

North Pacific Fishery Management Council

News and Notes



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GOA Groundfish Rationalization

The Council reviewed the Gulf of Alaska Rationalization Community Committee report and staff annotated motion, which summarized the changes recommended by the committee to refine options for two programs intended to benefit Gulf communities under Gulf groundfish rationalization. The committee met on March 30 to discuss the design and implementation issues associated with the Community Fisheries Quota (CFQ) Program and the Community Purchase Program (CPP). These programs are proposed for inclusion in either of the Council's primary Gulf rationalization action alternatives.

Upon review of the report and annotated motion, the Council approved the majority of the committee's recommended changes to the current options, with several modifications. Under the CFQ Program, these include: clarifying the mechanism by which the initial allocation of CFQ would be made to the administrative entity if more than one entity is formed; refining the eligibility criteria to include commercial groundfish fishing participation; clarifying the options to restrict the use of lease proceeds; and requiring that the annual report be submitted both to NMFS and the Council. A similar change to the reporting requirement was added to the CPP.

Additionally, the Council requested that staff provide community groundfish catch data (excluding IFQ sablefish) at a subsequent Council meeting. After reviewing the catch data, a minimum landing threshold may be added to the options to address community groundfish dependency. The Council also recommended the continued work of the committee when additional data is available. The March 30 committee report, June 2005 Council motion, and revised suite of elements and options for the community provisions are provided on the Council website. Staff contact on GOA community provisions is Nicole Kimball.

Staff also provided the Council with a preliminary data report showing participation in and catch from the different Gulf management areas by gear type. Data showed the division of catch between State waters (0 nm to 3 nm) and Federal waters (3 nm to 200 nm). The Council took no action on the alternatives at this meeting, but requested that staff provide additional information concerning participation for the October meeting. Staff also intends to provide the Council with a more extensive analysis of various options in the

program alternatives at the October meeting. Staff contact is Mark Fina.

The Council reviewed a staff discussion paper on proposed methodology for establishing trigger limits and closure areas for PSC species. The alternatives under consideration for *C. Bairdi* Tanner crab were used as an example for overlaying information and highlighting where clarifications were necessary. The Council provided direction for the analysis, indicating that trigger limits should be separated by gear type and focusing these limits on biomass-based approaches to the extent possible. The Council also provided direction regarding the additional information and emphasis necessary for the analysis of trigger limits, closure areas and hot spot management for all PSC species. The Tanner crab alternative was further revised to specify which gear types would be under consideration in the triggered closures. Staff intends to provide additional information on crab and salmon PSC species under consideration at the October meeting. Staff contact is Diana Stram.

Austin and Nelson leaving the Council

During the April meeting a reception was held to say goodbye and to roast and toast the departing Council members, Hazel Nelson and Dennis Austin. Mr. Austin served on the Council as the Washington Department of Fish and Game representative for 8 years. Ms. Nelson of the Bristol Bay Economic Development Corporation has served on the Council for 3 years and was a member of the Advisory Panel for 9. Both Nelson and Austin participated in the Council process through various committees, and we thank them both for their outstanding contributions to the conservation and management of our fisheries.

Plan Team Appointments

The Council appointed Dan Lew to the Bering Sea Plan Team, Ward Testa to the Gulf of Alaska Plan team, and Jie Zheng to the Scallop Plan Team. Dr. Lew is an economist with the Resource Ecology and Fisheries Management Division of NMFS, Dr. Testa is a Research Wildlife Biologist with the National Marine Mammal Laboratory, and Dr. Zheng is a fisheries scientist with the Alaska Department of Fish and Game.

IR/IU

At this meeting, the Council conducted a preliminary review of the Amendment 80 EA/RIR/IRFA and determined that further analysis is needed before the document is released for public review. Staff received comments from the SSC, AP, and the Council concerning a range of issues. Some of the major issues the SSC would like to see in the analysis are:

- An overview of the allocation of TAC for species included in the proposed action;
- Expand the discussion on the impacts of PSC allocations to the Non-AFA Trawl Catcher Processor sector to other sectors;
- Include a discussion on alternatives for addressing the problem statement;
- Include a discussion of the potential impacts of the BSAI non-pollock groundfish catcher processor buyback program on the proposed action;
- Additional motivation for the proposed structure of the monitoring program; and
- Additional discussion of the information that NMFS needs about privately negotiated within-cooperative agreements

During staff presentations and public testimony, a number of issues concerning the proposed action were highlighted as needing further clarification. The Council addressed these clarifications, using the recommendations of the AP as its starting point, by modifying a number of components and options under consideration. Some of the more significant changes included:

Component 2 – The Council expanded the options for CDQ allocations of secondary groundfish species (except Pacific cod) taken incidental to the primary allocated species.

Component 3 – The Council expanded the options for LLP permits associated with trawl catcher vessel that have not participated in the BSAI groundfish fisheries during the 1995 to 2004 period. LLP permits with trawl and BSAI endorsements that do not meet the eligibility requirements will not be able to participate in the directed fishery for the five allocated species under Amendment 80.

Component 6 – The Council added a new PSC allocation suboption that would be allocated PSC based on the PSC taken in the sector's directed fishery for the allocated primary species and Pacific cod. The Council also clarified that PSC allocation under Suboption 6.1.2 would be made only for the allocated primary species and Pacific cod.

Components 7 and 8 – The Council adjusted these two components so that eligibility in the Non-AFA Trawl CP sector is separate from cooperative eligibility. Sector eligibility has been determined by the language in the BSAI non-pollock groundfish catcher processor buyback program. Options for cooperative eligibility were expanded to include more recent years. The Council also added a requirement that any cooperative must be comprised of at least two separate entities. Finally, the Council added a new option that would allow cooperative formation with at least 15 percent of the eligible licenses.

Component 11 – The Council identified specific holdings cap. A persons holdings would be limited to 20 percent, 30 percent, or 50 percent of the sector's allocation on a species-by-species basis under the proposed options.

Component 12 – The Council clarified the sideboard options for the GOA. These options include sideboards for those species that close on TAC in the GOA (POP, PSR, NR, and Pacific cod) and sideboards for qualified Non-AFA Trawl CP sector for halibut PSC usage in the GOA. The Council also added an option to create participation thresholds for eligibility for GOA flatfish fisheries. Non-AFA Trawl Catcher Processor vessels would be required to exceed a weekly participation threshold in the GOA flatfish fisheries during the qualifying period to be eligible to participate in the those fisheries.

Other Elements of Amendment 80 – The Council included an option to make annual allocations transferable among cooperatives.

Initial review of the Amendment 80 package will occur in October 2005 and final action in December 2005. A complete copy of the Amendment 80 components and options as updated through the June meeting appears on the Council website. Staff contact is Jon McCracken.

Fishery Interaction Team

The Council received a report from the NMFS Alaska Fisheries Science Center's Fishery Interaction Team (FIT) on the status of studies of Alaskan groundfish fishery interactions with endangered Steller sea lions. For the past several years, the FIT has focused on studies of Pacific cod, Atka mackerel, and pollock which are important prey items for Steller sea lions. Libby Logerwell and Liz Connors reported that the FIT will discontinue the studies of pollock in Barnabas and Chiniak troughs near Kodiak until NOAA research vessel time is available and also the studies of Pacific cod near Cape Sarichef. The FIT requested Council, SSC, and AP suggestions for continuing these studies elsewhere or conducting other kinds of studies. The FIT will take these suggestions and develop study plans for future research on fishery interactions with the marine ecosystems of the North Pacific.

The pollock fishery closure of Chiniak Trough will not be in effect during 2005, as that study will not take place in 2005. The Council asked NMFS to rescind the May 15-31 Pacific cod fishery closure at Cape Sarichef for 2006. The FIT will present options for future fishery interaction studies, and possible fishing closures, at a later date. Staff contact is Bill Wilson.

Observer Program

The Council reviewed a preliminary analysis for an FMP amendment to restructure the funding and deployment mechanism in the North Pacific Groundfish Observer Program. Under the new system, NMFS would contract directly with observer providers for observer coverage, and this would be supported by a user fee and/or Federal funding. The problem statement identifies the data quality and disproportionate cost issues resulting from the current program structure. These include the inability of NMFS to determine when and where observers are deployed in the <100% covered fisheries, the inflexible nature of coverage levels fixed in regulation, the disproportionate cost issues among the various fishing fleets, and the difficulty in responding to evolving data and management needs in individual fisheries under the current program structure.

The alternatives and options proposed in the analysis range from including only Gulf groundfish vessels in the new program to including all vessels and processors operating in the Federal fisheries of the North Pacific. These alternatives were developed through several Council and Observer Advisory Committee (OAC) meetings, and originally focused only on implementing a new program for the Gulf of Alaska, where the data quality and disproportionate cost concerns were most acute. Over time, due to agency concerns with a hybrid program, several new alternatives were approved for analysis which included various fleets in the BSAI, and eventually all fisheries in the BSAI and GOA. This step-wise approach in developing the suite of alternatives resulted in a myriad of alternatives and options that were difficult to compare and contrast and included options that were likely not feasible.

Upon review of the analysis, the Council requested that staff incorporate the SSC and AP recommendations as practicable, which includes the OAC recommendations from its May 12 - 13 meeting. One of the primary recommendations of the SSC was to consider simplifying the alternatives to those that are feasible. The Council approved a motion to reorganize the alternatives as follows:

- Alt. 1: No action (existing program expires Dec. 31, 2007)
- Alt. 2: Permanent rollover of existing program with no change to the service delivery model
- Alt. 3: New ex-vessel value fee program for GOA groundfish (vessels and processors) and all halibut vessels. Rollover of existing program in BSAI.
- Alt. 4: New ex-vessel value fee program for all Tier 3 and 4 fisheries (less than 100% coverage) in GOA and BSAI. Rollover of existing program for all Tier 1 and 2 fisheries (100% or greater coverage) in GOA and BSAI. (Major decision point involves dividing line between Tier 2 and Tier 3 fisheries for CPs <125' and CVs ≥125'.)
- Alt. 5: New fee program for all fisheries. Tiers 3 and 4 (less than 100% coverage) would be funded by an ex-vessel value fee program. Tiers 1 and 2 (100% or greater coverage) would be funded by a daily observer fee.

The Council's motion incorporates many additions for the initial review draft, including but not limited to: placing all <125' catcher processors in Tier 3 for purposes of the analysis; an examination of the coverage requirements in the CDQ fisheries;

further analysis of the observer insurance issue; and modifying the primary cost tables to express costs as a percentage of gross revenues for all sectors. In addition, the Council emphasized that it is difficult to adequately evaluate the impacts of the alternatives without resolution of the observer compensation and overtime pay issues.

The Council requested that the OAC meet prior to Council initial review of and final action on the analysis. Initial review is scheduled for February 2006. The Council Chair will also evaluate whether all affected sectors are adequately represented on the committee, specifically, the <60' catcher vessel sector. The OAC report is on the Council website. Staff contact is Nicole Kimball.

Crab Management

The Council received an update on issues discussed during the recent Crab Plan Team meeting May 16-18th at the AFSC in Seattle, WA. Among the issues covered by the Crab Plan Team during that time period were snow crab abundance estimates, the summer research survey, revised overfishing definitions amendment and the role of the plan team in providing peer review. The Council endorsed the team's change to their terms of reference to function as part of the peer review process for reviewing stock status. The Council also endorsed the SSC's request for additional membership on the team. The amendment to revise the current overfishing definitions for BSAI king and Tanner crab stocks is scheduled for initial review by the Council in April 2006. The team will meet again in September to discuss the status of stocks and to compile the annual SAFE report. Details for the Crab Plan Team fall meeting will be posted on the Council's website. Staff contact is Diana Stram.

CDQ Program

The Council received a status report on the draft analysis for a regulatory amendment to change the management of the CDQ groundfish reserves in the BSAI. The alternatives for the amendment are organized under five primary issues: 1) which BSAI groundfish species or groups would be allocated to the CDQ Program; 2) which BSAI groundfish species or groups would be allocated to individual CDQ groups; 3) determine the process to annually modify the list of species allocated to individual CDQ groups; 4) determine whether the CDQ groups would be allowed to form cooperatives and pool their allocations for purposes of quota management and monitoring; and 5) determine whether CDQ groups would be allowed to transfer groundfish CDQ between groups at any time during the year, thus allowing a CDQ group to cover an overage of its allocated groundfish quota. The comprehensive list of alternatives and options for this amendment is on the Council website.

Upon review of the issues and alternatives being considered, the Council requested that NMFS proceed with the analysis as proposed, for initial review in October 2005. Council staff is Nicole Kimball.

BSAI Salmon

The Council took initial review of an EA/RIR/IRFA for proposed Amendment 84 to modify the existing bycatch reduction measures for Chinook and chum salmon in the BSAI groundfish FMP. The analysis examines the environmental and economic impacts of the existing regulatory salmon savings area closures as well as alternatives to repeal or suspend the closures and allow the pollock fleet to use their hot spot management system to avoid salmon bycatch. The Council endorsed the request by the SSC for the inclusion of additional information to expand upon the existing analysis prior to it being released for public review. The Council also added an option to the existing alternative 3 with the intent that this option will be included in the public review draft. The following is the existing alternative 3 with the Council changes in **bold**.

Alternative 3: Suspend the regulatory salmon savings area closures and allow pollock cooperatives and CDQ groups to utilize their voluntary rolling hot spot closure system to avoid salmon bycatch.

Option 1: Reimpose regulatory salmon savings closures if reported non-compliance with agreement merits expedited action

Option 2: Maintain the regulatory salmon savings area triggers and closures but participants in a cooperative voluntary rolling hotspot closure (VRHS) system would be exempted from compliance with savings area closures. This exemption is subject to Council approval and review of the effectiveness of a VRHS system.

Suboption(applies to option 2): Extend the exemption to the chum salmon savings area closure to vessels in the trawl cod and/or flatfish targets.

The Council requested that the suboption to option 2 be added provided it would not delay the public review draft of the amendment package. The Council further specified that in addition to the inclusion of SSC comments for the public review draft, the analysis shall include the contribution of the cod trawl and flatfish vessels to the chum salmon bycatch totals in the CVOA. This analysis is scheduled for final action at the October meeting. The public review draft will be available on the Council website later this summer.

The Council requested a review of salmon population abundance and assessment information at the October meeting as well as an update on the status of efforts by some western Alaskan groups to develop a cooperative research plan. In October, the Council will also discuss the status and initiation of amendment package B, which includes alternatives to analyze new regulatory savings area closures as well as individual vessel accountability programs. The Council motion as well as information relating to amendment package B may be found on the Council website. Staff contact is Diana Stram.

GOA Groundfish Other species

The Council took final action on an EA/RIR/IRFA for Amendment 69 to modify the Total Allowable Catch (TAC) calculation for the other species complex for the Gulf of Alaska groundfish FMP. Currently there is no OFL or ABC specified for the other species complex, and the TAC for the complex is fixed as 5% of the sum of the target species TACs in the GOA. Concerns were raised regarding the potential to increase the harvest of specific members of the complex, particularly following the removal of individual species to target categories. The other species complex contains the following species: squid, sculpins, sharks and octopus. As currently configured, the other species complex is open to directed fishing up to the TAC for the complex.

The following three alternatives, including one sub-option, were examined in the analysis:

Alternative 1: Status Quo. TAC for the other species complex is fixed at 5% of the sum of the target groundfish TACs.

Alternative 2: Set the other species complex TAC at less than or equal to 5% of the sum of the target species TACs.

Alternative 3: Set the other species complex TAC at a level anticipated to meet incidental catch in other directed fisheries throughout the fishing year.

Sub-option: Revise the maximum retainable amount for the other species complex by fishery. Three alternative means of revising MRAs were provided in the analysis.

The Council selected Alternative 2, Suboption B as the preferred alternative. This alternative allows for flexibility in establishing TAC at or below 5% of the sum of the target TACs with the possibility for some directed fishing allowed on the complex. Suboption B revises the current MRAs for other species in all fisheries to be equal to 20 percent. This sub option changes the MRA for the other species in the arrowtooth fishery only (all other fisheries are already at 20%). TAC for the other species complex in the GOA will be specified in the annual specifications process. This action is intended as an interim step prior to Council action on a more broad-based revision of the other species complex management in both the GOA and BSAI, which is anticipated for 2006. Staff contact is Diana Stram.

Steller Sea Lions

The Council indicated its intent to begin an evaluation of information relative to initiating formal Section 7 consultations and preparation of a new Biological Opinion on groundfish fishery interactions with the Steller sea lion (SSL). The Council requested staff prepare a discussion document that outlines the issues that could be considered including new scientific information on SSLs, results from fishery interaction studies, a possible draft SSL recovery plan later this year, possible time lines for initiating and developing a new Biological Opinion, staff availability, and other relevant information. The Council intends to review this issue further during their October meeting. Staff contact is Bill Wilson.

BSAI Pacific cod allocations

The Council reviewed two discussion papers related to the components and options to revise the allocations of BSAI Pacific cod to all participating gear sectors (trawl, hook-and-line, pot, and jig). The first paper outlined a concept related to the seasonal apportionment of the proposed BSAI Pacific cod allocations that the Council discussed in April. The paper explored options to maintain the current seasonal harvest distribution between the fixed and trawl gear sectors during the first half of the year (Jan. 1 – June 10), and apply any changes in the overall gear sector allocations resulting from the amendment to the second half of the year (June 10 – Dec. 31). The purpose was to consider an option to revise the allocations that would mirror historical use, given that the quota that comprises the adjustment in allocations is quota that is ‘rolled over’ from the trawl to the fixed gear sector in the second half of the year.

Although the proposed concept would not change the percentage of the ITAC harvested by either the trawl or fixed gear sector in the first half of the year, it would necessarily modify the seasonal apportionments currently authorized under Federal regulations. Staff was directed to work with NMFS, Protected Resources Division, to determine if this concept would be likely to trigger a formal re-consultation on Steller sea lions, as the current seasonal apportionments were part of the mitigation measures consulted on in the 2001 Biological Opinion.

The Council reviewed the staff discussion paper as well as a letter from NMFS summarizing its preliminary response to the proposed approach. NMFS noted that the concept is unlikely to trigger a formal re-consultation, as it would effectively implement in regulation the observed fishery as it has occurred given reallocated quota between seasons and gear types and as has been considered in previous consultations. Upon review, the Council amended its current components and options to include this approach. In addition, the Council added an option to revise the current seasonal apportionments to the jig sector and removed three options to determine the sectors’ allocations of Pacific cod in the Aleutian Islands, should the BSAI TAC be split into a BS and AI TAC in a future specifications process.

The second paper reviewed by the Council outlined alternative inseason management measures, as presented by Andrew Smoker, NMFS Sustainable Fisheries Division. This paper was requested by the Council in April, relative to the types of potential management tools available to inseason managers to control and monitor the more refined BSAI Pacific cod sector allocations that may result from the amendment. The Council expressed the need to avoid closing fisheries in which cod may occur as incidental catch, mitigate the risk of approaching the overfishing level, and prevent a situation in which one sector’s actions would pre-empt another sector’s fisheries. Upon review of the paper, the Council requested that the analysis include a discussion of specific management priorities and tools identified by the Council.

The June Council motion and the revised components and options for analysis are provided on the Council’s website. Staff contact is Nicole Kimball.

Ecosystem Management

Ecosystem Committee

The Council’s Ecosystem Committee met on Thursday, June 2. The Committee’s agenda and minutes are posted on the website (www.fakr.noaa.gov/npfmc) under the ‘Ecosystem’ current issues topic. The Committee’s recommendations on Aleutian Islands area-specific management, and the Council’s role in developing an ecosystem approach to management, were adopted by the Council. These projects are discussed below.

Aleutian Islands Fishery Ecosystem Plan

Based on a discussion paper on area-specific management in the Aleutian Islands, the Council decided to further examine the development of an AI Fishery Ecosystem Plan (FEP). The Council will receive a report in October about the possible contents and structure of an AI FEP, including an assessment of what information is already available in existing analyses such as the Groundfish PSEIS and the EFH EIS. Also, the Council will look at the process involved in creating a FEP, including the potential designation of an AI Ecosystem Plan Team. Staff will continue to work with the Ecosystem Committee on this issue.

The Council also adopted a purpose and need statement for the action, which expresses the Council’s intent to continue to pursue an ecosystem approach to fisheries in Alaska, and considers the Aleutian Islands ecosystem as a unique environment that would benefit from continued implementation of an ecosystem approach. The full purpose and need statement may be found on the Council’s website.

Ecosystem Councils

The Council also opted to explore the idea of an ecosystem council, or similar regional collaboration, to move forward with a broader ecosystem approach to management (EAM). An EAM considers interactions among multiple ecosystem activities and ecological processes, and is intended to bring together both fishery and non-fishery jurisdictions for purposes of dialogue and information exchange. The Council Chair will pursue setting up a public workshop, co-hosted in partnership with the State of Alaska and NOAA Fisheries, to develop the idea of such a council. The Council supports identifying the Aleutian Islands as a pilot ecosystem area for this approach. The Council also identified a preliminary preferred structure, which is described on the Council’s website, to focus initial discussion during the workshop, with the understanding that it will likely be modified through the public process. The workshop will involve all interested collaborating agencies and area stakeholders, and if possible, may take place prior to the October Council meeting. Information on the workshop will be updated on the Council website as it becomes available.

Staff contact is Diana Evans.

GOA Rockfish

At its June 2005 meeting, the Council selected a preferred pilot program alternative to rationalize the Central Gulf of Alaska (CGOA) rockfish fishery. The program was developed by the Council under the authority of the Consolidated Appropriations Act of 2004. In Section 802 of that act, the U.S. Congress included a directive to the Secretary of Commerce to establish, in consultation with the Council, a pilot program for management of directed rockfish fisheries in the Central Gulf of Alaska. The selection of the preferred alternative represents the culmination of its efforts that began in February of 2004.

For the catcher processor sector, the Council selected a cooperative program in which eligible persons would be permitted to join cooperatives, which would receive annual harvest share allocations based on the qualified harvest histories of their members. Alternatively, eligible persons could fish in a limited access fishery, which would receive the allocation of all eligible catcher processors that do not join a cooperative. Lastly, an eligible person could opt-out of the rockfish fishery altogether. Sideboards would vary depending on the choice of the eligible person.

For the catcher vessel sector, the Council selected a cooperative program under which each eligible person would be eligible to join a single cooperative associated with the processor to which the person delivered the most pounds of rockfish during the processor qualifying years. Each cooperative would receive an annual harvest allocation based on its members' qualified harvest histories. These cooperatives would be required to deliver their landings to processors that met threshold landing requirements during the processing qualifying years. Eligible catcher vessels that choose not to join a cooperative would be permitted to fish in a competitive, limited access fishery that receives an allocation based on the harvest histories of non-members of cooperatives.

During its deliberations, the Council also decided to include in the preferred alternative various options that were under consideration. The Council made decisions to:

- 1) Suggest an opening date of May 1st for the pilot program fisheries,
- 2) Have the entry level trawl fishery prosecuted as a limited access fishery, which would open on May 1st, if PSC were available at that time,
- 3) Limit the duration of cooperative agreements to a single year,
- 4) Exclude a suboption that would have relaxed processor eligibility requirements,
- 5) Recommend that non-trawl vessels in the entry level fishery be excluded from VMS requirements, and
- 6) Manage Gulf halibut sideboards in the aggregate across all Gulf management areas.

The Council also selected options for the management of shortraker and roughey rockfish in the pilot program fisheries. Under the preferred alternative, the catcher processor sector will be allocated 30.03 percent of the shortraker TAC and 58.87 percent of the roughey TAC annually. Shortraker and roughey will be managed under an MRA of 2 percent for the catcher vessels sector. In addition, shortraker will be put on PSC status for the catcher vessel sector, if the catch of the sector exceeds 9.72 percent of the TAC.

It is anticipated that, if approved by the Secretary of Commerce, the pilot program will be implemented for the 2007 season. Staff contact is Mark Fina.

Crab Rationalization

At its June 2005 meeting, the Council conducted a preliminary review of the analysis of options for allocations of harvest and processing shares for the Bering Sea *C. bairdi* fisheries under the crab rationalization program. The options would allocate harvesting and processing shares consistent with the management of two Bering Sea *C. bairdi* fisheries. Under its authority under the FMP, the State of Alaska has determined to manage Bering Sea *C. bairdi* as two separate stocks, one east of 166° W longitude and one west of 166° W longitude. The analysis examined two options for each sector for allocation of harvesting and processing shares for these two separate fisheries. The Council recommended minor changes, at the suggestion of the SSC, and directed staff to release the analysis for final action at the Council's October meeting. Staff contact is Mark Fina.

Other June Actions

Under the Staff Tasking agenda item the Council discussed a number of other issues, and made recommendations on several regulatory changes. The Council requested that NMFS enact an emergency rule to alter QS/ITQ transfer provisions to allow transfers for war-time situations, if necessary. The Council also concurred with NMFS that the Cape Sarichef closure be removed for the 2006 fisheries, now that research in that area has been completed. The Council provided comments on the forthcoming proposed rule for Amendment 79 (minimum groundfish retention standard), and recommended that the rule become effective in January 2007, and starting with a 65% retention rate. In discussion potential VMS requirements for GOA vessels relative to the proposed EFH/HAPC closure areas, the Council recommended that NMFS not require VMS for fixed gear vessels, with the clarification that this recommendation not effect existing requirements promulgated as part of the Steller sea lion protection measures. The Council instead recommended that NMFS develop an analysis and alternatives to address the issue of broader VMS application in the GOA and BSAI in a manner that meets enforcement, monitoring, and safety issues. Additional new tasking included development of a discussion paper to examine the effects of shifting the Bering Sea pollock A-season 5 days earlier.

DRAFT NPFMC THREE-MEETING OUTLOOK - updated 6/15/05

October 3, 2005 Anchorage, Alaska	December 5, 2005 Anchorage, Alaska	February 6, 2006 Seattle, Washington
Flatfish IRIU Am 80: Initial Review	Flatfish IRIU Am 80: Final Action	Ecosystem Indicators Workshop
CDQ Management of Reserves: Initial Review (T)	CDQ Management of Reserves: Final Action (T)	
Bairdi Crab Amendment: Final Action Crab Management: Review SAFE report		
BS Habitat Conservation: Review strawman problem statement and alternatives, and finalize for analysis		
GOA Rationalization: Action as necessary	GOA Rationalization: Action as necessary	GOA Rationalization: Action as necessary
IFQ Omnibus 5 Amendments: Initial Review	IFQ Omnibus 5 Amendments: Final Action (T)	
Halibut Charter GHL: Status Report and action as necessary Halibut Charter IFQ: Review Proposed Rule (T) Halibut Charter IFQ Cost Recovery: Review Discussion Paper (T)		
BOF/NPFMC pollock fishery sub-committee: Receive Report		
SSL information review: Discuss and action as necessary		
BSAI pollock A-season start date: Review Discussion Paper		
Rockfish Management: Review Discussion Paper Receive Non-target Committee Report		GOA Dark rockfish: Initial Review (T)
Groundfish specs for 2006/07: Adopt proposed specs SAFE Ecosystem Chapter: Review AI FEP and EAM: Discussion/direction Research Priorities: Review	Groundfish specs for 2006/07: Adopt final specs Groundfish SAFE Report: Review	
Non-target species mgmt: Discussion/direction		Observer Program: Initial Review (T)
BSAI P.cod sector allocations: Action as Necessary	BSAI P.cod sector allocations: Initial Review (T)	BSAI P.cod sector allocations: Final Action (T)
BSAI salmon bycatch: Final Action; Discuss Package B SSC workshop on salmon stock ID	BSAI Salmon Bycatch Package B: Action as necessary	BSAI Salmon Bycatch Package B: Initial Review (T)
Salmon Cooperative Research: Report Scallop Assessment Methods: SSC Review		

TAC - Total Allowable Catch
BSAI - Bering Sea and Aleutian Islands
IFQ - Individual Fishing Quota
EEAM - Ecosystem Approach to Management
HAPC - Habitat Areas of Particular Concern
LLP - License Limitation Program
PSC - Prohibited Species Catch

AI - Aleutian Islands
GOA - Gulf of Alaska
SSL - Steller Sea Lion
BOF - Board of Fisheries
FEP - Fishery Ecosystem Plan
CDQ - Community Development Quota
IRIU - Improved Retention/Improved Utilization

SAFE - Stock assessment and fishery evaluation
VMS - Vessel Monitoring System
EAM - Ecosystem Approach to Management
SSC - Scientific & Statistical Committee
FMP - Fishery Management Plan
DPSEIS - Draft Programmatic Groundfish SEIS
(T) Tentatively scheduled

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EBS Pollock Start Date

The Council received a request from the Bering Sea pollock fleet to consider changing regulations to allow the pollock A-season to start five days earlier (and to end the season five days earlier, so that the overall season length would remain the same). Industry reports that pollock are maturing earlier, and the quality of roe is peaking earlier in the A season. An earlier start date for that fishery would allow the fleet more flexibility to harvest pollock when their roe content is optimal. The Council tasked staff with

developing a discussion document which would identify the issues associated with starting and ending the eastern Bering Sea pollock fishery five days earlier including pollock roe maturation data, economic returns to the fleet from alternative start dates, effects of an earlier start date on other fisheries, and effects of changing the A season fishing dates on Steller sea lions. This information will be evaluated by the Council during their October meeting. Staff contact is Bill Wilson.

NPFMC Tentative Meeting Dates for 2005-2007

	February Week of/Location	April Week of/Location	June Week of/Location	October Week of/Location	December Week of/Location
2005				3/Anchorage	5/Anchorage
2006	6/Seattle	3/Anchorage	5/Kodiak*	2/Dutch Harbor	4/Anchorage
2007	5/Portland*	2/Anchorage	4/Sitka*	1/Anchorage	3/Anchorage

*Meeting dates subject to change depending on availability of meeting space. Any changes will be published in the Council's newsletter.