing permit to continue research on salmon bycatch reduction devices as outlined in the letter from NMFS dated May 15, 2014.** Mr. Henderschedt spoke to the motion noting that reducing salmon bycatch has been in discussions throughout the week, highlighting the importance of this project. Mr. Fields noted his support of the motion and research. **The motion passed without objection.**

## D3 Norton Sound Red King Crab

#### BACKGROUND:

*In October 2013, the Council received public testimony from a participant of the Norton Sound red king crab (NSRKC) fishery, requesting that the Council take action to discourage over-capitalization of this fishery. Specifically, Council was asked to consider requiring LLP licenses for vessel 32 feet length overall (LOA) and under, as well as applying a recency requirement for the existing pool of LLP licenses. The testimony suggested that at least one reported NSRKC landing in the past five years should be required in order to maintain a license.*

*This issue was scheduled for the June 2014 meeting held in Nome, in order to allow stakeholders from Norton Sound surrounding region a chance to provide additional public input. Council members expressed the utility of a baseline description of the fishery to augment stakeholder input. Therefore, this discussion paper provides a reference that describes the characteristic of the stock, the fishery, harvest levels and participation over time. A draft was presented to the Crab Plan Team in May 2014 and comments were incorporated into the discussion paper.*

Sarah Marrinan gave the staff report on this agenda item. Lori Swanson gave the AP report, and public comment was heard. The SSC did not address the issue.

## COUNCIL DISCUSSION/ACTION

**Mr. Fields moved, which was seconded, to urge the fleet and local stakeholders to work together to bring potential solutions or alternatives back to the Council at a future meeting.** He spoke to the motion, stating he appreciates there have been changes in the fishery and understands economics have been fragile, balancing between equity and opportunity. He requests additional dialogue in the community with direction by Council staff, which may or may not provide additional requests of the Council. It was briefly discussed that over the coming year there will be opportunities for discussion in the area. **The motion passed without objection.**

## D4 Bering Sea Fishery Ecosystem Plan

### BACKGROUND:

*In February 2014, the Council reviewed a discussion paper on the development of a Bering Sea Fishery Ecosystem Plan (FEP), and is now considering whether to prioritize time and resources to develop an FEP for the Bering Sea. Since there have been many recent studies investigating the Bering Sea ecosystem, the Council will decide whether there is value in developing a guidance document that assesses available information about the Bering Sea with respect to the fisheries that the Council manages. The BS FEP would not be a regulatory document, and changes to the management of Bering Sea fisheries would continue to be made through fishery management plan amendments. The FEP could provide an opportunity for the Council to express its management values for Bering Sea fisheries, and develop strategies to respond to emerging ecosystem science. The Council decided to seek public input on what the objectives might be for a Bering Sea FEP, and how the plan could be structured to be of benefit to fishery management decision making.*

Diana Evans gave a brief background on actions to date. There was no AP or SSC report, and public comment was taken.

## COUNCIL DISCUSSION/ACTION

No action was taken.

## D5 Research Priorities

### BACKGROUND:

*The Magnuson-Stevens Act requires the Council to adopt a five-year research priorities. The Council adopted its most recent five-year research plan in June 2013 (attached), based on recommendations from its four Plan Teams, the Scientific and Statistical Committee, and the Advisory Panel. At this meeting, the Council will update its five-year research plan for 2015-2019.*

*Staff has been working on transitioning the Council and SSC's 2013 research priority list to a relational database system accessed through a web portal, developed by Pacific States Marine Fisheries Commission staff. The use of the database allows us to track more information relative to each research priority, including relative Plan Team priorities, keywords, and the status of research activity. The Council's research priorities for 2013 are now publicly available online at <https://research.psmfc.org/>. Staff intends to continue improving the website in response to user feedback.*



Diana Evans gave the staff report on this agenda item. There was no AP report, and the SSC had given its report earlier. She answered questions from the Council. There was no public comment.

#### COUNCIL DISCUSSION/ACTION

**Mr. Tweit moved, which was seconded, to identify the 2013 priorities as 2014 priorities, and schedule time on a future agenda to establish high priority Council initiatives for 2015, and to interact with the SSC on definitions for “critical”, “high”, “medium”, and “low” priorities.** He spoke to the motion stating that documents at hand are inefficient to make decisions, and the Council has 2013 research priorities which are still current. He noted that it is difficult to see differences in SSC recommendations on 2014 from 2013, and that it is easiest to roll forward last year’s priorities. The Council needs to have a common understanding with the SSC about what the priorities are, and other items that may be misunderstood. **The motion passed without objection.**

### E Staff Tasking

Chris Oliver reviewed the items for the Council that need to be discussed in this agenda item. Public comment was taken. **The February and April Minutes were approved as written without objection.**

#### MSA Reauthorization

Mr. Oliver will interact with the Council, and engage an executive committee. It was agreed other Council members can engage as they have time and desire. Work products will be reviewed by all Council, and the committee can meet over summer. Mr. Fields noted ASMI will be working on the comments regarding certification of fisheries, and it was agreed the committee could work with ASMI to discuss concerns.

#### Visit by Russell Dunn in October

Mr. Dersham will work with Mr. Henderschedt, Mr. Oliver, and Mr. Olson, to discuss topics for the regional recreational fisheries and Mr. Dunn’s visit. It was agreed that the Council should request copies of the presentation Mr. Dunn will be giving in order to gain additional points of focus as Mr. Dersham develops comments.

#### Lead Level 2 Observers

**Mr. Cross moved to have Council identify alternative methods to develop a sustainable and renewable adequate pool of fixed gear LL2-qualified observers. Methods could be regulatory, such as further modifications or prior experience requirements, or non-regulatory such as additional work with an in-season advisor in via ATLAS in the early days of the cruise. The discussion paper would be intended to guide the Council to possibly developing alternatives for a regulatory amendment package to the Observer program. The motion was seconded.** He noted that this issue is important to the public and has heard through public testimony, and that the Observer Program will try to identify long term solutions. It is understood that NMFS and NPMFC have their own prioritizing system, but he would like to get this issue on the list. There was brief discussion regarding the use of staff resources. **The motion passed without objection.**

#### Industry Feedback on Halibut Items

Mr. Hull noted that December may be an appropriate time to receive reports from industry, as the IPHC will have met, and that hook and line representatives are also encouraged to report. Mr. Henderschedt noted his concern with timing, and other voluntarily reporting requirements. Ms. Kimball noted that it is a good idea to let industry to know what the Council is expecting, and letting them know the Council will



be putting the Bering Sea PSC halibut issue on the agenda. Discussion continued regarding timing and notice to public. It was generally agreed to plan reports for February, recognizing limited time and resources.

EM Workgroup and OAC

Mr. Hull discussed timing of the meetings. He noted that the schedules for both groups, along with review of draft documents, is pretty tight. The OAC will review draft AEP and amendments as necessary.

CDQ Cod Fishery

Mr. Henderschedt noted he was interested in discussion of an action timeline. However, after analysis, consideration of the cod fishery action as a trailing amendment is recommended.

Skate MRA

Mr. Henderschedt encouraged Mr. Oliver to work with NMFS staff to review the skate MRA issue. Mr. Fields noted his agreement, and that it is an issue that should be resolved.

IFQ Vessel Caps

Mr. Hull questioned if there would be staff available to work on this agenda item for October. Mr. Hull can follow up with Ms. DiCosimo regarding progress on this agenda item.

The Council thanked the Chairman and his work on Council.

Mr. Olson also thanked the public, staff, and Council members and adjourned the meeting at 10:31am on June 9, 2014.

# MEETING ATTENDEE SIGN-IN SHEET

June, 2014 N.P.F.M.C. MEETING

PLEASE REGISTER ATTENDANCE FOR MEETING RECORDS

PLEASE PRINT - THANK YOU!

NAME	AFFILIATION
Michael Lake	Alaskan Observers, Inc.
Jon Warrenduk	Oceanq
Kris Norosz	Iceberg Seafoods Inc
Frank Kelly	City of UFA Alaska
JOE PLESHA	TRIDENT
Heather McCarty	McCarty's Assoc. - Juneau
Phillip Lostenkot	CBSFA, St. Paul Island
Vince O'Shea	PSPA
Aggie Fouts	WACDA
BRENT PAINE	UCB
Brian Lynch	PUDR
Keith Bruton	O'Hara Corp.
Matt Upton	US Seafoods
Mark Finn	US Seafoods

**TIME LOG**  
**North Pacific Fishery Management Council**  
**Meetings held in Nome, Alaska**  
**June 4-9, 2014**

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**Wednesday - June 4, 2014**

<b>Time of Day</b>	<b>Subject</b>
08:00	Call to Order
<b>08:02</b>	<b>B1 ED Report, Chris Oliver</b>
08:32	Mabel Baldwin-Schaeffer, Norton Sound Red King Crab Research Project
<b>08:45</b>	<b>B2 NMFS Management Report</b>
08:45	Glenn Merrill
<b>09:37</b>	<b>B3 ADFG Report</b>
09:37	Karla Bush
<b>09:47</b>	<b>B4 NOAA Enforcement</b>
09:47	Matt Brown and Nathan Lagerwey
<b>10:21</b>	<b>B5 USCG Report</b>
10:25	Phillip Thorne
<b>10:30</b>	<b>B7 Protected Species Report</b>
10:30	Chris Oliver, Review
10:37	B items Public Testimony
10:37	Jim Johnson
10:46	Stephanie Madsen
11:04	Mark Fina
11:14	George Hutchings
<b>11:27</b>	<b>C1 Crab Management</b>
11:27	Staff report, Diana Stram NPFMC
12:03	SSC report, Pat Livingston
12:04	C1 Crab motion – Cora Campbell
<b>01:16</b>	<b>C2 Observer Program Annual report</b>
01:16	Staff report, Diana Evans NPFMC
01:16	Staff report, Martin Loefflad, AFSC
03:01	Staff report, Jennifer Mondragon, NMFS
04:33	SSC report, Pat Livingston
04:46	AP report, Lori Swanson
04:58	Recess

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**Thursday - June 5, 2014**

<b>Time of Day</b>	<b>Subject</b>
08:03	Call to Order
08:03	C2 Public Testimony
08:03	Jeff Farvour
08:06	Michael Lake
08:14	Chad See
08:24	John Warrenchuck
08:33	Linda Behnken
09:03	Illia Kuzman
09:05	Julie Bonney

09:17	C2 motion – Dan Hull
<b>11:03</b>	<b>C3 Observers for Tendering</b>
11:03	Staff report, Diana Evans NPFMC
11:04	Staff report, Sally Bibb NMFS
11:43	AP Report, Ernie Weiss
11:46	C3 Public Testimony
11:46	George Hutchings
11:52	C3 Council motion
<b>01:38</b>	<b>C4 Electronic Monitoring</b>
01:38	Staff report, Diana Evans NPFMC
01:55	AP report, Lori Swanson
01:57	C4 Public Testimony
01:58	Linda Behnken
02:04	Eric Osborne
02:09	Iliya Kusman
<b>02:42</b>	<b>D6 Trawl Salmon Excluder EFP</b>
02:42	John Gauvin
03:20	SSC report, Pat Livingston
03:25	Recess

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**Friday - June 6, 2014**

<b>Time of Day</b>	<b>Subject</b>
08:59	Call to Order
<b>09:00</b>	<b>C5 BSAI Bering Sea Chinook Bycatch</b>
09:00	Staff report, Diana Stram NPFMC
09:02	Staff report, Katie Howard ADFG
09:35	Staff report, Jim Ianelli AFSC staff
10:50	Staff report, Alan Hanie, AFSC staff
01:02	IPA Representatives reports
01:02	James Mize
01:37	John Gruver
02:29	Stephanie Madsen
02:29	Amanda Sterne
03:16	SSC Report, Farron Wallace
04:05	AP report, Lori Swanson
04:07	C5 Public Testimony
04:08	Joe Garney
04:19	Sky Starky
04:30	Louie Green Jr.
04:38	Stanislav Sheppard
04:43	Brandon Ahmasuk
04:49	Emily Murray
04:55	Perry Mendenhall
05:00	Michael Sloan
05:11	Barb Amarok
05:14	George Hutchings
05:18	Recess

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**Saturday - June 7, 2014**

<b>Time of Day</b>	<b>Subject</b>
08:01	Call to Order
08:02	C5 Public Testimony, continued
08:02	John Gruver, Brent Paine
08:47	Rose Fosdick
08:51	Robert Keith
08:58	Art Nelson
09:10	Gayle Vick
09:18	Ben Stevens
09:33	Becca Robbins Gisclair
10:14	Jack Fagerstrom
10:18	Jack Johnson
10:25	Tim Smith
10:35	Austin Amasuk
10:39	Eric Osborne
10:45	C5 Motion – Cora Campbell
<b>01:34</b>	<b>D1 BSAI Halibut PSC Stock Impacts</b>
01:34	Staff report, Jane DiCosimo NPFMC
01:35	Staff report, Ian Stewart IPHC
<b>02:49</b>	<b>D2 Sector Reports BSAI Halibut PSC</b>
02:49	Brent Paine
03:09	Jason Anderson
03:10	John Gauvin, Mark Fina
03:57	Chad See
04:16	Stephanie Madsen
04:32	Aggie Fauts and Anne Vanderhoeven
04:43	AP report, Lori Swanson
04:59	Recess

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**Sunday - June 8, 2014**

<b>Time of Day</b>	<b>Subject</b>
08:30	Call to Order
08:30	D1/D2 Public Testimony
09:03	Bob Alverson
09:04	Peggy Parker
09:12	Heather McCarty
09:34	Phillip Lestenkof, Jeff Kauffman, Ray Melovidov
09:45	Mateo Paz Soldon
09:57	Chad See
10:07	Theresa Peterson
10:12	Angel Drobnica
10:19	Leonard Herzog
10:38	Karl Haflinger
10:49	Brian Lynch
11:16	D1 Council action
<b>02:42</b>	<b>D4 BS Fishery Ecosystem Plan</b>
02:42	Staff report, Diana Evans NPFMC

02:49	D4 Public Testimony
02:49	Rose Fosdick
<b>03:04</b>	<b>C6 Crab ROFR</b>
03:04	Staff report, Rachel Baker NMFS
03:22	C6 Public Testimony
03:22	Frank Kelty, Mateo Paz Soldon, Heather McCarty
<b>03:40</b>	<b>C7 CDQ Pacific cod</b>
03:40	Staff report, Sarah Marrinan NPFMC
04:20	Staff report, Sally Bibb NMFS
04:32	AP report, Lori Swanson
04:40	Aggie Fouts, Anne Vanderhoeven, Angel Drobnika, Jeff Kauffman
04:54	Mateo Paz Soldon
04:58	C7 Motion - Glenn Merrill
05:14	AP report, Lori Swanson
05:17	Recess

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**Monday - June 9, 2014**

<b>Time of Day</b>	<b>Subject</b>
08:05	Call to Order
<b>08:08</b>	<b>D3 Norton Sound Red King Crab</b>
08:08	Staff report, Sarah Marrinan NPFMC
08:15	AP report, Lori Swanson
08:19	D3 Public Testimony
08:19	Eric Osborne
08:25	Robin Thomas
08:29	Tim Smith
08:34	Frank McFarlan
08:41	Adem Boeckmann
08:50	Jack Fagerstrom
<b>09:00</b>	<b>D5 Research Priorities</b>
09:00	Staff report, Diana Evans
<b>09:47</b>	<b>E Staff Tasking</b>
09:47	Staff report, Chris Oliver NPFMC
09:57	Public Comment on Staff Tasking
09:57	Eric Osborne
10:01	Julie Bonney
10:09	Action on Staff Tasking
10:31	Meeting Adjourned

# North Pacific Fishery Management Council

Eric A. Olson, Chairman  
Chris Oliver, Executive Director



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## ADVISORY PANEL MINUTES

June 3-6, 2014

Nome, Alaska

The following members were present for all or part of the meetings (absent ~~stricken~~):

Ruth Christiansen

~~Kurt Cochran~~

John Crowley

Jerry Downing

Jeff Farvour

Becca Robbins Gisclair

John Gruver

Heath Hilyard

Jeff Kauffman

Mitch Kilborn

~~Alexus Kwachka~~

Craig Lowenberg

Brian Lynch

Chuck McCallum

Paddy O'Donnell

Joel Peterson

Theresa Peterson

Sinclair Wilt

Lori Swanson

Anne Vanderhoeven

Ernie Weiss

Minutes from the April 2014 meeting were approved.

### C2 Observer Program

The AP endorses all of the OAC recommendations (in bold, bulleted and buried in the text) regarding the 2013 Annual Report. Further, the AP recommends that the Council ask the agency to move vessels from the vessel selection pool into a separate trip selection pool.

*The 2<sup>nd</sup> sentence (above) was an amendment to the motion which passed 15/2. Entire motion passed 18/0.*

#### Rationale:

- Council policy has been to prioritize coverage on vessels with PSC limits, which are now in the trip selection pool.
- Moving vessels from the vessel selection pool into the trip selection pool may dilute the coverage on existing trip selected vessels.
- Keeping vessels currently in the vessel selection pool separate from those currently in the trip selection pool will allow differential observer coverage rates for these two groups.

The AP recommends that the Council urge the NPGOP to develop a system that accurately credits observers for sampling any set or haul. This needs to include a system whereby second observers voluntarily placed as second observers on fixed gear vessels are credited for sampled sets that will accrue toward LL2 certification. *Motion passed 19/0.*

#### Rationale:

- It's a matter of time before a vessel is left at the dock for lack of an available LL2 certified observer.
- The new program was previously identified as the training/experience gaining forum to replace LL2 observers lost to attrition.
- Deploying fewer observers in fixed gear partial coverage will exacerbate the apparent shortage of newly-qualified LL2 observers when EM becomes available to that fleet.

- The Council previously asked the agency, industry and observer providers to work together to find a viable solution, but they appear to be at an impasse.

The AP recommends the Council request staff to prepare a discussion paper to:

1. Identify how many fixed-gear, newly LL2 qualified observers were certified in 2013 working in each the full coverage and partial coverage programs.
2. How many fixed-gear, LL2 certified observers were available for deployment in 2013 compared to 2012.
3. Identify alternative methods to develop a sustainable, renewable and adequate pool of fixed-gear, LL2 qualified observers. Methods could be regulatory (such as further modifications to prior experience requirements) or non-regulatory (such as additional work with an in-season advisor via ATLAS, especially during early days of the cruise).

The discussion paper is intended to guide the Council in developing potential alternatives for a regulatory amendment package to the Observer Program.

*Motion passed 19/0.*

The AP recommends the Council request NMFS to develop an alternative for:

1. Deployment by gear type (trawl, longline, and pot) for 2015 Annual Deployment Plan (ADP)
2. Deployment strategies that secure representative data using EM from the non-observed fleet.

*Motion passed 11/8.*

Rationale:

- Council has prioritized PSC fisheries for coverage. Table 4.6 on page 84 and Table 4.1 on page 80 show that the under the new program the amount of observed catch on hook and line boats increased, the amount of observed catch on pot boats remained relatively the same but the observed catch on GOA trawl CV's trawl catch decreased by about 50%.
- Secures the ability to provide usable data from the non-observed (<40' and conditionally exempted) vessels.

*Minority Report: The minority felt that it is important to continue with the current priority for observer coverage on fisheries with PSC limits and this is not served by dividing deployment by gear type. Further, having not yet received the EM Workgroup report, the feasibility of developing EM for 2015 is unclear. Signed by: Anne Vanderhoeven, Lori Swanson, John Gruver, Jerry Downing, Ruth Christiansen, Mitch Kilborn, Paddy O'Donnell, and Sinclair Wilt.*

### **C3 Observers for Tendering**

The AP recommends that the Council ask the agency to evaluate and report back on tendering data for the first part of 2014 before prioritizing this package. *Motion passed 18/0.*

Rationale:

- Expanded data will help the Council understand the scale of the problem and the appropriate priority for action.
- This presents a middle ground between no action (waiting for GOA bycatch management action to address this) and taking action at this time
- This is consistent with the OAC recommendation on Page 6 of the OAC report.



The AP recommends that option 2, the option to allow observers to monitor pollock offloads at the tender in order to census salmon, be removed from this amendment package, and considered as part of the GOA trawl bycatch management package. *Motion passed 18/0.*

Rationale:

- Salmon sampling issues are specific to trawl gear and are already being contemplated as part of the GOA bycatch management action.
- This is consistent with the OAC recommendation on Page 6 of the OAC report.

#### **C4 EM Workgroup Report**

The AP recommends the Council accept the Electronic Monitoring Workgroup minutes and take the necessary actions to move the implementation of EM forward with analytical work and the amendment process with consideration and recognition of the following points:

1. Track 1 is critical to provide context and scope of how an operational program might work and to provide a workable alternative for vessels that are unable to accommodate a human observer.
2. Track 3 is a research track for stereoscopic camera/chute technology which is at a different stage of development and will need operational testing on a variety of boats without a technician onboard. Further the AP notes that chute technology development should not slow down or limit implementation of an operational EM program.
3. The AP supports the EM workgroup's recommendation that field work to develop EM support capacity and socialization continue during Council decision making and regulatory process. The AP recommends the Council encourage NMFS and EM workgroup to identify ways to expand the scope of cooperative research in 2015 to test vessel selection methods for obtaining representative data with emphasis on vessels with bunk space constraints.

*Motion passed 17/2.*

*A motion to amend to strike the 2<sup>nd</sup> sentence of item 3, failed 7/11. (The AP recommends the Council encourage NMFS and EM workgroup to identify ways to expand the scope of cooperative research in 2015 to test vessel selection methods for obtaining representative data with emphasis on vessels with bunk space constraints.)*

Minority Report: *A minority of the AP feel that conditional releases based on bunk space are difficult to verify and present a major loophole for avoiding observer coverage, and believe that focusing EM actions on vessels requesting these particular releases is inappropriate. The balance of the sentence is duplicative of a motion that passed under Agenda Item C3 (Observer Program Review). Signed by: Lori Swanson, Anne Vanderhoeven, Sinclair Wilt, John Gruver, Jerry Downing, Mitch Kilborn, and Ruth Christiansen*

#### **C5 BSAI Chinook/Chum Salmon Bycatch**

The AP recommends the Council prioritize moving forward on implementing the regulatory changes necessary to incorporate Bering Sea chum salmon bycatch avoidance measures into the Chinook salmon Incentive Plan Agreements (IPA) by replacing the Amendment 84 non-Chinook salmon exemption to the Chum Salmon Savings Area (CSSA) regulations with an exemption for vessels participating in a Chinook IPA that includes chum salmon avoidance measures. The IPA chum salmon avoidance measures must prioritize Chinook salmon avoidance while preventing high chum salmon bycatch, with a focus on avoiding Western Alaska origin chum salmon, while allowing flexibility to harvest pollock in times and places that best support these goals as exemplified by the industry submitted chum salmon IPA provisions at its October 2013 meeting.

Regarding additional Chinook salmon bycatch controls, the AP finds the three sector specific IPA responses to the October 2013 motion to be both reasonable and adequate measures for addressing Chinook bycatch concerns specific to each sector.

*Motion passed 11/8.*

Minority Report: *A minority of the AP did not support the substitute motion and supported the original motion to analyze 3 alternatives: (1) abundance based performance standard/cap; (2) amend the performance standard in Amendment 91 to analyze a range of 14,000-35,000; and (3) amend the overall cap and analyze a range of 20,000-50,000.*

*The substitute motion is not responsive to the Chinook salmon crisis in Western Alaska. In 2014 subsistence fisheries on the Yukon and Kuskowkwim Rivers, which account for 80% of the Chinook salmon subsistence harvest in Alaska, are completely shut down in an effort to meet escapement goals. Effectively, 100% of the Chinook salmon harvest is allocated to the Pollock fishery in 2014. While we do not know the cause of the declines, under the current state of the runs, every single Chinook salmon matters, and they all need to return to spawn to rebuild the runs. Bycatch at the current cap levels would devastate Western Alaska runs in their current condition. It's critical that the upper limit is lowered to ensure that bycatch doesn't threaten the ability of Western Alaska Chinook salmon to meet escapements and recover. While industry efforts to reduce bycatch are important, the IPA proposals are not sufficient to address the current situation. Signed by: Theresa Peterson, Ernie Weiss, Heath Hilyard, Chuck McCallum, Becca Robbins Gisclair, Jeff Kaufman, Jeff Farvour, and Joel Peterson*

## **C6 Crab ROFR**

The AP recommends that the Council adopt Alternative 2 to apply the ROFR to all terms and conditions of the proposed sale or to any subset of those assets, as otherwise agreed to by the PQS holder and the community entity, as the preliminary preferred alternative moving forward.

*Motion passed 18/0 with 1 abstention.*

### Rationale:

- This alternative is a common sense solution that allows for an adaptable process.
- Strengthens the ability of processors and communities to work together, but does not compel either party to any side agreement.

## **C7 CDQ Pacific Cod**

The AP recommends the Council release the draft EA/RIR/IRFA for public review after revising Alternative 4 to incorporate elements in the "NMFS Recommendations" document. This would constitute a Preliminary Preferred Alternative (PPA).

The elements of the NMFS recommendations are an expansion of Alternative 4, which would include elements of Alternative 3, Option 2 and several new components and clarifications.

The alternative would apply to vessels <= 46' length overall (LOA) using hook-and-line gear to conduct directed fishing for Pacific cod for CDQ groups that also have halibut CDQ allocations in the area being fished or for vessels with adequate amounts of halibut IFQ to support the incidental catch of halibut while Pacific cod fishing.

Under existing regulations, any vessel retaining more than the 20% maximum retainable amount (MRA) of Pacific cod would be considered directed fishing for Pacific cod. Each CDQ group and the vessels fishing on its behalf can choose to remain under the regulations that govern “halibut CDQ fishing” by discarding any amount of Pacific cod that would exceed the 20% MRA. This provision would continue.

The following regulations would apply to vessels  $\leq 46'$  LOA that the CDQ group chose to allow to conduct directed fishing for Pacific cod CDQ. In all cases below, reference to “the vessel” means a catcher vessel  $\leq 46'$  LOA while directed fishing for Pacific cod CDQ.

- i. LLP exemption: NMFS recommends exempting vessels between 32' and 46' LOA from the LLP requirements rather than creating a separate CDQ LLP.
- ii. Documentation of eligibility for LLP exemption: If an LLP exemption is selected, NMFS recommends that each CDQ group be required to submit a list of vessels between 32' and 46' LOA that it is authorizing to conduct directed fishing for Pacific cod CDQ on its behalf. NMFS also would post a list of the vessels registered to fish on behalf of each CDQ group on NMFS's website as an additional piece of information to document the vessels eligible for the LLP exemption.

ADDITION: Any vessel authorized to fish CDQ cod, and who participates in an IFQ halibut trip, and does NOT wish to retain groundfish as required under this program, must be removed from the CDQ group's list of eligible vessels for the duration of that IFQ halibut trip.

- iii. Partial observer coverage: Any vessel on the CDQ group's list of eligible vessels would be placed in the partial observer coverage category while CDQ fishing. For example, under the current regulations, in 2014, vessels less than 40' LOA would be in the no coverage pool and vessels between 40' and 46' LOA would be in the vessel selection pool.

- iv. Halibut retention requirements: Vessel operators would be required to retain all legal sized halibut caught as either halibut CDQ or halibut IFQ.

- v. Pacific cod retention requirements: Current IR/IU regulations require operators of vessels directed fishing for groundfish CDQ to retain all Pacific cod as long as the CDQ group has available Pacific cod allocation. This requirement does not apply to vessels “halibut CDQ fishing.” No additional regulatory amendments are needed to maintain this provision.

- vi. Retained Pacific cod: Any Pacific cod retained, landed, and reported as CDQ will accrue to the CDQ group's Pacific cod CDQ allocation.

- vii. At-sea discards of groundfish: NMFS would estimate the at-sea discards of all groundfish, by these vessels, including those species allocated to the CDQ Program, based on applying discard rates from observed vessels to the landed catch weight of the CDQ trips. The estimates of at-sea discards, including Pacific cod, while these vessels are directed fishing for Pacific cod on behalf of a CDQ group, would accrue to the non-CDQ allocation of the TACs. Estimates of at-sea discards of Pacific cod would accrue to the non-CDQ allocation of Pacific cod to the hook-and-line and pot vessels less than 60 ft.

- viii. Seasonal limitations: The provisions described in (i) – (vii) would be provided only while the halibut fishery is open because retention of halibut must be allowed to implement the exemption from halibut PSC accounting by these vessels.

ix. SSL and habitat protection measures: All other regulations that apply to vessels using hook-and-line gear and directed fishing for Pacific cod would apply to these vessels. These requirements include closure areas and VMS requirements. However, as the VMS requirement may be limiting for some smaller vessels, there remains interest in developing alternatives to VMS and in the VMS discussion paper currently in the Council process.

**Under the revised Alternative 4, also analyze the following three options, which are not mutually exclusive:**

Option 1: Apply the proposed management measures to all vessels  $\leq 46'$  using hook-and-line gear while directed fishing for any groundfish species allocated to the CDQ Program, except sablefish. Option 1 would apply full retention requirements only to those groundfish species already required to be retained in the CDQ fisheries (Pacific cod, Pollock, and sablefish). Option 1 would not apply to sablefish because sablefish already is managed under regulations similar to Alternative 4 as a result of the regulation of harvest provisions of the MSA that require fixed gear sablefish CDQ to be regulated no more restrictively than the sablefish IFQ.

Option 2: Expand the current prohibition against discarding legal sized halibut while IFQ fishing to people fishing for halibut CDQ while the CDQ group has remaining halibut CDQ.

Option 3: In a situation when there is no halibut available (either CDQ or IFQ) to fund the CDQ small boat Pacific cod fishery, another workable alternative would need to be developed, such as a mutually acceptable halibut PSC discard rate system.

*Motion passed 19/0.*

## **D1 BSAI PSC Halibut Stock Impacts**

The AP recommends the Council take the following actions:

1. Initiate a Council review of halibut bycatch caps in the Bering Sea/Aleutian Islands groundfish fisheries, including the potential need for regulatory action to reduce caps, in a range below actual bycatch levels, with a consideration of linking caps to halibut abundance, going up as well as going down.
  - In order to provide more immediate relief for directed halibut users, initiate an emergency regulatory process to reduce halibut PSC limits by 15% to 20% from current PSC use (5-year average).
  - The Council should immediately adopt guidelines for groundfish industry sectors to voluntarily reduce halibut bycatch—from the current PSC use (5-year average)—by at least 300 metric tons in the near term, and 20% percent in the longer term, and require periodic reports on industry progress, with the first report provided in October. This element should include a white paper in October on the appropriate methods for measuring industry accomplishments, the applicability of industry incentive programs modeled after the Chinook salmon bycatch avoidance measures, and an evaluation of the potential effectiveness of the cooperative and regulatory suggestions made in the June 2014 industry reports.
  - Option to all above: Recognize significant past bycatch reduction efforts in PSC fisheries.
2. Initiate the formation of a Joint Protocol Committee with the IPHC—or another formalized arrangement such as a series of joint meetings between the Council, NMFS, and the IPHC—to enable a coordinated approach to management of both the directed halibut fishery and the halibut bycatch fishery. The goals of such a cooperative framework must be clearly defined, and should

include fostering an understanding at the Council level of the survey, science and management process at the IPHC, and an understanding at the IPHC level of the information needs of the Council for effective management of the halibut bycatch fishery.

3. Fast-track the process underway to make regulatory changes regarding deck sorting procedures on vessels (Amendment 80) in some groundfish trawl fisheries to reduce halibut mortality. In particular prioritize the means to weigh and/or measure halibut.
4. Initiate a Council review of existing observer protocols, including potential improvements in recording halibut bycatch age and size, and quantifying bycatch mortality.
5. Initiate a review of the halibut nursery area that is currently closed to directed halibut fishing but open to all other commercial groundfish fishing sectors. Include an analysis of directed fishery target catches along with bycatch rates, amounts and size ranges for each fishery in that area over a range of years.

*Motion passed 15/3.*

Rationale:

- This emergency action is premised on the recent assessments of the halibut biomass, which have resulted in dramatic declines of the directed fishery catch limits in the Bering Sea/Aleutian Island area.
- Such declines may lead to potential closures by management area of the halibut directed fishery, resulting in a commercial fishery failure. Such an outcome would have severe economic impacts on halibut dependent small boat fleets and communities.
- The declining halibut resource in the BSAI, the halibut bycatch in the BSAI groundfish fisheries, and the subsequent decline in halibut available for directed halibut fisheries are serious conservation and management concerns.
- Halibut bycatch is having a disproportionate economic effect on directed halibut users whose IFQ and CDQ quotas in the BSAI have been reduced by up to 70% over the last three years.
- The IPHC, NMFS and the NPFMC are not adequately coordinated, and scientific data and stock information are not mutually understood.
- BSAI halibut PSC limits may be at a level unrelated to the current status of the halibut resource, particularly in the under 26 (U26) component that make up a substantial proportion of halibut bycatch in groundfish fisheries, and halibut wastage in the directed fishery.
- Management should address the need to reduce total halibut mortality to achieve both yield and conservation goals.

*A motion to delete the first bullet under item 1 (emergency action to cut the halibut cap), failed 7/11.*

*Minority report: The minority felt that emergency action is an unnecessary step and will not provide any additional benefits to the other actions. Emergency actions require staff to prepare review documents, followed by action by the Council, and can only be in place for two 6-month periods. Industry can respond immediately and the effectiveness of the response can be reviewed at the Council's request. It was also felt that it ignored past reduction efforts in the HAL sector and discouraged future voluntary PSC reduction practices from being implemented. Signed by: Lori Swanson, John Gruver, Anne Vanderhoeven, Paddy O'Donnell, and Joel Peterson.*

*A motion to replace the 5<sup>th</sup> bullet with a request for the most recent IPHC report on the halibut nursery area, failed 7/11.*

Minority report: A motion to replace item 5 (review of the nursery grounds) with a request for the most recent IPHC report on the nursery area failed 7/11. A minority of the AP felt that data on the location and rate of bycatch is already available. Further, the analysis foreshadows action to close the nursery area, which would effectively close or severely displace major Bering Sea fisheries for flatfish, pollock and Pacific cod. Management by closed area is problematic, and much finer-scale control is available by the vessels themselves operating under PSC caps. The recent IPHC report was thought to contain pertinent information on the history and purpose of the closure to the directed halibut fishery. Signed by: Lori Swanson, John Gruver, Anne Vanderhoeven, and Paddy O'Donnell.

A motion to allow Amendment 80 vessels to harvest their cod allocations with longline or pot gear, failed 8/8.

Rationale for:

- Harvesting cod with fixed gear could result in lower halibut PSC catch.
- Amendment 80 vessels could either fish the cod themselves or lease to fixed gear vessels.
- Any change in harvest would be voluntary.

Rationale against:

- The Amendment 80 fleet has expressed no interest in this proposal.
- Cod allocations to the Amendment 80 fleet are so restrictive that there is little if any directed cod fishery.
- The chances of any vessel making use of this option are extremely small.

### **D3 Norton Sound RKC LLPs**

The AP recommends the Council urge the fleet and local stakeholders to work together to bring potential solutions or alternatives back to the Council at a future meeting. *Motion passed 16/0.*

### **D6 BS Trawl Salmon Excluder EFP**

The AP recommends the Council approve the request for an Experimental Fishing Permit to continue research on salmon bycatch reduction devices as outlined in the letter from NMFS dated May 15, 2014. *Motion passed 14/2.*

# North Pacific Fishery Management Council

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Date: 7/3/14

**REPORT**  
**of the**  
**SCIENTIFIC AND STATISTICAL COMMITTEE**  
**to the**  
**NORTH PACIFIC FISHERY MANAGEMENT COUNCIL**  
**June 2<sup>nd</sup> – 4<sup>th</sup>, 2014**

The SSC met from June 2<sup>nd</sup> through 4<sup>th</sup> at the Nome Mini Convention Center and Nome Elementary School, Nome, AK

Members present were:

Pat Livingston, Chair  
*NOAA Fisheries—AFSC*

Jennifer Burns  
*University of Alaska Anchorage*

Anne Hollowed  
*NOAA Fisheries—AFSC*

Seth Macinko  
*University of Rhode Island*

Lew Queirolo  
*NOAA Fisheries—Alaska Region*

Matt Reimer  
*University of Alaska Anchorage*

Robert Clark, Vice Chair  
*Alaska Department of Fish and Game*

Alison Dauble  
*Oregon Dept. of Fish and Wildlife*

George Hunt  
*University of Washington*

Steve Martell  
*Int'l. Pacific Halibut Commission*

Terry Quinn  
*University of Alaska Fairbanks*

Farron Wallace  
*NOAA Fisheries—AFSC*

Chris Anderson  
*University of Washington*

Sherri Dressel  
*Alaska Department of Fish and Game*

Gordon Kruse  
*University of Alaska Fairbanks*

Franz Mueter  
*University of Alaska Fairbanks*

Kate Reedy  
*Idaho State University Pocatello*

## **C-1 BSAI Crab**

At this meeting, the SSC is providing the OFL/ABC recommendations for three crab stocks (Tables 1 and 2). We also provide modeling advice on EBS snow and Tanner crab, Bristol Bay red king crab, Pribilof Island red king crab, and St. Matthew Island blue king crab, and recommendations on a variety of other issues. Diana Stram (NPFMC) and Jack Turnock (NMFS AFSC) presented Crab Plan Team (CPT) recommendations for these three stocks, model reviews, and CPT discussions on other issues.

### General recommendations

**The SSC recommends conducting a workshop to address procedures for assigning buffers for data-poor stocks.** Since 2010, there have been a number of new data poor methods that have been developed to address stocks that lack relative abundance information and how the use of catch only data could be used to develop approximate distributions or at least minimum estimates of Maximum Sustainable Yield. Simulation studies based on these data-poor stocks (e.g., scallops and crabs) can be conducted to examine how historical variability in catch and trends in mean size of the catch could be used to develop procedures for setting appropriate buffers for stocks that are not surveyed. The Scallop and Crab Plan Teams should structure the workshop in such a way that the needs of both teams are addressed. The

outcome of such a workshop should clearly articulate the procedures and minimum requirements for establishing 10%, 20%,..., X% buffers such that they can be consistently applied across a range of species and different stocks. This workshop should include participants from all Plan Teams that are dealing with Tier 5 assessments.

#### EBS Snow Crab

The snow crab assessment model underwent external review by the Center for Independent Experts (CIE) in January 2014. The three CIE reviewers made a number of recommendations, some of which should be given higher priority over others. The key recommendations from the review include: improving model documentation, including snow crab outside the survey area in the population, estimating survey catchability with respect to the experimental trawl using the Nephrops net, attempting to estimate natural mortality based on shell condition information, conducting a comprehensive sensitivity analysis, collecting new growth information, and incorporating immature male and female biomass into the assessment likelihood components. The SSC discussed the merits of some of these recommendations and concluded that all of these are reasonable and should be taken into consideration. Natural mortality is a major source of uncertainty in this assessment and the SSC considers development of ageing methods to estimate total mortality rate and improve estimates of natural mortality rates a high research priority. Some work addressing direct ageing based on the method developed by Kilada et al. (2013) is ongoing. Another topic of importance is integrating the chela height data directly in the assessment model. The chela height ratio data suggest that there is considerable variability in size at maturity for males over time. These data could easily be accommodated, but would require a non-parametric approach in estimating the proportion mature by size class, as the empirical data do not suggest a sigmoid relationship. Another suggestion was to use the shell condition information to better inform natural mortality rates. The SSC briefly discussed that there was no objective method for assigning an age to the alternative shell conditions, and assigning a shell condition is a subjective process itself.

The CIE reviewers also made a number of research recommendations, not all of which the SSC felt were appropriate in the short-term, such as a spatially explicit assessment model. The SSC discussed the challenges of developing a spatially explicit assessment model, especially since the spatially explicit data required are not available. It may be more reasonable to use a spatially explicit model for exploring alternative management procedures in a research setting than it would be to assess spatial abundance directly. The SSC does recommend further research on growth rates, molting probabilities, and ways to obtain better estimates of natural mortality rates for this species at this time. The SSC also encourages continued development of the Generic Model for Alaskan Crab Stocks (Gmacs) software and testing this new platform on multiple crab species, stocks, and simulated data.

An update on the snow crab stock assessment model was provided. Four alternative model scenarios were explored, where the base model (Model 0) is the same model that was used in September 2013. The alternative models explored alternative growth models and penalties on the fishing mortality rate deviations. Model 1 explores a two-segment growth model, Model 2 explores the effects of fishing mortality rate deviations, and Model 3 is a combination of Models 1 and 2. The CIE panel was concerned about convergence issues for the alternative models. However, the analyst identified a reporting error in the table of likelihoods and clarified that convergence was obtained for the alternative models. For Model 1, there were no significant improvements in fit to all the data by adopting a disjointed growth curve. In the case of Model 2, overall mean fishing mortality rates increase, with extremely high estimates of  $F$  during periods of large landed catch. The model fit the catch data well but could not be justified because there is no discard catch data in the early time periods to corroborate these estimates.

**For the September assessment the SSC agrees with the CPT recommendations that Model 0 go forward along with a Model 1 scenario with an alternative parameterization of the growth model that is continuous and differentiable. The SSC has the following additional recommendations:**



- Conduct additional sensitivity analyses on the penalties to constrain fishing mortality rate deviations and their impacts on biological reference points.
- Investigate direct integration of the chela height data into the assessment model.
- Explore time varying maturity options and potential environmental covariates as an explanation for the observed variability in male maturity-at-length.

The SSC further requests detailed information on the new length-frequency information to be considered for use in the stock assessment model and details regarding the re-analysis of the landed-length composition data. Lastly, the SSC requests that the author provide a rationale for the various weightings used in the likelihood composition. Specifically, the SSC asks whether inverse variance weighting was used and how the effective sample size was determined for the length composition data.

#### Bristol Bay Red King Crab

**The authors have been responsive to previous CPT and SSC comments** from May-June 2013 and September-October 2013, in giving responses to all comments and making substantive changes in the SAFE. At its October 2013 meeting, the SSC identified four issues regarding this assessment:

- 1) Disentangling causes of shifts in distribution – The authors indicated that adequate data are not available to accomplish this task but that a more in-depth analysis would be provided in the September SAFE report. The SSC believes that some progress can be made and encourages further study.
- 2) Consistent approach for treatment of non-surveyed areas (along with flatfish assessments) – The authors investigated whether the flatfish approach of adjusting biomass using a linear regression approach would be applicable to RKC. The authors responded that the approach would not work and that the selectivity function was adequate to adjust for the non-surveyed areas. The SSC agreed with these findings.
- 3) Maturity data and modeling – There is a need for better data and modeling. The authors intend to accomplish this task by examining data on growth increments for females in Kodiak to better understand maturity in Bristol Bay, which has limited data on female growth. Consequently, a smooth growth function will be developed instead of the crude step function currently used. The SSC notes that this topic should be a specific research priority and that direct information on female growth in Bristol Bay is needed.
- 4) Predation pressure – Predation pressure may be an important factor affecting recruitment and mortality. Mortality is thought to be most important during the molting phase. The authors noted that data are not available during the molting period, because the survey is done in the summer. Also the predation is likely to be highest on juveniles that occupy shallower nearshore waters not surveyed. The SSC believes that progress can be made in three directions. First, a study of potential environmental and biological covariates should be undertaken. Second, there should be a research priority to undertake a study of predation of juveniles in their habitat. Third, there should be a field study to collect groundfish food habits during winter when mature male crab are molting.

At this meeting, the SSC reviewed the authors' proposed model scenarios in response to prior CPT and SSC reviews. The seven model scenarios are: Model 4 – the model used in the 2013 assessment with survey catchability  $Q = 0.896$ , Model 4b – Model 4 with  $Q$  estimated, Models 4n and 4nb – Models 4 and 4b except with updated data, Models 4nb0.5 and 4nb2 – Model 4nb halving and doubling, respectively, the value for the prior for  $Q$ , and Model 4nb7 – Model 4nb with an estimated natural mortality parameter  $M$  for 2006-2010.

Estimated survey biomasses were similar among the first six models, but different for Model 4nb7. The reason for the difference is that Model 4nb7 estimated a higher  $M$  ( $= 0.28$ ) than the status quo ( $M = 0.18$ ).

Model 4nb7 fitted the trawl survey data better but resulted in a much lower OFL. The CPT recommended dropping Models 4 and 4b because they did not use new survey data revisions. So Models 4n and 4nb were recommended for September 2014. It recommended that Model 4nb7 be held back despite its better fit until corroborating evidence for higher M can be sought and a plausible mechanism identified.

**The SSC concurs with the PT recommendations, except that it would like Model 4nb7 or similar models to be investigated further for September 2014, if time permits.** Similar models include the random walk model investigated in June 2013 or a model that uses environmental (e.g., SST) or biological (e.g., Pacific cod abundance) covariates. These models may provide insights into processes influencing natural mortality rates. The SSC agrees with the CPT that new procedures would be needed to accommodate estimation of biological reference points under assumptions of time varying M. A critical issue is to consider what "equilibrium" means under time varying M (especially when M is increasing in the most recent time period).

The SSC found that the nomenclature for models was confusing and recommends that a more straightforward system be used. Also, the SSC encourages authors to continue to investigate whether recruitment is related to environmental or biological variables.

#### EBS Tanner Crab

There have been a number of changes to key data sets used in this assessment including revised at-sea observer sample data and dockside size composition data in the crab fisheries (1990-2012) and groundfish fisheries (1972-2012). The 1995 retained catch sample was not included in the revised data set due to low sample sizes. The revised numbers of crabs from dockside and at-sea observer sampling were found to be substantially different in some years compared to those used in the 2013 assessment model (base model). Sample sizes in the groundfish fishery were also found to be substantially different in some years between the assessment and the revised data set. These differences were due to inclusion of joint venture fishery datasets and a shift from calendar year to FMP crab year (July 1-June 30). The assessment author evaluated the impact of the revised data sets on assessment results and found only slight changes in model estimated mean recruitments.

The assessment author proposed four modeling scenarios including: (1) the base model, (2) base model with discard mortality formulation similar to that used in the Gmacs model, (3) base model with Bristol Bay red king crab bycatch estimated, and (4) base model with the changes included in Models 2 and 3.

Recruitment and mortality trends were very similar among models while the MMB in Models 2 and 4 leveled off during the last few years compared to the base model. The estimate of the 50%-selection parameter for the directed fishery for 1996 hit its lower bound in all model scenarios except the base model using the original assessment dataset. Based on these results the CPT provided a number of recommendations to the stock assessment author for further development and evaluation. **There was some discussion about whether the CPT was requesting two or three model formulations (see p. 12 of the CPT report) and the SSC requests the CPT clarify this with the assessment author.**

**The SSC agrees with CPT recommendations and provides the following recommendations to the assessment author:**

- Examine retrospective patterns between alternative models being brought forward
- Use the new handling mortality rate (0.321), as recommended by the CPT
- As the ABC calculations are now at the third (final) stair step, the SSC advises the assessment author to explore the buffer between ABC and OFL and asks the author and Plan Team to consider the control rule for this stock. The author and Plan Team are referred to the discussion in the SSC's report for October 2013.
- Explore model fit to survey data using only male information

The SSC notes that the assessment author is developing completely new model code (TCSAM2014) that is based on the Tanner crab model used in the 2013 stock assessment. The SSC encourages new model development and looks forward to reviewing the revised assessment in the future.

#### Pribilof Islands Red King Crab

The assessment authors developed a new model (an integrated length-based assessment model) for PIRKC for use as a Tier 3 assessment, and compared the approach and results with the status quo, survey-based Tier 4 assessment. The model appears to be an improvement over the 3-year running average approach currently used in the Tier 4 assessment and acts to smooth the erratic survey time series more logically, although there is the cost of additional assumptions implicit in constructing a model.

**The SSC supports the CPT recommendation for the continued development of the integrated length-based model for presentation to the CPT in September 2014 and the specific suggestions given by the CPT to the authors for attention and work prior to the September 2014 CPT meeting.** These involve constructing a profile of the catchability likelihood, using a better growth model, dealing with sparse size frequency data, and including additional data sources. The CPT recommended that PIRKC be kept in Tier 4, instead of elevating it to Tier 3, until data and analysis for estimating and reducing the current high uncertainty on the maturity curve for males, growth per molt, and survey and fishery selectivity are available.

Consequently, the SSC asks the CPT to further consider and comment at their September meeting on which tier they recommend, as the SSC will consider accepting the new model either as a Tier 3 or Tier 4 assessment for 2014/15 specifications at the October SSC meeting. The survey-based, 3-year running average, Tier 4 approach should be brought to the September 2014 meeting as the default approach. PIRKC may continue to be recommended as being in Tier 4, because the stock is relatively data-poor and numerous assumptions on key Tier 3 parameters are made. However, the advantage of the modeling approach used in Tier 3, in terms of better utilizing available data, could overcome these limitations.

There are multiple sources of uncertainty for PIRKC. The authors clearly identified these sources of uncertainty and explained how they can be accounted for in setting the OFL and ABC. The SSC notes that the female biomass in the eastern Bering Sea (EBS) bottom trawl survey is the lowest biomass observed since 1988, suggesting that additional precaution may be desirable when setting the ABC.

The authors noted that several hauls were occasionally taken at a single survey station in the EBS bottom trawl survey and that ‘haul’, in this instance, does not refer to the high-density sampling in which the ‘corners’ of a station are trawled, but instead refers to multiple samples from a given location. The SSC requests the authors include a description of the years and locations these multiple hauls occurred and what process was used to determine when multiple hauls would be taken. The SSC also asks the authors to provide equations to explain how annual survey estimates, confidence intervals, and coefficients of variation (CVs) were calculated and, additionally, how multiple hauls were treated when calculating survey point estimates, confidence intervals and CVs.

#### St. Matthew Island Blue King Crab

The Saint Matthew Island blue king crab stock is currently managed under Tier 4 using biomass estimates from a three-stage catch-survey analysis first approved by the CPT and SSC in 2012. While the model was judged adequate for setting reference points, some concerns with the model structure and performance were highlighted in the 2013 assessment cycle, including uncertainty in natural mortality, the use of an appropriate stage-transition matrix and a strong retrospective pattern. No document was available for review, but the author, at the CPT meeting, discussed efforts to improve the stage-transition matrix using growth data from crab tagged during the 1995 ADF&G pot survey and presented an updated ten-year retrospective plot. **The SSC encourages these explorations and also re-iterates its request**

**from the October 2013 minutes to explore the effects of varying natural mortality in the model, for example using a likelihood profile on M.**

#### Norton Sound Red King Crab

Roy Ashenfelter (crab subsistence harvester) and Charlie Lean (Local Advisory Committee, ADF&G) gave public testimony.

The SSC finds that the authors have addressed all of the comments and suggestions made by the CPT and SSC at their meetings.

This SAFE chapter has benefitted from careful review during the January 2014 crab modeling workshop. The authors addressed several of the recommendations from that workshop. Specifically, the following explorations were undertaken:

- The penalty on recruitment ( $\sigma_R$ ) was changed to 0.5.
- The authors explored several ways to simplify the model:
  - a. assuming selectivity for the ADF&G and NMFS trawl surveys are the same;
  - b. estimating the growth and molting parameters within the model; and
  - c. removing all or part of the winter pot survey data.

The authors brought forward the following suite of models:

- The base model (Model 0) was developed during the January 2014 modeling workshop and has separate selectivity curves for the NMFS and ADF&G trawl surveys. Tagging data are not included. Growth transition parameters are estimated outside the model. Winter survey CPUE is not included but other winter survey data information (length frequencies) is used.
- Model 1 is the same as Model 0, except that it has identical selectivity curves for the NMFS and ADF&G trawl surveys.
- Subsequent models are all variants of Model 0 with separate selectivity curves.
- The next three models (collectively named Model 2) include historical tagging data to allow exploration of the estimability of growth parameters inside the model. Estimation inside the model is intended to avoid confounding with fishery selectivity. These models differ in how molting probability is treated:
  - Model 2i – molting probability is the same for newshell and oldshell crab, and molting probability parameters are estimated,
  - Model 2io – molting probability is different for newshell and oldshell crab, and molting probability parameters are estimated,
  - Model 2ii – molting probabilities are fixed at 1 for all length classes.
- Model 3 includes the winter survey CPUE data and winter length frequency as a means to inform the winter fishery harvest.
- Model 4 was the same as Models 0 and 3, except that it excluded all winter survey data.

The SSC was confused by the nomenclature used for the models and suggests that a more straightforward system be used.

#### SSC Model Evaluation

Model 1: This model, which assumes identical selectivity curves for the NMFS and ADF&G trawl surveys, produced no change in the likelihood. The SSC notes that from model parsimony one would select combined trawl selectivity parameters, especially if treating them separately does not improve model fit. However, since other model explorations were not conducted using Model 1, the SSC accepted the separate estimation of selectivity for the two surveys for this assessment but encourages further examination of models with identical selectivity parameters in the next assessment.

Model 2: Including tag recovery data resulted in an estimated molting probability of 0.999 when newshell and oldshell were combined in the likelihood (Model 2i). The assumption (Model 2ii) or estimation (Model 2i) of molting probabilities at a value near 1 (Model 2.i or Model 2.ii) implies that all crab are newshell, so that oldshell crabs are supposedly absent. The SSC agrees with the author that this is not the case. When oldshell and newshell crabs were separated in the likelihood, molting probability estimates were biologically plausible. The SSC agrees with the authors and CPT that growth and maturity parameters can be estimated within the model when newshell and oldshell crabs have different molting probabilities. Thus, Model 2io is preferred over Models 0, 2i, and 2ii.

Model 3: Including winter pot survey CPUE resulted in poorer model fits (higher log-likelihood for each component). The SSC interprets these results as an indication that the winter pot survey CPUE may be an unreliable index of abundance, as suggested by public testimony, and hence, Model 3 is less plausible.

Model 4: Removing the winter pot survey CPUE data and the winter length frequency caused difficulty in meaningfully estimating winter pot survey selectivity and getting convergence of model parameters. Hence, Model 4 is not viable. These results suggest that the winter length frequency data do provide useful information regarding size frequency of crab available to winter fisheries.

#### SSC Recommendations

**Based on these considerations, the SSC agrees with the author and the CPT that the best model is Model 2io. The SSC agrees with the CPT conclusion that the stock should be managed in Tier 4, and current stock status places it in Tier 4b.** The author and the CPT noted that discard estimates in the NSRKC model are derived from only 2 to 4 observations from up to 60 vessels annually, and sampling trips are opportunistic, meaning that the discard data may be very uncertain and possibly biased. **Thus, the SSC recommends that only retained catch be used for OFL/ABC calculations** and agrees with the CPT that there is insufficient data to adequately estimate discards for setting OFL/ABC.

It is difficult with the current stock assessment schedule to obtain important new data to update the stock assessment and OFL/ABC determinations in time for the September CPT meeting. Harvesting occurs in both summer and winter; summer fishing can start in May and extend into September; and one of the most informative data sources is the triennial trawl survey that occurs in August. To address these concerns, the CPT recommended that a revised annual schedule be followed: setting the 2014/2015 OFL/ABC from the current stock assessment for this year only, and in the future, addressing model structure revisions at the September CPT meeting and adding a mid-winter meeting the following January to review the annual stock assessment for NSRKC and to set OFL/ABC in time for a May fishery. Under this adjustment, the assessment cycle will be changed to July-June. **The SSC endorses this approach and anticipates reviewing future stock assessments and setting OFL and ABC at its February meeting.**

**The SSC recommends that the 2014/15 OFL be set at a retained catch of 210 t. Given the uncertainty with this model noted above and consistent with past practice, the SSC agrees with the CPT recommendation of a 10% buffer for the ABC, resulting in a retained catch of 190 t.** Here, the SSC references its general recommendation that a rigorous approach be investigated for setting the appropriate buffer for all crab stocks. The current biomass of this stock is 1,680 t, which is above the MSST (996 t) and thus the stock is not overfished. The total (projected) catch in 2013/2014 did not exceed the OFL and thus overfishing has not occurred.

**The SSC concurs with the CPT recommendations for future model improvements for NSRKC,** including: (a) exploring different weighting schemes for the tag data; (b) relaxing some of the parameter bounds; and (c) constructing a likelihood profile for a single M for all size classes and one for when M differs between the last size-class and the other size-classes. In addition, the SSC would like further information on the effects of sea ice and salinity on the winter survey, as suggested by public testimony.

The SAFE should acknowledge the importance of NSRKC to subsistence users. The SSC also requests in the future that the authors and CPT provide a clear and thorough rationale for their choice of a preferred model and the selection of the Tier level. In light of the choice of Model 2io (with growth estimation inside the model) as the preferred model, it would be useful to reconsider Models 1, 3, and 4 (pooled selectivity over the two surveys and treatment of the winter survey data) with this feature. Also, the connection between growth and molting parameters and the resulting growth transition matrix should be better described in the SAFE text.

#### Aleutian Islands Golden King Crab

This is a Tier 5 stock, with a single OFL and ABC, but the TAC is split between the western and eastern Aleutian Islands in areas 541-543 at 174 degrees W. The assessment author recommended adjusting the ABC buffer for this stock from 10% to 25% based on the following arguments: there is uncertainty regarding the appropriate years to compute the OFL, the CPT has suggested various year ranges in the past, the ABC for the Western Aleutian Island red king crab stock is based on a 40% buffer, and of the six FMP stocks that are surveyed by the EBS bottom trawl survey the ABCs for three stocks use buffers >10% (30% for Tanner crab, and 20% for PIRKC and SMBKC). It is difficult to argue that there is greater uncertainty for these three surveyed stocks than for un-surveyed AI golden king crab. The CPT agreed with the author that there is more uncertainty, but could not agree on a process by which to set an appropriate buffer for this stock. **The SSC recommends that a 25% buffer suggested by the author be adopted for setting the ABC for this stock.** The OFL for the stock is 5,690 t (12.54 million pounds), and with a 25% buffer the ABC would be 4,265 t (9.40 million pounds). Catch in 2012/2013 did not exceed the OFL, therefore, overfishing is not occurring.

#### Western Aleutian Islands Red King Crab

The SSC reviewed the 2014 SAFE chapter for the Western Aleutian Islands red king crab (RKC), formerly referred to as the Adak RKC stock. In March 2014, the Alaska Board of Fisheries established two districts for RKC in the Aleutians (Adak and Petrel Bank) and to avoid confusion, this stock will now be referred to as the “Western Aleutian Islands” (WAI) RKC stock.

There is no assessment model for this stock. This fishery has been closed since the end of the 2003/04 season. In agreement with the CPT, **the SSC continues to recommend that this stock be managed as a Tier 5 stock for the 2014/15 season and agrees with the recommended OFL of 56t (0.124 million pounds).** This OFL is based on the 1995/96 – 2007/08 average total catch, as recommended by the SSC in 2010. Catch in the 2012/13 season did not exceed the OFL, therefore, overfishing is not occurring. No overfished status determination is possible for this stock, given the lack of a biomass estimate.

The SSC remains concerned about the lack of data and the depleted status of this stock. Both the CPT and the assessment author recommended an ABC, reduced from the maximum permissible, of 34t (0.074 million pounds). The SSC recommended this ABC in 2013/14, specifically to accommodate a potential test fishery to collect much needed data. This test fishery was not executed in 2013/14 and there are no plans currently for a test fishery or any other surveys in 2014/15, although the development of a cooperative Adak red king crab survey is a priority for the Aleutian King Crab Research Foundation. **Given the ongoing concerns regarding the depleted stock status and the lack of any planned surveys, the SSC concurs with the CPT and assessment author on a reduced ABC of 34t (0.074 million pounds) and continues to strongly encourage efforts to gather additional information on the status of this stock.** However, the SSC noted that reductions in the ABC may be necessary in the future, especially as discussions on how to consistently incorporate uncertainty in data-poor stocks move forward. Finally, the SSC questioned whether this stock has reached a minimum stock size threshold below which reproduction potential is dramatically impacted, and noted that this is a valid concern for WAIRKC, as has been shown with some other crab stocks.

Table 1. SSC OFL and ABC recommendations for four crab stocks on June 4<sup>th</sup>, 2014. **Recommendations are marked in bold where SSC recommendations differ from those of the Crab Plan Team.** (Note diagonal fill indicated parameters not applicable for that tier level while shaded sections are to be filled out for the final SAFE in September 2014).

Chapter	Stock	Tier	Status (a,b,c)	F <sub>OFL</sub>	B <sub>MSY</sub> or B <sub>MSYproxy</sub> (kt)	Years <sup>1</sup> (biomass or catch)	2014 <sup>2</sup> <sup>3</sup> MMB (kt)	2014 MMB / MMB <sub>MSY</sub>	$\gamma$	Mortality (M)	2014/15 OFL (kt)	2014/15 ABC (kt)
1	EBS snow crab	3										
2	BB red king crab	3										
3	EBS Tanner crab	4										
4	Pribilof Islands red king crab	4										
5	Pribilof Islands blue king crab	4										
6	St. Matthew Island blue king crab	4										
7	Norton Sound red king crab	4	b	0.157	1.90	1980-current [model estimate]	1.68	0.88	1.0	0.18 0.68 (>123 mm)	0.21	0.19 <sup>4</sup>
8	AI golden king crab	5				See intro chapter					5.69	<b>4.26</b>
9	Pribilof Island golden king crab	5										
10	Western AI red king crab	5				1995/96– 2007/08					0.05	0.03

<sup>1</sup> For Tiers 3 and 4 where B<sub>MSY</sub> or B<sub>MSYproxy</sub> is estimable, the years refer to the time period over which the estimate is made. For Tier 5 stocks, it is the years upon which the average catch for OFL is obtained.

<sup>2</sup> MMB as projected for 2/15/2015 at time of mating.

<sup>3</sup> Model mature biomass on 7/1/2014

<sup>4</sup> Retained catch only

Table 2. Maximum permissible ABCs for 2014/15 and SSC recommended ABCs for those stocks where the SSC recommendation is below the maximum permissible ABC, as defined by Amendment 38 to the Crab FMP. Note that the rationale is provided in the individual introduction chapters for recommending an ABC less than the maximum permissible for these stocks. Values are in thousand metric tons.

Stock	Tier	2014/15 <i>MaxABC</i>	2014/15 ABC
Norton Sound red king crab	4b	0.21	0.19
Aleutian Islands golden king crab	5	5.12	4.26
Western AI red king crab	5	0.05	0.03

## C-2 Observer Program

A presentation was given by Craig Faunce (NMFS-AFSC) and Jason Gasper (NMFS-AKRO) on the North Pacific Groundfish and Halibut Observer Program Annual Report (Annual Report). Public testimony was provided by Julie Bonney (Alaska Groundfish Data Bank) and Chad See (Freezer Longline Coalition).

The SSC first expressed its concern about lack of observer information in the late 1980s as the conversion from the foreign to the domestic fishery was happening. It noted that the lack of a fishery data collection program was jeopardizing the ability to provide necessary scientific and fishery information and analysis to conserve and protect fishery resources for the long-term benefit of the nation. The Council family responded in a timely fashion to implement an observer program. Thereafter, the SSC continually identified key elements for a rationale observer program, including proper statistical sampling goals and design. One important aspect of a proper program is a periodic process for reviewing the objectives, statistical properties of accuracy and precision, and implementation issues associated with the program. **The SSC is heartened to see that the first annual review of the observer program is now underway and sees it as a major milestone for the successful management of North Pacific fisheries. We acknowledge the dedication and tireless work of the staff of the observer program to make this happen.**

The Annual Report is well written and provides useful information on the implementation of the restructured observer program in 2013. The report is largely responsive to SSC comments about the program provided during the October 2013 and February 2014 meetings. Observer-collected data provide essential biological samples and fishery-dependent information for management of sustainable fisheries in waters off Alaska. The Annual Report provides an overview of the program, including coverage levels, description of the fee collection program, programmatic and contract costs, compliance and enforcement, as well as metrics on the performance of the deployment plan.

Success of the restructured program under partial observer coverage varied among the three deployment strata: trip selection pool, vessel selection pool, and dockside coverage. Trip selection was the most successful aspect of the program, based on various performance metrics including attainment of planned coverage targets. The main issue with this portion of the program was the need to reduce coverage levels during June 22 through August 17 to avoid going over budget before the end of the year. A second difficulty was the ability of vessels to enter multiple trips into the Observer Declare and Deploy System (ODDS), and then fish the trips in a self-selected order. This allowed trips flagged for observation to be



deferred to a later date or avoided altogether. In 2014, this flexibility was removed, likely solving this potential source of bias.

On the other hand, coverage levels for vessel selection were less than expected. Additionally, random selection of vessels, which was used during January through October, was abandoned and all eligible vessels were selected during the last period, November through December. Inability to meet coverage levels in vessel selection was attributable to several factors. First, selection of vessels for observer coverage in 2013 was based on fishing activity prior to 2013. As a result, selection included vessels that fished prior to 2013, but did not fish in 2013, resulting in “over-coverage.” Second, some vessels fishing in 2013 had no chance of being selected because they did not fish during that time period in 2012, resulting in “under-sampling.” Third, many vessels were excused from sampling by “conditional releases,” owing to purported lack of bunk space or life raft capacity. It was reported that 52% of vessels and 50% of trips that were expected to be observed were not, owing to conditional releases. Observer program staff have struggled to distinguish legitimate situations in which no bunks exist for an observer, versus cases in which this loophole is being exploited by those wishing to avoid observer requirements altogether. The analysts presented information showing that the probability of making a fishing trip declines after vessels have been selected for observer coverage.

Dockside coverage sampled 99.8% of pollock offloads in the BSAI, but only 73% of pollock offloads in the Gulf of Alaska, falling short of the goal to sample all pollock offloads. Dockside deployments were designed to meet sampling requirements for salmon genetics according to the protocol of Pella and Geiger (2009). Problems included instances in which notification of delivery was not provided, instances when observers were not available in the location and at the time of delivery, and instances in which salmon held by the processing plant did not represent a census of all salmon PSC. During 2013, the observer program switched from systematic random sampling, in which all deliveries are observed and every 10<sup>th</sup> Chinook and every 30<sup>th</sup> chum salmon are sampled, to simple random sampling, in which deliveries from observed vessels are sampled and every salmon is observed, to address these issues. This change appeared to improve program performance for salmon PSC sampling.

The SSC offers the following recommendations to the Council:

1. **The SSC supports the NMFS recommendation to move all participants from the vessel selection category into the trip selection category for 2015.** Concerns about bias in data resulting from the vessel selection category as currently structured are very high, owing to two sources of bias. First, the sampling pool of vessels for selection of coverage in 2013 was not the same as the pool of vessels actually fishing in 2013, which resulted in sampling frame bias. Second, vessels in the vessel selection category had an apparent greater ability to game the system by seeking conditional releases or by just not fishing after being selected for sampling. If the Council opts to move all participants from the vessel selection category to the trip selection category and changes the current policy of not considering conditional releases for vessels in trip selection, the SSC would support NMFS’ recommendation to limit releases, because of the large impact of releases on the percent of non-response (vessels that were selected and fished, but were not observed).
2. **If the Council opts to retain the vessel selection category, the SSC recommends some sort of pre-registration program in which vessels must register their intent to fish.** An approach could be adopted similar to that used for trip selection. It is important that the sampling pool of vessels matches the pool of vessels actually fishing in the current year. In addition, if the Council opts to retain the vessel selection category, the SSC recommends changes to the conditional release policy to reduce bias (see bullet 3).
3. **Changes to the conditional release policy are needed to reduce biases in the observer data collection program.** The goal should be to restrict conditional releases to legitimate cases only. The results of the first year of the restructured observer program have shown that the current

conditional release policy has a large adverse impact. To reduce this impact, industry involvement is essential.

4. The SSC endorses changes made to the program to improve salmon PSC sampling in pollock offloads; however, additional analyses may be helpful.
5. The SSC also endorses other program changes needed to prevent the manipulation of trip order in the trip selection category.
6. The SSC encourages development of a way to link data from the Observer Declare and Deploy System (ODDS) to the e-Landings system. Inclusion of a trip identifier is required for some data analyses.

The SSC offers the following recommendations to the Observer Program:

1. The SSC appreciates the variety of statistics included in the current annual report. In addition to numbers of trips and deployments, information on rates of coverage would be helpful. The SSC also looks forward to future estimation of variance of catch statistics (directed, bycatch, PSC).
2. The SSC also would appreciate analyses that compare various shared trip attributes (e.g., landed species composition) on both observed and unobserved vessels as indicators of the observer effect or lack thereof. Another informative analysis could be to examine the potential association of prohibited species catch (PSC) with trip attributes on observed vessels. If associations are found, PSC rates in shoreside offloads from unobserved vessels could be compared for evidence of bias.
3. The SSC appreciates that the focus of the report is the evaluation of the 2013 program. However, we recommend that the report clarify what changes have already been made to the program to address problems identified. These changes were nicely highlighted in the presentation, but a bit obscure in the document.
4. Public testimony raised concerns about the availability of sufficient numbers of lead-level-2 observers in the program. The observer program should continue to work with observer providers to seek to improve recruitment and retention of a sufficient pool of experienced observers.

**Although the restructured observer program addresses a number of problems with the former program, the SSC remains concerned about the ability to extrapolate PSC and bycatch from observed vessels to the entire fishery.** The ability to extrapolate accurately is still potentially limited by coverage levels and bias introduced by the presence of an observer. This is a high-priority, long-term issue. A fundamental question is, “what are the goals and objectives of the observer program and are they being met?” Program objectives may vary by species. For instance, for target species, objectives might involve estimation of total fishing mortality, with specified accuracy and precision, so as to assure, with a high level of confidence, that overfishing does not occur. Different objectives may be suited for PSC species, seabirds, and marine mammals. Currently, the observer coverage level seems to be driven largely by budget constraints and it is not at all clear that an 11% to 15% coverage level is sufficient to meet objectives nor are the objectives clearly defined.

Other observer programs should be consulted for additional innovations. Beyond the coverage levels needed to meet objectives, some other programs have shown demonstrable incentives for much higher levels of coverage, and coverage on vessels less than 40 feet. For instance, reductions in discards have resulted in higher catch limits in the British Columbia trawl fishery.

### **C-5 Chinook/Chum Salmon PSC**

The SSC reviewed two discussion papers presented by Diana Stram (NPFMC), Jim Ianelli (NMFS-AFSC), and Alan Haynie (NMFS-AFSC). The papers were prepared in response to a Council motion from October 2013, to provide an initial evaluation of the regulatory changes needed to incorporate Bering Sea chum salmon PSC avoidance into the Chinook salmon Incentive Plan Agreements (IPAs). The objectives of the motion are to prioritize Chinook salmon PSC avoidance, while preventing substitution of chum salmon PSC, focusing specifically on avoidance of Alaska chum salmon stocks; and allowing flexibility to harvest pollock in times and places that best support those goals. The motion specifically

requested an evaluation of potential changes to the IPA objectives and reporting requirements, including the rolling hotspot system, as well as evaluating six specific measures to potentially refine Chinook salmon PSC controls in Bering Sea pollock fisheries. Incentive Plan Agreement (IPA) representatives for the inshore, offshore, and mothership sectors were given an opportunity to provide feedback concerning potential IPA modifications for reducing Chinook PSC (Discussion Paper 2). Public testimony was provided by James Mize (representative for the MSSIP IPA), Roy Ashenfelter (Kawerak), Tim Smith (Norton Sound/Bering Strait Regional Aquaculture Association), Brandon Ahmasuk (Kawerak), Donald Johnson (local subsistence user), and Rose Fosdick (Kawerak, self).

In general, the discussion papers adequately responded to the Council's request for the evaluations contained in their motion. These papers provide the Council with vital information from which to further focus their efforts to limit Chinook and chum salmon PSC mortality, to the extent practicable. The SSC looks forward to a succinct and targeted problem and needs statement from the Council concerning Chinook and chum PSC, as well as the accompanying analyses needed to support each of the potential alternatives.

In reviewing the discussion papers, the SSC had the following comments regarding the examined salmon PSC reduction measures and the proposed IPA modifications provided by the IPA representatives:

- The discussion paper indicates there is very little correlation between adult equivalent (AEQ) PSC and run size of Chinook salmon (Figure 4 on page 14). However, we note that there does appear to be a positive relationship between AEQ PSC and run size for all run years, except 2006 through 2009, especially for the Coastal Western Alaska stock grouping. Chinook salmon run size may be important in determining the magnitude of PSC, especially at low run sizes.
- More analysis is needed to identify potential performance "outliers" in the analysis of penalizing vessels with relatively high PSC rates in the pollock fishery. The level of aggregation among vessels, cooperatives, and fleets to determine average and standard deviation of PSC rates will need to be carefully considered to accurately portray salmon PSC avoidance ability.
- It is not clear from the analysis whether the industry-proposed IPA modifications would provide meaningful incentives for vessels to avoid Chinook PSC at all times, nor is it clear how these incentives would translate into reduced Chinook PSC. Depending on the future alternatives selected by the Council, additional analysis on the efficacy of these IPA modifications is needed.
- It would be useful to frame the projected effects of different management measures in terms of tradeoffs. Possible useful tradeoffs include: PSC salmon per unit of pollock catch; pollock revenue foregone per PSC salmon avoided; Chinook PSC per chum PSC; and unit of pollock landing foregone per salmon returning to coastal communities.

With respect to the information needed to support further action by the Council, the SSC had the following comments:

- "Command-and-control" types of alternatives—such as shortening the pollock B-season, changing the PSC accounting system, requiring the use of salmon excluders, etc.—are not easily adapted to changing fishery conditions, and often fail to align industry incentives with Council objectives. Such measures can therefore produce unexpected outcomes that differ from those desired by the Council.
- Well-designed "incentive-based" alternatives can provide the industry with incentives to avoid salmon PSC at all times, while supplying the industry with flexibility to avoid PSC in an effective/appropriate manner. Such measures may therefore be more appropriate for addressing PSC issues identified by the Council.
- The Council should consider how new policy measures could interact with prevailing regulations and IPA structures, particularly those that are already providing incentives to avoid salmon PSC.
- If Chinook salmon run size is considered in potential alternatives, it will likely influence the range of years of data that should be included in any analysis of the alternatives. For example,

rather than using all available years of data, an analysis of PSC rates may need to include or exclude years of high AEQ PSC (2006 through 2009) depending on the alternative being analyzed.

- As salmon run size changes from high to low, the costs and benefits of PSC avoidance, borne by different user groups (subsistence, commercial, sport salmon, and the pollock fleet), change and potential alternatives will have to take this into account.
- The SSC continues to support research priorities that focus on gaining a better understanding of the physical and biological determinants of chum and Chinook salmon abundance in Alaska, and the relationship between Chinook and chum salmon PSC and run sizes in Western Alaska communities.
- Genetic techniques to improve resolution of regional stock groupings of Chinook salmon are evolving (e.g., discrimination of Norton Sound stocks from the Coastal Western Alaska grouping) and should be incorporated into future analysis as this new information becomes available.
- It will be important to analyze the social and non-monetary effects of potential alternatives on subsistence users in western Alaska. This will require additional data collection, including metrics to determine the viability (i.e., predictability and stability of the fishery over time) of subsistence fisheries, in the face of declining abundance of Chinook salmon (cf. research priority 228).

### **C-6 Crab ROFR**

The SSC received a presentation of the draft RIR/IRFA for the proposed action from Rachel Baker (NMFS AKRO). Public testimony was received from Frank Kelty (City of Unalaska) and Heather McCarty (Central Bering Sea Fishermen's Association).

#### **The SSC recommends that the draft be released for public review and that the following changes be incorporated before release, if possible:**

- 1) The consideration of distributional changes in crab processing in the communities of interest should be expanded and clarified. As the text notes at the bottom of page 13, there have been substantial shifts in processing activity. However, the current draft is somewhat opaque on the full scope of these changes. For example, it is hard for the reader to interpret what has really happened in Kodiak given the information presented in Table 5 versus that presented in Table 6. The SSC recommends that a comparison of absolute pounds processed in each community in 2005-06 compared to 2012-13 (or the most recent years for which data are available) would help the reader understand the extent of distributional changes in processing activity. In Table 5, the only category gaining percentage of Processor Quota Share (PQS) is "None" with several communities losing some or all of the PQS to which ROFR applies. The analysis does not fully address how the alternatives will improve this trend.
- 2) The SSC recommends that the analysts provide a discussion of how these distributional changes are regarded by the relevant communities; and how they view the value of the ROFR provision. ROFR has never been used as designed or intended, and the analysis should explore the barriers the entities/communities face within the context of how the alternatives may alleviate those barriers. In particular, it would be useful to hear from community representatives on why there have been no instances of using the existing ROFR provision.
- 3) It is hard to understand the additional benefit, or leverage, provided to communities by Alternative 2. This is not to say that such benefits are not provided, just that these are difficult to grasp by the reader of the analysis. The SSC requests a more expansive discussion that highlights the *practical* distinction between Alternative 2 and the status quo (Alternative 1).
- 4) The SSC requests that more neutral language be used to describe possible actions by eligible communities. If communities elect to exercise the ROFR provision, they are not "intervening," but simply "exercising the ROFR," as envisioned.

### **C-7 CDQ Pacific cod**

The SSC received a presentation from Sarah Marrinan (NPFMC), with a subsequent summary from Sally Bibb (NMFS-AKRO) of the NMFS C-7 Action Assessment. Public comment was offered by Tim Smith (Norton Sound/Bering Strait Regional Aquaculture Association) and Eric Osborn (CDQ commercial fisherman, Nome).

The SSC appreciates the excellent presentation and effective initial draft analysis of various options for creating new Pacific cod fishing opportunities for the CDQ village small vessel fleets. Expectations are that, under the proposed amendment, the Pacific cod fishery would be prosecuted in association with the halibut CDQ and IFQ fishery, and that the footprint of the fishing effort would not significantly change relative to current spatial distribution.

This is the initial review and awaits identification of a Preliminary Preferred Alternative (PPA). The draft presents a good foundation upon which the Council may choose to construct a complete amendment. The document analyzes three action alternatives that offer several distinct management approaches, and provides useful contextual information on each alternative and the associated options. The draft, in combination with the associated NMFS Agenda Item C-7 Assessment, effectively highlights some of the important data limitations and deficiencies confronting the analysis.

### **The SSC recommends release of the draft for public review, subject to inclusion of the following key elements (to the extent practicable):**

- There is little discussion of the commercial scale infrastructure currently in place or that may be needed to realize the desired result (e.g., access to processing, cold storage, transshipment, consolidation, and marketing). These aspects deserve more complete consideration in the analysis.
- The alternatives would result in redistribution of CDQ Pacific cod harvest from a predominantly large, fully observed, C/P FLL fleet, to a geographically dispersed, more numerous, historically unobserved small boat CV fleet. While no net change in the allocated CDQ amounts would occur, this redistribution may pose challenges with respect to management design; including catch accounting, impacts on non-CDQ TAC from CDQ overages, monitoring, and fishery enforcement.
- The NMFS Agenda Item C-7 Assessment report should be included in the action document package, as it explicitly addresses the catch accounting, non-CDQ TAC impacts of CDQ overages, monitoring and fishery enforcement, as well as other specific matters, such as the potential interaction with Steller Sea Lion protection measures.
- The importance of VMS for management and enforcement needs was emphasized, specifically with respect to fleet members operating vessels 46' LOA and smaller. A full characterization of the costs and logistical challenges associated with VMS for this segment of these village-based fleets would be very informative.
- The action alternatives propose to move the CDQ small boat fleets into the partial observer coverage category. An analysis of observer coverage and logistics costs for this fleet segment would also be informative.
- An elaboration of the resource-risks and management complexities that accompany the proposed redistribution of CDQ Pacific cod fixed gear fishing effort should be provided.

### **D-1 BSAI PSC Halibut Stocks Impact**

Jane DiCosimo (NPFMC) gave an overview of this topic and Heather Gilroy (IPHC) gave an overview of the discussion paper, assisted by Steve Martell (IPHC, SSC).

This discussion paper by IPHC staff is a result of a request by the Council to IPHC for a summary of the status of Pacific halibut in the BSAI and of the impact of PSC on the halibut resource and its directed

longline fisheries. Both NPFMC and IPHC need this summary to determine if additional management measures are needed.

**The discussion paper presents a thorough summary of the information available** about the halibut resource in the BSAI and the associated uncertainties. There has been a substantial decline in halibut biomass in the BSAI since the late 1990s. BSAI surveys and coast-wide tagging information show that the Bering Sea is a nursery area that produces juveniles that can disperse through the entire range of Pacific halibut. With a 32" retention size limit in the directed fishery and gear selectivity toward larger fish, information about smaller fish, less than 26" (U26 halibut), is poor. Halibut over 26" are labeled O26 halibut. The NMFS bottom trawl survey catches smaller fish, and data from these surveys suggest changes in the population, including higher natural mortality, changes in dispersion, or recruitment. However, this information is also uncertain, due to incomplete geographic coverage. Much of the coast-wide incidental fishing mortality in non-target fisheries occurs in the BSAI and is comprised of small fish. The SSC notes that uncertainties in estimates of discards in the directed fishery are likely to be reduced by the increased coverage under the new observer program.

The impact of this incidental fishing mortality on the halibut resource and the directed fishery is studied using the Stock Synthesis assessment model, the results of which only address the changes in the O26 estimates of biomass and catch mortality. To approximate the relative impacts of U26 loss, the reported mortality/PSC (U26 only) is increased to a level that would produce a similar value for spawning potential ratio (SPR, the magnitude of spawning stock biomass resulting from a given amount of recruitment) in the assessment model. **The authors obtained reasonable results that provide an initial look at bycatch/PSC (as contextually appropriate) impacts.** Different values for both coast-wide and BSAI bycatch/PSC were selected. As expected, higher /PSC results in lower directed fishery catch. These results show that the impact of /PSC on directed fishery yield comes about equally from mortality of O26 halibut and that of U26 halibut. A 20% reduction in coast-wide bycatch/PSC produced an increase in directed fishery catch from 24.5 million lbs. to 26.0 million lbs., about 6%. Another important finding is that a reduction in bycatch/PSC has the biggest effect in Area 4CDE (Bering Sea), the area with the highest PSC mortality.

Work is underway to improve the impact analysis, by constructing a more refined equilibrium age-structured approach (Martell et al., attachment to this agenda item). Two important features of this approach are: (1) the joint probability of mortality due to the minimum size limit and the discard mortality rate, and (2) the cumulative effects of size-selective fishing (fast-growing fish have a higher total mortality). The SSC looks forward to seeing the results of this analysis.

#### **D-5 Research Priorities for Scallop and Crab**

The SSC reviewed and updated the Scallop and Crab Plan Teams' research priorities (see Appendix A1). Minor modifications to priorities and wording of particular items were made in addition to deleting redundant items or consolidating similar items (see Appendix A2). The SSC plans to create a subgroup to develop draft definitions of the levels (critical, high, medium, and low), by which it will rank priorities in the future, and noted the continued re-evaluation of the relative importance of each priority ranking, specifically as it relates to the large number of high priorities for crab. For the research priorities outlined in this SSC report, we used the definition for the critical category as, 'those items that are important information for setting allowable catch limits and for fishery management actions'. The SSC also plans to create a subgroup that will specifically consider and review priorities that concern social science issues.

The SSC has the following recommendations for continued database development:

1. Include the ability to track changes by multiple different entities in the titles, descriptions, and priority rankings;
2. Separate the SSC priority ranking from that of the Council, so the SSC can track changes they make to their ranking over time; and

3. Include an option to produce a summary table that lists the titles and priority rankings by each of the Plan Teams, the SSC, and Council (with track changes).

The SSC requests that the Groundfish Plan Team consider the SSC's December 2013 comments on C-5 octopus and skate discussion paper on EGOA skate fishery and GOA octopus fishery for addition to current research priorities.

#### **D-6 BS Trawl Salmon Excluder EFP**

John Gauvin (Gauvin and Associates, LLC & North Pacific Fisheries Research Foundation) gave an overview of his application for a new exempted fishing permit (EFP). The packet included a letter in support of the application from AFSC, and a draft Environmental Assessment (EA). No public testimony was received.

The purpose of the EFP request is to allow the development and testing of a trawl salmon excluder device. This request is the latest in a long-term effort to design and test a salmon excluder that facilitates consistent escapement of salmon, low escapement of pollock, and that is workable for the fleet. The over and under escapement design proposed for testing in this EFP was initially deployed in 2012 and 2013 in the Gulf of Alaska, under a prior EFP. By the end of the experiment, it consistently provided ~40% Chinook escapement with < 3% pollock loss. Vessels fishing in the Bering Sea are larger, have higher horsepower, and operate in waters with different salmon and pollock densities, necessitating a new round of testing.

The EFP proposal is for test fishing by one or two vessels in the winter 2015, summer/fall 2015, and winter 2016 seasons. The experimental design is solid, and the requested harvest amount is based on a need for 10 to 12 tows per test, a number that has provided good confidence intervals in prior EFP tests. Two sea samplers will be deployed on each contracted vessel. These sea samplers act as observers and also conduct genetic sampling and coded wire tag monitoring for all captured salmon. Genetic data from prior EFPs have already proven of interest.

Relative to the application reviewed, the plans for monitoring escapement have been modified to rely solely on cameras, instead of cameras on the bottom and a recapture net on the top. This change is based on a previously successful test done in the Gulf of Alaska of the camera estimates relative to those from the recapture net, where the results indicated that escapement estimates from the cameras matched the escapement estimates in the recapture net. Video footage is of sufficient quality to distinguish salmon and pollock, quantify escapement of these (and other species), and allow for some estimation of salmon size. While the video feed is not live, spot checks of the videos are done in the field to ensure that the trawls are occurring in waters with an appropriate mix of species. Some testing of the effect of the camera lights has been done, with no effect apparent. This method precludes obtaining biological samples from escaping salmon, although captured salmon are sampled.

The EA associated with this EFP concludes that issuing the EFP will have no net adverse effects on the stocks or ecosystem, and this conclusion is well supported with detailed information. The AFSC staff review of the EFP supports approval of this request. The cover letter from NOAA does note that approval is contingent on the TAC amounts being set sufficiently below the ABC for BS pollock in the 2015 and 2016 harvest specifications to meet the EFP amounts. **The SSC notes that the Council should be aware of the need for a total of 5,000 mt of pollock in 2015 and 2,500 mt in 2016 for this EFP to be conducted.**

The SSC commends the investigators for their efforts to develop and test gear modifications that have the potential to significantly reduce PSC rates in the Bering Sea pollock fishery. The EA appears to be complete and the application well-written. **The SSC recommends that the Council approve the EFP application.**

# Appendix A1. SSC Research Priorities for Crab and Scallops.

Res_ID	Res_Title	Status	Priority
145	Continuation of State and Federal annual and biennial surveys	Underway	Critical
165	Conduct routine surveys of subsistence in the northern Bering Sea and Arctic Ocean	Partially underway	Critical
249	Assess the movement of Steller sea lions, northern fur seals, Tanner crab, snow crab, and Pacific cod	Partially underway	Critical
146	Improve surveys in untrawable habitat, particularly for rockfish, Atka mackerel, and sculpins	Partially underway	Critical
229	Evaluate the effectiveness of setting ABC and OFL levels for data-poor crab stocks	Partially underway	Critical
144	District-wide survey for demersal shelf rockfish in Southeast Alaska	No action	Critical
157	Improve methods of monitoring fishery interactions	Underway	High
158	Research ecosystem indicators and their thresholds for inclusion in ecosystem-level management strategy evaluation.	Underway	High
159	Evaluate interactions between fisheries and pinnipeds	Underway	High
160	Assess vital rates of Steller sea lions	Underway	High
161	Assess the health of Stellar sea lions	Underway	High
162	Quantify killer whale predation of Steller sea lions (M)	Underway	High
389	Investigate ecosystem effects and inter-species interactions of halibut	Underway	High
173	Expand studies to identify stock and management boundaries	Underway	High
226	Continue to evaluate the economic effects from fishery policy changes on coastal communities.	Underway	High
176	Refine methods to incorporate uncertainty into harvest strategies for groundfish	Underway	High
177	Conduct prospective and retrospective analyses of changes in the spatial and temporal distribution of fishing effort in response to management change	Underway	High
180	Economic, social, and cultural valuation research on protected species	Underway	High
181	Foraging ecology studies of Steller sea lions	Underway	High
187	Maintain indicator-based ecosystem assessment for EBS.	Underway	High
192	Collect, analyze, and monitor diet information	Underway	High



230	Examine social and economic interactions between coastal communities and commercial fisheries	Underway	High
366	Continue to investigate time variation and the shape of fishery and survey selectivity models	Underway	High
367	Continue to improve stock assessment methodology with respect to uncertainty	Underway	High
385	Study Pacific halibut PSC, bycatch, and discard behavior in fisheries	Underway	High
250	Conduct ecosystem structure studies	Underway	High
388	Study temporal and spatial patterns in size-at-age of Pacific halibut	Underway	High
156	Improve knowledge for salmon PSC impact assessment	Underway	High
155	Evaluation of salmon PSC mitigation measures	Underway	High
154	Pacific cod stock assessment for the Aleutian Islands	Underway	High
153	Study vertical distribution of Pacific cod to better understand catchability	Underway	High
151	Develop a spatially-explicit model for BSAI pollock	Underway	High
150	Maintain the core biological and oceanographic data (e.g., biophysical moorings, stomach data, zooplankton, age 0 surveys) necessary to support integrated ecosystem assessment	Underway	High
170	Quantitative reproductive index for the surveyed BSAI crab stocks	Underway	High
148	Spatial distribution of male snow crab	Partially underway	High
149	Improve handling mortality rate estimates for crab	Partially underway	High
163	Conduct routine fish, crab, and oceanographic surveys in the northern Bering Sea and Arctic Ocean	Partially underway	High
164	Effects of trawling on female red king crab and subsequent recruitment	Partially underway	High
166	Estimate scallop stock abundance	Partially underway	High
169	Studies on factors that affect catchability particularly for King and Tanner crab	Partially underway	High
171	Acquire basic life history information (e.g., natural mortality, growth, size at maturity) for data-poor stocks.	Partially underway	High
174	Develop spatially explicit stock assessment models	Partially underway	High
175	Develop age-structured models for scallop assessment	Partially underway	High
178	Develop a framework for collection of economic information	Partially underway	High

179	Conduct pre- and post-implementation studies of the benefits and costs, and their distribution, associated with dedicated access privileges	Partially underway	High
182	Evaluate current and alternative Council PSC/bycatch reduction initiatives	Partially underway	High
183	Research the role of habitat in population dynamics and ecosystem processes	Partially underway	High
188	Develop indicator-based ecosystem assessments for AI (in progress), GOA, Arctic.	Partially underway	High
189	Develop stock-specific ecosystem indicators and incorporate into stock assessments	Partially underway	High
190	Collect and maintain time series of ocean pH	Partially underway	High
191	Assess whether changes in pH and temperature would affect managed species, upper level predators, and lower trophic levels.	Partially underway	High
206	Biomass indices and alternate methodologies for lowest tier groundfish species	Partially underway	High
384	Effects of changes to the observer program	Partially underway	High
147	Life history research on non-recovering crab stocks	No action	High
368	Develop a simulation model of Steller sea lion fishery interactions	No action	High
172	Develop and validate aging methods for crabs.	No action	High
364	Updated sperm whale stock assessment	No action	High
167	Alternative approaches to acquire fishery-independent abundance data for Aleutian Islands golden king crab	No action	High
212	Develop methods to estimate sea lion abundance	Underway	Medium
251	Modeling studies of ecosystem productivity	Underway	Medium
236	Conduct studies of sperm whale and killer whale depredation of catch in long-line fisheries and surveys	Underway	Medium
211	Benefits and costs of directed halibut catch and halibut PSC utilization	Underway	Medium
209	Investigate factors affecting the guided angler sector of the halibut fishery	Underway	Medium
208	Research on stock- recruit relationships	Underway	Medium
202	Methods for reliable estimation of total removals	Underway	Medium
223	Develop and evaluate global climate change models (GCM) or downscaled climate variability scenarios to assess impacts to recruitment, growth and spatial distributions.	Underway	Medium
221	Collect maturity scans during fisheries that target spawning fish	Underway	Medium

217	Impact of fisheries on benthic habitat and trophic interactions	Underway	Medium
214	Evaluate the impact of seabird bycatch in fisheries on bird populations, and methods to reduce	Underway	Medium
391	Investigate spatial stock dynamics and population connectivity for Tanner Crab (2 stocks)	Pending	Medium
224	Climate and oceanographic information covering a wider range of seasons	Partially underway	Medium
225	Development of projection models to evaluate (a) the robustness and resilience of different management strategies under varying environmental and ecological conditions and (b) to forecast seasonal an	Partially underway	Medium
228	Conduct studies documenting the subsistence harvest (patterns, norms, quantities) in communities affected by Council actions.	Partially underway	Medium
246	Cooperative research efforts to supplement existing at-sea surveys that provide seasonal, species-specific information on upper trophic levels	Partially underway	Medium
247	Assess the relative importance of non-commercially exploited species to human communities	Partially underway	Medium
218	Survey capability for forage fish	Partially underway	Medium
222	Improve estimates of natural mortality (M) for Pacific cod.	Partially underway	Medium
244	Collect and maintain time-series data on the community composition, production and biomass of benthic invertebrate and vertebrate fauna	Partially underway	Medium
243	Collect and maintain data on forage fish community composition and abundance	Partially underway	Medium
241	Develop bottom and water column temperature database and indices	Partially underway	Medium
240	Develop a multivariate index of the climate forcing of the Bering Sea shelf	Partially underway	Medium
239	Assess the extent of the distribution of corals	Partially underway	Medium
238	Develop a GIS relational database for habitat, to include a historical time series of the spatial intensity of interactions between commercial fisheries and habitat.	Partially underway	Medium
237	Improved habitat maps	Partially underway	Medium
235	Investigate gear modifications and changes in fishing practices to reduce bycatch and PSC	Partially underway	Medium

234	Analyze current determinants of demand for principal seafood products	Partially underway	Medium
232	Develop management strategy evaluations that incorporate changing climate and market economic conditions.	Partially underway	Medium
184	Evaluate efficacy of habitat closure areas and habitat recovery	Partially underway	Medium
186	Collect and maintain zooplankton and meroplankton biomass and community composition time series	Partially underway	Medium
203	Improve discard mortality rate estimates for scallops	Partially underway	Medium
204	Tagging studies of Aleutian Islands Pacific cod and Atka mackerel	Partially underway	Medium
205	Age determination methods for Pacific cod, Pacific sleeper sharks, and spiny dogfish	Partially underway	Medium
210	Develop bioeconomic models	Partially underway	Medium
213	Assess the impact of the displacement of the groundfish fleet on Northern fur seals	Partially underway	Medium
231	Retrospective analysis of the impact of Chinook salmon PSC avoidance measures on the BSAI pollock fishery	Partially underway	Medium
215	Determine potential impacts of fishing activities on marine mammals	No action	Medium
227	Improve estimation of fishery interactions with non-target groundfish, and prohibited species.	No action	Medium
390	Assess the population status of harbor seals in the Aleutian Islands and determine factors affecting their population trajectories	No action	Medium
383	Determine quantitative indicators of spatial structure, particular for walleye pollock and Pacific cod	No action	Medium
245	Assess the impact of increases in recovering whale populations on lower trophic level energy pathways	No action	Medium
382	Investigate in situ methods of tagging species that experience barotrauma	No action	Medium
381	Effects of changes to the observer program	No action	Medium
207	Analyses of fishery effort and observer data for scallops	No action	Medium
219	Monitor skate egg case concentration sites	No action	Medium
168	Assess seasonal diets and species interactions of fish and shellfish	No action	Medium
220	Research on survey analysis techniques for species that exhibit patchy distributions	No action	Medium
365	Retrospective analysis of the impact of Chinook PSC avoidance measures on communities of western Alaska	No action	Medium

242	<b>Collect and maintain primary production time series</b>	<b>No action</b>	Medium
233	<b>Develop an ongoing database of product inventories</b>	<b>No action</b>	Medium
248	<b>Measure and monitor fish composition</b>	<b>No action</b>	Medium
363	<b>Area-specific variability in scallop population processes</b>	<b>No action</b>	Medium
386	<b>Investigate long term effects of fishing on Pacific halibut</b>	<b>Underway</b>	Low
387	<b>Determine effects of migration on the Pacific halibut population and management</b>	<b>Underway</b>	Low
193	<b>Improve species identification</b>	<b>Partially underway</b>	Low
216	<b>Assess whether Bering Sea canyons are habitats of particular concern</b>	<b>Partially underway</b>	Low
195	<b>Conduct multivariate analysis of bycatch data from the scallop observer program</b>	<b>Partially underway</b>	Low
194	<b>Identification and integration of archived data</b>	<b>Partially underway</b>	Low
361	<b>Effects of Ocean Acidification on Scallops</b>	<b>No action</b>	Low
362	<b>Monitoring potential water quality impacts</b>	<b>No action</b>	Low
200	<b>Monitor contaminant flux and loads in lower and higher trophic levels, and assess potential for impact on vital rates.</b>	<b>No action</b>	Low
197	<b>Develop methodologies to monitor for new/emerging diseases and/or parasites among exploited species and higher trophic levels</b>	<b>No action</b>	Low
196	<b>Evaluate hybridization of snow and Tanner crabs.</b>	<b>No action</b>	Low
198	<b>Initiate and expand non-market valuation research of habitat, ecosystem services, and passive use considerations</b>	<b>No action</b>	Low

Appendix A2. Priority changes and items consolidated into other research priorities.

Res_ID	Res_Title	Status	Old_Priority	New_Priority
229	Evaluate the effectiveness of setting ABC and OFL levels for data-poor crab stocks	Partially underway	Medium	Critical
165	Conduct routine surveys of subsistence in the northern Bering Sea and Arctic Ocean	Partially underway	High	Critical
249	Assess the movement of Steller sea lions, northern fur seals, Tanner crab, snow crab, and Pacific cod	Partially underway	Medium	Critical
230	Examine social and economic interactions between coastal communities and commercial fisheries	Underway	Medium	High
250	Conduct ecosystem structure studies	Underway	Medium	High
226	Continue to evaluate the economic effects from fishery policy changes on coastal communities.	Underway	Medium	High
206	Biomass indices and alternate methodologies for lowest tier groundfish species	Partially underway	Medium	High
391	Investigate spatial stock dynamics and population connectivity for Tanner Crab (2 stocks)	NEW	Pending	Medium
186	Collect and maintain zooplankton and meroplankton biomass and community composition time series	Partially underway	High	Medium
184	Evaluate efficacy of habitat closure areas and habitat recovery	Partially underway	High	Medium
168	Assess seasonal diets and species interactions of fish and shellfish	No action	High	Medium
216	Assess whether Bering Sea canyons are habitats of particular concern	Partially underway	Medium	Low
152	Studies to identify crab stock boundaries	No action	High	Consolidated
185	Maintain moorings and develop/maintain a sea ice formation, sea ice retreat, and spring bloom indices for the EBS	Partially underway	High	Consolidated
199	Assess the synergistic effects of ocean acidification, oil, dispersants, and changes in temperature on productivity of marine species.	No action	Low	Consolidated
201	Catch accounting of crab sex and size	Partially underway	Medium	Consolidated



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# News & Notes

North Pacific Fishery Management Council

June 2014

## Thank You, Nome!

The Council held the June Council meeting in Nome, Alaska. Many local stakeholders participated in the week-long meetings, and local and regional businesses went out of their way to ensure a successful meeting. Thank you to the Chamber of Commerce who helped coordinate the logistics, as well as the many groups who provided lodging, catering, and internet capabilities. Also thanks to NSEDC who hosted a BBQ at the Safety Roadhouse. A good time was had by all.



## Olson Terms Out

Eric Olson served on the Council process for 13 years – 4 years on the Advisory Panel, 9 on the Council, and 7 of those as Chairman. The Council and NSEDC hosted a “Toast and Roast” to the outgoing chairman, and a fun evening was had in the land of the midnight sun! Thank you Chairman Olson for your work in managing Alaska’s fisheries, and we look forward to working with you in a different capacity in the future.



David Witherell, photo

## BSAI Halibut Bycatch Reduction

During its June 2014 meeting, the Council identified its plans for addressing Pacific halibut bycatch in the Bering Sea/Aleutian Island groundfish fisheries. First, the Council requested voluntary actions from five groundfish fishing sectors (American Fisheries Act Catcher Processor, American Fisheries Act Catcher Vessel, Amendment 80, Freezer Longline Cooperative, and Community Development Quota) to reduce halibut mortalities in the BSAI resulting from halibut PSC use, as well as discards in the directed halibut fishery, by a cumulative 10% from the current 5-year average levels, through the 2014-15 fishing seasons. The Council requested that industry report back to the Council on those voluntary halibut reduction measures and the effectiveness of those measures in terms of absolute reductions in halibut mortalities. These reports are scheduled for February 2015.

The Council requested several actions to be undertaken by NMFS: 1) continue to work with the Amendment 80 sector to develop deck sorting procedures and technologies that could reduce halibut mortalities, in order to initiate regulatory changes for a full-scale program; 2) continue to work with the International Pacific Halibut Commission to provide halibut bycatch and discard size data from the Observer Program in a form that can be better incorporated into IPHC stock assessments; and 3) evaluate the potential to reduce halibut PSC use under: a) the Amendment 80 flatfish flexibility program, b) a potential change to the Amendment 80 trawl season opening date from January 20 to January 1, and c) potential changes to the current Amendment 80 area closures.

The Council also adopted a purpose and need statement and initiated an analysis of alternatives to reduce the halibut PSC limits in the BSAI groundfish fisheries. In addition to the “No Action” alternative, Alternative 2 includes options to: 1) establish seasonal apportionment of halibut PSC in the BSAI trawl limited access sector and 2) analyze a range of 10, 20, 30, and 35 percent reductions of current halibut PSC limits to the five sectors identified above. Alternative 3 would implement measures in the Amendment 80 sector to allow deck sorting of halibut. Initial review of the Analysis is scheduled for February 2015.

The Council requested that the analysis include reviews of specific information, which are listed in the motion that is posted on the Council website. The Council noted its interest in reviewing a revised version of an IPHC paper on the biological and management issues related to accounting and management of all sizes of halibut, which is planned to be provided to the IPHC later this year and potentially acted on during its January 2015 meeting. The Council may revise the above alternatives after reviewing the IPHC paper. Staff contact is Jane DiCosimo/Diana Evans.



Nome, AK - Photo: Joy Berger



## Upcoming meetings:

**AFSC Independent Peer Review, BSAI Stock Assessment:** July 29-31, 9am-5pm, AFSC, Seattle

**Crab Plan Team:** September 15-18, AFSC

**BS FEP public meeting :**  
September 15, Seattle, 3-6pm  
(tentative, location TBD)

**Ecosystem Committee:**  
September 16, AFSC, Seattle  
8:30am-5pm (timing tentative)

**Electronic Monitoring Workgroup:** September 17-18, Seattle, AFSC; 17<sup>th</sup>: 8:30-5p; 18<sup>th</sup>: 8:30-noon (timing tentative)

**Observer Advisory Committee:**  
September 18-19, AFSC, Seattle, 18<sup>th</sup>: 1-5p; 19<sup>th</sup>: 8:30-5p (timing tentative)

**Groundfish Plan Team:**  
September 23-25 and November 17-21, AFSC, Seattle

**Crab Modeling workshop: (T)**  
Anchorage, January 12-14

## Bering Sea FEP

The Council provided an opportunity for stakeholders to comment on the potential development of a Bering Sea Fishery Ecosystem Plan (FEP). The Council initiated a series of scoping meetings to get public input on a BS FEP after reviewing a discussion paper in February 2014. A meeting will be held in Seattle in September, and there will also be an opportunity to provide input at the October Council meeting in Anchorage. Staff contact is Diana Evans.

## Research Priorities

The Council identified a five-year research plan for 2014-2018, as required by Magnuson-Stevens Act, which is posted online. The Council chose to carry over the research priorities identified in June 2013, which were developed based on recommendations from its four Plan Teams, the Scientific and Statistical Committee, and the Advisory Panel, as they considered that the priorities expressed in 2013 are still current. Staff and the SSC have been working on transitioning the research priority list to a relational database system accessed through a web portal, <https://research.psmfc.org/>, developed by Pacific States Marine Fisheries Commission staff. The use of the database will allow the Council to track more information relative to each research priority, including Plan Team prioritization, keywords, and the status of research activity. The SSC and the Council identified a number of improvements to the process and to decision-making materials, which will be addressed in the coming year.

## Salmon EFP

The Council approved an application for a salmon excluder exempted fishing permit to continue research on salmon bycatch reduction devices in the Bering Sea pollock fishery. The purpose of the EFP is to improve performance of the salmon excluder device developed in trials in 2011 and 2012. The testing will occur over several weeks during both A and B seasons of 2015 and 2016. In order to test the excluder device the applicants require exemptions to existing regulations for salmon bycatch management, observer requirements, several closures and additional TAC for pollock and other

incidentally caught groundfish species. EFP fishing would be permitted if the ABC for Bering Sea pollock exceeds the TAC by at least 5,000 mt in 2015 and 2,500 mt in 2016. The EFP also requires a total (2015-2016) of additional Chinook salmon PSC (1,450) and chum salmon PSC (3,000). It is also estimated to need approximately 12 mt of halibut PSC per season. Results will be presented to the Council at the conclusion of the project. Reports on the previous analyses of iterative designs for salmon excluder devices by the applicant are posted on the Council's website. Staff contact is Diana Stram.

## BSAI Halibut PSC Rollover

The 167-mt halibut PSC limit for the yellowfin sole fishery category has been reached and NMFS closed its directed fishery by the BSAI trawl limited access sector on May 18, 2014. As of May 24, 2014, 12,623 mt of yellowfin sole allocation to the sector remained. Currently, 347 mt of unused halibut PSC remains of the total 875 mt PSC limit for the BSAI trawl limited access sector. Of the 453 mt PSC limit for the Pacific cod fishery category, 169 mt remained unused as of May 24, 2014. After receiving a request from NMFS to reapportion the BSAI trawl limit access halibut PSC limit between fisheries, the Council recommended that NMFS reapportion 60 mt of halibut PSC in the Bering Sea Pacific cod fishery to the Bering Sea yellowfin sole fishery, as NMFS projects that the halibut PSC limit for the Pacific cod fishery category will not be reached during 2014.

## Norton Sound Red King Crab

The Council followed up on a public testimony from October 2013 in which a participant of the Norton Sound Red King Crab (NSRKC) fishery asked the Council to take action to reduce over-capitalization in the fishery. Specifically the stakeholder ask the Council to lift the exemption for vessels less than or equal to 32 ft to operate in the NSRKC fishery without a License Limitation Program (LLP) license. Additionally, there was a suggestion of an LLP recency program which would remove licenses that were latent. The testimony suggested that at least one reported NSRKC landing in the past five years would be required in order to maintain a license. Council received a discussion paper produced by staff that demonstrated characteristics of participation in the recent years. The paper demonstrated an increase in the number of small vessels (vessels  $\leq 32$  ft) participating in the fishery in recent years and that out of 62 LLP licenses, 24 of those licenses had made at least one landing in the five year period from 2008 to 2012.

This item was discussed in Nome in order to gather more public input on these management strategies. After receiving additional public testimony from stakeholders of the fishery, the Council urged the fleet and local stakeholder to work together to bring potential solutions or alternatives back to the Council at a future meeting. Staff contact is Sarah Marrinan.

# Bering Sea Salmon Bycatch Management

The Council has been iteratively reviewing the performance of management measures for Chinook salmon bycatch in the Bering Sea pollock fishery since the implementation of Amendment 91 in 2011. Overall bycatch levels have been much lower than historical levels and very low in comparison to the cap level and performance standard established in regulation. However, given continuing concerns regarding poor returns to western Alaskan Chinook salmon stocks, the Council continues to focus on potential improvements to Chinook bycatch management in the Bering Sea. Additionally, the Council is interested in moving forward with more comprehensive concurrent management of Chinook and chum salmon bycatch management in the Bering Sea pollock fishery.

At the Council's request, a discussion paper was prepared which included an analysis of regulatory issues associated with proposed modifications to address chum and Chinook salmon bycatch management. For chum salmon this entailed discussion of the regulatory changes needed to incorporate Bering Sea chum salmon bycatch avoidance into the Chinook salmon Incentive Plan Agreements (IPAs). For Chinook information, the paper centered on both the vessel-level bycatch performance estimates and an evaluation of potential refinements to current measures to further reduce bycatch encounters, especially at low levels of abundance. Specific information was presented on measures to impose restrictions or penalties on vessels with consistently high Chinook bycatch rates in the IPAs, to require the use of salmon excluders when Chinook encounter rates are high, modifying provisions of how

the rolling hot spot program closures are enacted, shortening the pollock fishery when pollock catch rates decline and Chinook bycatch rates increase (late B season September/October) and modifying the accounting period for application of the Chinook PSC limit.

After considerable discussion of the likely impacts of modifying measures under the IPAs and considerations of appropriate incentive-based measures to reduce bycatch, the Council initiated an analysis for combined chum and Chinook salmon bycatch management measures. The Council noted in its purpose and need statement for this analysis, that while Chinook salmon bycatch impact rates have been low under the Amendment 91 program, there is evidence that improvements could be made to ensure the program is effectively reducing Chinook salmon bycatch at low abundance. Measures to be considered in this analysis include provisions to avoid salmon late in the year and to strengthen incentives across both seasons.

Alternatives to be considered include incorporating chum salmon avoidance into the IPAs, revising IPAs for Chinook provisions to address the identification of vessels with higher rates relative to other vessels, mandating the use of salmon excluders, and modifying provisions of the hot spot program and savings credits issuance under specific IPAs. Alternatives also consider revising the pollock fishery seasons to alter the start and end date of the B season and reducing the current performance standard by 25-60% in times of low western Alaska Chinook abundance. The problem statement, as well as more specific options and additional considerations to be analyzed, are available in the motion on the Council's website. The analysis will be available online by early November and will be addressed at the December 2014 Council meeting in Anchorage. Staff contact is Diana Stram.



The Advisory Panel met in Old St. Joe's Church in Anvil City Square. Photo: Joy Berger

## Crab Specifications

The Council reviewed final stock assessments and set specifications for three crab stocks in the Bering Sea/ Aleutian Islands: Norton Sound red king crab (NSRKC), Western Aleutian Islands red king crab (WAIRKC), and Aleutian Islands golden king crab (AIGKC). The current biomass estimate for NSRKC is below its BMSY estimate, while biomass estimates are not available at this time to determine stock status for WAIRKC or AIGKC stocks. The SSC recommended ABC buffer levels higher than the maximum permissible for all three stocks with 10% for NSRKC, 40% for WAIRKC and 25% for AIGKC. The SSC also recommended that a workshop be conducted for assessment of all North Pacific data-poor stocks as well as the consideration of how best to approximate uncertainty in the ABC control rule. The Crab Plan Team in September will begin this process by detailing how uncertainty is addressed in the current crab ABC control rule and its application across stocks in September. Additional information on the data-poor workshop will be posted as topics and timing for it are developed. Staff contact is Diana Stram.

## Vacancy: Staff Fishery Analyst

Position serves as a fisheries management analyst, working closely with other biologists and economists in the identification and analysis of issues pertaining to fishery management plan development and amendments, with specific focus on potential effects of management measures on fish stocks and other resources. More information available on the website. Closing date July 25, 2014.

# CDQ Pacific Cod Development

An analysis for initial review was presented to the Council on the development of a CDQ small vessel Pacific cod fishery. The action alternatives in the analysis focused on increasing opportunities for the retention of Pacific cod for commercial sale. The measures analyzed would be applicable to vessels  $\leq 46$  ft LOA using hook-and-line gear that fish on behalf of a CDQ group. The Council reviewed four alternatives including: 1) no action, 2) increasing the maximum retainable amount (MRA) of Pacific cod in the halibut CDQ fishery for this group of vessels, from 20 percent of a halibut harvest, up to 100 percent of the halibut harvest, 3) create a new CDQ License Limitation Program (LLP) license that is annually distributed to eligible CDQ participants, with options to move this group into the partial observer coverage category, and 4) a direct exemption for participating CDQ vessels from the LLP that also moves these vessels into a partial observer category consistent with the Annual Deployment Plan.

The Council chose to release the EA/RIR /IRFA for public review after revising Alternative 4, to incorporate additional elements outlined in a "NMFS Recommendations" document (elements 1 (i) through (ix)). This document makes clear the extent of the LLP exemption and the requirements for documentation of eligibility for this exemption. It describes CDQ Pacific cod, halibut and other groundfish retention requirements and the catch accounting process that would take effect in a directed CDQ Pacific cod fishery under this alternative. The document describes how the directed CDQ Pacific cod fishery would be constrained to the halibut CDQ season and

area closures as well as Vessel Monitoring System (VMS) requirements would remain consistent with the status quo. With the incorporation of these elements, Alternative 4 would constitute a Preliminary Preferred Alternative (PPA).

The document is moving forward with the addition of three new options for future analysis under the PPA. These options are not mutually exclusive. The first is applying the management measures proposed Alternative 4 to all vessels  $\leq 46$  ft LOA using hook-and-line gear while directed fishing for any CDQ groundfish species, in addition to Pacific cod. The second option would analyze whether to expand the current prohibition against discarding legal sized halibut while IFQ fishing to participants of the CDQ halibut fishery, while the CDQ group has remaining halibut CDQ. Finally, Option 3 would allow the Pacific cod CDQ directed fishery to operate if there was no halibut CDQ or IFQ available to fund the incidental catch of halibut in this fishery. In a situation where there is no targeted halibut quota available (CDQ or IFQ), all incidentally caught halibut would be considered prohibited species catch (PSC). Analysts will consider alternative approaches to estimating the halibut PSC using data from observed vessels in the partial coverage category for the Council's consideration.

It was made clear during staff tasking that the Council wants to review the revised analysis in October 2014. If analysis of Option 3 cannot be completed by then, the Council may consider taking final action on the other alternatives and options and consider further analysis of Option 3 as a trailing amendment. The revised draft analysis will be released in September. Staff contact is Sarah Marrinan.

*Jane DiCosimo, the Council's senior plan team coordinator, is leaving the Council after 20 years. She will be moving on to NMFS headquarters in Silver Spring, MD to be the National Observer Program Coordinator. Thank you Jane, for your work on the Council and for your work in maintaining the sustainability of our nation's fisheries.*





## Observer Program

The Council reviewed the 2013 Annual Report for the Observer Program, the first report assessing a full year of fishing under the restructured program, and addressed a number of observer and electronic monitoring (EM) issues. Motions are available on the Council website. Staff contact is Diana Evans.

## Annual Deployment Plan (ADP) and Report

The Council supported NMFS' recommendation to move participants in the vessel selection pool (vessels 40 to 57.5 ft LOA) into the trip selection pool for the 2015 ADP, in order to resolve a source of bias that is affecting observer data quality for this vessel group. The Council also expressed concern about the policy of allowing conditional releases for these vessels, another source of potential bias. The Council requested more analysis of 2013 vessel selection pool data, as well as the likely burdens associated with carrying an observer in the trip selection pool, in order to consider removing provisions for conditional release. The Council will review the draft 2015 ADP in October 2014.

The Council also discussed coverage rates for the 2015 ADP. Consistent with its recommendation of the past two years, the Council requested NMFS to maintain a higher observer coverage rate for all trawl vessels, and fixed gear vessels over 57.5 ft LOA, in the revised trip selection pool, in order to have expanded coverage of PSC-limited fisheries. In order to maintain consistent levels of coverage in the early years of the restructured program, there was also support for continuing to request supplementary Federal funding, given that some of the collected fees have been set aside, due to Federal sequestration rules and as a reserve against overspending.

## Lead Level 2 Availability

The Annual Report responded to Council queries about the availability of fixed gear lead level 2 observers, which are required in the full coverage freezer longline fleet. The Council asked the Observer Program to develop a system to credit observers for sampling longline sets, even if the observer is a second observer taken voluntarily by the vessel, for purposes of certification. Additionally, the Council initiated a discussion paper on long-term regulatory and non-regulatory solutions for developing a sustainable pool of fixed gear lead level 2 observers.

## Observer Tendering Analysis

The Council reviewed a discussion paper on the proposed regulatory amendment to change the deployment of observers on catcher vessels in the partial coverage observer category when they are delivering to tender vessels. The Council initiated the amendment package in 2013 based on preliminary information from the first four months of 2013, which indicated that GOA vessels delivering to a tender were making longer trips when unobserved than when they were observed, and that this unrepresentative behavior could be an important source of variance and/or bias in catch data. In the 2013 Annual Report, the agency assessed data from the whole year, and no longer found the same acute difference in fishing behavior between observed and unobserved vessels, although noting that sample sizes were small. The Council also heard a report about the interaction between the observer tendering amendment and the GOA trawl bycatch management action, in which 100% observer coverage is proposed for trawl vessels, resolving the issue of bias for this gear type. It was noted that the issue of trawl vessels delivering to tenders will have to be considered in that action, especially with respect to salmon sampling practices.

Given these discussions, the Council opted to reconsider the priority of the observer tendering amendment, and requested that NMFS evaluate and report back on tendering data for the first part of 2014, in order to assess whether there is a seasonal aspect to the tendering bias that is masked by aggregating to the annual scale. Additionally, the Council removed Option 2 from the analysis, which allows observer to monitor trawl offloads at the tender in order to census salmon, and asked that it be included directly in the GOA trawl bycatch management action.



Observer recording data. Photo: Megan Petersen

## Electronic Monitoring Workgroup

The Council reviewed the minutes from the first Electronic Monitoring Workgroup, which took place on May 15-16, 2014 in Anchorage, and supported the conceptual approach outlined. The Council appointed the Workgroup at the April 2014 meeting, in order to bring industry members, observer providers, and agency staff together to address cooperative research needs to advance the Council's goal of integrating EM for fixed gear vessels into the Observer Program. The Workgroup reported agreement on overall goals and objectives for the various components of the cooperative research, including summaries of the four research tracks, and how the tracks will be integrated. Over the summer, Workgroup members will continue to identify protocols to ensure that data from the various EM research projects is gathered consistently. The Council agreed with the work to date, and asked the SSC to review study designs and data review protocols in order to evaluate the program's ability to inform a regulatory amendment package for integrating EM. A preliminary discussion of the timeline for the program, and how it will merge into an implementation process, was included in the minutes, and the EM Workgroup will meet in September to further develop decision points and timelines for the Council to consider in initiating an amendment package. Staff contact is Diana Evans.

**DRAFT NPFMC THREE-MEETING OUTLOOK - updated 6/17/2014**

October 6-14, 2014 Anchorage, AK	December 8-16, 2014 Anchorage, AK	February 2-10 Seattle, WA
<p>MSA Reauthorization: <b>Update</b> Fishing Guide Definition: <b>Review Draft Regulations</b></p> <p>GOA Trawl Bycatch Management: <b>Discussion papers</b></p> <p>AI Pcod Allocation: <b>Initial Review</b></p> <p>Draft Observer Annual Deployment Plan: <b>Review</b> EM Workgroup report; OAC report</p> <p>Charter Halibut Common Pool: CATCH proposal/Disc paper</p> <p>Crab ROFR contract terms: <b>Final Action</b> ROFR Aleutia PQS: <b>Final Action</b></p> <p>CDQ P.cod fishery development: <b>Final Action</b></p> <p>BSAI Crab SAFE report: set ABC/OFL for 7 stocks: <b>PT report</b></p> <p>Proposed groundfish harvest specs: <b>Approve; PT report</b></p> <p>GOA Skate MRA revisions: <b>Initial Review</b> MRA enforcement period; all fisheries: <b>Discussion Paper</b></p> <p>Bering Sea FEP: <b>Update/review objectives</b> Ecosystem Committee report</p> <p>EFH 5-year Review update: <b>SSC only</b></p> <p>Am 80 5-year review: <b>Final Report</b></p>	<p>VMS Discussion paper: <b>Review</b></p> <p>Bering Sea Salmon Bycatch: <b>Initial Review</b></p> <p>AI Pcod Allocation: <b>Final Action (T)</b> Observer coverage on small CPs: <b>Discussion paper</b> Observer coverage on BSAI trawl CVs: <b>Discussion paper</b> Electronic Monitoring: <b>Discuss alternatives (T)</b></p> <p>Charter Halibut Management Measures for 2015 GOA sablefish longline pots: <b>Initial Review</b> IFQ Vessel Caps: <b>Discussion paper</b></p> <p>Pribilof canyon corals: <b>Receive comments re range of alternatives</b></p> <p>Final groundfish harvest specs: <b>Approve; PT reports</b></p> <p>GOA Skate MRA revisions: <b>Final Action</b></p>	<p>GOA Trawl Bycatch Management: <b>Action as necessary</b></p> <p>GOA Tendering (2015): <b>Discussion Paper</b></p> <p>Bering Sea Halibut PSC, deck sorting: <b>Initial Review (T)</b> Industry sector reports on Bering Sea halibut bycatch</p> <p>GOA sablefish longline pots: <b>Final Action</b> Area 4A halibut retention in sablefish pots: <b>Initial Review (T)</b></p> <p>Norton Sound Red King Crab OFL/ABC Crab modeling report (SSC Only)</p> <p><b>ITEMS BELOW NOT YET SCHEDULED</b></p> <p>Greenland Turbot allocation: <b>Initial Review</b> EFH 5-year Review (2015) BSAI Crab bycatch: <b>Discussion paper</b> Observer Lead Level 2: <b>Discussion paper</b> Observer fee collection methods: <b>Discussion paper</b> Observer exemption for deminimus IFQ: <b>Discussion paper</b> Observer requirements for multiple area fishing: <b>Discussion paper</b> Halibut DMRs 2016-2018; CDQ rates</p>

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

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  
SIR - Supplemental Information Report  
SSC - Scientific and Statistical Committee  
SAFE - Stock Assessment and Fishery Evaluation  
SSL - Steller Sea Lion

**Future Meeting Dates and Locations**

October 6-14, 2014 Anchorage  
December 8-16, 2014, Anchorage  
February 2-10, 2015, Seattle  
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 - , 2016, TBA  
October 3 -11, 2016 Anchorage  
December 5-13, 2016, Anchorage