

Aleutians East Borough Proposed Alternative 3
for Steller Sea Lion Mitigation Measures in the current EIS.
Submitted for Consideration by the
North Pacific Fishery Management Council
Steller Sea Lion Mitigation Committee

10/12/2012

Contact: Ernie Weiss
Natural Resources Department
Aleutians East Borough
3380 C Street Suite 205
Anchorage, Alaska 99503
Ph 907-274-7557
Fx 907-276-7569
eweiss@aeboro.org

Statement of Proposed Alternative

Change the apportionment of the Pacific cod TAC between the A & B seasons in the Western Gulf of Alaska NMFS reporting area 610. The TAC is currently apportioned to 60% of the TAC in the A-season, 40 % in the B-season. The proposed alternative apportionment would be 80% in the A-season, and 20% in the B-season.

Objectives of Proposal

The first objective for this alternative is to increase the value of the harvest by allowing more roe-laden cod to be caught, which are more abundant in the A-season. This proposal increases the apportion of Pacific cod to be harvested in the A-season, and as more roe-laden cod are available in the A-season, the harvest is more valuable.

The second objective for this alternative is to reduce the amount of salmon and halibut bycatch, which is more abundant in the B-season. By reducing the amount of harvest in the B-season, bycatch should also be reduced.

Impacts of Proposal

The proposed change should have little or no impact on the wDPS of the SSL or designated critical habitat. The proposed action should reduce PSC in the Pcod fishery, which may, in turn, improve SSL conditions by reducing nutritional stress. Opportunities for local fishermen and communities will improve by giving fishermen better fish to market, resulting in higher prices paid to fishermen and more raw fish tax for municipalities.

Supporting Data and other documentation

The following discussion paper was presented to the Council at the March 2012 meeting:

GOA Pacific Cod A Season Opening Date Change available online at:

http://www.fakr.noaa.gov/npfmc/PDFdocuments/catch_shares/Pcod/AseasonDiscPap-GOApCod_312.pdf

From page 2 of the discussion paper: “Seasonally, sixty percent of the TAC apportioned is to the A season, which opens to fixed gear sectors (pot, jig, and longline/hook-and-line (HAL) gear) on January 1 and to trawl sectors January 20. The A season closes to all sectors June 10 or when the applicable TAC is achieved, whichever occurs first. The B season opens September 1st for all gear types and continues until the TAC is harvested or November 1 for trawl gear or December 31 for fixed gear, whichever occurs first.”

The Fishery Management Plan for Groundfish of the Gulf of Alaska is available online at:

<http://alaskafisheries.noaa.gov/npfmc/PDFdocuments/fmp/GOA/GOA.pdf>

Amendment 83 of the Fishery Management Plan for Groundfish of the Gulf of Alaska further allocates GOA Pcod TACs among gear sectors. The following table from page 22 of the FMP illustrates the seasonal and sector allocations of GOA Pacific cod:

Western GOA sector allocations with jig allocation taken off the top of the TAC				Central GOA sector allocations with jig allocation taken off the top of the TAC			
	Annual Allocation	Seasonal allocation			Annual Allocation	Seasonal allocation	
		A season	B season			A season	B season
HAL CP	19.8%	55.2%	44.8%	HAL CP	5.1%	80.3%	19.7%
HAL CV	1.4%	47.2%	52.8%	HAL CV <50	14.6%	63.9%	36.1%
Pot CWCP	38.0%	52.0%	48.0%	HAL CV >=50	6.7%	84.0%	16.0%
Trawl CP	2.4%	37.9%	62.1%	Pot CWCP	27.8%	63.9%	36.1%
Trawl CV	38.4%	72.3%	27.7%	Trawl CP	4.2%	48.8%	51.2%
				Trawl CV	41.6%	50.8%	49.2%

*Due to rounding, percentages for each sector may not sum to totals.

Alternative Solutions

An alternative that could be considered is apportioning 70% of the WGOA Pcod TAC to the A-season, and 30% to the B-season.

Justification for Council Action

The Council is currently establishing a program to provide tools for comprehensive bycatch reduction in the CGOA. This proposal by the AEB is proposed as a homegrown alternative to catch shares that has the potential to reduce bycatch and increase harvested catch value. Considering this proposal is warranted in light of the current bycatch tools discussion and requests by the Council for WGOA fishermen to propose program goals and objectives for the WGOA groundfish fisheries.