

**Testimony of Ms. Stephanie Madsen, Chair
North Pacific Fishery Management Council**

**Before the
Subcommittee on Fisheries and Oceans
Committee on Resources
United States House of Representatives**

July 6, 2005 in Ketchikan, Alaska and July 8, 2005 in Kodiak, Alaska

Good morning. My name is Stephanie Madsen, and I am the Chair of the North Pacific Fishery Management Council based in Anchorage, Alaska. Thank you for the opportunity to offer comments to the Subcommittee on fisheries management successes in Alaska and reauthorization of the Magnuson-Stevens Fishery Conservation and Management Act. We believe we have a very successful model in the North Pacific, and we believe that the basic tools for successful and sustainable management exist within the current Magnuson-Stevens Act. However, we recognize that a number of changes are being contemplated and we hope that our input, and our examples, will be informative to development of appropriate amendments to that Act.

Fisheries Management in the North Pacific

The successful management program for Alaska's offshore fisheries has been developed by the North Pacific Council, through its partnership with NOAA Fisheries and close working relationship with other state and federal agencies, including the Alaska Department of Fish and Game (ADF&G), the International Pacific Halibut Commission, the Pacific States Marine Fisheries Commission, and the United States Coast Guard.

The North Pacific Fishery Management primarily manages groundfish in the Gulf of Alaska, Bering Sea, and Aleutian Islands. Groundfish include cod, pollock, flatfish, Atka mackerel, sablefish, and rockfish species harvested by trawl, longline, jig, and pot gear. The Council also makes allocation decisions for halibut, in concert with the International Pacific Halibut Commission which manages biological aspects of the resource for U.S.-Canada waters. Other large Alaska fisheries such as salmon, crab, scallops and herring are managed jointly with the State of Alaska.

The Council has eleven voting members representing state and federal fisheries agencies, and fishery participants. Six are from Alaska, three are from Washington, one from Oregon, and one representative from NOAA Fisheries. The Council's four non-voting members represent the U.S. Coast Guard, U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service, Department of State, and the Pacific States Marine Fisheries Commission. The Council receives advice at each meeting from a 20 member Advisory Panel (representing commercial fishing and processing industry sectors, environmentalists, recreational fishermen, and consumer groups), and from a 15 member Scientific and Statistical Committee (SSC) of highly respected scientists who review all information and analyses considered by the Council.

Decisions must conform with the Magnuson-Stevens Act, the National Environmental Policy Act, Endangered Species Act, Marine Mammal Protection Act, Regulatory



Flexibility Act, and other applicable law including several executive orders. Regulatory changes may take a year or longer to develop, analyze, and implement, particularly if complex or contentious. All Council decisions are forwarded as recommendations to the Secretary of Commerce, for review and approval.

One of the keys to successful fishery management is incorporating diverse views into decision making through a transparent public process. Council meetings are open, and public testimony - both written and oral - is taken on each and every issue prior to deliberations and final decisions. Public comments are also taken at all Advisory Panel and Scientific and Statistical Committee meetings.

Importance of Alaska Fisheries

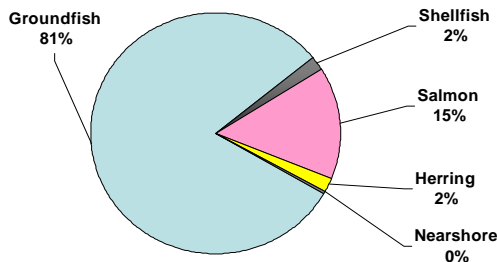
Fisheries are one of the most important industries in Alaska, culturally and economically, providing nearly half of all private sector jobs, and second only to the oil industry in providing revenue to the state. Over 10,000 people are involved in groundfish fishing and processing alone; thousands more work in the salmon, crab, scallop, and other fisheries. In addition, thousands of people work in other fisheries and fishing support industries, such as sport fishing guides, gear and fuel suppliers, restaurants, hotels, airlines, and others. With over 47,000 miles of coastline, and 336,000 square miles of fishable continental shelf area, the waters off



Alaska support a variety of fisheries. Approximately 1,400 vessels participate in the groundfish and crab fisheries directly managed by the Council, ranging from small 20 foot skiffs fishing for near-shore halibut, to a 200+ foot catcher/processors prosecuting midwater pollock fisheries in the open waters of the Bering Sea. The majority of the fleet, however, consists of mid-size vessels, anywhere from 40 to 150 feet in length. These vessels are engaged in longline fisheries for halibut, sablefish, and cod; trawl fisheries for cod, pollock, and flatfish species; and pot fisheries for cod and crab. Recreational fisheries for halibut and salmon are an important part of the fisheries off Alaska.

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Alaska Landings
2.5 million mt (1998-2001)
 (From OLO, 4 Yr Average)

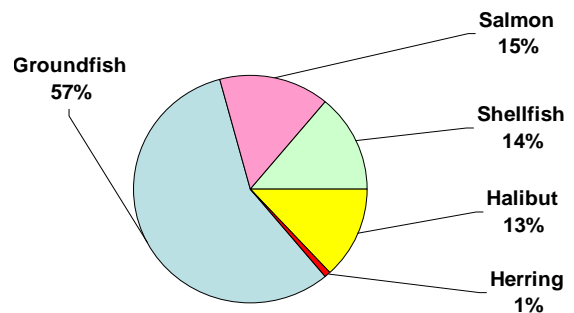


These fisheries are worth nearly \$1 billion ex-vessel annually (amount paid to fishermen at delivery, prior to value-added processing). The groundfish fisheries account for a majority of the overall value, but the halibut, salmon, and shellfish (crab) fisheries also contribute substantially. Additionally the Council's community development quota (CDQ) program allocates from 7.5% to 10% of all groundfish and crab quotas to six CDQ groups consisting of 66 western Alaska coastal communities. Through partnerships with other industry groups, and through direct involvement in fisheries and development of fisheries related infrastructures, this program allows these remote coastal communities to continue and enhance their participation in Alaska fisheries.

Ex-Vessel Value of All Alaska Landings

\$1.08 Billion (2001-2003 Average)

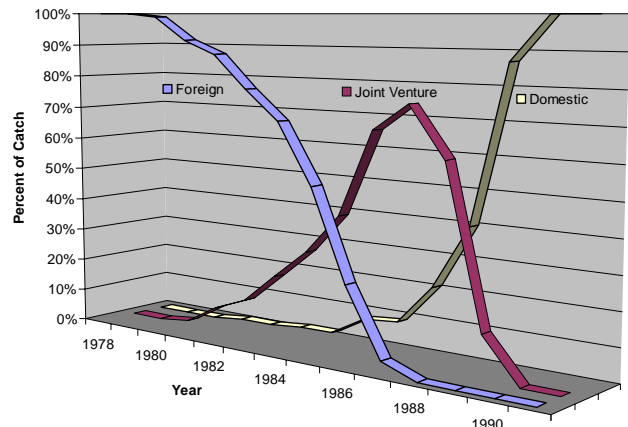
(From Table 2.1 of Economic Chapter)



Major Turning Points in Alaska Fisheries

Passage of the Magnuson-Stevens Act in 1976 marked a new era in U.S. fisheries management. Foreign fisheries in the EEZ off Alaska were rapidly phased out through joint-ventures, with the fisheries fully prosecuted by domestic fisheries ('Americanized') by 1990. Management efforts in the early 1990's focused on limiting effort of the burgeoning domestic groundfish fleet. By 1992, the fleet had grown to over 2,200 vessels, including about 110 trawl catcher processors (factory trawlers). The symptoms of overcapacity intensified; the 'race for fish' resulted in shorter fishing seasons and allocation disputes among various fishing and processing interests.

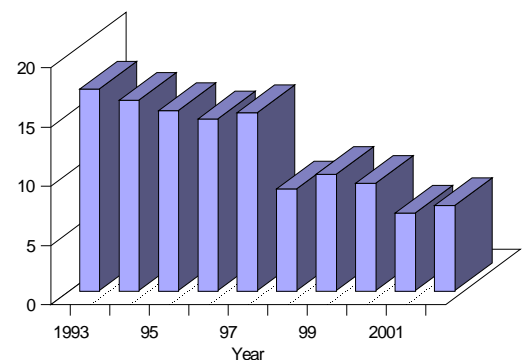
Americanization of Alaska Groundfish Fisheries



To address the overcapacity problem, the Council, working together with the NOAA Fisheries Alaska Regional office, aggressively pursued capacity limitations in all managed fisheries. An Individual Fishing Quota program for halibut and sablefish fisheries was adopted in 1992, and fully implemented in 1995. A moratorium on new vessel entry for groundfish and crab fisheries was implemented in 1996, with a more restrictive license limitation program in place by 2000. In 1998, the American Fisheries Act was passed by Congress and implemented by the Council and NOAA Fisheries the following year. The Act limited access to the Bering Sea pollock fisheries only to qualifying vessels and processors, eliminated a number of large catcher processor vessels from the fleet, and established a system of fishery cooperatives that allows for individual catch and bycatch accountability. Lower bycatch and significantly higher product recovery rates have resulted under the pollock cooperative system. In 1999, the Council adopted a very restrictive limited entry program for the scallop fishery. In 2003, the Council completed its work on an individual fishing and processing quota system for the Bering Sea crab fisheries (crab rationalization), consistent with Congressional legislation. Current Council initiatives include development of further rationalization programs for Bering Sea non-pollock groundfish fisheries, and development of some form of rationalization program for Gulf of Alaska groundfish fisheries.

Measures implemented in the 1990's also were designed to limit impacts on target and bycatch species, marine mammals and seabirds, and habitat, and provide opportunities for disadvantaged coastal communities along the Bering Sea. A comprehensive domestic groundfish observer program, funded by participating vessels, was instituted in 1990 to provide the basis for controlling catch within allowable levels and monitoring removals of both target and bycatch species. Closure areas and bycatch limits were established for chinook and chum salmon taken in Bering Sea trawl fisheries. Additional year-round trawl closure areas were established to reduce bycatch and protect habitat for Bering Sea crab stocks. To reduce bycatch and discards of Alaska groundfish, mandatory retention of all pollock and cod was required beginning in 1998. Retention requirements are soon to be implemented for Bering Sea flatfish fisheries, and further reductions in bycatch and discard amounts (currently about 7%) are expected.

Discard Rates of Alaska Groundfish



In 1990, Steller sea lions were listed as threatened under the Endangered Species Act, and numerous measures were implemented over the following decade to minimize potential interactions with fisheries

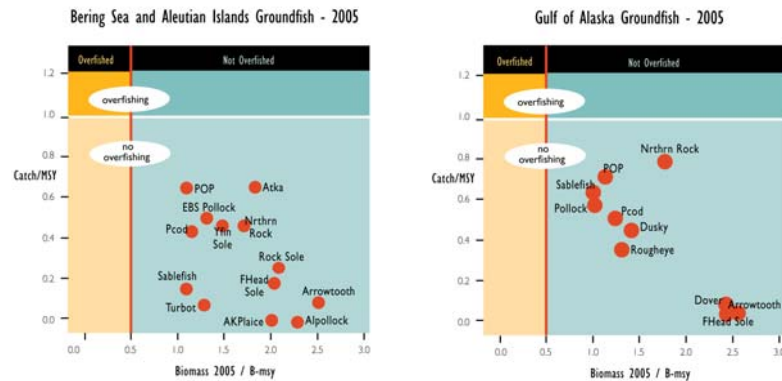
and potential competition for prey. These measures included incidental take limits, 3 nm no entry buffer zones, 10 nm no trawl zones around rookeries, 20 nm no pollock fishing zones, seasonal and spatial dispersal of pollock and mackerel fisheries, and a prohibition on the harvest of forage fish. In 2001, a comprehensive suite of protection measures was implemented through Council recommendation which closed over 58,000 square miles of ocean to fishing for certain species, or in some cases to all fishing activities, to reduce fish removals and fishing activities in Steller sea lion critical habitat areas throughout the Gulf of Alaska, Bering Sea, and Aleutian Islands.

What Makes Alaska Different?

Management of fisheries off Alaska is, by all accounts, a success story of biological and economic sustainability. The foundation for success has been the long-standing, precautionary approach embraced in the North Pacific, supported by an underpinning of sound science and a reliance on that science, and by a fishing industry supporting a priority toward long-term sustainability. Strict catch quotas for all managed species, coupled with an effective monitoring program, represent the forefront of the conservative management approach in the North Pacific. Since 1976, groundfish harvests have been maintained in the range of 3 to 5 billion pounds annually, and **no groundfish stocks are overfished**. Vast areas of the Bering Sea and Gulf of Alaska are closed to trawling, or in some cases to all fishing, to protect habitat, minimize bycatch, or minimize interactions with protected species such as Steller sea lions.

The Council's precautionary management approach is to apply judicious and responsible fisheries management practices, based on sound scientific research and analysis, proactively rather than reactively, to ensure the sustainability of fishery resources and associated ecosystems for the benefit of future, as well as current generations. The basic tenets of this approach include public participation, reliance on scientific research

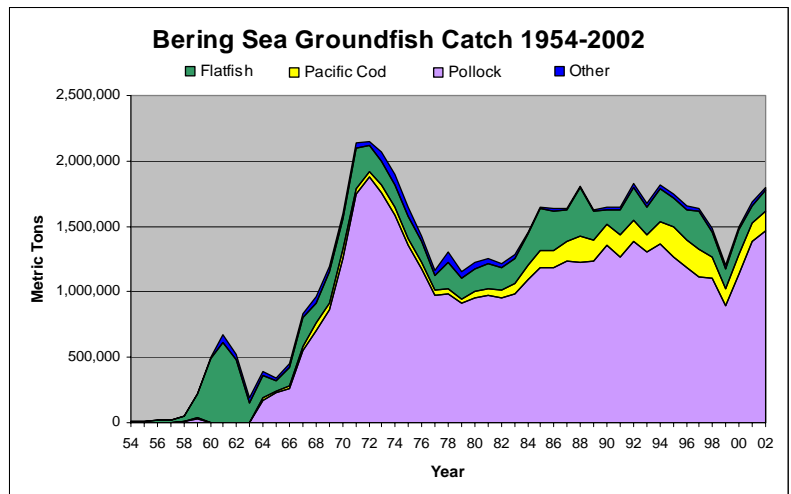
and advice, conservative catch quotas, comprehensive monitoring and enforcement, limits on bycatch of non-target species, marine protected areas, measures to protect marine mammals and seabirds, and other measures.



Status of groundfish stocks, showing catch rates well below 'overfishing' levels, and biomass well above 'overfished' levels.

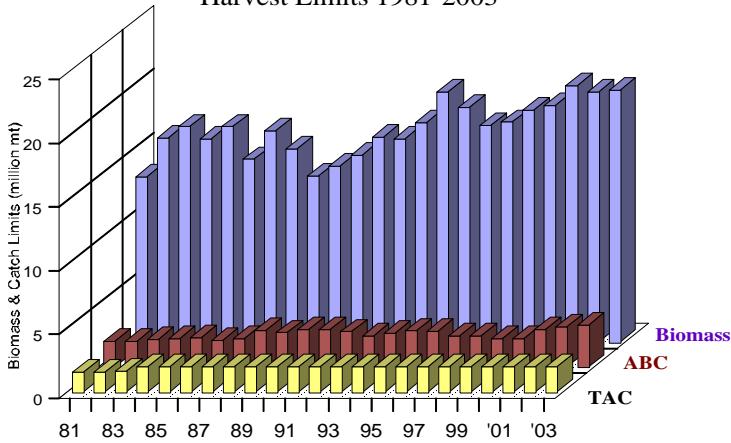
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Strict annual catch limits for every groundfish fishery are the foundation of the sustainable fisheries management approach in the North Pacific. A rigorous process in place for almost 30 years ensures that annual quotas are set at conservative, sustainable levels. Beginning with scientific data from regular groundfish abundance surveys, stock assessment scientists recommend acceptable biological catch (ABC) levels for each species. These are reviewed by the Council's Groundfish Plan Teams, then further reviewed by the Council's Scientific and



Statistical Committee, prior to the Council’s setting of the Total Allowable Catch (TAC), which is always set at or below the ABC, and far below the designated overfishing level.

Bering Sea/Aleutian Islands Groundfish
Harvest Limits 1981-2003



As an additional precautionary measure, the Bering Sea and Aleutian Islands quotas, for all groundfish combined, are capped at a maximum of 2 million metric tons (mt) annually, regardless of the maximum recommended ABC levels. For example, ABCs for the past several years have ranged from 3 to 4 million mt, yet TACs were reduced to stay within the 2 million mt cap. The Gulf of Alaska has a similar overall TAC cap. Catch of all species, whether targeted or taken as bycatch, whether retained or discarded, count toward the annual catch limits, and fisheries are closed when these limits are reached. This is one of the fundamental aspects of responsible management in the North Pacific groundfish fisheries.

These catch quotas are closely monitored to ensure accurate accounting on a real-time basis. At the core of the monitoring system is a comprehensive, industry-funded, on-board observer program, coupled with requirements for total weight measurement of most fish harvested. Except for small vessels less than 60 feet, all vessels fishing for groundfish in federal waters are required to carry observers, at their own expense, for at least a portion of their fishing time. The largest vessels, those over 125 feet, are generally required to carry observers 100% of the time, with multiple observers required on catcher/processors and in certain fisheries. Scales to weigh catch are also required on many of the larger vessels. Most shoreside processing plants are also required to have observers at all times, and to weigh all fish landed at each processing location. Observers estimate total catch weight, catch composition, and discards, and collect biological information critical to stock assessment. In excess of 36,000 observer days, by over 500 observers, are logged in these fisheries each year. In the North Pacific’s largest fishery, for walleye pollock, nearly 85% of the total catch is measured and sampled by observers, with 99% of the catcher/processor (factory trawler) harvest sampled by observers. Used in conjunction with reporting and weighing requirements, the information collected by observers provides the foundation for in-season management and for tracking species-specific catch and bycatch amounts.



The Council and NOAA Fisheries are currently developing amendments to the fishery management plans that are designed to better ensure ongoing collection and quality observer data. These amendments will examine alternative funding mechanisms (for example, a fee-based program instead of direct payment by vessels required to carry observers), and alternative service delivery models, all designed to allow fisheries managers to more effectively determine specific observer deployments by fishery and by vessel. Technological innovations, such as digital (video) observer applications, are also being evaluated by the Council and NOAA to potentially supplement onboard observers.

Enforcement of fishery regulations is accomplished by complementary efforts of NOAA and State enforcement agencies, and the U.S. Coast Guard, both on the grounds and dockside. As part of their patrol activities, the Coast Guard enforces a complex array of domestic regulations and international treaties, including enforcement of the maritime boundary and high seas driftnet violations. The Coast Guard also maintains its priority mission of search and rescue, a critical mission in all U.S. waters,

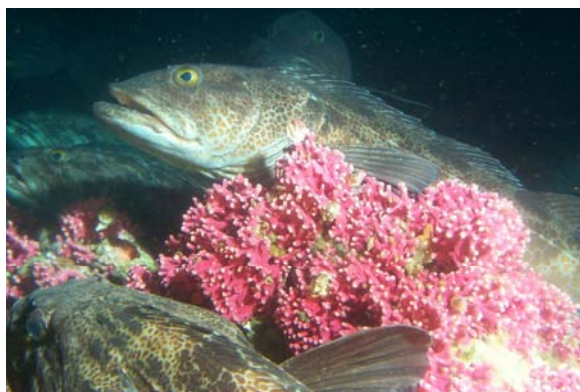
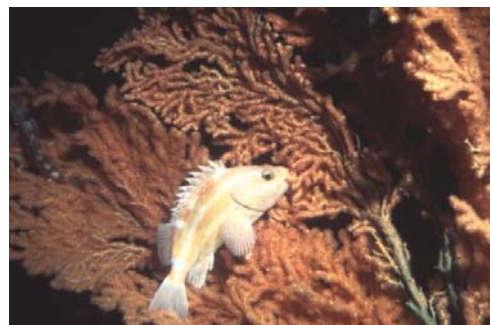
particular in the volatile Bering Sea. NOAA Enforcement also conducts patrols and investigations throughout coastal Alaska to enforce fisheries regulations and total catch limits.

The North Pacific region also enjoys one of the strongest science support structures of any region. The Alaska Fisheries Science Center conducts annual stock assessments in the North Pacific, and provides the information upon which annual catch quotas are set. The comprehensive North Pacific groundfish observer program also is managed through the Science Center, and biological and economic analyses of proposed actions often involve Science Center personnel. The Alaska Department of Fish and Game also administers an observer program for the crab fisheries, and provides stock assessment information and in-season management for the crab fisheries, as well as the scallop fisheries and some rockfish species.

Notwithstanding this success, the Council and NOAA Fisheries continue to develop new and innovative approaches to address issues such as bycatch, protecting habitat, overcapacity, and further development of ecosystem-oriented management approaches. In 2004 the Council and NOAA Fisheries completed a comprehensive assessment of its overall management programs through approval of a programmatic supplemental environmental impact statement (PSEIS). This process included adoption of revised goals and objectives for the groundfish FMPs, which further strengthen the precautionary, ecosystem-based approach to management.

Progress towards Ecosystem-based management

The North Pacific Fishery Management Council has a long track record of making precautionary fishery management decisions, and has continued developing its ecosystem-based approach. The approach is built upon four goals: 1) maintain biodiversity consistent with natural evolutionary and ecological processes, including dynamic change and variability; 2) maintain and restore habitats essential for fish and prey; 3) maintain system sustainability and sustainable yields for human consumption and non-extractive uses; and 4) maintain the concept that humans are part of the ecosystem.

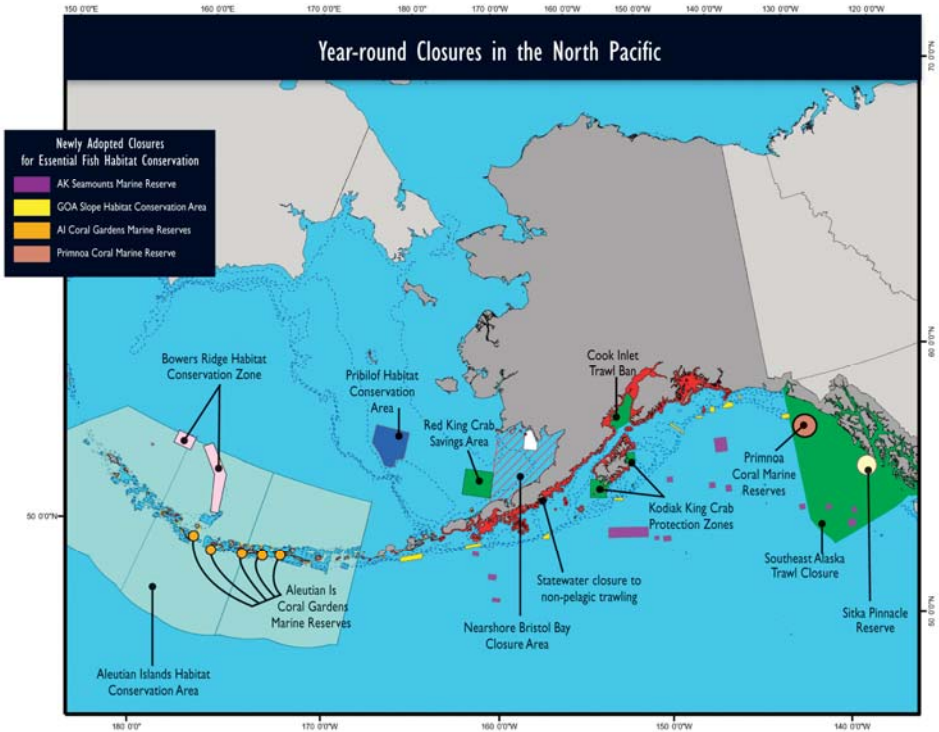


The existing Alaska Groundfish FMPs contain many components of fishery ecosystem plans, or an ecosystem approach to management. Specific measures have been taken to minimize potential impacts to marine mammals, seabirds, and other components of the Alaska marine ecosystem. Major measures include limits on total removals from the system, a prohibition on directed fishing for forage fish species, seabird deterrent devices to minimize incidental bycatch of seabirds, a variety of measures to protect Steller sea lions from disturbance and

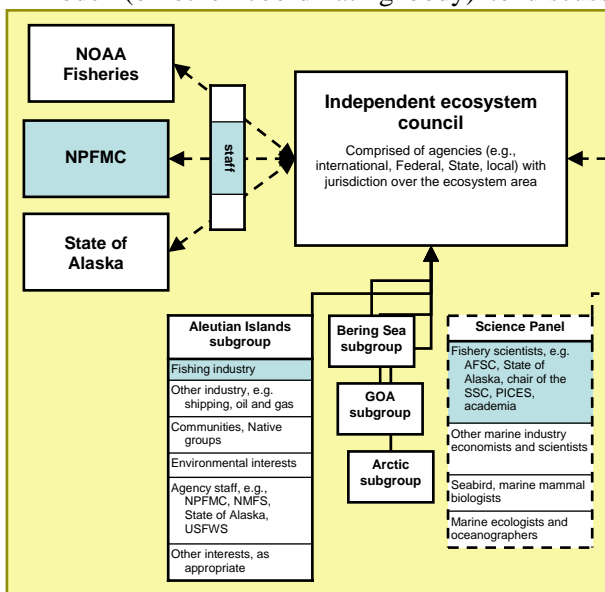
potential competition with prey, and quasi marine reserves to conserve benthic biodiversity. However, recent recommendations from the U.S. Commission on Ocean Policy, and NOAA's own internal initiatives, underscore the need to even more explicitly incorporate ecosystem considerations in management of all U.S. fisheries.

In February 2005, the Council took significant action to identify and conserve essential fish habitat (EFH) from potential adverse effects of fishing. A 2,500+ page scientific analysis was prepared to evaluate the total impacts of fishing on EFH, and evaluate alternatives to describe and conserve EFH from fishing

impacts. Although the analysis concluded that fisheries do have long term effects on habitat, these impacts were considered minimal and would not have detrimental effects on fish populations or their habitats. Nevertheless, continuing with its long history of precautionary, ecosystem-based management policy, the Council adopted several new and significant measures to conserve EFH. Specifically, to protect deep-water corals, the Council took action to prohibit all bottom trawling in the Aleutian Islands, except in small discrete 'open' areas. Over 95% of the Aleutian Islands management area will be closed to bottom trawling (277,100 nm²) and about 4% (12,423 nm²) will remain open. Additional bottom trawl closures were created in the Gulf of Alaska. Further, on the Alaska seamounts, and in areas with especially high density coral and sponge habitat, the Council voted to close these areas to all bottom contact fishing gear (longlines, pots, trawls, etc.). As a result, these areas will essentially be considered 'marine reserves'. While pelagic fishing would be allowed in these areas, none is anticipated, so resource extraction will be nil in the areas.



The North Pacific Council, through its newly constituted Ecosystem Committee, is actively pursuing additional avenues to further and more explicitly implement an ecosystem approach to management, both at a fisheries-specific level (EAF), and at a broader level addressing non-fishing considerations (EAM). Given the unique environment and management context of the Aleutian Islands ecosystem, the Council is planning to use this area as a test case for development of a separate Fishery Ecosystem Plan (FEP), and for development of an Ecosystem-Approach to Management (EAM) using a regional ecosystem council model (or other coordinating body) to discuss and exchange information on fishery and non-fishery



activities. The Aleutian Islands FEP is in the developmental stages and we anticipate a draft later this year. Details of the FEP, including possible designation of an Aleutian Island Plan Team, are still being developed at this time. Council staff is also involved with a NOAA internal working group to draft national guidelines for implementing the ecosystem approach to fisheries. The Councils support the development of such guidelines, as a guiding strategic document for the FMPs, rather than explicit statutory requirements at this time. The Council is also in discussions with other State and Federal agencies regarding the larger ecosystem coordination issues, and is planning to hold a workshop with the State of Alaska and NOAA fisheries later this year to determine how best to coordinate the broader ecosystem approach.

How is Science Integrated?

The Council has an active Scientific and Statistical Committee (SSC) that reviews all analytical documents prepared for each management change. The SSC consists of biologists, economists, and social scientists from academia and federal and state agencies. The SSC meets five times per year, concurrent with and at the same location as the Council meetings. In addition to providing comments to analysts, the SSC makes recommendations to the Council on the adequacy of analytical documents relative to the best available scientific information, including biological, economic, and social impact analyses. The SSC also reviews development of models and other analytical approaches for understanding impacts of fishery measures. Further, the SSC provides recommendations on priority areas for research.

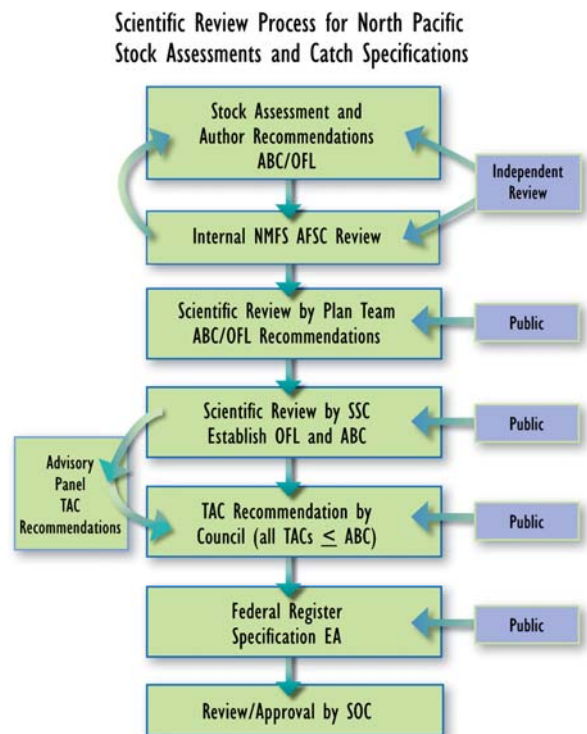
The scientific review process used by the Council is multi-tiered and robust. For example, stock assessments and acceptable biological catch limits undergo a thorough internal review by the Alaska Fisheries Science Center. Each year, a couple of these assessment models are further reviewed by the Center for Independent Experts. Once completed by NOAA Fisheries scientists, the assessments are scientifically reviewed by the Plan Teams, consisting of federal, state, and university scientists. The SSC has final scientific review authority for the assessments. The Council then approves the Stock Assessment and Fishery Evaluation Report for public distribution, and adopts the SSC's recommendations for Acceptable Biological Catch limits (ABCs). Total Allowable Catch levels (TACs) are then established by the Council with the SSC recommended ABCs as an upper bound. Because this process has worked so successfully, we have not made any additional changes to the existing scientific review process.

The Council also coordinates with the recently formed North Pacific Research Board (NPRB) and other governmental and academic research organizations to identify priority areas for funding of proposed research activities. Through direct membership and participation on the NPRB, and through annual reviews of funded research, the Council maintains a close working relationship with the scientific research community and is regularly apprised of pertinent scientific information.

Regional Issues and Challenges

The Council's basic precautionary approach to management cuts across all FMPs and geographic regions under our jurisdiction. The comprehensive goals and objectives (recently revised in the PSEIS process) pertain to both the Bering Sea/Aleutian Islands and the Gulf of Alaska FMPs. While these basic tenants apply to all areas we manage, there are some regional differences and specific regional challenges that are currently being addressed by the Council.

The Bering Sea fisheries can be characterized as more industrial in nature than fisheries in the Gulf of Alaska, and are dominated in volume and value by the enormous pollock resource. While the pollock



Flow chart depicting the scientific review process for stock assessments and establishment of catch specifications in the North Pacific region. Catch specifications include the overfishing level (OFL), the acceptable biological catch level (ABC), and total allowable catch limits (TAC), where $TAC < ABC < OFL$.

fishery is operating under a fully rationalized system established by the American Fisheries Act and the Council, other groundfish fisheries are in need of further rationalization programs, beyond the basic limited entry programs currently in place. Cod fisheries are a significant resource for a number of user groups and the Council is in the process of re-evaluating the current allocations among gear types, and considering even more discrete allocations to more narrowly defined user (gear) groups. The Council is addressing bycatch and discard issues by imposing minimum groundfish retention standards, and in conjunction with that initiative is developing a program of fishery cooperatives for the non-AFA catcher processors (the head and gut or H&G fleet) which we expect to approve later this year. The Council will also be considering further measures with regard to essential fish habitat and habitat areas of particular concern in the Bering Sea, in addition to the measures recently approved for the Gulf of Alaska and Aleutian Islands areas.

Gulf of Alaska groundfish fisheries are characterized by more numerous, smaller vessels, lower overall resource abundance, direct ties to a greater number of coastal communities, and a greater number of user groups/constituencies (gear groups, coastal communities, sport fisheries, etc). Fisheries in the Southeast area of Alaska are primarily fixed gear (longlining for halibut and sablefish, or salmon troll fisheries), and state water salmon fisheries. This area, along with areas in the Central Gulf of Alaska, also has an important recreational fishery component, primarily for salmon and halibut. Management of the guided sport fishery for halibut (charter boat fishery) is under Council jurisdiction and we have approved both a guideline harvest level (GHL) program for that fishery, and a charter boat IFQ program which, if approved by the Secretary, would incorporate this fishery into the existing IFQ program for halibut. Halibut is also critical to subsistence users and the Council and NOAA have approved and implemented regulations recognizing and protecting subsistence use of the halibut resource.



The most significant program currently under development by the Council, and one of the most challenging, is focused on a comprehensive rationalization of the Gulf of Alaska groundfish fisheries, which would apply primarily to Central and Western Gulf fisheries. Recognizing the operational and economic benefits of Bering Sea rationalization programs, and coupled with the logistical challenges posed by the numerous Steller sea lion restrictive measures in the Gulf of Alaska, the Council is attempting to develop some type of quota-based, cooperative style program for Gulf fisheries. Working closely with the State of Alaska and the State Board of Fisheries, this is an ambitious program with numerous competing constituencies and overlapping jurisdictions with regard to state waters inside three miles. Completion of the environmental impact statement (EIS) required for this program will not occur until sometime in 2006, with actual implementation not likely until at least 2008.

Lessons for Reauthorization

The subcommittee has expressed interest in what lessons can be learned from the management approach in the North Pacific, and how those lessons might inform reauthorization of the Magnuson-Stevens Act. In summary, I believe our overall management program illustrates that the current Magnuson-Stevens Act contains the necessary tools for successful, sustainable fisheries management. Strengthening the existing tools, or imposing requirements to use the existing tools, may be necessary in the reauthorization process but it does not appear that significant new requirements are necessary at this time. Below I provide a brief summary related to some of the primary reauthorization issues.

Ecosystem approach to management: Regarding ecosystem approaches to fisheries management, we believe that we have long been using an ecosystem approach to fisheries management, as are many of the other regional Councils, but that a more explicit recognition and application of this approach may be warranted. We believe that development of national guidelines is appropriate, which would then be used as strategic guidance (rather than as regulatory requirements) for implementation of specific regulatory programs through the existing FMPs. We believe that extreme caution should be exercised with regard to specific statutory requirements for fishery ecosystem plans, until we have some experience with voluntary, pilot projects regarding fishery ecosystem plans, and some experience with collaborative efforts on the broader EAM front. The North Pacific has long embraced this approach and is working hard to more explicitly incorporate that approach in our management programs.

Improving science in management: Regarding the integration of science and management, we believe that the North Pacific model clearly illustrates (1) the importance of closely linking science and management; (2) the ability of the existing SSC structure and process to provide the nexus between science and management by the regional Councils; and, (3) the flaw in the argument to somehow separate science and management (allocation) decisions. We believe that the integration of science in management works very well in the North Pacific, and we are very concerned that changes could be imposed on that process, in order to address other regional problems. We also believe that any potential new requirements for ‘independent peer review’ of data and analyses needs to be considered carefully, given the additional cost and time implications and given the ability of the current SSC process (or similar existing processes) to provide quality, objective peer review of the majority of information used by the Council and NOAA fisheries.

IFQs or other DAP programs: Regarding individual quota programs, or other dedicated access privileges (DAP) such as fishery cooperatives, we believe that multiple programs currently operational in the North Pacific (or pending such as Bering Sea crab) illustrate the benefits of ‘rationalized’ fisheries. We also believe that these programs reflect the differences among fisheries and regions, and underscore the need for maximum flexibility in designing these programs. In the halibut and sablefish IFQ program, in place since 1995, the Council included numerous provisions in the program design, such as restrictions on transfers across vessel categories and restrictive share caps, in order to maintain the important social and community fabric of those fisheries. The pollock fishery cooperative system, and to some degree the crab IFQ/IPQ program, are designed to reflect the more industrial nature of those fisheries, though in the case of the crab IFQ/IPQ program there are still, for example, regional delivery provisions which were designed to protect existing community involvement in those fisheries. Programs currently under development, such as the Gulf of Alaska rationalization program, will require a different set of provisions to address the specific regional, social, economic, and fishery conditions.

Reconciling statutes: The development of fishery management programs, and the review and approval process, is overly complicated, takes way too long, and often is not user-friendly to the public and to the fishing industry. This is primarily due to the number of often redundant and overlapping statutory requirements, including the National Environmental Policy Act (NEPA), the Regulatory Flexibility Act, the National Marine Sanctuary Act, the Endangered Species Act, the Marine Mammal Protection Act, the Magnuson-Stevens Act, and numerous additional Acts and Executive Orders. In the North Pacific, our close working relationship with NOAA Fisheries Alaska Region and Science Center has been crucial to our ability to successfully implement our core management measures, as well as many innovative, cutting-edge management programs. And that close coordination has allowed us to do so, for the most part, while still addressing the myriad statutes and executive orders that apply to fisheries management actions. However, while the Councils and NOAA Fisheries have made substantial progress over the past few years in terms of ‘streamlining’ this regulatory process, and reducing litigation, we strongly believe that there needs to be some Congressional action to clarify and reconcile the competing statutes. Our

ability to design, analyze, and implement complicated DAP programs in particular is hindered by the redundant applications of several statutes.

Particularly, the application of NEPA to fishery plan and regulation development, and to some degree the Regulatory Flexibility Act, are impeding our ability to develop realistic, practical management solutions in a timely manner. For example, specific provisions could be made to the Magnuson-Stevens Act which would capture the underlying intent of basic NEPA provisions, and reinstate the Magnuson-Stevens Act as the primary Act governing fisheries management, with the necessary environmental and conservation protections built directly into the Act. Specific recommendations in this regard have been developed by the eight regional councils and include requirements for considering a range of alternatives, requirements for cumulative impact assessment, and additional requirements for public review and input.

Mr. Chairman, there are a number of other issues we could discuss today, but I believe that I have covered the basic management approach used in the North Pacific, and covered the primary issues we see in the upcoming Magnuson-Stevens Act reauthorization. I thank you again for the opportunity to comment on these issues, and further apprise you of our management approach and specific issues here in the North Pacific. We stand ready to help in any way we can as you are further shaping important changes to the Act, and to respond to those changes when they are finalized.

