

North Pacific Fishery Management Council

News and Notes



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Halibut Charter Moratorium

The Council approved a motion to implement a moratorium on entry into the charter halibut fisheries in Areas 2C and 3A using a control date of December 9, 2005. The moratorium is intended to limit the number of halibut charter businesses that can operate in Areas 2C and 3A in the future. The moratorium program is comprised of several provisions, primary of which is a participation requirement that each licensed fishing guide business owner must have reported a minimum of 5 bottomfish trips on their logbooks during 2004 or 2005, and in the year prior to implementation (likely either 2007 or 2008) in order to qualify for a moratorium permit. A business owner would be issued a permit(s) based on the number of trips summed for all vessels in his best year of the qualification period, and would be limited to the number of permits equal to the highest number of vessels used in any one year during the qualifying period. In addition, individual vessels must meet a higher threshold of at least 15 bottomfish trips in order to receive a transferable permit; vessels that do not meet this threshold would receive a non-transferable permit. An estimated 25% of the moratorium permits would be non-transferable using 2004 and 2005 logbook data.

While the Council's preliminary preferred alternative from February identified a more restrictive threshold for overall qualification (10 or 15 trips as opposed to 5), the Council's final motion balances the desire to allow more business owners to qualify for an initial permit with the parallel intent to limit the ability of the businesses with relatively low recent participation to sell their permits to a business that may have significantly greater participation (in terms of annual halibut trips) in the future.

The Council approved a use cap of 5 permits in order to limit permit consolidation, meaning an individual business owner could not own or control more than 5 permits, unless it was grandfathered in at a higher level. The Council also approved a permit endorsement that would limit the number of halibut clients a vessel operating under that permit could have onboard. A permit's endorsement would be equal to the highest number of bottomfish clients on any trip in 2004 or 2005, with a minimum endorsement of 4. A business could also stack multiple permits on a single vessel, subject to the use cap. This provision was intended to allow individual businesses to expand their operations

without increasing the total pool of permits allowed. Note that the permits that would be issued under this program do not limit a business in terms of the number of trips or angler days.

The Council motion also included a military hardship provision, as supported by public testimony. This provision allows an individual who qualifies under this provision to be eligible to apply for a moratorium permit without having met the qualification requirements of the general program. To qualify under the military hardship provision a person must have been assigned to active military duty during 2004 or 2005; qualify as an "active" charter business during the year prior to implementation; and can demonstrate an intent to participate in the charter fishery in Area 2C or 3A (prior to the qualifying period). Permits issued under the military hardship provision would receive a halibut client endorsement of 6.

Finally, the Council provided opportunities for a specified set of small, rural (not located on the road system) Gulf communities with under-developed charter industries to request and receive a limited number of permits at no cost. These permits would be non-transferable and held only by the Community Quota Entity representing the eligible community, and used to support halibut charter businesses operating out of those communities. The list of Area 2C and 3A eligible communities is noted in the final Council motion.

The Council motion on this issue is provided on the Council website. Council staff contact is Nicole Kimball.

Plan Team Appointments

The Council appointed two new members to the BSAI Crab Plan Team. Mr. Bill Bechtol is currently working on his PhD at the University of Alaska, Fairbanks conducting a retrospective analysis of the Kodiak red king crab stock collapse. Also appointed is Dr. Andre Punt, who is an associate professor of the School Aquatic and Fishery Sciences, University of Washington, and an expert on stock assessment modeling. We look forward to working with these distinguished scientists.

Charter Halibut GHL

The Council reviewed a number of important issues that affect charter halibut fisheries in Southeast and Southcentral Alaska. NMFS informed the Council that it will **not implement the International Pacific Halibut Commission's recommendation for a 1-fish bag limit** in Area 2C (Southeast Alaska) during June 15 through July 31, 2007 and in Area 3A (Southcentral Alaska) during June 15 through June 30, 2007. Instead, NMFS has identified its preferred alternative in Area 2C, for a 2-fish bag limit with a requirement that one of those halibut be no more than 32 inches. This proposed measure, in addition to State of Alaska Emergency Order 1-R-02-07, which prohibited the retention of charter fish by skippers and crew and limited the lines that may be fished from a charter boat to the number of paying charter clients onboard the vessel, was determined to result in the same amount of reduction in charter halibut harvest in a manner that would reduce adverse impacts on the charter fishery, its sport fishing clients, the coastal communities that serve as homeports for this fishery, and on fisheries for other species. A proposed rule is expected to be published on April 6, 2007, and a final rule is expected to be published prior to June 1, 2007.

Emergency Order 2-R-3-02-07, which implemented the skipper/crew and line restrictions State measures in Area 3A, was determined to be sufficient to restrict charter halibut harvests in that area in 2007.

For 2008 and beyond, the Council reviewed an analysis to set restrictive management measures in Area 2C to limit charter halibut harvests to the **guideline harvest level (GHL)** of 1.432 M lb. The Council revised the range of options for final action in June 2007: 1) No more than one trip per vessel per day; 2) No harvest by skipper and crew, and line limits; 3) Annual limits of four, five or six fish per angler; 4) Reduced bag limits of one fish per day for May, June, July, August, September, or the entire season; 5) A two fish bag limit with one fish any size and one fish larger than 45" or 50"; 6) A two fish bag limit with one fish any size and one fish less than 32 inches; 7) A two fish bag limit with one fish any size and one fish either less than 32" or greater than 45" or 50"; 8) Combination of Options 1, 2, & 6; 9) Combination of Options 1, 2, 7; 10) Combination of Options 1, 2, & 5; 11) Combination of Options 1, 2, 3, & 6; 12) Combination of 1, 2, 3, & 5; and 13) Combination of options 1, 2, 3 & 7.

Three options were considered and rejected for future action: 1) Closing the season after August 15, Sept 1, or Sept 15; 2) Closing one or more days of the week to halibut fishing; and 3) A minimum size limit of 32 inches.

The Council requested that the analysis compare options relative to Alternative 1 (2 fish bag limit) and Alternative 2, Option 6 (NMFS preferred alternative for 2007) and discuss the possibility that the GHL step down provisions may be triggered in 2008 as a result of a reduced CEY in Area 2C. This is to inform the public that the Council may choose to select management measures to achieve a harvest of either the current GHL of 1.432 M lbs or the step down of 1.217 M lbs for Area 2C. The regulations are intended to be in effect prior to June 1, 2008.

The Council also initiated analysis of restrictive management measures to reduce charter halibut harvests to the Area 3A GHL. These include: 1) No more than one trip per vessel per day; 2) No harvest by skipper and crew and line limits; 3) Annual limits of four or five or six fish per angler; 4) Reduced bag limits of one fish per day for May, June, July, August, September, or the entire season; 5) A two fish bag limit with one fish any size and one fish larger than 32", 34", or 36"; 6) A two fish bag limit with one fish any size and one fish less than 32 inches; 7) A two fish bag limit with one fish any size and one fish either less than 32" or greater than 45" or 50". This analysis is scheduled for review in October and final action in December 2007. The regulations are intended to be in effect prior to June 1, 2008.

The Council is also focusing on **long term solutions**. It has selected a range of percentages (12-17% in Area 2C and 13-15% in Area 3A) or fixed pounds (1.4 – 1.9 M lb in Area 2C and 3.7 – 4.2 M lb in Area 3A) for an initial allocation to the charter sector. An analysis is scheduled for October 2007. Linked to that decision, the Council has forwarded a separate suite of elements and options for a compensated reallocation program to its Charter Halibut Stakeholder Committee for review and recommendations at its April 12-13, 2007 meeting in Anchorage. The intent is to develop a mechanism to fund the purchase of commercial halibut quota shares for future increases in the charter allocation above the level set at initial allocation. The committee will report to the Council in June. The committee will meet separately to provide final recommendations on potential changes to the recently adopted limited entry program or two share-based programs (client days or quota share) prior to the October Council meeting. The Council's motions are posted on its website. Staff contact is Jane DiCosimo.

AI Fishery Ecosystem Plan

The SSC and the Council reviewed a draft of the AI FEP at this meeting, and provided feedback to the writing team. The FEP is intended as a guidance document for the Council, to understand the ecosystem context of management actions affecting the Aleutian Islands ecosystem. Dr Sarah Gaichas, from the Alaska Fisheries Science Center, presented information on the physical, biological, and socioeconomic relationships in the Aleutians, including results from the Aleutian Islands food web model, and a qualitative risk assessment of AI ecosystem interactions. The Council was enthusiastic about the ecosystem information collected in the FEP, and requested that the revised document include a discussion of how this information could guide management actions. The Ecosystem Committee will meet in late May 2007 to provide recommendations for the Council about next steps for using the FEP. A revised draft of the FEP will be available on the Council website prior to the June meeting. Staff contact is Diana Evans.

Dark Rockfish

The Council took final action to address the management of dark rockfish under both the GOA and BSAI FMPs. The amendment analysis evaluates removing dark rockfish (*Sebastes ciliatus*) from the GOA and BSAI groundfish FMPs. This species is currently contained in the pelagic shelf rockfish (PSR) assemblage in the GOA and in the other rockfish complex in the BSAI. It comprises a small proportion of the total biomass in each complex, is more often found in nearshore waters, and is caught in State fisheries. The Council recommended removing dark rockfish from both the BSAI and GOA groundfish FMPs. There is limited impact in the Federal fishery of removing this species from either FMP. Dark rockfish comprise a small proportion of the total biomass in the GOA PSR assemblage, which is dominated by the target species, dusky rockfish. Impacts to other PSR stocks as well as other groundfish stocks are minimal due to the relatively minor contribution to the overall exploitable biomass from the dark rockfish stock. In the BSAI, dark rockfish makes up a very minor component of the total biomass in the other rockfish complex. This is not a target fishery, and retained catch is dominated by shortspine thornyhead rockfish and dusky rockfish. These two species make up the majority of the biomass in the complex.

Management of dark rockfish by the State is anticipated to be an improvement over Federal management within the PSR complex due to the State's ability to manage this stock as a single stock and on smaller management areas to protect against the potential for localized depletion. Staff contact is Diana Stram.

Salmon Bycatch Workshop

The SSC had a workshop on salmon bycatch in conjunction with the Council meeting. Presentations were given by State and Agency scientists on current salmon bycatch patterns, fleet response to closures, stock origin for salmon species taken incidentally in the pollock fishery and updated information on stock status for AYK salmon stocks. The purpose of the workshop was to review this information in the context of the Council's alternatives for a forthcoming amendment package on revised time/area closures and caps on salmon bycatch in the pollock fishery. A workgroup has been formed by the Council to work with staff on options for both hard caps and trigger caps (for time/area closures). This workgroup will meet twice prior to the June Council meeting to formulate their recommendations. The meetings will be open to the public. The Council will receive the recommendations from the workgroup at their June Council meeting and will refine the final suite of alternatives for analysis at that time. Initial review of the salmon bycatch amendment package is anticipated for October 2007. More information on the salmon bycatch workshop, and the current suite of alternatives and Council actions with respect to salmon bycatch in the pollock trawl fishery can be found on the Council website. Staff contact is Diana Stram.

Scallop Management

The Council reviewed the status the weathervane scallop stocks in Alaska. Management of scallop stocks is delegated to the State of Alaska under a Federally-approved FMP. During the 2005/06 season, 8 of 9 registration areas were open for scallop fishing. Of these 8 areas, only 5 had fishing effort occurring in them. Scallop harvests within these areas are limited by the Guideline Harvest Ranges (GHRs) established by the State. Information on scallop stocks is provided by biennial surveys in two regions and by the statewide scallop observer program. New video survey technology is being utilized to provide additional information on scallop stocks. The scallop stocks in Alaska are neither overfished nor approaching an overfished condition. The 2007 Scallop Stock Assessment and Fishery Evaluation (SAFE) report was approved by the Council and is available on our website.

The Council also moved to send two letters regarding scallop management issues. The first letter will be sent to the Alaska Legislature to provide additional information on possible impacts of not continuing the current limited entry statutes in the scallop fishery. This vessel-based limited entry program will sunset at the end of 2008, unless extended by the legislature. The Council expressed concern with the possibility of reverting to an open access fishery in state waters and potential adverse effects relative to State/Federal management. The second letter is to the University of Alaska and the Alaska Department of Fish and Game to encourage continued support of research and analysis of scallop stocks, product quality issues, and the overall scallop habitat and ecosystem. Staff contact is Diana Stram.

Economic and Social Data Collection

The Council received a discussion paper from Alaska Science Center staff concerning the development of a comprehensive economic and social data collection program that would apply to participants in all fisheries. The paper described types of data and potential methods of collection to fulfill needs for economic and social analyses. The paper is the product of preliminary efforts of a workgroup of social and economic analysts on staff with NOAA Fisheries Science Center and Region, State of Alaska, and the Council. The Council suggested that the workgroup continue to develop this program, but stated its intent to postpone further action on this matter to provide the SSC and public with the opportunity to comment on the workgroup's report. In addition, the Council requested the charter industry to consider if and the extent to which that sector should be included in the economic and social data collection program. Staff contact is Mark Fina.

Gulf of Alaska Pcod Sector Allocations

The Council received a staff presentation concerning the a potential action to divide the Western Gulf of Alaska and Central Gulf of Alaska Pacific cod total allowable catches among various sectors. The Council adopted the following draft purpose and need statement to guide its action on this matter:

The limited access derby-style management of the Western Gulf and Central Gulf Pacific cod fisheries has led to competition among the various gear types (trawl, longline, pot, and jig) and operation types (catcher processor and catcher vessel) for shares of the total allowable catch. Competition for the GOA Pacific cod resource has increased for a variety of reasons, including increased market value of cod products, rationalization of other fisheries in the BSAI and GOA, increased participation by fishermen displaced from other fisheries, a reduced federal TAC due to the state waters cod fishery, and Steller Sea Lion mitigation measures including the A/B seasonal split of the GOA Pacific cod TAC. The competition among sectors in the fishery may contribute to higher rates of bycatch, discards, and out-of-season incidental catch of Pacific cod. Participants in the fisheries who have made long-term investments and are dependent on the fisheries face uncertainty as a result of the competition for catch shares among sectors. Allocation of the TAC among sectors would reduce this uncertainty and contribute to stability across the sectors. Dividing the TAC among sectors may also facilitate development of management measures and fishing practices to address Steller sea lion mitigation measures, bycatch reduction, and PSC mortality issues.

The Council also adopted a series of provisions for preliminary analysis. Those provisions would be used to define:

- Sectors by gear and operation type,
- Sector catch histories for determining allocations (which could include all retained catch, retained catch (except catch used in meal production), or catch during the directed fishery),
- An increasing allocation to the jig sector to allow for growth of that sector,
- Stranded allocations to allow for late season harvest of a sector's remaining allocation by other sectors,
- Incidental catch allowances to support incidental catch needs

The full list of elements and options is on the Council's website.

The Council requested staff to begin the analysis of these elements and options to allow for further refinement at a future meeting. The analysis should provided the Council with preliminary estimates of the sector allocations that would result from the implementation of these elements and options. Staff contact is Mark Fina.

Gulf of Alaska Fixed Gear LLP Recency

The Council received a staff presentation concerning the potential development of recency requirements for continued LLP eligibility for fixed gear licenses in the Western Gulf of Alaska and Central Gulf of Alaska management areas. The Council adopted the following draft purpose and need statement to focus public input on this issue:

Western Gulf and Central Gulf groundfish fisheries are subject to intense competition, particularly in the A season, when fish are aggregated and of highest value. Competition among fixed gear participants in the Western Gulf and Central Gulf fisheries has increased for a variety of reasons, including increased market value of Pacific cod products and a declining ABC/TAC. The possible future entry of latent effort would have detrimental effects on LLP holders that have exhibited participation in, and dependence on, the fixed gear groundfish fisheries. Many fixed gear vessel owners have made significant investments, have long catch histories, and are dependant on WGOA and CGOA groundfish resources. These long-term participants need protection from those who have little or no recent history and who have the ability to increase their participation in the fisheries. The intent of the proposed amendment is to prevent latent fixed gear groundfish fishing capacity that has not been utilized in recent years, from future entry or re-entry into the fisheries. This requires prompt action to promote stability in the fixed gear sectors of the GOA groundfish fisheries, and is expected to be implemented concurrently with the division of GOA Pacific cod among sectors which is currently under consideration.

The Council also requested staff to provide additional tables and information concerning participation across the various gear and operation types to assist it in the development of elements and options for analysis. Staff contact is Mark Fina.

Upcoming Meetings

Charter Halibut Stakeholder Committee April 12-13, Anchorage

Steller Sea Lion Mitigation Committee: April 17-19, NMFS Conference room, Juneau; May 7-10 AFSC, Seattle

Ecosystem Committee is meeting in Seattle (AFSC) on May 21st, timing TBD.

Salmon Bycatch Workgroup meetings:

April 27 Hilton Hotel Anchorage

May 15-16 Hilton Hotel Anchorage

Crab Plan Team: May 22-24 AFSC Seattle

PNCIAC: April 17 Leif Erickson Hall, Seattle

Observer Advisory Committee: meeting, May 21 - 22 Alaska Fisheries Science Center, Seattle, Building 4, Room 1055 (Agenda will be posted on our website shortly.)

BSAI Crab Rationalization 18 Month Review

The Council received a report that reviews two aspects of the crab rationalization program as scheduled, 18 months after fishing began under the crab rationalization program. The first issue is whether the 90/10 A share/B share split and arbitration system are serving their intended purposes. Based on the report and public testimony, the Council took several actions. First, the Council tasked staff to develop a discussion paper further examining the use of B shares and whether those uses are consistent with the Council's intent in developing those shares. In addition, the Council stated its intent to create an advisory committee to further examine the use of B shares and develop recommendations concerning several regulatory concerns identified, including issues related to the timing of market reports, and the time periods for matching A shares to IPQ. The Council also tasked staff to develop a discussion paper examining the provision of legal immunity to administrators of the arbitration program (which could include arbitrators, market analysts, arbitration organizations, and the third party data provider). The analysis also examined the landing pattern of C shares (captain and crew shares) in comparison to the landing patterns of A shares and B shares, to assess whether application of the 90/10 A share/B share split is appropriate. Under current regulations, the 90/10 A share/B share split would apply to C shares after 3 years of fishing under the program. After considering the analysis and public testimony, the Council elected to initiate an amendment to prevent the application of the A share/B share split to C shares.

The Council also received a discussion paper prepared by Alaska Fishery Science Center staff concerning the crab economic data collection program. The paper defined a process for the development of protocols to protect confidentiality and maintain data quality. Under that process, staff would prepare a briefing paper defining confidentiality protocols, including proposed aggregation rules for release of data in analyses. Staff would also prepare a briefing paper based on information gathered from audits and from submitters of economic data concerning potential inaccuracies in data submitted under the program. Variable definitions and preliminary estimates of the degrees of error in the data will be included in the paper. Meetings would be scheduled in the summer for review of these papers by the public and industry. Input from these meetings would be incorporated into both briefing papers. Through this process, proposed data confidentiality and quality protocols will be defined for presentation to the Council at a future meeting. Staff contact is Mark Fina.

Stock Assessment Review Guidelines

The Council reviewed draft guidelines for external reviews of stock assessments, and decided the guidelines should be revised so as to create separate guidelines for groundfish, scallops, and crabs, given the different timing required for completing the assessments and establishing annual catch limits. The Council will make final approval of the revised stock assessment review guidelines in June.

GOA Sideboard Limits

In December 2006, the Council heard public testimony that some of the Gulf of Alaska sideboard limits maybe overly restrictive and that some of the sideboard limits are not restrictive enough. To begin assessing whether changes in the sideboard limits in the Gulf of Alaska fisheries are needed, Council requested staff to prepare a summary of Gulf of Alaska sideboard limits. At this meeting, the Council reviewed the discussion paper and directed staff to expand the Gulf of Alaska sideboard limit discussion paper to include assessments of the following:

1. Potential redundancies of the CGOA Rockfish Pilot Program and Amendment 80 sideboards and possible methods to modify those sideboards to eliminate redundancies while maintaining their integrity.
2. An option to allow AFA CV GOA sideboard exempt fleet to lease their BSAI pollock allocation during the B season (June 10 to November 1).
3. The removal of the 14 day stand down (July 1 to July 14) for CP vessels participating in the CGOA Rockfish Pilot Program that are members of cooperatives in the BSAI fisheries under Amendment 80.
4. An option to exempt crab vessels from GOA Pacific cod sideboards during the B season, starting on November 1st.
5. An option to change the GOA Pacific cod sideboard exemption criteria for crab vessels.
6. An option to exempt certain crab vessels from GOA pollock sideboard.
7. The number and collective harvest of crab vessels that have been sold and entered into the GOA pot cod fishery.

The expanded discussion paper will be available at the October 2007 Council meeting. Staff contact is Jon McCracken

Western GOA Pollock Trip Limits

At its February 2007 meeting, the Council heard testimony that the current structure of the Western Gulf of Alaska 300,000 lb pollock trip limit may be ineffective for limiting temporal concentration of catch in that fishery. In response, the Council requested staff to bring back the February 2005 discussion paper concerning this issue. After reviewing the discussion paper and hearing public testimony, the Council initiated an analysis for a regulatory amendment to impose a landing limit of 300,000 lbs during a 24-hour period trip for Western Gulf of Alaska pollock. Initial review is scheduled for October 2007. Staff contact is Jon McCracken.

Trawl CV LLP Recency

The Council reviewed an updated discussion paper on trawl CV LLP recency requirements in the BSAI and GOA trawl fisheries. A discussion paper was also presented by NOAA Fisheries that addressed the respective threshold periods proposed for the amendment (i.e. 1995-2005 or 2000-2005). There are data limitations associating harvests with licenses for the earlier period, therefore selection of the 1995-2005 threshold period, while possible to accomplish, could result in delays implementing the amendment. Other issues addressed in the discussion paper included potential exemptions of LLP requirements for the three license limitation programs (AFA/AM80/Rockfish) and gear/area designations in the LLP program. These potential exemptions will be further assessed in the next iteration of this analysis. Going into this meeting, the amendment based the threshold criteria on trawl groundfish landings (Alternatives 2 and 4) or on or on both trawl and non-trawl landings (Alternatives 3 and 5).

In their action on this proposed amendment, the Council took the following actions:

- 1) Delete Alternatives 3 and 5 and make Alternatives 2 & 4 applicable only to LLP trawl endorsements (therefore the amendment will have no effect on non-trawl groundfish LLPs).
- 2) Direct staff to provide a discussion on exemptions that may be provided for LLP licenses used on vessels in the AFA, AM 80 & Central Gulf Rockfish programs.
- 3) Direct staff to assess the landings data for 2006 and determine the appropriateness of minimum 2006 landings and/or investments prior to 2006 as trawl Recency qualification tests.

With respect to (3), comments during deliberation on this item indicated that Council intent is for staff to look at those LLPs that showed activity only in 2006 (LLPs that would otherwise not meet the landings threshold criteria) and provide additional information only for these instances. An updated version of the alternatives, components and options for this proposed amendment is posted on the Council website. The Council will review this package again in June. Staff contact is Jim Richardson.

Observer Program

In April, the Council tasked its Observer Advisory Committee (OAC) to convene prior to the June meeting in order to review a discussion paper outlining potential changes to the existing groundfish observer program proposed by NMFS. The OAC is scheduled to meet May 21 - 22 in Seattle to review this paper and recommend alternatives and options for a possible regulatory amendment to implement a suite of changes. The Council will review the discussion paper and the OAC's recommendations at its June meeting. Staff contact is Nicole Kimball.

AI Habitat Conservation Area

The Council adopted modifications to the Aleutian Island Habitat Conservation Area (AIHCA) during the March 2007 meeting. The AIHCA was created in 2005 as part of a suite of conservation measures to minimize the adverse effects of fishing on Essential Fish Habitat in the Aleutian Islands subarea. The AIHCA prohibits the use of non-pelagic trawl fishing gear in designated areas of the AI to reduce the effects of fishing on corals, sponges, and hard bottom habitats, while allowing areas that have been trawled repeatedly in the past to remain open. The modifications are a result of reported discrepancies in the latitude and longitude boundaries defined in the regulations and those latitude and the boundaries representing fishing patterns recorded on commercial fisher's plotters. Two areas in the Western Aleutians near Agattu and Buldir Islands will be corrected to allow fishing in areas historically fished and to prevent bottom trawling in areas that have not been repeatedly fished. One location near Agattu Strait had been historically fished and was included into the closure area. A second location near Buldir Island was included in the portions of the AIHCA open to bottom trawling but has some documented presence of corals and sponges which is indicative of a fragile habitat. Staff contact is Cathy Coon.

Bering Sea Habitat Conservation

The Council received a staff report on an initial draft analysis of alternatives to minimize the effects of fishing on habitat in the Bering Sea. The analysis tiers off the action taken by the Council in February 2005 to conserve essential fish habitat (EFH) from potential adverse effects of fishing. The alternatives focus on open and closed areas to bottom trawling, as well as gear modifications for bottom trawl gear. The Council recommended the document be made available for public comment with some minor revisions and final action will be taken at the June 2007 meeting. Additional information including maps of the areas and the Council's motion are available on the Council web site. Staff contact is Cathy Coon.

FMP Consultation

The Council received from NMFS a revised schedule for the Section 7 consultation on the Council's Fishery Management Plans. Given the re-prioritization of completing another draft of the Revised Steller Sea Lion Recovery Plan, NMFS will suspend work on the consultation and will postpone preparation of a draft Biological Opinion until late 2007. The Council's Steller Sea Lion Mitigation Committee (SSLMC) will complete its work on the Proposal Ranking Tool (PRT) and will review the proposals it has received at its April and May meetings, respectively. The SSLMC will receive further guidance from the Council at its June meeting. Staff contact is Bill Wilson.

Steller Sea Lion Recovery Plan

At its February 2007 meeting, the Council requested that NMFS consider preparing another draft of the Revised Steller Sea Lion Recovery Plan for public and Council review. NMFS has agreed, and will release another draft for public review in early May 2007. NMFS intends to have this revised draft Recovery Plan peer reviewed by the Center for Independent Experts, and the Council also will work with the North Pacific Research Board to complete a separate independent peer review of the recovery plan. The Council will convene a special meeting in early August to review the draft Recovery Plan. Additional information on the Special Council meeting will be provided at the Council's June meeting.

As part of its planned review of the second draft of the Revised Steller Sea Lion Recovery Plan, the Council has contracted with Dr. Tom Loughlin to compile information on the criteria developed by endangered species recovery teams for changing the listing status of ESA-listed species other than Steller sea lions. The review will include discussion and comparison of recovery actions in the plans and their similarity to those in the draft SSL Recovery Plan. This report will be available for Council review at its June 2007 meeting. Staff contact is Bill Wilson.

Miscellaneous Items

The Council directed staff to draft letters on several issues, including a letter regarding 1) a proposal for a pot closure area off Unalaska; 2) comments to NMFS on proposed annual catch limits; 3) complementary State regulations for seabird avoidance measures; 4) the State scallop vessel moratorium; 5) scallop research issues; 6) season dates for BSAI opilio and bairdi crab fisheries; 7) continued NMFS funding for rockfish; 8) inclusion of C shares in the cost recovery program; 9) comments on proposed revisions to the NEPA process; and 10) another letter requesting resolution of observer compensation relative to the Fair Labor Standards Act. The Council approved a motion to formally adopt the Council Coordination Committee. Additionally, they requested discussion papers on implications of removing dinglebar gear from VMS requirements. They also approved the minutes from the February meeting, and a process for awarding the Bob Mace Distinguished Service Award. Lastly, the Council met with a visiting delegation of Russian fisheries representatives, hosted by World Wildlife Fund. A question and answer session with the Council and Russian delegation proved very enlightening to both parties.

Other Species Management

In April 2005, the Council initiated an analysis to eliminate the other species category in the BSAI and GOA groundfish FMPs, and set annual specifications for sharks, skates, squids, sculpins, and octopuses, with an option to add grenadiers. At the March 2007 meeting, the Council received a staff report on implications of alternatives being considered to manage the 'other species' complex. The Council decided to hold off on further development of this action until after the issue of setting annual catch limits for data poor stocks is discussed at a national workshop. The issue could then be addressed by the Non-Target Species Committee over the summer, taking into consideration revised National Standard 1 guidelines, and brought back to the Council at a future meeting. Staff contact is Jane DiCosimo

NPFMC Tentative Meeting Dates for 2007-2008*

	February Week of/ Location	April Week of/ Location	June Week of/ Location	October Week of/ Location	December Week of/ Location
2007	7/Portland	March 26th/Anchorage Hilton	4/Sitka	1/Anchorage Hilton	3/Anchorage Hilton
2008	4/Seattle Renaissance Downtown	March 31/Anchorage Hilton	2/Kodiak	September 29/ Anchorage	1/Anchorage Hilton

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

DRAFT NPFMC THREE-MEETING OUTLOOK - updated 4/5/07

June 4, 2007 Sitka, Alaska	* October 1, 2007 Anchorage, Alaska	December 3, 2007 Anchorage, Alaska
SOPPS: Review and action as necessary (T) Draft MMPA LOF for 2008: SSC review SSLMC Report on proposal review: Action as necessary (T) SSL Recovery Plan: Review progress and related ESA discussion paper	National Bycatch Report: Update Revised NEPA process: Comment Draft MMPA LOF for 2008: Action as necessary (T) SSL Recovery Plan and BiOp Update: Action as necessary	SSL BiOp Review: Action as necessary
	GOA sector split: Preliminary Review GOA sideboards: Discussion paper; action as necessary GOA fixed gear LLP recency: Discussion Paper, action as necessary WGOA pollock trip limit: Initial Review	GOA sector split: Initial Review GOA fixed gear LLP recency: Initial Review (T) WGOA pollock trip limit: Final Action
BSAI Crab 'Active Participation': Discussion paper BSAI Crab Custom Processing: Discussion paper BSAI Crab Post-delivery Transfers: Discussion paper	BSAI Crab 'B' Shares: Discussion paper BSAI Crab 'C' Shares: Initial Review BSAI Crab custom processing: Initial Review (T) Crab Advisory Committee: Report and Action as necessary	Crab 'C' Shares: Final Action BSAI Crab custom processing: Final Action (T)
Charter Halibut Allocation/Compensation: Committee report and action as necessary	Charter Halibut Allocation/Compensation: Initial Review (T) Charter Halibut Discard Mortality: Discussion paper (T) Charter Halibut Logbook Data: SSC Review	Charter Halibut Allocation/Compensation: Final Action (T)
Charter Halibut 2C GHM Measures: Final action	Charter Halibut 3A GHM Measures: Initial Review	Charter Halibut Longterm: Discuss Charter Halibut 3A GHM Measures: Final Action
Halibut Subsistence Rural Definition: Discussion paper	Comprehensive Socioecon. Data Collection: Report	
Observer Program: Cttee Report, Disc paper; action as necessary	Observer Program Reg. Package: Initial Review (T)	Observer Program Reg. Package: Final Action (T)
Trawl LLP Recency: Review information to date	Trawl LLP Recency: Initial Review (T)	Trawl LLP Recency: Final Action (T)
Salmon Bycatch (B-1): Workgroup report/refine alternatives	BSAI Salmon Bycatch (B-1): Initial Review (T)	BSAI Salmon Bycatch (B-1): Final Action (T)
GOA arrowtooth MRA: Initial Review (T) CDQ Am. 71/22: Discussion paper on Alternatives and legal opinion (T) CDQ regulation of harvest: Initial Review/Final Action (T)	GOA arrowtooth MRA: Final action (T) CDQ Program: Action as necessary	
Arctic management: Review discussion paper BS Habitat Conservation: Final Action HAPC Priorities and Timing: Review/Action as necessary	Seabird avoidance measures in 4E: Action as necessary	
Research Priorities: Review and Approve	Other Species: Committee Report	
PSEIS Priorities: Review	Groundfish specifications and SAFE: Initial action	Groundfish specifications and SAFE: Final Action
Guidelines for External Review: Review/Approve	BSAI Crab SAFE	
AI FEP: Review and Approve (T)	BSAI Crab Overfishing Definition: Final Action	
BSAI Crab Overfishing Definition: Initial Review		

TAC - Total Allowable Catch
 BSAI - Bering Sea and Aleutian Islands
 IFQ - Individual Fishing Quota
 GHM - Guideline Harvest Level
 HAPC - Habitat Areas of Particular Concern
 LLP - License Limitation Program
 SAFE - Stock Assessment and Fishery Evaluation
 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
(T) Tentatively scheduled

Future Meeting Dates and Locations

June 4 - 12, 2007 in Sitka

*** August meeting to comment on SSL recovery plan, August 1-3, Anchorage Marriott, Downtown**

October 1 - 9, 2007 in Anchorage

December 3 - 11, 2007 in Anchorage

February 4 - , 2008 in Seattle

March 31 - , 2008 in Anchorage



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Special August Council Meeting Scheduled

The North Pacific Fishery Management Council will be holding a special meeting in August to comment on the Steller Sea Lion Recovery Plan. The SSC will begin August 1 and continue through noon on the 2nd, and the Council will begin at 1 on the 2nd and continue through the 3rd at the Anchorage Marriott Hotel Downtown. The focus of the meeting will be a review of a second draft of the Revised Steller Sea Lion Recovery Plan. The first draft of this Plan was released for public review in May 2006, after which NMFS received comments from the Council and its SSC and members of the public. At that time, NMFS' priority was the FMP consultation and Biological Opinion, but early in 2007 the Council requested that the Agency re-prioritize work on the recovery plan. NMFS agreed, and now plans to release another draft of the recovery plan in early May 2007 for another round of public review. The special SSC and Council meeting on August 1-3 will include the following items: Presentation of the revised draft of the Revised Steller Sea Lion Recovery Plan, a summary of the comments received on the first draft of the plan, the results of the peer review conducted by the Center for Independent Experts, a report on the Council's peer review of the revised plan, and a report on recovery criteria developed for other ESA-listed species. An update on the agenda for the meeting will be provided to the Council at its June meeting in Sitka.