

North Pacific Fishery Management Council
October 2007
C-4(a) – GOA Pacific Cod Sector Split

The Council directed staff to continue the analytical process for an amendment to allocate the Western and Central Gulf of Alaska Pacific cod TACs among the various sectors. The Council modified the purpose and need statement and components and options for analysis:

Purpose and Need Statement

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, hook-and-line, pot, and jig) and operation types (catcher processor and catcher vessel) for shares of the total allowable catch (TAC). 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. 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 catch among sectors may reduce this uncertainty and contribute to stability to some of 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 prohibited species catch (PSC) mortality issues.

Component 1

The Western and Central Gulf of Alaska Pacific cod TACs will be allocated among the various gear and operation types, as defined in Component 2.

Component 2: Sector definitions

The Western and Central GOA Pacific cod TACs will be allocated among the following sectors:

- Trawl catcher processors
- Trawl catcher vessels
- Hook-and-line catcher processors
 - Option: Hook-and-line catcher processors <125 ft
 - Hook-and-line catcher processors ≥125 ft
- Hook-and-line catcher vessels
- Pot catcher processors
- Pot catcher vessels
- Jig vessels

Additional divisions could include:

- Pot catcher vessels <60 ft
- Pot catcher vessels ≥60 ft
- All catcher processors <125 ft
- All catcher processors ≥125 ft

Component 3: Definition of qualifying catch

Option 1 All retained legal catch of Pacific cod in the federal and parallel waters fisheries in the Western and Central Gulf of Alaska.

Option 2 All retained Pacific cod harvested during the directed federal fisheries in the Western and Central Gulf.

Catch will be calculated using Fish Tickets for catcher vessels and Catch Accounting/Blend data for catcher processors.

Under all options, allocations to the trawl sectors will deduct incidental catch allocated to the trawl sector for the Central Gulf Rockfish program.

Component 4: Years included for purposes of determining catch history

Option 1 Qualifying years 1995-2005: average of best 5 years

Option 2 Qualifying years 1995-2005: average of best 7 years

Option 3 Qualifying years 2000-2006: average of best 3 years

Option 4 Qualifying years 2000-2006: average of best 5 years

Component 5: Allocation of Pacific cod to jig sector

Options include setting aside 1%, 3%, 5%, or 7% of the Western and Central GOA Pacific cod TACs for the jig catcher vessel sector, with a stairstep provision to increase the jig sector allocation by 1%, 2%, or 3% if 90% of the federal jig allocation in an area is harvested in any given year.

Subsequent to the jig allocation increasing, if the harvest threshold criterion described above is not met during three consecutive years, the jig allocation will be stepped down by 1% in the following year, but shall not drop below the level initially allocated.

The jig allocation could be set aside from the A season TAC, the B season TAC, or divided between the A and B season TACs.

Component 6: Apportionment of Pacific cod to meet incidental catch needs¹

Option 1 Reserve the amount of Pacific cod needed to support incidental catch of cod in all other directed Gulf of Alaska fisheries off the top before allocating to the sectors; or

Option 2 Give each sector separate incidental catch allocations, and sectors will be responsible for their own incidental catch needs.

¹ Under regulation, 20 percent of the TAC of each Gulf species (including Pacific cod) can be held in reserve for later allocation to accommodate bycatch. In recent years, NOAA fisheries has not set aside a separate incidental catch allowance for cod, and has instead included the reserves as part of the GOA Pacific cod TACs.

Component 7: Management of unharvested sector allocations

Any portion of a CV, CP, or Jig allocation determined by NMFS to remain unharvested during the remainder of the fishing year will become available as soon as practicable to either:

Option 1 Other respective CV or CP sectors first, and then to all sectors as necessary to harvest available TAC, or

Option 2 All sectors

Component 8: Apportionment of hook-and-line halibut PSC (other than DSR) between catcher processors and catcher vessels

Option 1 No change in current apportionments of GOA halibut PSC

Option 2 Apportion the GOA hook-and-line halibut PSC to the CP and CV sectors in proportion to the total WGOA and CGOA Pacific cod allocations to each sector. No later than November 1, any remaining halibut PSC not projected by NMFS to be used by one of the hook-and-line sectors during the remainder of the year would be made available to the other sector.

Option 3 Other apportionment (select amount for each sector). No later than November 1, any remaining halibut PSC not projected by NMFS to be used by one of the hook-and-line sectors during the remainder of the year would be made available to the other sector.

Suboption (can be applied to Options 1, 2, or 3): Change seasonal apportionment by sector.

Other Issues for Analysis

The Council requested that staff include a discussion of cumulative economic and socioeconomic effects of the proposed action, including an analysis of vessel ownership, skipper residency, potential impacts on crew and processors, economic dependency of participants on GOA Pacific cod in comparison to other fisheries, and potential changes in the distribution of landings. Analysis will include a discussion of the likelihood of voluntary harvest cooperative formation within each sector, and the expected effects of cooperative fishing under sector allocations.

The Council also requested that staff discuss interactions between sector allocations and GOA Pacific cod sideboards. The analysis will also include a comparison of the options for defining sectors and qualifying catch in the sector split action and the trawl and fixed gear recency actions and a discussion of the implications of these differences on sector allocations.

The Council requested that staff provide a summary of discarded incidental Pacific cod harvests by year. Finally, the Council requested a description of the State-managed Pacific cod fisheries and a discussion of the overlap in participants in the federal and State-managed GOA Pacific cod fisheries.