

Progress on Implementing the Groundfish Programmatic Workplan and Staff Notes for Revisions to the Workplan

June 2004-October 2006

The current Groundfish Workplan is attachment D-6(e) in this packet. The full list of management objectives in the FMPs are excerpted on pages 5-8 of this document.

Protection of Habitat

- relates to FMP policy objectives 26-30, Reduce and Avoid Impacts to Habitat

2004 workplan priority actions

- Achieved:
- EFH action is completed
 - Increased benthic habitat mapping is a Council's research priority
 - Review of existing closures and MPA definitions, paper in press
- Ongoing:
- Effectiveness of existing crab and salmon closures continues to be reviewed
 - Bering Sea analysis of mitigation measures to protect habitat ongoing

FMP policy objectives

The 2004 workplan largely captured the action items in the FMP policy objectives.

Staff notes on revisions to workplan

- As many of the priority actions have been achieved, the Council may wish to remove this category from the workplan until such time as the next proposal cycle for habitat areas of concern comes due.

Bycatch Reduction

- relates to FMP policy objectives 14-21, Manage Incidental Catch and Reduce Bycatch and Waste

2004 workplan priority actions

- Achieved:
- Fishery rationalization programs in the BSAI and GOA: BSAI multispecies trawl flatfish fishery, BSAI Pacific cod sector allocations, GOA rockfish demonstration program
- Ongoing:
- Council is working on rationalization of the GOA fisheries
 - Incentive-based bycatch reduction programs being explored through GOA rationalization and salmon bycatch analyses, also mortality-based approaches to setting bycatch limits
 - new management strategies to reduce rockfish bycatch

FMP policy objectives

The workplan priority actions draw on FMP policy objectives 15, 17, and 20. The FMP policy objectives also address other issues.

- The FMP policy objectives (14, 18, 20) include a number of objectives to continue and improve bycatch management through spatial, seasonal, and gear restrictions, and PSC limits. In the PSEIS, the Council identified the GOA as a target area for new PSC controls, and the Council is addressing this action as part of the GOA rationalization analysis.

- Objectives 16 and 19 address improving bycatch mortality accounting for all species, and improving population estimates for non-target species.

Staff notes on revisions to workplan

- The Council may wish to continue to identify GOA rationalization as a priority action for bycatch reduction, also incentive-based bycatch reduction programs.
- The Council may wish to remove BSAI rationalization (as much of action has been achieved), management strategies to reduce incidental rockfish discards (implementation of groundfish retention standard and rationalization should reduce discards), mortality-rate based PSC limits (adapted below).
- Ideas for new priority actions:
 - Explore need for biomass-based PSC limits in GOA fisheries as part of GOA rationalization (objective 20)
 - Continue and improve rigorous statistical approach to determining bycatch of all species (objective 19)
 - Encourage research programs to evaluate population estimates for non-target species (objective 16)

Protection of Steller Sea Lions

- relates to FMP policy objectives 22-25, Avoid Impacts to Seabirds and Marine Mammals

2004 workplan priority actions

- Achieved: • NMFS is reconsidering SSL critical habitat
- Ongoing: • Council is re-evaluating mitigation measures to protect SSL and participating in the ESA jeopardy consultation process

FMP policy objectives

The workplan priority actions draw on FMP policy objectives 23-25 with specific reference to SSLs. Other FMP policy objectives call for cooperation with NMFS and USFWS to protect ESA-listed species, and review of fishery interactions with marine mammals as appropriate.

Staff notes on revisions to workplan

- The Council may wish to remove recommendation to reconsider SSL critical habitat
- The Council may wish to continue priority action to participate in development of mitigation measures

Prevent Overfishing

- relates to FMP policy objectives 1-5, Prevent Overfishing

2004 workplan priority actions

- Achieved: • Set TAC at or < ABC
- Ongoing: • continue to develop “lumping and splitting” criteria
- consider new harvest strategies for rockfish

FMP policy objectives

The 2004 workplan largely captured the action items in the FMP policy objectives.

Staff notes on revisions to workplan

- The Council may wish to remove action to set upper limit for TAC (achieved).
- The Council may wish to continue priority action to develop new management strategies to manage target species and protect incidental catch species (“lumping and splitting”).
- The Council may wish to revise rockfish priority action based on recent CIE review of rockfish harvest strategies: address treatment of survey inputs in Tier 5 and 6 species.

Ecosystem Management

- relates to FMP policy objectives 10-13, Preserve Food Web

2004 workplan priority actions

- Achieved:
- Annual presentation of ecosystem indicators as part of stock assessment process
 - Research paper on calculation of OY caps
- Ongoing:
- Development of a subset of key indicators for each ecosystem area

FMP policy objectives

The FMP policy objectives also address other issues.

- FMP policy objective 11 seeks to improve the procedure to account for uncertainty and ecosystem considerations in estimating ABC. Amendments 56/56 to the BSAI/GOA FMPs addressed uncertainty in establishing the overfishing definitions for groundfish species; the PSEIS proposed a different procedure, and the expected revisions to National Standard 1 guidelines may differ from either of these.
- Objective 13 seeks generally to incorporate ecosystem-based considerations into fishery management decisions. A recently initiated Council action to develop a FEP for the AI aims to provide an interface between ecosystem science and Council decision-making.

Staff notes on revisions to workplan

- The Council may wish to remove action to review calculation of OY caps (achieved).
- The Council may wish to revise ecosystem indicator action to: encourage and participate in development of key ecosystem indicators for Council ecosystem areas.
- Ideas for new priority actions:
 - Reconcile procedures to account for uncertainty and ecosystem considerations in establishing harvest limits.
 - Develop Fishery Ecosystem Plan for the Aleutian Islands.

Improve Data Quality and Management

- relates to FMP policy objectives 38-45, Improve Data Quality, Monitoring, and Enforcement

2004 workplan priority actions

- Ongoing:
- Modify observer program
 - Develop programs for economic data collection
 - Modify VMS program

FMP policy objectives

A number of FMP policy objectives promote cooperation with partner agencies, coordinated research programs, and improvements in monitoring and enforceability that are taken into account with each Council action.

Staff notes on revisions to workplan

- The Council may wish to continue progress on all priority actions in this category.

FMP policy categories not included in the workplan

Promote Sustainable Fisheries and Communities

FMP policy objectives

FMP policy objectives in this category promote considerations such as safety, stability, and fairness, which are taken into account by the Council during each management action.

Staff notes on revisions to workplan

- No priority actions are required.

Promote Equitable and Efficient Use of Fishery Resources

FMP policy objectives

In addition to echoing principles of fairness and efficiency, the FMP policy objectives in this category promote the elimination of latent licenses, and extending community- or rights-based management programs. Also, objective 33 calls for periodic review of rationalization programs.

Staff notes on revisions to workplan

- Idea for new priority action:
 - Continue rationalization of GOA fisheries, while accounting for community provisions and review requirements.

Increase Alaska Native Consultation

FMP policy objectives

FMP policy objectives address local and traditional knowledge in fishery management, and Alaska Native participation and consultation. The Council supports community research for many of its analyses, and has co-sponsored two community conferences.

Staff notes on revisions to workplan

- Idea for new priority action:
 - Continue to support participation by fishing communities.

Excerpt from chapter 2 of the BSAI [GOA] Groundfish FMPs

2.2 Management Approach for the BSAI [GOA] Groundfish Fisheries

The Council's policy 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 productivity of the North Pacific ecosystem is acknowledged to be among the highest in the world. For the past 25 years, the Council management approach has incorporated forward looking conservation measures that address differing levels of uncertainty. This management approach has in recent years been labeled the precautionary approach. Recognizing that potential changes in productivity may be caused by fluctuations in natural oceanographic conditions, fisheries, and other, non-fishing activities, the Council intends to continue to take appropriate measures to insure the continued sustainability of the managed species. It will carry out this objective by considering reasonable, adaptive management measures, as described in the Magnuson-Stevens Act and in conformance with the National Standards, the Endangered Species Act (ESA), the National Environmental Policy Act, and other applicable law. This management approach takes into account the National Academy of Science's recommendations on Sustainable Fisheries Policy.

As part of its policy, the Council intends to consider and adopt, as appropriate, measures that accelerate the Council's precautionary, adaptive management approach through community-based or rights-based management, ecosystem-based management principles that protect managed species from overfishing, and where appropriate and practicable, increase habitat protection and bycatch constraints. All management measures will be based on the best scientific information available. Given this intent, the fishery management goal is to provide sound conservation of the living marine resources; provide socially and economically viable fisheries for the well-being of fishing communities; minimize human-caused threats to protected species; maintain a healthy marine resource habitat; and incorporate ecosystem-based considerations into management decisions.

This management approach recognizes the need to balance many competing uses of marine resources and different social and economic goals for sustainable fishery management, including protection of the long-term health of the resource and the optimization of yield. This policy will use and improve upon the Council's existing open and transparent process of public involvement in decision-making.

2.2.1 Management Objectives

Adaptive management requires regular and periodic review. Objectives identified in this policy statement will be reviewed annually by the Council. The Council will also review, modify, eliminate, or consider new issues, as appropriate, to best carry out the goals and objectives of this management policy.

To meet the goals of this overall management approach, the Council and NMFS will use the Alaska Groundfish Fisheries Programmatic Supplemental Environmental Impact Statement (PSEIS) (NMFS 2004) as a planning document. To help focus consideration of potential management measures, the Council and NMFS will use the following objectives as guideposts, to be re-evaluated, as amendments to the FMP are considered over the life of the PSEIS.

Prevent Overfishing:

1. Adopt conservative harvest levels for multi-species and single species fisheries and specify optimum yield.
2. Continue to use the 2 million mt optimum yield cap for the BSAI groundfish fisheries. [Continue to use the existing optimum yield cap for the GOA groundfish fisheries.]
3. Provide for adaptive management by continuing to specify optimum yield as a range.
4. Provide for periodic reviews of the adequacy of F_{40} and adopt improvements, as appropriate.
5. Continue to improve the management of species through species categories.

Promote Sustainable Fisheries and Communities:

6. Promote conservation while providing for optimum yield in terms of the greatest overall benefit to the nation with particular reference to food production, and sustainable opportunities for recreational, subsistence, and commercial fishing participants and fishing communities.
7. Promote management measures that, while meeting conservation objectives, are also designed to avoid significant disruption of existing social and economic structures.
8. Promote fair and equitable allocation of identified available resources in a manner such that no particular sector, group or entity acquires an excessive share of the privileges.
9. Promote increased safety at sea.

Preserve Food Web:

10. Develop indices of ecosystem health as targets for management.
11. Improve the procedure to adjust acceptable biological catch levels as necessary to account for uncertainty and ecosystem factors.
12. Continue to protect the integrity of the food web through limits on harvest of forage species.
13. Incorporate ecosystem-based considerations into fishery management decisions, as appropriate.

Manage Incidental Catch and Reduce Bycatch and Waste:

14. Continue and improve current incidental catch and bycatch management program.
15. Develop incentive programs for bycatch reduction including the development of mechanisms to facilitate the formation of bycatch pools, vessel bycatch allowances, or other bycatch incentive systems.
16. Encourage research programs to evaluate current population estimates for non-target species with a view to setting appropriate bycatch limits, as information becomes available.
17. Continue program to reduce discards by developing management measures that encourage the use of gear and fishing techniques that reduce bycatch which includes economic discards.
18. Continue to manage incidental catch and bycatch through seasonal distribution of total allowable catch and geographical gear restrictions.
19. Continue to account for bycatch mortality in total allowable catch accounting and improve the accuracy of mortality assessments for target, prohibited species catch, and non-commercial species.

20. Control the bycatch of prohibited species through prohibited species catch limits or other appropriate measures.
21. Reduce waste to biologically and socially acceptable levels.

Avoid Impacts to Seabirds and Marine Mammals:

22. Continue to cooperate with U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service (USFWS) to protect ESA-listed species, and if appropriate and practicable, other seabird species.
23. Maintain or adjust current protection measures as appropriate to avoid jeopardy of extinction or adverse modification to critical habitat for ESA-listed Steller sea lions.
24. Encourage programs to review status of endangered or threatened marine mammal stocks and fishing interactions and develop fishery management measures as appropriate.
25. Continue to cooperate with NMFS and USFWS to protect ESA-listed marine mammal species, and if appropriate and practicable, other marine mammal species.

Reduce and Avoid Impacts to Habitat:

26. Review and evaluate efficacy of existing habitat protection measures for managed species.
27. Identify and designate essential fish habitat and habitat areas of particular concern pursuant to Magnuson-Stevens Act rules, and mitigate fishery impacts as necessary and practicable to continue the sustainability of managed species.
28. Develop a Marine Protected Area policy in coordination with national and state policies.
29. Encourage development of a research program to identify regional baseline habitat information and mapping, subject to funding and staff availability.
30. Develop goals, objectives and criteria to evaluate the efficacy and suitable design of marine protected areas and no-take marine reserves as tools to maintain abundance, diversity, and productivity. Implement marine protected areas if and where appropriate.

Promote Equitable and Efficient Use of Fishery Resources:

31. Provide economic and community stability to harvesting and processing sectors through fair allocation of fishery resources.
32. Maintain the license limitation program, modified as necessary, and further decrease excess fishing capacity and overcapitalization by eliminating latent licences and extending programs such as community or rights-based management to some or all groundfish fisheries.
33. Provide for adaptive management by periodically evaluating the effectiveness of rationalization programs and the allocation of access rights based on performance.
34. Develop management measures that, when practicable, consider the efficient use of fishery resources taking into account the interest of harvesters, processors, and communities.

Increase Alaska Native Consultation:

35. Continue to incorporate local and traditional knowledge in fishery management.
36. Consider ways to enhance collection of local and traditional knowledge from communities, and incorporate such knowledge in fishery management where appropriate.
37. Increase Alaska Native participation and consultation in fishery management.

Improve Data Quality, Monitoring and Enforcement:

38. Increase the utility of groundfish fishery observer data for the conservation and management of living marine resources.
39. Develop funding mechanisms that achieve equitable costs to the industry for implementation of the North Pacific Groundfish Observer Program.
40. Improve community and regional economic impact costs and benefits through increased data reporting requirements.
41. Increase the quality of monitoring and enforcement data through improved technology.
42. Encourage a coordinated, long-term ecosystem monitoring program to collect baseline information and compile existing information from a variety of ongoing research initiatives, subject to funding and staff availability.
43. Cooperate with research institutions such as the North Pacific Research Board in identifying research needs to address pressing fishery issues.
44. Promote enhanced enforceability.
45. Continue to cooperate and coordinate management and enforcement programs with the Alaska Board of Fish, Alaska Department of Fish and Game, and Alaska Fish and Wildlife Protection, the U.S. Coast Guard, NMFS Enforcement, International Pacific Halibut Commission, Federal agencies, and other organizations to meet conservation requirements; promote economically healthy and sustainable fisheries and fishing communities; and maximize efficiencies in management and enforcement programs through continued consultation, coordination, and cooperation.