

North Pacific Fishery Management Council

News and Notes



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Volume 5-05

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December 2005

2006 Appointments Announced

The Council announced the following appointments for three year terms to the Advisory Panel: Duncan Fields, Jeb Morrow, Michelle Ridgway, Lisa Butzner, Robert Gunderson, and Lori Swanson. Butzner, Gunderson and Swanson are new to the AP, but not new to the Council process. Butzner is an administrator for the North Pacific Longline Association. Robert Gunderson has been involved with many fisheries throughout the North Pacific and currently operates out of Kodiak. Lori Swanson is the acting Executive Director for Groundfish Forum. We would like to thank John Bruce, David Fraser, and Jeff Stephan for their many years of commitment and contributions to the council process and the sustainable management of the North Pacific fisheries.

The Council re-appointed 14 members of the Scientific and Statistical Committee with one change; Steve Parker from the Oregon Department of Fish and Wildlife will serve as a replacement for David Sampson, who will continue as an alternate.

A full list of AP, SSC, and Council members and their contact information and terms is available on our website.

BSAI Pollock "A" Season

At its October 2005 meeting, the Council reviewed a discussion paper on issues associated with a proposal for a 5-day early start date for the BSAI pollock "A" season. At the October meeting, the Council developed a problem statement and several alternative actions and requested that NMFS Office of Protected Resources Management review the proposal to determine if such an action would likely trigger a formal Section 7 consultation. At the December 2005 meeting, the Council received a letter from NMFS indicating that the proposed early "A" season start date proposal, whether it be a 3-, 5-, or 7-day early start alternative, would trigger a formal consultation. The Council decided to not continue consideration of this proposal, and instead include it in the broader FMP-level consultation process currently under way. Staff contact is Bill Wilson.

Halibut/ Sablefish IFQ and CDQ amendments

The Council approved the release of a revised analysis for public review of four proposed changes to the commercial halibut and sablefish IFQ and CDQ program. The actions, as amended by the Council, include: (1) allow freezing of non-IFQ species when unused halibut catcher vessel IFQs are held by those onboard the vessel; (2) allow the use of pot longline gear in the Bering Sea sablefish IFQ and CDQ fisheries during June; (3) withdraw halibut and sablefish QS from initial recipients who have never fished any of those shares across all regulatory areas after adequate notice, with an option to award unused halibut (only) QS to qualified crewmen (there are too few unused sablefish QS to warrant a lottery); and (4) allow temporary transfer of IFQs held by reservists during their deployment. The Council has tentatively scheduled final action for April 2006.

Additionally, the Council encouraged the Alaska Fisheries Science Center Auke Bay Laboratory to develop experimental research in 2006 to determine the effectiveness of different size escape rings and soak times, in conjunction with the development of catch-per-unit-effort indices for sablefish pot fishing. The Council requested that a discussion paper on three potential changes to sablefish pot gear regulations be prepared based on research results. Potential changes include: 1) escape rings; 2) changes to required biodegradable panels; and 3) banning at-sea storage of pots. The paper may be presented in Fall 2006. Contact Jane DiCosimo for more information.



**HAPPY
HOLIDAYS**

Charter Halibut Management

After two days of testimony from more than 150 members of the public, the Council elected to reexamine its preferred alternative for managing the charter halibut fishery. Instead of proceeding with its April 2001 preferred alternative to implement a quota share (QS) program based on past participation during 1998 or 1999, and 2000, the Council will appoint a stakeholder committee to examine a suite of management options that were proposed by the Alaska Department of Fish and Game prior to any further action.

The **Charter Halibut Stakeholder Committee** is tasked with reviewing proposed management options, and others that may be proposed through the committee process, to develop two alternatives for Council review in April 2006. The Council requests that those individuals that wish to be appointed to the new stakeholder committee submit their nomination to the Council by **January 10, 2006**. New applications are required for this committee. Nominees should identify their participation in the halibut fisheries as commercial, charter, or angler sectors. A number of 1-2 day meetings during February and March 2006 in Anchorage are anticipated in order to meet the Council's request that the Committee complete its recommendations by the April 2006 Council meeting. Committee members will be responsible for their own travel expenses.

In April, the Council would finalize the alternatives for formal analysis and future consideration. One alternative would be based on the 2001 preferred alternative with a newly proposed "leveling" plan, an effort-based transferable seat program, or other methods, which may include current participants in a quota share based system.

A second alternative would allocate a percentage of halibut harvests to the charter sector, but the fishery would be managed under more traditional management tools. These include, but are not limited to:

- 1) a percentage-based quota that would fluctuate (up and down) with abundance;
- 2) subdivisions of Area 2C and 3A quotas among smaller geographic sub-districts, including time certain establishment of local area management plans (LAMPs) and super-exclusive registration areas;
- 3) a detailed set of management measures which would be used to enforce the allocation, including measures already approved for analysis to lower harvests below the Area 2C and 3A Guideline Harvest Levels (GHLs) as described below;
- 4) State-sponsored measures to:
 - a) reinstitute in 2006 a halibut reporting requirement in charter boat logbooks with methodology to ensure accuracy based on a protocol identified by ADF&G, and
 - b) propose a regulation to the Board of Fisheries in 2006 which would prohibit retention or harvest of fish by skipper and crew when clients are on board and limit the number of lines fished to the number of clients;

- 5) annual angler limits;
- 6) limits on days fished either by total number of days or by excluding specific days of the week;
- 7) reduced daily limits, including size limits for the second fish;
- 8) in-season quota monitoring with deductions off next year's quota;
- 9) a vessel moratorium;
- 10) limited entry program for charter boats by the State or NOAA Fisheries Service, with delayed transferability of permits;
- 11) unspecified mechanisms that would result in an "orderly and compensated" allocation shift, including a State charter stamp, similar to the king salmon stamp, to raise funds to manage the fishery and to fund the purchase of commercial QS to be reallocated to the charter sector; and
- 12) additionally, the committee would explore legal issues related to delegation of authority to the State for some management aspects of the sport fishery, including the charter sector.

The Council set a **control date of December 9, 2005** to notice the halibut charter industry that a moratorium and/or limited entry program for this fishery may be implemented, and fishermen and vessels not participating by that date may not be eligible for future access and/or quota. The Council's motion, along with a conceptual approach for collecting charter halibut data is posted on the Council's website. Both alternatives, once streamlined by the stakeholder committee and further revised by the Council, will undergo a comprehensive economic analysis, including impacts on other affected sectors of the halibut fishery.

In a separate action pursuant to the provisions of the **GHL program**, the Council will review a draft analysis in February 2005. This analysis would consider reducing charter halibut harvests in Areas 2C and 3A to below the GHLs, since the caps were exceeded in both areas in 2004. Proposed measures include limiting vessels to one trip per day and prohibiting harvest by skipper and crew in both areas, and annual angler limits of 5 or 6 halibut per angler in Area 2C. The Council's GHL Committee will convene on February 1 - 2, 2006 in Anchorage to review the draft analysis and provide comments to the Council, as well as proposals to revise the GHL. **No final decision will be made in February.** Final action is scheduled for April 2005 in Anchorage. If adopted by the Council and approved by the Secretary of Commerce, regulations would be implemented no earlier than the 2007 season.

The GHL Committee was also charged with developing alternatives to modify the GHL Program. Options include: 1) setting the GHL to fluctuate with abundance; 2) dividing Area 2C and 3A GHLs into sub-regions; 3) moratorium on new entrants; and 4) comments on a valid reporting system. While these issues are also tasked to the new Stakeholder Committee, the GHL Committee will begin these discussions at its February meeting. Contact Jane DiCosimo for more information on this issue.

BSAI Pcod trawl CV eligibility

The Council reviewed a discussion paper outlining the number of LLPs in the AFA and non-AFA trawl catcher vessel sectors and their associated retained harvest levels of BSAI Pacific cod during 1995 – 2003. The paper was intended to assist the Council in determining whether to consider cod license endorsement requirements for the trawl catcher vessel sectors which would further restrict participation in the directed BSAI Pacific cod fishery in Federal waters for catcher vessels operating with trawl gear.

Upon review of the paper and public testimony, the Council recommended that the BSAI trawl catcher vessel cod LLP endorsement eligibility criteria be developed in a new amendment package, separate from the current BSAI Amendment 85 package being developed to consider new sector allocations. The Council recommended that the new eligibility amendment incorporate the current BSAI Amendment 85 problem statement as a draft, understanding that revisions will be necessary in the future. The Council also recommended that the eligibility criteria from the discussion paper be used as starting point options for future analysis. For the AFA trawl catcher vessel sector, options would include BSAI trawl LLP holders that met the following landing thresholds of BSAI Pacific cod during 1995 - 2003: 1) no landings; 2) at least one landing; 3) at least 500 mt; and 4) at least 1,000 mt. For the non-AFA trawl catcher vessel sector, options would include BSAI trawl LLP holders that met the following landing thresholds of BSAI Pacific cod during 1995 - 2003: 1) no landings; 2) at least one landing; 3) at least 10 mt; 4) at least 175 mt; 5) at least 500 mt; and 6) at least 1,000 mt.

The Council also approved setting a control date of **December 11, 2005**. The intent of the control date is to notice the public that after this date, participation in the BSAI Pacific cod fisheries may not count for consideration of allocation or eligibility.

Short-tailed Albatross Recovery Plan

The Council received a report on the draft short-tailed albatross recovery plan prepared by the Short-tailed Albatross Recovery Team (START) and the U.S. Fish & Wildlife Service (USFWS) <http://endangered.fws.gov/recovery/index.html#plans>. The plan sets out criteria for recovery of the short-tailed albatross as well as costs and an implementation schedule for actions that the START and USFWS believes are necessary for recovery. The Council decided to submit comments on the draft recovery plan noting that proposed recovery actions are ambitious but likely necessary for recovery of this endangered seabird. The Council supports continued efforts for short-tailed albatross conservation. The Council's letter will be posted on the Council's web site. Staff contact is Bill Wilson.

CDQ Program

Management of CDQ reserves

The Council took final action on a regulatory amendment to allow after-the-fact transfers of groundfish CDQ or halibut PSQ between CDQ groups to cover harvest overages. The Council also took action to modify the current program such that only CDQ target species would be allocated to the individual CDQ groups and CDQ non-target species would be managed on the reserve level. In effect, CDQ target species allocations will continue to be managed as hard caps and the non-target CDQ reserves will be managed as soft caps. In sum, the Council adopted the lists provided in the EA/RIR (dated November 14, 2005), with the modification that AI Greenland turbot and BS Pacific Ocean Perch is moved to the non-target species list and BSAI arrowtooth flounder is moved to the target species list. The list of CDQ target and non-target species is included as part of the full motion and is on the Council website.

BSAI Amendment 71

The Council's original BSAI Amendment 71, approved in June 2002, proposed several changes to the CDQ allocation process and government oversight of the program. In 2004, NMFS identified several legal and policy issues that arose after final action, which slowed progress on the proposed rule for Amendment 71 and required further consultation with the Council. In addition, upon request of the Council, the State formed a Blue Ribbon Panel to review the program in 2005, the recommendations of which were presented to the Council at its October 2005 meeting. Given the above events, at this meeting, the Council rescinded its final action on Issues 1-7 of BSAI Amendment 71 that was taken in June 2002. In addition, the Council adopted a revised list of alternatives and options for a new BSAI Amendment 71, which incorporates the new information and recommendations of the Blue Ribbon Panel. The three primary alternatives generally represent: 1) no action; 2) the Council's preferred alternative from June 2002, and 3) recommendations from the State's Blue Ribbon Panel. The new suite of alternatives and options is provided as part of the full CDQ motion and is on Council website. Staff contact is Nicole Kimball.

Bycatch Reduction Technology

The World Wildlife Fund and partner groups announced the second international competition to develop innovative ideas to reduce bycatch in commercial fisheries. The competition will award a \$25,000 grand prize and two runner-up \$5,000 prizes for the winning ideas for reducing incidental take of seabirds, marine mammals, and turtles and bycatch of nontarget fish in fishing gear. The competition invites entries worldwide. Instructions, entry forms, and additional information are available at www.smartgear.org.

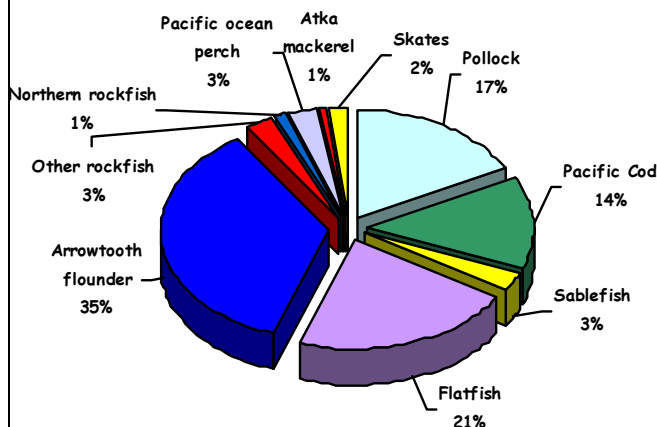
2006/2007 Groundfish Specifications

Gulf of Alaska

The Council approved the 2005 Gulf of Alaska Stock Assessment and Fishery Evaluation (SAFE) report and recommended final catch specifications for the 2006 and 2007 groundfish fisheries. Amendment 48 to the GOA groundfish FMP made two significant changes with respect to the stock assessment process. First, since new data during years when no groundfish surveys are conducted are limited, annual assessments are no longer required for long-lived GOA species. These species include the rockfishes, flatfishes, and Atka mackerel. In 2005 a GOA groundfish survey was conducted therefore full assessments for all species are presented in this year's SAFE report. The second significant change is that the proposed and final specifications can be specified for a period of up to two years. This requires specifying OFLs, ABCs and TACs for 2006 and 2007.

The sum of the recommended ABCs for 2006 is 501,366 mt. The sum of the ABCs decreased 5% compared with last year. The ABC levels increased in Pacific cod (+19%), deep water flatfish (+27%), other slope rockfish (+6%), Pacific ocean perch (+5%), shortraker rockfish (+12%), pelagic shelf rockfish (+19%), thornyhead rockfish (+14%), Atka mackerel (+683%), longnose skates (+3%) and other skates (+22%). The species with ABCs that declined relative to 2005 are pollock (-6%), sablefish (-7%), rex sole (-27%), shallow water flatfish (-1%), flathead sole (-16%), arrowtooth flounder (-18%), roughey rockfish (-2%), and Big skates (-11%).

2006 ABCs by species groups are shown below:



The abundances of Pacific cod, Dover sole, flathead sole, arrowtooth flounder, Pacific ocean perch, roughey rockfish, northern rockfish, and dusky rockfish are above target stock size. The abundances of pollock and sablefish are below target stock size. The relative abundances of other deep-water flatfish, shallow-water flatfish, rex sole, shortraker rockfish, demersal shelf rockfish, other pelagic shelf rockfish, other slope rockfish, thornyhead rockfish, Atka mackerel, and skates are unknown. None of the groundfish stocks are overfished nor are they approaching an overfished condition.

For most stocks, the Council established TACs equal to ABCs with some exceptions. These exceptions include Pacific cod, where the quota was reduced approximately 24.1% to account for removals in the state managed fishery, and those fisheries where the bycatch of other target species is a concern, specifically for Shallow water flatfish (W and C GOA), Flathead sole (W and C GOA), Arrowtooth flounder (GOA wide) and Other slope rockfish (EYAK/SEO). For those fisheries, the TAC was set below the ABC. Atka mackerel was also established at levels to meet incidental catch needs in other fisheries only (no directed fishing is allowed). **The Council recommended OFLs, ABCs and TACs for 2006 and 2007 are attached.** The SAFE Report is available on the Council's website.

Other Species:

In June of 2005, the Council took final action to implement a calculation change to the other species complex in the GOA under amendment 69 to the GOA FMP. The 5% TAC calculation was modified such that the Council may recommend a TAC at or below 5% of the sum of the target species TACs during the annual specifications process. The Council's intent was to establish a TAC level which would meet incidental catch needs in other directed fisheries with the potential to establish this TAC at a higher level which could allow for directed fishing on the complex but be placed low enough to prevent excessive harvest of a single targeted species or on the complex as a whole. This interim measure is intended to provide additional flexibility in responding to potential conservation concerns as they arise until more comprehensive management changes can be made to the other species complex (i.e., analysis of individual species level assessments). Based on information provided to the Council by the Plan Team in the annual GOA SAFE report as well as recommendations from the Advisory Panel, the Council established TAC for the other species complex at 4,500 mt. This will meet incidental catch needs in other groundfish fisheries as well as allow for limited directed fishing within the complex but is low enough to alleviate any conservation concerns regarding exclusive targeting on any one member of the species complex. This TAC recommendation will supersede the existing 5% TAC calculations when amendment 69 regulations become finalized by June 2006.

Prohibited Species Catch Limits:

The Council adopted halibut prohibited species catch limits, by season and gear apportionment for 2006-2007. These can be viewed on the Council's website.

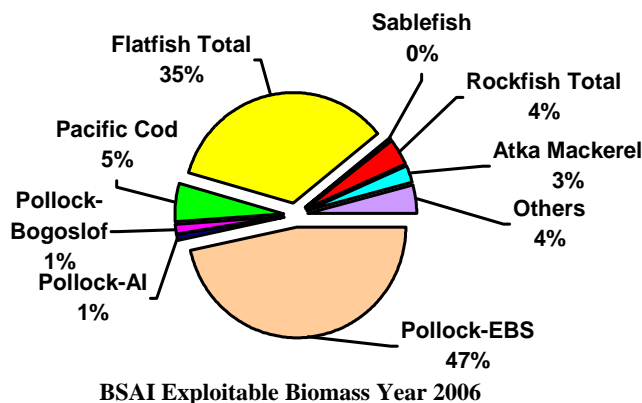
Dark rockfish amendment:

In 2005, the Council initiated an amendment to remove Dark rockfish from the GOA FMP. Dark rockfish are currently part of the pelagic shelf rockfish complex, although they are primarily located in nearshore waters. Removing them from the FMP entails turning dark rockfish over to the State for management. This was previously done in 1998 in the GOA for black and blue rockfish, two other primarily nearshore rockfish species. Initial review of the environmental assessment for this amendment is scheduled for the April 2006 Council meeting. Staff contact is Diana Stram.

Bering Sea Aleutian Islands

The Council established final catch specifications for the 2006 and 2007 fisheries. The sum of the recommended ABCs for 2006 is 3,013,000 mt, approximately 31,000 mt below the sum of the 2005 ABCs. This is still about 1 million mt above the 2 million mt cap implemented by the Council as a conservation measure. Overall, the status of the stocks continues to appear favorable, although some stocks are declining due to poor recruitment in recent years. Total biomass for 2006 (17.4 million mt) is roughly equal to last year's estimate.

The 2005 bottom trawl survey estimated a pollock biomass of 5.13 million mt, up 37% from the 2004 estimate. This is due in part to an increase in the estimated strength of the 2000 year class. All other year classes spawned after 1996 appear weaker than average, except for an average 1999 year class. This year's EBS shelf bottom trawl survey resulted in a Pacific cod biomass estimate of 604,000 mt, nearly the same as the 2004 estimate and near the minimum for the time series (534,000 mt). Abundance is projected to continue to decrease during 2006-2009 because recent (2001-2004) recruitments are below average. Sablefish spawning biomass is projected to remain stable from 2005 to 2006. The 1997 and 2000 year classes appear to be important parts of the total biomass and together are projected to account for 38% of 2006 spawning biomass. The 1998 year class, once expected to be strong, appears average. The yellowfin sole stock is predicted to be fairly stable or decrease slightly in the near future due to below average recruitment in the last 5 years. Greenland turbot continues to be the only flatfish species that remains low in abundance compared to 1970 levels. Both the EBS and AI arrowtooth flounder biomass estimates are peaking. Two species of rock sole, northern and southern, inhabit the Bering Sea; their combined biomass estimate increased 8 percent from last year and is expected to decline due to the low recruitment in the last decade. Biomass estimates for Atka mackerel have increased for the last three surveys with four back-to-back years of above-average recruitment (1998-2001 year classes). None of the groundfish stocks are overfished or approaching an overfished condition.



The Council adopted TACs equal to 2 million mt, based on a consensus among BSAI fishery sectors (see attachment). The Pacific cod TAC declined by 12,000 mt due to a decline in

the allowable biological catch. This decrease was reallocated to pollock, yellowfin sole, and arrowtooth flounder. Based on new biomass estimates, the prohibited species catch limits were changed for two species. The PSC for *C. opilio* (snow) crabs increased to 5.76 million crabs. The PSC for herring dropped to 1,770 mt. Remaining PSC limits remained the same as in 2005.

The Council tasked staff with developing alternatives for a future analysis that would amend the BSAI Groundfish FMP to allow the Council flexibility in the sablefish fixed gear/trawl allocations in the Bering Sea and Aleutian Islands management areas to allow for maximizing catch in the IFQ and CDQ fixed gear sectors, without leaving fish unharvested. Contact Jane DiCosimo for more information on this issue.

Ecosystem Approaches

The Council received reports on two projects. The Council Chair and staff continue to explore a regional ecosystem collaboration for the Aleutian Islands. In mid-November, a Federal-State-Council meeting was held which broached the idea of creating an Aleutian Islands Ecosystem Forum for increasing coordination and information-sharing among agencies with jurisdiction over activities within the Aleutian Islands marine ecosystem area. In general, agency representatives expressed support for further exploration of such a forum, and a follow-up meeting is intended for the spring of 2006. The meeting summary, including a list of participants, is available on the Council website.

Staff also reported on progress with exploring an Aleutian Islands Fishery Ecosystem Plan. The Ecosystem Committee has requested revisions to the staff discussion paper, which will be available for the February meeting, and after which the Ecosystem Committee will make further recommendations to the Council. Minutes from the Ecosystem Committee meeting are available on the Council website. Staff contact is Diana Evans.

FMP Consultation

The Council received a report from NMFS outlining the agency's plans for proceeding with an FMP-level Section 7 consultation under the Endangered Species Act. At its October 2005 meeting, the Council asked NMFS to consider reinitiating consultation since the previous comprehensive FMP-level Biological Opinion (BiOp) was issued in 2000 and up to seven years will have passed by the time a new BiOp can be issued (2007). NMFS provided a summary of the consultation process and a schedule of milestones culminating in a new BiOp in 2007 or early 2008. The Council concurred with the NMFS plan and intends to activate its Steller Sea Lion Mitigation Committee early in 2006 to participate in this process. Staff contact is Bill Wilson.

BSAI Salmon Bycatch

The Council revised the existing alternatives under amendment package 84b on continued measures for BSAI salmon bycatch reduction. This amendment analysis is intended to follow up on remaining measures that were not analyzed under amendment 84 which was approved by the Council in October 2005. Implementation of amendment 84 to exempt pollock vessels participating under a VRHS system from regulatory salmon savings area closures is anticipated prior to August 1, 2006.

The following problem statement and alternatives have been adopted for the follow up (Amendment 84B) analysis:

Amendment Package 84B

This amendment would establish exempt AFA qualified and CDQ vessels participating in the intercooperative voluntary rolling hotspot system (VRHS) from regulatory Bering Sea salmon bycatch savings areas. Analysis and refinement of the current salmon savings areas may be necessary in the event pollock vessels either surrender or lose their exemption and return to fishing under the regulatory salmon bycatch program. Further, alternatives to the VRHS system and/or the regulatory salmon bycatch program should be developed to assess whether they would be more effective in reducing salmon bycatch. The following amendment packages are not intended to preclude the intercooperative annual review as required under Amendment 84.

Amendment Package B-1

This amendment and package would establish new regulatory salmon savings systems taking into account the most recent available salmon bycatch data. In developing alternatives include an analysis of the need and implementation strategy for appropriate caps as bycatch control measures. This package should be completed first and implemented when ready so that salmon savings regulations are based on the best available information.

Option: Adjust the Chinook and non-Chinook regulatory closure areas periodically based on the most current bycatch data available, such as the 2-3 year rolling average of bycatch rates by species and area.

Amendment Package B-2

Develop a regulatory individual vessel salmon bycatch accountability program.

Option A: managed at the individual level

Option B: managed at the co-op level

Option C: Either Option A or Option B for each AFA pollock sector.

Suboption 1: Implement the individual vessel salmon bycatch accountability program.

i) Immediately, if it was determined to be more effective in reducing salmon bycatch than the VRHS system.

ii) After 3 years if it is determined the VRHS system has failed to achieve the desired level of bycatch reduction.

Suboption 2: Analyze the need and implementation strategy for appropriate caps as bycatch control measures.

(note Suboptions 1 and 2 apply to Options A,B and C)

The Council reiterated its intention to pursue analysis of amendment package B-1 prior to amendment package B-2. Additional discussion of and opportunity for revisions to amendment package B-1 will occur at the April 2006 Council meeting.

The Council also intends to organize a salmon workshop for the April 2006 Council meeting. This workshop will include state and agency staff, additional scientists and personnel working on relevant research and will be open to the public. The purpose of this workshop will be to review the existing research on stock origins of incidentally-caught salmon species in the BSAI, assessment information for Pacific Rim salmon stocks and other research relevant to the Council's continued activities with salmon bycatch reduction measures. Staff contact is Diana Stram.

Bering Sea Habitat Conservation

The Council received a report from staff on a proposed problem statement and preliminary alternatives for Bering Sea Habitat Conservation. The Council intends to evaluate potential new fishery management measures to protect Essential Fish Habitat in the Bering Sea. The analysis will tier off of the 2005 EFH EIS and will consider as alternatives open and closed areas and gear modifications.

Additionally, the Council added following modifications to the suite of alternatives:

1. Exclude the rotations in the area-based measures
2. Analyze the alternative on gear modification, with consideration of recent work by Dr. Rose
3. Incorporate locations of recent bottom trawl effort in the development of the open areas-alternative.

Dr. Craig Rose from the Alaska Fisheries Science Center also reported on recent research on gear modification in the Bering Sea to mitigate the effects of bottom trawl fisheries. Preliminary results indicate that the placement of rollers on the sweeps may increase catches of some target species. Video observations suggest that bottom contact was reduced by the rollers. The a change in bycatch of invertebrates or on damage to living habitat has not been assessed. Continued research will be conducted during spring of 2006.

The Council will review the package in April and consider whether additional alternatives are necessary. Staff contact is Cathy Coon.

GOA Groundfish Rationalization

At the December 2005 meeting, the Council received four reports from staff. The first report reviewed a discussion paper on the two community programs proposed under GOA groundfish rationalization: the Community Fisheries Quota (CFQ) Program and the Community Purchase Program (CPP). The paper outlined ongoing legal concerns with the CFQ Program and provided preliminary data on fisheries participation by potentially eligible communities. The second report reviewed a preliminary analysis of alternatives, preliminary catch data analyses, and preliminary analyses of elements and options under consideration. These analyses are intended to assist the Council in developing and refining alternatives for regulatory analysis. The third report reviewed available information on species under consideration for bycatch reduction measures by the Council, including the draft bycatch alternatives last modified in June 2005. The fourth report examined potential systems for the collection of detailed crew participation data.

In response to public testimony and staff reports, the Council modified several components of the alternatives under consideration. The Council modified the community program options to: require that the harvesting of shares under the purchase program is limited to eligible community residents; clarify that the groundfish fisheries participation criteria in the community eligibility options is in the WG, CG, and WY areas; and provide requirements to qualify an administrative entity under the CPP. The Council also requested that subsequent community fisheries participation tables indicate the number of landings made by residents. Staff contact is Nicole Kimball.

Based on Advisory Panel suggestion, the Council also directed staff to reformat the Council's overall motion describing elements and options from which the alternatives are defined, so that each sector is treated distinctively. This reformatting is intended to make the motion more accessible to stakeholders wishing to compare the alternatives and to facilitate further refinement of the alternatives by the Council.

In addition, the Council also modified options in its overall motion. The Council added options to Alternative 3 (similar to those already contained in Alternative 2) that would cap the amount of quota that could be used on a vessel and limit leasing within cooperatives to constrain consolidation under the program. The Council also modified the provisions in both alternatives that define qualifying years used to determine eligibility for processing protections.

The Council also reiterated its intention to consider bycatch reduction measures (under the GOA groundfish rationalization initiative) for the following species: Chinook salmon, 'other' salmon, Tanner crab, red king crab. The Council requested that updated spatial data on the bycatch of these species be included in a subsequent analysis. A meeting date for further Council review of data and an analysis on bycatch reduction measures has not yet been determined: however other aspects of the

overall program will be discussed at the February 2006 Council meeting. Staff contact is Diana Stram.

The Council also directed staff to work with industry in the development of options to address crew interests under program. Staff contact on crew provisions is Rachel Baker from the Alaska Department of Fish and Game and Mark Fina, Council staff, who will be working on the overall program in addition to crew provisions.

Right Whale Critical Habitat

The Council received a report from NMFS on the Proposed Rule to designate two areas in the North Pacific as Critical Habitat (CH) for the northern right whale. One CH area is located in the southeastern Bering Sea (35,630 sq mi) and another in the Gulf of Alaska south of Kodiak Island (1,170 sq mi). NMFS reported that the CH designations are based on a Primary Constituent Elements analysis of areas where dense concentrations of copepod are believed to occur. The Federal Register notice, maps of the two CH areas, and other information is available at <http://www.fakr.noaa.gov/protectedresources/whales/nright/rule/default.htm>. The Council also received a discussion paper from staff that summarizes the nature of Council-managed fisheries that occur in these CH areas; the document provided socioeconomic data on fisheries including species, gear types, locations, seasons, and values for harvesting, processing, and communities.

During public comment, representatives of the North Pacific groundfish fishery reported on a joint initiative between industry and NMFS to produce a laminated sheet as an aid to right whale identification with advice on appropriate action to take if a right whale is encountered. These mariner advisory placards are being distributed to the fleet. More information is available from the Marine Conservation Alliance and the National Marine Mammal Laboratory.

The Council decided to submit comments to NMFS on the Proposed Rule including a summary of the amount of groundfish, crab, and halibut harvested from the two CH areas and the estimated economic value of these harvests. While none of these fisheries would likely adversely impact the Primary Constituent Elements of CH, that is the copepod concentrations upon which northern right whales feed, the Council wishes to stress the importance of the fisheries that occur in these areas. The Council's SSC also provided comments on the Proposed Rule and are included in the Council's comments. The letter to NMFS will be posted on the Council's web site. Staff contact is Bill Wilson.

BOF Proposal for P. cod Fishery in AI

The Council was informed of a recent decision by the Alaska Board of Fisheries (BOF) to consider approving a P. cod fishery in State waters in the Aleutian Islands. This proposal was reviewed at the BOF meeting in December and placed on the agenda for BOF action during its January 22-February 1, 2006 meeting in Ketchikan. The proposal calls for allocating three percent of the BSAI P. cod ABC for a State water fishery west of 170 degrees West longitude. Harvested cod would be delivered shoreside in the Aleutian Islands. The proposal includes trip limits, vessel and gear restrictions, and would comply with current Federal Steller sea lion protection measures.

The Council expressed concern over how this proposed fishery might affect the current ABC for P. cod in the BSAI, whether it might trigger formal ESA Section 7 consultation, how halibut bycatch would be managed, and several other issues. The Council asked staff to prepare a discussion paper that highlights the Council's concerns and to submit this document to the BOF before their January 2006 meeting. The Council also requested that the BOF be asked to postpone action on this proposal until there is an opportunity for further review and discussion between the BOF and the Council. Staff contact is Bill Wilson.

February Workshops

The SSC will hold a workshop on **Ecosystem Modeling** at the February meeting. The workshop will focus on climate models and lower trophic level models. The agenda will be posted on the Council website. The SSC also held a related workshop in February of 2005, and a summary of the presentations is also available on the website.

An evening workshop on **Integration of Ecological Indicators for the North Pacific with an Emphasis on the Bering Sea** will be held Wednesday night, February 8th, during the Council meeting. Gordon Kruse (University of Alaska Fairbanks) and Pat Livingston (Alaska Fisheries Science Center) will introduce a framework for ecosystem-based fishery management using ecological indicators available for the Bering Sea. Gordon and Pat seek advice from the public on priority marine ecosystem issues, including stressors affecting both ecological and human environments. A short panel session will be used to stimulate public suggestions on priorities, key indicators, and specific operational objectives to be considered by future management of the Bering Sea using the selected management alternative from the Alaska Groundfish Fisheries Final Programmatic Supplemental Environmental Impacts Statement to guide the discussions.

Chiniak Gully Pollock Research

The Council received a report from NMFS that outlines a proposed continuation of the Fishery Interaction Team study of pollock localized depletion in Chiniak Gully and Barnabas Trough near Kodiak. Dr. Libby Logerwell of the Alaska Fisheries Science Center outlined the agency's plans for continuing this experiment which focuses on the potential for trawl fishery localized depletion of pollock, an important prey item for Steller sea lions. The research program is planned for five more years and will include a closure to commercial fishing in Chiniak Gully during the period August 1 – September 20 for the years 2006-2010. NMFS is preparing an environmental assessment of the continued research project and will present an update to the Council at its February 2006 meeting. Additional information on the pollock study may be found at www.afsc.noaa.gov/refm/stocks/fit/Pollock_interaction. Staff contact is Bill Wilson.

Upcoming Meetings

GHL Committee. February 1 -2, 2006. North Pacific Research Board Conference Room, 1007 West 3rd Avenue, Suite 100 Anchorage, Alaska.

Observer Advisory Committee January 30-31, Alaska Fisheries Science Center, Seattle

Scallop Plan Team February 23-24, Anchorage, Location TBA

Ecosystem Committee meeting, February 7, 1-5 p.m, Doubletree Hotel, Seattle

Council recommendations for GOA groundfish 2006 - 2007 OFLs , ABCs and TACs

Stock/ Assemblage	2005					2006			2007		
	Area	OFL	ABC	TAC	Catch*	OFL	ABC	TAC	OFL	ABC	TAC
Pollock	W (61)		30,380	30,380	31,116	29,187	29,187		23,291	23,291	
	C (62)		34,404	34,404	27,838	30,775	30,775		24,558	24,558	
	C (63)		18,718	18,718	19,348	18,619	18,619		14,858	14,858	
	WYAK		1,688	1,688	1,879	1,809	1,809		1,443	1,443	
	Subtotal	144,340	85,190	85,190	80,181	110,100	80,390	80,390	89,500	64,150	64,150
	EYAK/SEO	8,690	6,520	6,520	0	8,209	6,157	6,157	8,209	6,157	6,157
Total	153,030	91,710	91,710	80,181	118,309	86,547	86,547	97,709	70,307	70,307	
Pacific Cod	W		20,916	15,687	12,208	26,855	20,141		19,292	14,469	
	C		33,117	25,086	21,241	37,873	28,405		27,206	20,405	
	E		4,067	3,660	14	4,131	3,718		2,968	2,671	
	Total	86,200	58,100	44,433	33,462	95,500	68,859	52,264	59,100	49,466	37,545
Sablefish	W		2,540	2,540	1,892	2,670	2,670		2,360	2,360	
	C		7,250	7,250	6,602	6,370	6,370		5,630	5,630	
	WYAK		2,580	2,580	1,825	2,280	2,280		2,014	2,014	
	SEO		3,570	3,570	3,335	3,520	3,520		3,116	3,116	
	Total	19,280	15,940	15,940	13,654	17,880	14,840	14,840	15,800	13,120	13,120
Deep-water flatfish ¹	W		330	330	3	420	420		421	421	
	C		3,340	3,340	395	4,139	4,139		4,145	4,145	
	WYAK		2,120	2,120	4	2,661	2,661		2,665	2,665	
	EYAK/SEO		1,030	1,030	4	1,445	1,445		1,446	1,446	
	Total	8,490	6,820	6,820	406	11,008	8,665	8,665	11,022	8,677	8,677
Rex sole	W		1,680	1,680	576	1,159	1,159		1,096	1,096	
	C		7,340	7,340	1,576	5,506	5,506		5,207	5,207	
	WYAK		1,340	1,340	0	1,049	1,049		992	992	
	EYAK/SEO		2,290	2,290	0	1,486	1,486		1,405	1,405	
	Total	16,480	12,650	12,650	2,152	12,000	9,200	9,200	11,400	8,700	8,700
Shallow-water flatfish ²	W		21,580	4,500	108	24,720	4,500		24,720	4,500	
	C		27,250	13,000	4,516	24,258	13,000		24,258	13,000	
	WYAK		2,030	2,030	0	628	628		628	628	
	EYAK/SEO		1,210	1,210	6	1,844	1,844		1,844	1,844	
	Total	63,840	52,070	20,740	4,630	62,418	51,450	19,972	62,418	51,450	19,972
Flathead sole	W		11,690	2,000	611	10,548	2,000		10,932	2,000	
	C		30,020	5,000	1,904	25,195	5,000		26,111	5,000	
	WYAK		3,000	3,000	0	2,022	2,022		2,096	2,096	
	EYAK/SEO		390	390	0	55	55		57	57	
	Total	56,500	45,100	10,390	2,515	47,003	37,820	9,077	48,763	39,196	9,153
Arrowtooth flounder	W		26,250	8,000	2,531	20,154	8,000		21,011	8,000	
	C		168,950	25,000	16,681	134,906	25,000		140,640	25,000	
	WYAK		11,790	2,500	23	15,954	2,500		16,632	2,500	
	EYAK/SEO		9,910	2,500	29	6,830	2,500		7,120	2,500	
	Total	253,900	216,900	38,000	19,264	207,678	177,844	38,000	216,500	185,403	38,000

Stock/ Assemblage	2005					2006			2007		
	Area	OFL	ABC	TAC	Catch*	OFL	ABC	TAC	OFL	ABC	TAC
Other slope rockfish ³	W		40	40	93		577	577		577	577
	C		300	300	565		386	386		386	386
	WYAK		130	130	70		317	317		317	317
	EYAK/SEO		3,430	200	36		2,872	200		2,872	200
	Total	5,150	3,900	670	764	5,394	4,152	1,480	5,394	4,152	1,480
Northern rockfish ³	W		808	808	570		1,483	1,483		1,483	1,483
	C		4,283	4,283	4,208		3,608	3,608		3,608	3,608
	E		0	0	0		0	0		0	0
	Total	6,050	5,091	5,091	4,778	7,673	5,091	5,091	7,618	5,091	5,091
Pacific ocean perch	W	3,076	2,567	2,567	2,340	4,931	4,155	4,155	4,997	4,290	4,290
	C	10,226	8,535	8,535	8,145	8,806	7,418	7,418	8,923	7,660	7,660
	WYAK		841	841	872		1,101	1,101		1,137	1,137
	SEO		1,632	1,632	0		1,587	1,587		1,639	1,639
	E(subtotal)	2,964				3,190	2,688	2,688	3,232	2,776	2,776
	Total	16,266	13,575	13,575	11,357	16,927	14,261	14,261	17,152	14,726	14,726
Shortraker	W		155	155	70		153	153		153	153
	C		324	324	224		353	353		353	353
	E		274	274	203		337	337		337	337
	Total	982	753	753	497	1,124	843	843	1,124	843	843
Rougheye	W		188	188	52		136	136		133	133
	C		557	557	122		608	608		596	596
	E		262	262	122		239	239		235	235
	Total	1,531	1,007	1,007	296	1,180	983	983	1,161	964	964
Pelagic shelf rockfish	W		377	377	120		1,438	1,438		1,463	1,463
	C		3,067	3,067	1,845		3,262	3,262		3,318	3,318
	WYAK		211	211	215		301	301		306	306
	EYAK/SEO		898	898	3		435	435		443	443
	Total	5,680	4,553	4,553	2,183	6,662	5,436	5,436	6,779	5,530	5,530
Demersal rockfish	SEO	640	410	410	289	650	410	410	650	410	410
Thornyhead rockfish	W		410	410	189		513	513		513	513
	C		1,010	1,010	388		989	989		989	989
	E		520	520	134		707	707		707	707
	Total	2,590	1,940	1,940	711	2,945	2,209	2,209	2,945	2,209	2,209
Atka mack.	Total	6,200	600	600	882	6,200	4,700	1,500	6,200	4,700	1,500
Big skate	W		727	727	26		695	695		695	695
	C		2,463	2,463	758		2,250	2,250		2,250	2,250
	E		809	809	60		599	599		599	599
	Total	5,332	3,999	3,999	844	4,726	3,544	3,544	4,726	3,544	3,544
Longnose skate	W		66	66	15		65	65		65	65
	C		1,972	1,972	947		1,969	1,969		1,969	1,969
	E		780	780	135		861	861		861	861
	Total	3,757	2,818	2,818	1,097	3,860	2,895	2,895	3,860	2,895	2,895
Other skates	Total	1,769	1,327	1,327	663	2,156	1,617	1,617	2,156	1,617	1,617
Other species	Total	NA	NA	13,871	2232	NA	NA	13,942	NA	NA	12,266
Total		713,667	539,263	291,298	182,957	631,293	501,366	292,776	582,477	473,000	258,549

* Catch through November 6, 2005

¹ "Deep water flatfish" includes Dover sole, Greenland turbot and deepsea sole.

² "Shallow water flatfish" includes rock sole, yellowfin sole, butter sole, starry flounder, English sole, Alaska plaice, and sand sole.

³ The EGOA ABC of 2 mt for northern rockfish has been included in the WYAK ABC for other slope rockfish.

Council Recommended Bering Sea/Aleutian Islands Groundfish Quotas for the 2006-2007 Fisheries - DRAFT

Species	Area	2005				2006			2007		
		OFL	ABC	TAC	Catch**	OFL	ABC	TAC	OFL	ABC	TAC
Pollock	EBS	2,100,000	1,960,000	1,478,500	1,483,096	2,090,000	1,930,000	1,485,000	1,930,000	1,790,000	1,500,000
	Aleutian Islands	39,100	29,400	19,000	1,621	39,100	29,400	19,000	39,100	29,400	19,000
	Bogoslof District	39,600	2,570	10	0	50,600	5,500	10	50,600	5,500	10
Pacific cod	BSAI	265,000	206,000	206,000	183,020	230,000	194,000	194,000	176,000	148,000	148,000
Sablefish	BS	2,950	2,440	2,440	1,037	3,680	3,060	2,820	3,260	2,700	2,700
	AI	3,170	2,620	2,620	1,480	3,740	3,100	3,000	3,300	2,740	2,740
Yellowfin sole	BSAI	148,000	124,000	90,686	91,684	144,000	121,000	95,701	137,000	116,000	107,641
Greenland turbot	Total	19,200	3,930	3,500	2,530	14,200	2,740	2,740	13,400	2,630	2,630
	BS		2,720	2,700	2,105		1,890	1,890		1,815	1,815
	AI		1,210	800	425		850	850		815	815
Arrowtooth flounder	BSAI	132,000	108,000	12,000	13,888	166,000	136,000	13,000	174,000	142,000	18,000
Northern rock sole	BSAI	157,000	132,000	41,500	37,237	150,000	126,000	41,500	145,000	122,000	44,000
Flathead sole	BSAI	70,200	58,500	19,500	15,818	71,800	59,800	19,500	67,900	56,600	22,000
Alaska plaice	BSAI	237,000	189,000	8,000	11,183	237,000	188,000	8,000	231,000	183,000	15,000
Other flatfish	BSAI	28,500	21,400	3,500	4,466	24,200	18,100	3,500	24,200	18,100	5,000
Pacific Ocean perch	BSAI	17,300	14,600	12,600	10,360	17,600	14,800	12,600	17,600	14,800	14,800
	BS		2,920	1,400	811		2,960	1,400		2,960	2,960
	AI total		11,680	11,200	9,549		11,840	11,200		11,840	11,840
	WAI		5,305	5,085	4,725		5,372	5,085		5,372	5,372
	CAI		3,165	3,035	2,238		3,212	3,035		3,212	3,212
	EAI		3,210	3,080	2,586		3,256	3,080		3,256	3,256
Northern rockfish	BSAI	9,810	8,260	5,000	3,959	10,100	8,530	4,500	9,890	8,320	5,000
Shorthead	BSAI	794	596	596	166	774	580	580	774	580	580
Rougheye	BSAI	298	223	223	92	299	224	224	299	224	224
Other rockfish	BSAI	1,870	1,400	1,050	468	1,870	1,400	1,050	1,870	1,400	1,400
	BS		810	460	188		810	460		810	810
	AI		590	590	280		590	590		590	590
Atka mackerel	Total	147,000	124,000	63,000	61,958	130,000	110,000	63,000	107,000	91,000	63,000
	WAI		46,620	20,000	19,736		41,360	15,500		34,220	17,500
	CAI		52,830	35,500	35,105		46,860	40,000		38,760	38,000
	EAI/BS		24,550	7,500	7,133		21,780	7,500		18,020	7,500
Squid	BSAI	2,620	1,970	1,275	1,183	2,620	1,970	1,275	2,620	1,970	1,275
Other species	BSAI	87,920	53,860	29,000	24,666	89,404	58,882	29,000	89,404	62,950	27,000
Total	BSAI	3,509,332	3,044,769	2,000,000	1,949,912	3,476,987	3,013,086	2,000,000	3,224,217	2,799,914	2,000,000

**2005 catch is through October 29, 2005 (includes CDQ).

DRAFT NPFMC THREE-MEETING OUTLOOK - updated 12/13/05

February 6, 2006 Seattle, Washington	April 3, 2006 Anchorage, Alaska	June 5, 2006 Kodiak, Alaska
Halibut Charter GHl Regs: Initial Review	Halibut Charter GHl Regs: Final Action (T) Halibut Charter Management: Receive workgroup report	Halibut Charter Management: Action as necessary
AFA Coop Reports: Review	IFQ Omnibus 5 Amendments: Final Action	
BSAI Crab Rationalization: Final Action on arbitration timing	BS Habitat Conservation: Progress Report	
CDQ community eligibility Reg amendment: Initial/Final Action	Am. 71: Review Alternatives and Options	Am. 71: Initial Review (T)
Observer Program: Initial Review (T)	Observer Program: Final Action (T)	Observer Program: Action as necessary
GOA Rationalization: Action as necessary	GOA Rationalization: Action as necessary	GOA Rationalization: Action as necessary
Flatfish IRIU Am 80: Final Action (T)	VIP Repeal: Initial Review (T)	VIP Repeal: Final Action (T)
ESA Consultation on FMPs: Action as necessary	ESA Consultation on FMPs: Action as necessary	ESA Consultation on FMPs: Action as necessary
EFP Applications: Review	Scallop SAFE: Review and approve	
	Rockfish Management: Review Report GOA Dark rockfish: Initial Review (T)	Rockfish Management: Action as necessary GOA Dark rockfish: Final Action (T)
Research Priorities: Review	Crab Overfishing Definitions: Initial Review (T)	Crab Overfishing Definitions: Final Action (T)
Non-target mgmt: SSC review O.species assessments SSC Workshop on Ecosystem Modeling	BSAI Cod Trawl C/V Eligibility: Review options	BSAI Cod Trawl C/V Eligibility: Review progress
BSAI P.cod sector allocations: Initial Review (T)	BSAI P.cod sector allocations: Final Action (T)	
	BSAI Salmon Bycatch Package B: Progress report Salmon genetic research: Report to SSC	BSAI Salmon Bycatch Package B: Action as necessary
Chiniak gully experiment: Initial Review/Final Action	VMS Requirements: Initial Review (T)	VMS Requirements: Final Action (T)

TAC - Total Allowable Catch
 BSAI - Bering Sea and Aleutian Islands
 IFQ - Individual Fishing Quota
 GHl - Guideline Harvest Level
 HAPC - Habitat Areas of Particular Concern
 LLP - License Limitation Program
 VIP - Vessel Incentive 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
 ESA - Endangered Species Act
 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
 AFA - American Fisheries Act
(T) Tentatively scheduled



North Pacific Fishery Management Council
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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
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.