

**North Pacific Fishery Management Council
Steller Sea Lion Mitigation Committee Meeting
October 16-18, 2007
Alaska Fisheries Science Center, Seattle**

Minutes

The Steller Sea Lion Mitigation Committee (SSLMC) convened in Seattle at the Alaska Fisheries Science Center on October 16-18, 2007. Committee members present were: Larry Cotter (Chairman), Jerry Bongen, Julie Bonney, Ed Dersham, John Gauvin, John Henderschedt, Dan Hennen (via video conference in Seward), Terry Leitzell, Dave Little, Steve MacLean, Stephanie Madsen, Max Malavansky Jr, Art Nelson, and Beth Stewart. Also present were Bill Wilson (Council staff); Dr. Doug DeMaster (NMFS AFSC); Kristin Mabry, Steve Lewis, Melanie Brown and Scott Miller (NMFS AK Region staff); Earl Krygier, (ADF&G); Mel Morris (Chairman, Alaska Board of Fisheries); John Lepore (NOAA General Counsel AKR); several AFSC and NMML scientists; and several members of the public. Chairman Cotter introduced and welcomed to the SSLMC two new members of the Committee, Stephanie Madsen and Beth Stewart. Ms. Madsen fills a seat vacated by Kevin Duffy and Ms. Stewart fills a seat vacated by Sam Cotten who was recently appointed to a seat on the Council.

Bill Wilson reviewed the agenda (attached), the work schedule for the coming several days, and the handout materials provided to each committee member. The minutes of the SSLMC's June 19-21, 2007 meeting were reviewed and approved.

Mr. Cotter reviewed the main goals of this SSLMC meeting. He characterized this meeting as being a transition from developing the proposal ranking tool to the process of analyzing proposals and developing a package of recommendations for Council review. He suggested that the SSLMC should develop a set of goals and objectives for the upcoming committee work, and identify some of the metrics against which the SSLMC will judge potential impacts of proposals. Mr. Cotter explained that at this meeting the SSLMC will hear reports on data sets that are available for proposal analysis, and go through proposals to identify additional data needs.

Mr. Wilson reviewed the results of the August 1-3, 2007 special Council and SSC meeting which was held primarily to review the May 2007 draft Revised SSL Recovery Plan. At that meeting, the Council requested that staff prepare a letter to NMFS outlining the Council's concerns with the SSL Recovery Plan. This letter was sent to NMFS on August 10, 2007, and is posted on the Council's website; the SSC minutes are also on the website.

Mr. Wilson also reviewed the results of the recent Alaska Board of Fisheries (BOF) Meeting held in Anchorage October 9-11. Mr. Mel Morris, Chairman of the BOF, gave details on the Board's actions. SSLMC members were provided with descriptions of several Board-generated proposals that could have effects on SSLs and which will be addressed by the BOF at their upcoming November 13-15, 2007 meeting in Homer.

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Since these proposals are under active consideration, they were referred to the SSLMC to include in the Committee's proposal review process. Mr. Cotter stated that the Committee would include them, and these proposals would be part of the SSLMC's upcoming review. These proposals are:

- 395 Change definition of daily trip limits for commercial pollock vessels in the GOA
- 396 Re-evaluate allowing the State waters pollock fishery in Aleutian Islands to be prosecuted in 2008
- 397 Reduce maximum vessel size to 60' or less LOA for State waters P. cod fishery in Aleutian Islands
- 398 After the Aleutian Islands State waters P. cod A season is closed, allow P. cod pot fishery to continue to harvest until June 10 with catch counted against the B season GHL; change how gear sectors affect closing and reopening the State waters P. cod B season

Mr. Cotter asked if the State does not close the State waters pollock fishery in the Aleutian Islands, would a Section 7 consultation be triggered. Dr. DeMaster stated that it would, and NMFS would have to focus effort on that issue until a Biological Opinion (BiOp) on that particular action is prepared. The SSLMC discussed the ramifications of each of these proposals. Mr. Morris noted that the Board would address these concerns at its Homer meeting, November 13-15.

Melanie Brown reviewed a revised schedule for completion of the final Revised SSL Recovery Plan, the FMP-level consultation process, the development of a status quo Biological Opinion, and the accompanying NEPA process (which will involve development of an EIS). Discussion ensued, focusing particularly a shift in the initiation of scoping to April. This change in scoping schedule was prompted by a Council motion at its October 2007 meeting asking that scoping not be initiated until after the SSL Recovery Plan is completed; the Council felt that identifying alternatives upon which to base scoping would be more appropriate after the recovery plan is available. The SSLMC discussed the changes in this schedule, including postponement of completion of a final SSL Recovery Plan to March 2008 and the draft status quo BiOp to May 2008, and how the Committee's work on proposals will mesh with this schedule.

The SSLMC expressed concern over this new schedule, and the degree to which this schedule would delay implementation of new SSL mitigation measures to 2011 or perhaps later. Dr. DeMaster and John Lepore noted that this schedule considers the time necessary for NMFS to complete the recovery plan and BiOp in a manner that is risk averse and gives the agency a strong position to avoid litigation. In addition, this schedule allows for Council involvement in each step of the process during regularly scheduled meetings. The SSLMC requested that concern be voiced to NMFS over the length of time scheduled for the NEPA process. The SSLMC asked that NMFS look at the entire process of completion of the recovery plan, BiOp, EIS, and related actions, and develop a new regulatory schedule that would provide for implementation of new

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mitigation measures no later than the 2010 fishing year. Mr. Cotter will contact the Council chair and make this request.

Mr. Cotter noted that the SSLMC must complete its work by May 2008 to keep the process on schedule. While it will be difficult to anticipate the content of the SSL recovery plan and its recovery criteria, the SSLMC must proceed with development of recommendations based on its current understanding of SSL biology and fishery interactions with SSLs. Dr. DeMaster added that, based on the Committee's familiarity with new data and SSL scientific studies, the SSLMC knows some of the more sensitive concerns (e.g. changes in 0 to 10 n mi around SSL sites, or large shifts in seasonal harvests), and therefore the SSLMC now is in a good position to know generally what kinds of mitigation measures may be realistic and which may not. Dr. DeMaster felt it was appropriate for the SSLMC to press on with the above schedule.

SSLMC Proposal Analysis Goals and Objectives

Mr. Cotter and Dr. DeMaster reviewed the process used by the old RPA Committee to develop a recommended set of alternative SSL protection measures that eventually were adopted by the Council in 2001. Mr. Cotter and Dr. DeMaster indicated their belief that the kind of approach used by the old RPA Committee might be helpful to follow, at least in part, as the SSLMC continues its work on proposals. The SSLMC has built a lot of expertise in its membership, and should now proceed with development of recommendations for changes in SSL protection measures for Council review and approval.¹

After a review of the 2001 RPA Committee's goals and objectives, the SSLMC then received an extensive review, presented by John Lepore, of Federal laws and Executive Orders that should be kept in mind as the Committee develops a suite of changes to SSL protection measures. In particular, this presentation focused on jeopardy and adverse modification of critical habitat decisions, and a summary of these presentations is provided immediately below. After hearing the presentations described below, the SSLMC adopted its goals and objectives for the upcoming months. These goal and objectives statements were modified later in the meeting to be clearer, and the final version is provided here:

¹ [Editor's note from the June 19-21, 2007 SSLMC meeting: Once this recommended package is accepted by the Council, it would be considered the "proposed action" that would be the subject of the ongoing Section 7 consultation, culminating in a revised BiOp that would be presented to the Council in September 2008. This proposed action also would be folded into the NEPA analysis and would be analyzed in a draft EIS scheduled for completion and presentation to the Council according to the new schedule discussed at this October 2007 SSLMC meeting.]

Goal: Develop regulatory changes to the Atka mackerel, Pacific cod, and pollock fisheries' SSL mitigation measures that continue to meet the mandates of the ESA, MMPA, MSFCMA, and other applicable laws, while conserving marine biodiversity and sustaining viability of the diverse fishing communities dependent upon the Alaska fishery resources.

Objectives:

- Continue to avoid jeopardy and adverse modification.
- Encourage development of a sound experimental design for monitoring.
- Minimize adverse social and economic impacts.
- Minimize bycatch of PSC and other groundfish.
- Promote safety at sea.
- Minimize adverse impacts to threatened and endangered species in the BSAI and GOA.

The Committee discussed how proposals would be evaluated and what kinds of data it will require to assess impacts of proposals. Dr. DeMaster suggested that the SSLMC could, as part of meeting the above goals and objectives, consider retaining the zonal approach to evaluating fishery effects on SSLs as described in the 2001 BiOp and its 2003 Supplement. The SSLMC could develop weightings for each fishery type when prosecuted in the SSL site zones (0-3, 3-10, etc.). Some questioned that, since the Proposal Ranking Tool (PRT) already considers fishery effects in zones around SSL sites, doing so again might be considered “double counting”; others thought using this approach might be a reasonable means to check how the PRT scores comport with a specific metric to determine effects, keeping in mind that the PRT scores are meant to rank proposals, not assess their individual impacts. Dr. DeMaster suggested that the SSLMC will need metrics for conducting impact assessments. John Lepore concurred, reminding the SSLMC that there are two issues involved: the PRT ranks proposals relative to each other only, and it will be a different process to evaluate proposal impacts. John Hendershedt remarked that the SSLMC needs to address the larger issues of jeopardy and to be holistic, and futuristic, as it considers all aspects associated with jeopardy. Other metrics the SSLMC may consider are data on counts and trends at individual SSL sites and in regions; Dr. DeMaster also reminded the SSLMC that, as it considers impacts on SSLs, keep in mind that weaning of juveniles is now thought to typically occur when the juvenile is either one, two or even three years of age.

Federal Laws and Related Considerations

John Lepore, NOAA GC, presented an overview of certain laws and orders that the SSLMC should keep in mind as the Committee develops a recommended package of changes in SSL protection measures for Council consideration. His presentation focused on the ESA, MMPA, NEPA, RFA, and E.O. 12866.

The ESA requires “conservation” of ESA-listed species and the ecosystem upon which they depend. This includes considerations of recovery – i.e. to get a species off the List.

To do so, the Agency must consider the five standards used to list a species: habitat, over utilization, disease and predation, inadequacy of existing regulations, and other factors affecting a species' continued existence. The ESA requires defining critical habitat (CH), which includes elements of conservation and recovery of the species. The ESA also requires recovery planning, with recovery meaning the steps necessary for conservation and survival of the species.

Under the ESA, a recovery plan is a guidance document without force of law. It is discretionary, since circumstances can change after a recovery plan is written and approved, and the Agency has the latitude to diverge from recovery criteria as needed, but certainly with explanation and justification. The ESA also requires Section 7 consultations, which start with a Biological Assessment document that initiates a consultation and is the means by which the Agency determines if the proposed action is "likely to adversely affect" a listed species; if yes, the consultation proceeds through a formal process. In this latter process, the Agency then determines if the action is likely to cause jeopardy to the continued existence of the listed species or adversely modify or destroy its designated CH; this assessment is provided in a Biological Opinion. Mr. Lepore explained in more detail the standards under which jeopardy determinations are made.

The MMPA requires protection of marine mammals and their habitat. It provides for incidental take authorizations, and the Agency must consider current, authorized takes when writing a BiOp under the ESA.

NEPA requires evaluation of the proposed action's impacts on the human environment. The Regulatory Flexibility Act – RegFlex – requires preparation of an IRFA which defines the impacts on small entities from a proposed action. Fishing businesses are generally considered small entities. This act requires the Agency to determine that its action will not have undue or disproportionate adverse effects on small entities. Executive Order 12866 requires determination of the costs and benefits of regulations promulgated by the Agency to ensure that net benefits are maximized.

Mr. Lepore then reviewed two recent court cases on jeopardy and adverse modification (JAM) decisions. One involving the U.S. Fish & Wildlife Service was the *Gifford Pinchot* case, and the other involved NMFS in a 2004 BiOp.

Under *Gifford Pinchot*, the court ruled that conservation of a listed species is more than just survival; it also must include recovery. Destruction or adverse modification of CH could occur if enough CH is lost so as to threaten a species' recovery even if there remains enough CH for the species survival. The key here is that in determining JAM, an Agency must consider BOTH survival and recovery, not just one or the other.

Under the NMFS BiOp decision, the court determined that NMFS must consider recovery (impacts of an action on recovery) as well as survival in the consultation process. To get a species off the List, conservation of CH is required, and management

must include an analysis of actions necessary for both recovery and survival of the species in its BiOp.

Regarding the future SSL recovery plan, Mr. Lepore noted that the delisting criteria in the recovery plan must be considered when the Agency evaluates a proposed action in its jeopardy determinations. Mr. Cotter questioned whether the delisting criteria in the upcoming final recovery plan will be THE driver of the JAM determinations. Mr. Lepore noted that these criteria must be measurable and objective, and as such are important parts of the JAM determination process; the Agency, however, has some discretion in considering delisting criteria when making JAM determinations. Dr. DeMaster felt that the Agency definitely will use these criteria in future consultations and BiOps.

The SSLMC further discussed the meaning of “recovery”; Mr. Lepore noted that recovery is essentially equivalent to conservation in the ESA, and both terms mean a process for getting a listed species off the List. Recovery criteria inform the BiOp, and in the SSLMC process in the coming months both the recovery plan and the status quo BiOp will inform the SSLMC’s final development of recommendations to the Council.

Databases and Analytical Support for Proposal Analysis

Steve Lewis, NMFS Alaska Region, gave an overview of databases that are available for the SSLMC to use during proposal analysis. Mr. Lewis also provided examples of analytical products that can be developed during this process. Mr. Lewis presented these databases, and how they were constructed:

- 1) VMS enabled catch in area database
- 2) Extrapolated observer data for the Atka mackerel, P. cod, and pollock fisheries
- 3) Extrapolated observer data by 154 SSL sites
- 4) Catch by vessel database

Mr. Lewis reviewed detailed elements of each database, anomalies in each, and how unobserved vessel data are treated. Examples of each database were illustrated, and Mr. Lewis gave a description of the kinds of analyses and products that can be generated from these databases. He also demonstrated a bathymetry mapping database, and illustrated how it might be used to inform the SSLMC’s proposal review process.

Proposal Ranking Tool Review

Kristin Mabry led the SSLMC through a review of the process used to build the PRT, the elements and hierarchy within the PRT, how elements were weighted, and the implications of the SSLMC’s final PRT structure. Ms. Mabry pointed out some general conclusions about SSLs and how they interact with fisheries that were reached by the SSLMC in its process of constructing the PRT:

- Effects of fishing are greater on SSLs than on the SSL prey field
- Effects of fishing on proximity and SSL site type are more important than what prey species are being harvested (and summer rookeries and nearshore zones are most sensitive)
- Summer is marginally more important to SSLs than winter

- More fish caught in a shorter period of time is more adverse to SSLs
- All regions in which SSL occur are equally important
- Seasonal/spatial importance of prey was inferred from scat data, acknowledging the limitations of these data

Ms. Mabry reminded the SSLMC that the PRT ranks proposals relative to each other, and does not constitute an impact assessment. The Committee still needs to conduct economic impact analyses, assessment of proposal effects on bycatch, analyses of proposal effects on fishery management and safety, and other analyses that consider the elements of jeopardy and adverse mod.

SSL Counts and Trends and the 2007 Surveys

Lowell Fritz reviewed count data from the 2007 SSL surveys conducted over the range of the western DPS. This year NMFS used a NOAA twin otter aircraft with both medium format and digital cameras. The medium format will phase out since the camera film is no longer manufactured. Mr. Fritz reviewed differences in how counts are made using both formats. In the future, digital holds promise for providing better data. The SSLMC discussed with Mr. Fritz the procedures used to compare and standardize counts using correction factors to keep a consistent time series of counts.

The 2007 non-pup surveys indicated an overall stability in the western DPS, with differences among regions. The trend site counts show a decrease in the eGOA with increases in the cGOA and wGOA subregions. The eAI showed a slight increase, but counts were poor for the cAI and no counts were obtained for the wAI.

The SSL survey/count program also attempts to obtain oblique 35 mm images where possible along with the vertical medium format and digital images, but this requires a second aircraft and thus coordination with other SSL researchers such as the University of Alaska or the Aleutians East Borough SSL programs. Oblique photos provide an opportunity to check counts made in the past using this technique along with counts made with current techniques. These opportunities provide NMML to re-check how both techniques compare.

Mr. Fritz reviewed several additional SSL programs and provided updates. Rookery versus haulout trends are both up, with western areas of the wSSL showing some decreases on haulouts. Mr. Fritz reviewed the Holmes et al. paper (Ecological Applications December 2007) on SSL natality that shows birth rate declines based on modeling studies of the wDPS. Brand/resight data show SSL movement varies by region and brand origin. Also, from these data survivorship calculations show a puzzling decline from birth to the first year, but then increases in survivorship in future years.

Survival studies show stable or increasing survival in both the eastern and western SSL populations based on resighting studies at Forrester and Marmot Islands. Compared with the fairly rapid decrease in survivorship at Marmot in 1987-1988, overall survivorship at

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Marmot (females only) in 2000-2006 is stable and nearly the same as in the 70s and early 80s.

Proposal Review

Mr. Cotter reviewed the BOF-sponsored proposals provided to the Committee earlier in this meeting, and suggested that the following be added to the list of proposals to be considered in the SSLMC proposal review process. Those proposals are:

- Proposal #34 (BOF #395) – Pollock daily trip limits in GOA
- Proposal #35 (BOF #396) – Close state waters pollock fishery in AI for 2008
- Proposal #36 (BOF #397) – Limit vessel size (all gear types) to <60' LOA in AI State waters P. cod fishery
- Proposal #37 (BOF #398) – Open a P. cod fishery to pot vessels only in AI State waters after the BSAI A season closes; account catch in this A season fishery against B season allocation

The SSLMC agreed to include these proposals in the proposal review process.

Bill Wilson reviewed all of the proposals with the Committee to refresh memories and to provide opportunity for Committee members to clarify each proposal. No detailed discussion occurred; this was primarily a way to review each and to ask questions and clarify the proposal's intent. After this proposal review, Mr. Cotter suggested that the Committee might want to combine some obviously similar proposals (e.g. BSAI pollock A season start, or BSAI pollock A/B TAC split) and perhaps organize them by geographic region (BS, AI, and GOA). The SSLMC noted it does not want to lose the PRT scores for each individual proposal, and these scores will be retained in this process; there was agreement that some combinations should occur.

The SSLMC then agreed to the following proposal consolidation:

- Combine #1 and #29 (retain all options in both)
- Combine #2 and #27 (retain all options in both)
- Combine #10 and #17 (keep #17, drop #10)

The Committee discussed whether the Atka mackerel fishery proposals might be combined, but determined that both #8 and #33 should stay as is and separate from each other.

Ms. Mabry reminded the Committee that as proposals are refined, groups of proposals can be scored as a group by the PRT, allowing the SSLMC to rank groups of proposals relative to other groupings; in fact, the Council's SSC likely would require that this step be part of the overall process of developing a recommendation for the Council to consider.

The Committee proceeded to review each proposal in detail, identifying questions, data needs, analysis suggestions, etc. Part way into that process Mr. Cotter suggested that a subgroup convene to describe a series of generic data sets that likely would be needed for many of these proposals. By doing so, he felt that going through the list by the whole committee might be expedited.

The subgroup met to prepare generic data requests. Members of this group were Mr. Cotter, Wilson, and Lewis; Drs. Hennen and Hills; and Ms. Mabry and Brown. Those data requests were presented to the full committee the following day. A list of generic data and other needs is attached. The Committee would use many of these “generic” data to put proposals into an historic context. Mr. Cotter suggested that the SSLMC will need to be careful when looking at 2000 and 2001 data, since in 2000 the fisheries were under the Zilly injunction, and in 2001 fisheries were managed under one set of conditions in the early part of the year and another set of conditions later in the year. Some questioned the amount and level of detail of generic data needed for proposal analysis. Mr. Cotter noted that these data will be important to verify the nature and amount of data available on each proposal, and he further suggested that the SSLMC should be transparent in the review process and eventual decision making; i.e., the Committee should use, or have the ability to reference, any relevant or applicable data sets that are available.

The SSLMC then reviewed the remaining proposals to identify any additional, unique data sets that might be needed to evaluate each individual proposal. All proposal-related data needs were compiled into a table (see attached).

Some committee members noted that, in the process of analyzing proposals and reviewing data, alternative measures that are not specifically part of the proposals in hand may be identified; how might these be treated? Mr. Cotter noted that alternative ways to accomplish the intended goal of some proposals may be identified; Mr. Cotter noted that this is an anticipated part of the SSLMC’s work, and alternative proposals, combinations of proposals, or variations on management measures might be analyzed in this process. The SSLMC should be able to suggest and analyze these alternatives as it moves through its work. This may be particularly evident since the Council has adopted, or intends to adopt, new measures that were not part of the management of fisheries when proposals were requested; thus, some measure of flexibility is required as the SSLMC moves forward.

Mr. Cotter requested that members of the SSLMC provide to Bill Wilson any additional data requests not listed on the attached table. These data requests should be provided no later than November 15, 2007. During this meeting, additional data needs were identified by Julie Bonney, Beth Stewart, Max Malavansky, Jerry Bongen, Dan Hennen, Chuck McCallum, and Thorn Smith; these needs are included in the attached list. All data will be brought to the next SSLMC meeting.

Mr. Cotter asked that the SSLMC review all of the Outside the Model Considerations (OTMC) previously identified for many of the proposals, and place these into categories based on the Objective statements developed by the SSLMC and adopted as goals/objectives for its future work. Ms. Mabry led the Committee through that process. The result was a table showing how these OTMCs related to the Committee’s objectives. This list is attached to these minutes.

And finally, as part of the process of documenting this committee's work and decisions, Mr. Cotter noted that this process would be helped if each proposal writer developed a statement for each proposal about how that proposal would meet or satisfy each of the Committee's goals/objectives. Using the list referenced immediately above, and attached to these minutes, Mr. Cotter asked each proposer to write such a statement for each of their proposals, and send this statement to Bill Wilson no later than December 1, 2007. This statement will be an important part of documenting the Committee's decisions. It also will be helpful in starting the discussions and making decisions at upcoming SSLMC meetings.

Consortium SSL Research Update

Dr. Andrew Trites, University of British Columbia and North Pacific Universities Marine Mammal Research Consortium, provided brief updates on new Consortium SSL research. In a feeding experiment where SSLs were fed a low ration and as a result measured weight loss was 15%, when fed again during winter the animals readily gained weight back, but when repeated in summer the animals were unable to regain weight unless fed in considerable excess. Findings suggest there may be a different physiological mechanism SSLs employ to metabolize food depending on season; are SSLs "used to tough times in winter" and therefore genetically adapted to having the ability to readily put on weight in that season?...and less so in the summer when food maybe more available and easy to get and weight gain is not as large an issue? Based on this and other recent work, Dr. Trites intends to update his nutrition model. He also reported that he plans to study effects on nutrition on female SSL ovulation using captive animals.

Dr. Trites also reported that two new papers will be coming out soon, one from Dr. Paul Wade and colleagues and another by Dr. Trites and his group, both focusing on additional discussion, and refutation, of the megafaunal collapse hypothesis. Both papers provide additional evidence that commercial whaling was not connected to declines in SSLs or fur seals.

Next Meeting and Work Schedule

Mr. Cotter stated that the Committee needs to meet as soon as possible, once the requested data sets and other items are prepared and available. The SSLMC must work through the proposals and develop some initial, though preliminary, products by early to mid March when the final recovery plan will be released. Mr. Cotter acknowledged that maybe more than one meeting will be necessary to get through all data for all proposals and discuss and deliberate each, and develop an initial product. Given the uncertainty, Mr. Cotter suggested January 2008 for the next meeting. **Based on a variety of conflicting meetings and events, January 6-8, 2008 at the AFSC was the decision for the next meeting.** Mr. Wilson will look into a meeting site for the first day, January 6, since it is Sunday and the AFSC may not be available; he also will send out reminders.

Adjourn

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The Committee adjourned at 11:15 a.m. October 18, 2007.

Bill Wilson

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North Pacific Fishery Management Council
Steller Sea Lion Mitigation Committee Meeting
Alaska Fisheries Science Center
October 16-18, 2007

Purpose: Initiate proposal analysis, review databases and demo products, adopt goals, identify information needs and develop data requests. Review Council meeting on SSL Recovery Plan.

AGENDA

October 16 - 8:30 AM – 5:00 PM

1. Introductions and Opening Remarks, Announcements, Agenda Approval (Cotter)
2. Minutes of Last Meeting (Wilson)
3. Update on August 2007 Council Meeting in Anchorage (Cotter, Wilson)
4. Updates on Other Meetings, Etc.
 - (a) Board of Fisheries Meeting October 9-11 (Wilson)
 - (b) October Council Meeting and New EIS Schedule (Brown)
5. Initiate Proposal Analysis (Cotter)
 - (a) Review 2001/2002 RPA Process and Criteria (Cotter, DeMaster)
 - (b) Review Applicable Federal Laws and Orders (Lepore)
 - (c) Review Jeopardy and Adverse Modification Standards/Criteria (DeMaster, Lepore)
 - (d) Adopt SSLMC Goals and Objectives (All)
 - (e) Review and demonstrate data bases available for proposal analysis (Lewis)
 - VMS Enabled Catch-In-Areas database by GIS shapefile 2003 - 2006. This is a product that transfers the attributes of a shapefile, e.g., 0-3, 3-10, 10-20 n mi to the fully accounted databases: Catch Accounting System. It will automatically split the database records as necessary to facilitate this process. Includes the attributes found in the Catch Accounting System to include Vessel ID, Vessel Class, Processing Sector, Fish Caught Code, Target Code, Directed Fishery Code, NMFS Reporting Areas, Tons, Date, and many other items. Fully accounts for unobserved vessel classes such as smaller vessels and jig vessels. It uses both VMS and Observer point data to process GIS data into the database.
 - VMS Enabled Catch-In-Areas database by Area 2003 - 2006. Has all groundfish catch by state statistical area and is currently being made available in smaller 20km and 5km blocks. Also includes all the attributes found in the Catch Accounting System.

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- Catch of Atka m, pollock, P cod inside/outside CH, by zone, by year, updated through 2006. Updated tables from 2003 Supplement to 2001 BiOp. Tables generated from database listed above.
- Observer Data 1992 - 2006. Observer data unextrapolated.
- Observer point data coarsely extrapolated to Blend and Catch Accounting for P.cod, pollock, and Atka mackerel. Does not account for unobserved or lightly observed vessel fleet.
- Catch By Vessel/Catch In Areas By State Stat Area: 1995 - 2001. This is a combination of Observer Data, Fish Ticket Data, and WPR data to account for the catch. Includes most of the information found in Blend/Catch Accounting System data. The resolution is the state stat area.
- Catch by SSL Site Location. Database includes expanded observer data and analysis for each of the 151 Steller sea lion sites individually. Where the 20nm buffers of CH overlap, so do the catch data, but this allows analysis of catch around the sites individually. Data is query-able by individual site.
- A series of lookup tables to discriminate between fleets of vessels.
- Lookup tables for economic analyses.
- Bathymetric data. More detailed bathymetry products can be generated to examine portions of a region's bathymetry - perhaps even overlay it with SSL telemetry or other data.

October 17 – 8:30 AM – 5:00 PM

- (f) Review updated SSL count and telemetry data (Fritz, Gelatt)
- (g) Initiate Proposal Analysis Using Available Databases and OTMCs
- (h) Identify Information Needs and Develop Data Requests

October 18 – 8:30 AM – 5:00 PM

6. Continue Proposal Analysis
7. Discuss Committee Meeting Schedule
8. Action Items, Closing Remarks, Adjourn (Cotter)

Public comment periods will be provided during the meeting.

Contact Bill Wilson at the Council offices if you have questions: 907-271-2809 or bill.wilson@noaa.gov

Generic Data and Other Proposal Review Needs for Evaluating Proposals to the SSLMC

Fisheries

Create GOA database that would allow us to look at:

- Pollock and P. cod catch and incidental catch (PSC and other groundfish)
- Catch by week, gear, vessel size, and by sector, value, location (State stat areas) 1996-2007
- Earlier data are limited because do not have VMS data and limited spatial resolution. VMS data is done in 10 km blocks and can be queried.
- Steve can provide temporal animation of data.

Create same database for BSAI for pollock, P. cod, and Atka mackerel.

Express results in maps of prey species fisheries and also need data/maps of sideboard fisheries.

Economic data on pollock roe from industry by mid December to Bill. Differences in roe grade over time. This was discussed later, and Wilson paper on early A season may suffice for now.

Value of Atka mackerel inside and outside HLA, including discard rates.

Fishing speeds to help with determining fishing behavior with VMS data - provided by industry.

Request proposals be reviewed by NMFS Inseason and Enforcement people

Prey species distribution (SAFE document, EFH adult distributions). Need to differentiate between size available for prey and size available to fishery if possible.

SSLs

Percent of CH (SSL protection area) closed in a region. Zonal accounting of CH open vs closed based on 0-3, 3-10, 10-20, and CH outside 20. Obtain from NMFS PR and Analytical Team

SSL trends in area over time. (Dan H. has data by rookeries, and Lowell F. provided data by larger areas.) Steve L. can provide data on change in fishing in CH (Either site specific or by larger area).

Percent of protected area.

Need maps showing the current SSL protection zones, and maps of the zones around SSL sites if a new classification of sites (based on new SSL counts) is adopted.

SSLMC Objectives

1. Continue to avoid jeopardy and adverse modification.
 - Is there additional fishing effort inside of SSL critical habitat?
 - Does the proposal provide trade-offs that reduce the total negative effects to SSL?
 - Does the proposal open a substantial amount of critical habitat?
 - Does proposal indirectly provide protection to additional sites?
 - Does proposal indirectly affect nearby SSL sites?
 - Does proposal affect important research site? (e.g. Chiswell)
 - Does proposal offer additional measures to control fishing rate or effort?
 - Does the proposal affect an SSL site that has special importance? (e.g. Marmot)
 - Does the proposal reduce the no-fishing time between end of year (December) and first of year (January) fisheries at a critical time for SSL?
 - Does proposal shift effort into a time/space or prey availability level that may have negative effect on SSL?
 - Does the proposal affect the number of fishing days required to harvest the quota?
2. Encourage development of a sound experimental design for monitoring.
3. Minimize adverse social and economic impacts.
 - Does the proposal provide economic benefits?
 - What is the impact upon harvesting and/or processing efficiency?
 - Does the proposal have any effects on other fisheries?
 - Will the proposed action be further affected by recent or pending council actions?
4. Minimize bycatch of PSC and other groundfish.
 - Does the proposal potentially create bycatch issues in other SSL prey species?
 - Does the proposal potentially create bycatch issues in PSC species?
5. Promote safety at sea.
 - Does the proposal reduce or increase safety for the fleet?
6. Minimize adverse impacts to threatened and endangered species in the BSAI and GOA

Data needs for selected proposals as identified by the SSLMC. Most of the data are provided by the generic database. Bold items are not available from the generic database.

Proposal	Data needs	Who provides data
1/29	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Roe value to determine the economic benefit, (Wilson's paper with proposal provides sufficient information on this) • Effect on other fisheries and regions (16 vessels AFA and not sideboarded moving into the GOA). Post season issues with flatfish and cod (all gear). (Amd. 80/85) yellowfin not included • Impact on chinook bycatch, seasonal , Salmon Bycatch rates during season . First week and last week of fishing in last five years. • Where does fishery occur now on Jan. 20. Historical info on where fisheries occurred before the 1/20 date. • CPUE during the season or days vessels out • Shoreside plant concerns • Geographic distribution of fixed gear fleet for 5, 10, and 15 days at beginning of A season. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Bill's memo, SSLMC • NMFS Inseason management and Industry • NMFS Inseason, current salmon bycatch EA, info from Seastate, (recent trends), • NMFS • NMFS • SSLMC or industry • NMFS
2	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Where fishing takes place outside of CH during the A season in BS • Compare Chinook bycatch at the end of A season with Chinook bycatch at the end of the B season • Value of non-roe fish vs roe fish 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • NMFS • NMFS • NMFS
3	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • CP pot cod vessels catch rates and season endings. Weekly in past 5 years. • Location of fishing effort for CP longline and pot cod in BS in B season vessels vs CVs (Competition) Need maps by week with overlay, total catch by location. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • NMFS • NMFS

4	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • CP hook and line BSAI P. cod catch data by location • All BS fisheries by season, gear, by week, and location • CPUE by week in the B season and compare to CPUE at the end of the A season • Seabird and halibut bycatch • Efficiency of fishery • Safety and weather 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • NMFS • NMFS • NMFS • NMFS/ AFSC • NMFS and industry • Industry and NMFS (seabird EA for weather)
8	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • VMS data back to when it started for Atka mackerel • Atka mackerel distribution (tagging study) • Zonal catch activity around sites • ID areas that are important regarding fishing and ssl trends, what trade off may be important 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • NMFS • NMFS/AFSC • NMFS • SSLMC
9	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Cod fishing effort in open period back through time 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • NMFS
12	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Proposed rookery designation and site counts 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • NMML and PR in draft biop
19	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Report from cameras at St. George (Max has) • Zonal catch activity around sites 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Max • NMFS
21	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • What was result of opening zones in 2004 in GOA, who ended up fishing there. Compare to what proposal said would happen. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • NMFS
22	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • % of total area of SSL CH in areas WAI, CAI, EAI/EBS, WGOA, CGOA, EGOA (by SSL area definitions, not fish management area definitions)by: Rookery 0-3, 3-10, 10-20 Haulout 0-3 (not Rookery 0-10), 3-10 (not Rookery 0-10) Foraging Area (not Rookery 0-10 or Haulout 0-3) 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • NMFS

	<p>State water (not Rookery 0-10 or Haulout 0-3)</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • % of total area of SSL CH in areas WAI, CAI, EAI/EBS, WGOA, CGOA, EGOA (by SSL area definitions, not fish management area definitions) broken out by "Open to Pollock vs Closed to Pollock" by <p>Rookery 0-3, 3-10 and 10-20</p> <p>Haulout 0-3 (not Rookery 0-10), 3-10 (not Rookery 0-10)</p> <p>Foraging Area (not Rookery 0-10 or Haulout 0-3)</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • % of total pollock catch 2002-2006 in areas EAI/EBS, WGOA, CGOA, EGOA (by SSL area definitions, not fish management area definitions) broken out by "Open to Pollock vs Closed to Pollock" by <p>Rookery 0-3, 3-10, 10-20</p> <p>Haulout 0-3 (not Rookery 0-10), 3-10 (not Rookery 0-10)</p> <p>Foraging Area (not Rookery 0-10 or Haulout 0-3)</p> <p>Outside CH</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • % of total pollock catch and average CPUE in the 1990's of SSL CH in areas WAI, CAI, (by SSL area definitions, not fish management area definitions) broken out by <p>Rookery 0-3, 3-10, 10-20</p> <p>Haulout 0-3 (not Rookery 0-10), 3-10 (not</p>	
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	<p>Rookery 0-10)</p> <p>Foraging Area (not Rookery 0-10 or Haulout 0-3)</p> <p>Outside CH</p> <p>State water (not Rookery 0-10 or Haulout 0-3)</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • % of total pollock catch and average CPUE in the 1990's of SSL CH in areas 541/542/543 and by 2 degree longitude blocks broken out by <p>Rookery 0-3, 3-10, 10-20</p> <p>Haulout 0-3 (not Rookery 0-10), 3-10 (not Rookery 0-10)</p> <p>Foraging Area (not Rookery 0-10 or Haulout 0-3)</p> <p>Outside CH</p> <p>State water (not Rookery 0-10 or Haulout 0-3)</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Pollock summer bottom trawl survey biomass distribution by 541/542/543 and by finest strata used in survey/stock assessment process. • Estimate of present ex-vessel and 1st wholesale value per ton of AI pollock using historic AI pollock size distributions and roe recovery rates. 	
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For GOA, use the fish ticket data for the smaller vessels. Don't try to extrapolate from VMS data from larger vessels.