

PREFERRED ALTERNATIVE

Management Approach

The productivity of the North Pacific ecosystem is acknowledged to be among the highest in the world. For the past 25 years, the Council management approach has incorporated forward looking conservation measures that address differing levels of uncertainty. This management approach has, in recent years, been labeled the precautionary approach. The Council's precautionary approach is about applying judicious and responsible fisheries management practices, based on sound scientific research and analysis, proactively rather than reactively, to ensure the sustainability of fishery resources and associated ecosystems for the benefit of future as well as current generations. Recognizing that potential changes in productivity may be caused by fluctuations in natural oceanographic conditions, fisheries, and other, non-fishing, activities, the Council intends to continue to take appropriate measures to insure the continued sustainability of the managed species. It will carry out this objective by considering reasonable, adaptive management measures as described in the Magnuson Stevens Act and in conformance with the National Standards, the Endangered Species Act, the National Environmental Policy Act and other applicable law. This management approach takes into account the National Academy of Science's recommendations on Sustainable Fisheries Policy.

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

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

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

To meet the goals of this overall management approach, the Council and NMFS will use the PSEIS as a planning document. To help focus its consideration of potential management measures, it will use the following objectives as guideposts to be re-evaluated as amendments to the FMP are considered over the life of the PSEIS.

Prevent Overfishing:

1. Adopt conservative harvest levels for multi-species and single species fisheries and specify optimum yield.
2. Continue to use existing optimum yield cap for BSAI (as stated in current law) and GOA groundfish fisheries.
3. Provide for adaptive management by continuing to specify optimum yield as a range.
4. Initiate a scientific review of the adequacy of F_{40} and adopt improvements as appropriate.
5. Continue to improve the management of species through species categories.

Promote Sustainable Fisheries and Communities:

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

Preserve Food Web:

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

Manage Incidental Catch and Reduce Bycatch and Waste:

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

Avoid Impacts to Seabirds and Marine Mammals:

22. Continue to cooperate with USFWS to protect ESA-listed species, and if appropriate and practicable, other seabird species.
23. Maintain or adjust current protection measures as appropriate to avoid jeopardy to ESA-listed Steller sea lions.
24. Encourage programs to review status of endangered or threatened marine mammal stocks and fishing interactions and develop fishery management measures as appropriate.
25. Continue to cooperate with NMFS and USFWS to protect ESA-listed marine mammal species, and if appropriate and practicable, other marine mammal species.

Reduce and Avoid Impacts to Habitat:

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

Promote Equitable and Efficient Use of Fishery Resources:

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

Increase Alaska Native Consultation:

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

Improve Data Quality, Monitoring and Enforcement:

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

Preferred Alternative Bookends

		PA.1	PA.2
TAC-setting Process	ABC & OFL	- Set ABC < OFL	- Set ABC < OFL
	TAC	- Sum of TACs has to be within OY range	- Set TAC =< ABC for all targets and "other spp." category
	OY	- OY specified as range for BSAI: 1.4-2.0 mill MT and OY specified as range for GOA: 116,000 - 800,000 MT; BSAI OY cap: if the sum of TAC > 2 mill mt then TAC will be adjusted down	- Revisit the calculation of the OY caps to determine their relevancy to current environmental conditions and our knowledge of current stock levels.
	B 20 rule	- B ₂₀ rule for prey species (pollock, P.cod, Atka mackerel)	- No change from PPA.1
	Forage Fish	- No directed fishery for forage fish (forage fish ban, Amendment 36/39)	- No change from PPA.1
	MSST	- Specify MSSTs for Tiers 1-3 - Continue to use and improve current harvest control rules to maintain a spawning stock biomass with the potential to produce sustained yields on a continuing basis	- Initiate analysis of MSSTs for priority stocks based on the timeframe determined by additional availability of required resources taking into account SSC comments and concerns -Improve collection of biological information necessary to determine spawning stock biomass estimates, particularly for species in Tier 4-5
	"Other species", Species Complexes, Non-specified species	- Set group TAC for "other species". - Maintain species categories (target, "other species", PSC and non-specified species)	- Develop criteria for 'splitting and lumping' of species in order to have a consistent approach over as wide a range as possible ('other species', rockfish, non-specified, etc.) - Consider breaking sharks and skates and additional groups out of "other species" group for TAC setting - Develop criteria to bring a non-specified species into a managed category
ABC Tier system	- Conduct F ₄₀ review and adopt appropriate measures as necessary	- Develop, implement and update as necessary, procedures to account for uncertainty in estimating ABC, species-specific production patterns, and ecosystem considerations	

		PA.1	PA.2
TAC-setting Process (continued)	Ecosystem Indicators	- Develop ecosystem indicators for future use in TAC-setting	- Develop and implement, as appropriate, criteria for using key ecosystem indicators in the TAC-setting process - Develop appropriate harvest strategies for rockfish
	Target Species closures	- Target species closures when harvest limit is reached	- No change from PPA.1
Spatial/ Temporal Mgmt of TAC		- Species TAC distributed spatially for some BSAI and GOA species	- No change from PPA.1
MPAs and EFH	MPA Process	- Executive Order 13158: Initiative establishes MPA Advisory Committee, MPA Center, MPA website, agency tasks and list of existing US MPAs - Development and adoption of definitions of MPAs, marine reserves, marine fishery reserves, protected marine habitats etc. - Develop MPA efficacy methodology including program goals, objectives, and criteria, for establishing MPAs	- Consider adopting 0-20% of BS, AI, GOA as MPAs and no-take marine reserves (e.g., 5% = no take, 15% = MPA) across a range of habitat types
	Closures	- Maintain current closed/ restricted areas such as Walrus Island closures, RKC Savings Area, Bogoslof, Pribilof Island closures, nearshore Bristol Bay closures, Kodiak Type I-III areas, EGOA trawl closures, closures for herring and salmon, Sitka Pinnacles, etc.	- Review all existing closures to see if these areas qualify for MPAs under established criteria. MPAs could include no-take reserves or have restrictions of specific gear types or specific fisheries or specific time periods
	EFH & HAPC	- Identify and designate EFH and HAPC	- Identify and designate EFH and HAPC - Determine extent of adverse effects from fishing, if any. Implement mitigation measures, if necessary. - Establish Aleutian Island management area to protect coral/live bottom habitats

		PA.1	PA.2
SSL Measures	SSL closures	- 2002 SSL closures: no fishing in Seguam Pass; 3nm no transit zones around rookeries; trawl and fixed gear closures in nearshore and critical habitat areas	- Modify 2002 SSL closures and designation of Critical Habitat as appropriate scientific information becomes available
	AI	- Review cumulative impacts of opening AI pollock fishery	- Modify AI SSL closures and designation of Critical Habitat as appropriate scientific information becomes available
Bycatch and Incidental Catch Restrictions	PSC limits	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Maintain PSC limits for herring, crab, halibut, and salmon in BSAI; maintain PSC limit for halibut in GOA - Review effectiveness of coop managed PSC reduction - BSAI: Consider reducing PSC limits for herring, crab, halibut, and salmon to the extent practicable (0-10%) (for purposes of analysis will use 10%) - GOA: Identify salmon savings areas and establish PSC limits to manage - GOA: Establish PSC limits or other appropriate measures on salmon (for example, NTE a 25,000 fish cap for Chinook and a 20,500 fish cap for 'other salmon'); establish PSC limits or other appropriate measures on crab and herring based on biomass or other fishery data - For those PSC species where annual population estimates exist, explore a mortality rate based approach to setting limits 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - BSAI: Reduce PSC limits for herring, crab, halibut and salmon to the extent practicable (0-20% for analytical purposes) - GOA: Establish PSC limits on salmon (for example, NTE a 25,000 fish cap for Chinook and a 20,500 fish cap for 'other salmon'); establish PSC limits on crab and herring based on biomass or other fishery data - GOA: consider reducing PSC by 0-10% - BSAI/GOA: For those PSC species where annual population estimates exist, explore a mortality rate-based and abundance based approach to setting limits
	IRIU	- IR/IU for Pollock and P. cod, yellowfin and rocksole (BSAI only), shallow water flatfish (GOA only)	- Extend to other species as appropriate
	Bycatch restrictions	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Maintain current bycatch and incidental catch restrictions. Full retention of DSR in SEO - Maintain coop managed 'hot spot' closures to control 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Incentive program for incidental catch and bycatch reduction, e.g.: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> (a) Individual Bycatch Quota (b) Harvest Priority (10% of TAC reserved to reward clean fishing) (c) bycatch reduction standards established (d) Coop managed Harvest Priority (0-10% TAC or PSC reserved to reward clean fishing)

		PA.1	PA.2
Bycatch and Incidental Catch Restrictions (continued)	VIP program	- Maintain VIP program	- Repeal VIP program
	Closures	- Maintain existing inseason bycatch closures	- Evaluate effectiveness of existing closures. Develop appropriate inseason closure areas in GOA to address bycatch of halibut, salmon, and/or crab when PSC cap is reached for that species
	Inseason bycatch measures	- Maintain MRAs	- Repeal or modify MRAs and establish a system of caps and quotas
Seabird Measures	Incidental take	- Take of more than 4 short-tailed albatross within 2 years triggers consultation in groundfish longline fisheries	- No change from PPA.1
	Seabird avoidance measures	- Longline: Maintain current seabird avoidance measures as approved in 2001 - Trawl: Cooperate with USFWS to develop scientifically-based fishing methods that reduce incidental take of ESA-listed seabird species.	- Longline: Cooperate with USFWS to develop scientifically-based fishing methods that reduce incidental take for all seabird species - Trawl: Cooperate with USFWS to evaluate and implement scientifically-based fishing methods that reduce incidental take of ESA-listed, and if appropriate and practicable, other seabird species
Gear Restrictions and Allocations	closures	- Retain existing no trawl zones and fixed gear restrictions. Bottom trawl ban in BSAI for pollock	- BSAI and GOA prohibition on pollock bottom trawl
	allocations	- Retain existing gear restrictions and allocations. No pot fishing in GOA for sablefish. Sablefish and P. cod allocated by gear in BSAI. Sablefish allocated by gear in GOA.	- Evaluate pot fishing in GOA for sablefish
Overcapacity	Restricted access management	- Maintain existing restricted access programs (LLP and moratorium, AFA, IFQ sablefish, etc.) - Continue development of rights-based mgmt, on a fishery by fishery basis as needed including: (a) IFQs (b) Coops (i) community-based (ii) sector-based (c) CDQs (d) Other community-based programs (e.g., halibut community share program as applied to other species)	- Rationalize all fisheries (all GOA, BSAI non-pollock/sablefish) - Ensure CDQ program maximizes benefits in rural communities

		PA.1	PA.2
Alaska Native Issues	Local and Traditional Knowledge	- Develop and implement procedures to incorporate local and traditional knowledge into fisheries management	- Incorporate additional local and traditional knowledge from research
	AP/Council representation	- Increase consultation with Alaska Native and encourage increased participation	- Increase consultation with and representation of Alaska Natives in fishery management
Observer Program	Coverage and monitoring	- Continue existing Observer coverage or modify based on data and compliance needs - Modification should be scientifically-based (e.g., random placement, flexibility, variable rate)	- Expand/modify observer coverage based on scientific data and compliance needs (applies to all vessels: <60' and >= 60') - Improve species identification for non-target species - Develop uncertainty estimates for target species data
	Fee Structure	- Industry pays for observer deployment related costs	- Develop and implement alternate funding mechanisms a) Federal funding b) Research Plan (e.g., fee-based)
Data and Reporting Requirements	Reporting Requirements	- Maintain current reporting requirements (a) AFA requirement that all CPs and motherships to weigh all pollock catch on NMFS approved scales (b) CDQ requirement that all CDQ groundfish catch is to be weighed on NMFS-approved scales	- Develop programs for mandatory economic data collection while protecting confidential information - Explore programs that collect, verify, and then aggregate economic data through independent third party (accounting firm/other) while protecting confidential information on an individual/firm basis - Collect and verify aggregate economic data through independent third party (e.g. accounting firm)
	VMS	- Maintain mandatory VMS requirement for Atka mackerel, p.cod, and pollock fleets	- Modify VMS to incorporate new technology and system providers