Action Memo

File #: GF 18-001, **Version:** 1

Dan Hull, Chairman
David Witherell, Executive Director

SUBJECT:
Small Sideboards - Final Action

STAFF CONTACT: Jon McCracken (NPFMC)

ACTION REQUIRED:
- Review AFA and Crab Rationalization Program Small Sideboard Elimination Analysis
- Recommend a preferred alternative

BACKGROUND:

In February 2017, the Council received a report on the American Fisheries Act (AFA) Program review. As part of the review, NMFS recommended revising regulations to prohibit directed fishing by non-exempt AFA vessels for species where the sideboard limits are not large enough to support a directed fishery. The Council requested a discussion paper to analyze this proposed action, which was subsequently expanded to include analysis of small sideboards on GOA groundfish that apply to non-exempt crab vessels in the Crab Rationalization (CR) Program.

After reviewing the discussion paper during the June 2017 meeting, the Council adopted a purpose and need statement and alternatives for analysis to revise federal regulations prohibiting directed fishing for species with sideboard limits insufficient to support directed fishing by non-exempt AFA vessels and crab vessels. National Marine Fisheries Service (NMFS) would no longer publish these AFA and CR Program sideboard limits in the annual harvest specifications. The proposed action would also remove the sideboard limit on AFA catcher/processors for Central Aleutian Islands Atka mackerel because the sideboard limit under the AFA (11.5%) exceeds the allocation to the trawl limited access sector (10%) that was established by the Amendment 80 Program.

In December 2017, the Council reviewed the initial review draft that analyzed a proposed action and released the document for public review once staff incorporated the SSC's comments to the extent practical. The analysis has been updated to incorporate the SSC's comments.