

FISHERY MANAGEMENT PLAN or REGULATORY AMENDMENT PROPOSAL
North Pacific Fishery Management Council – Steller Sea Lion Mitigation Committee
Provide the following information – attach additional pages as necessary:

Name of Proposer: United Catcher Boats Date: August 18, 2006
Address: 4005 20th Ave. West, Suite 116, Seattle, WA 98199
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Fishery Management Plan: Bering Sea/Aleutian Islands Groundfish FMP

Brief Statement of Proposal (What is the problem?): Eliminate the BSAI trawl Catcher Vessel (CV) P. Cod ‘C’ season and transfer the current CV trawl ‘C’ season apportionment to the CV trawl ‘A’ season apportionment. Therefore the BSAI CV trawl P. cod fishery would be split into two seasons rather than three. The CV trawl ‘A’ season starts on January 20 and would receive 89% of the CV trawl sector’s total directed harvest. The CV trawl ‘B’ season starts on April 1 and would receive 11% of the CV trawl sector’s directed fishing amount. The problem with the current seasonal allocation of three seasonal apportionments is that very little of the ‘C’ season allocation can be harvested economically by the BSAI CV trawl fleet. Therefore, since the cod season SSL regulations were implemented, cod previously harvested by the BSAI CV fleet has been rolled out of the trawl sector.

Need and Justification for Council Action (Why can’t the problem be resolved through other channels?): Prior to enactment of the current Sea Lion management measures, the CV trawl P. cod fishery was a winter fishery and the CV trawl fleet targeted cod when the fish were nicely aggregated. With no seasonal apportionments the CV trawl sector had no difficulties harvesting its sector allocation. Eliminating the CV trawl cod ‘C’ season will help insure that this sector will harvest its allocation of P. cod.

This problem can only be resolved by reestablishing the winter/spring CV trawl fishery.

Foreseeable Impacts of Proposal (Who wins, who loses?): This proposal will result in 3.3% of the BSAI P. cod TAC shifting from the June 10th – November 1st period to the January 20th – April 1st period. Depending on other sectors’ desires to harvest their P. cod allocations in the early winter period, those sectors may be negatively impacted by this proposal. However, the CP longline fleet has historically been able to fish P. cod throughout the entire year in areas outside of SSL critical habitat.

Are there alternative solutions? If so, what are they and why do you consider your proposal the best way of solving the problem? We know of no other alternatives that would provide an equitable opportunity for CVs to harvest their BSAI cod allocation as this proposal.

Supporting Data & Other Information. What data are available and where can they be found? Be specific and cite references. Justification for the current BSAI P. cod seasonal apportionments as presented in past Steller Sea Lion Biological Opinions

was based on the assumption that the early winter time period was a critical time for sea lion pups as this was when they weaned from their mothers. Recent research on timing of pups weaning indicates that the early winter months are not nearly as critical as originally thought. Secondly, results from the localized depletion study conducted by the Alaska Fisheries Science Center near Cape Sarichef in the Bering Sea indicate that there is no localized depletion of P. cod due to the harvest of P. cod by the trawl fleet during the A season inside SSL Critical Habitat. Previous SSL temporal measures that resulted in seasonal apportionments of P. cod were based on belief that P. cod harvests needed to be spread out over the course of a year. Given the results of the Cape Sarichef localized depletion study, increasing the CV trawl 'A' season harvest should have no effect on the Steller Sea Lion population.

Offsetting Measures. OPTIONAL – What protection measures might be increased in the region to offset the proposed action? None.

Signature: