

Groundfish

The Council has tasked its Non-Target Species Committee with considering possible priorities for breaking out different groups from the “other species” complexes in the BSAI and GOA groundfish FMPs. The need to set these priorities is to take quicker action for more vulnerable groups. The Council expressed concern that analyzing the current suite of alternatives, which addresses sharks, squids, sculpins, and octopuses in the GOA; sharks, skates, sculpins, and octopuses in the BSAI; and possibly grenadiers in the GOA and BSAI) in one analysis will result in an unmanageable and confusing document. Management of these ten groups (plus additional multiple sub-area, sub-allocation, and seasonal apportionments) is very complex and poses numerous management and regulatory difficulties and may result in unintended consequences on fishing fleets. The proposed Council priorities for action include: 1) move BSAI and/or GOA squid into the forage fish category; 2) move BSAI and/or GOA octopus into the forage fish category or remove it from the FMPs and defer management to the State of Alaska; 3) delete Alternative 5 (add grenadiers to the TAC specification process); and 4) separate the proposed alternatives into distinct BSAI and GOA amendment packages. The committee is tentatively scheduled to meet in late March in Seattle and report to the Council at the latter’s April meeting. One or two analyses could be scheduled for review as soon as the October 2008 meeting. Discussion papers by NMFS and Council staff on this issue are posted on the committee web page. Contact Jane DiCosimo for more information on management of other species or non-target species.