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North Pacific Fishery Management Council

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Council's 138th Plenary Session

The Council met April 21-26 at the Anchorage Hilton Hotel, spending the majority of the meeting on Steller sea lion issues and reviewing the analysis of American Fisheries Act sideboard provisions. These and other issues are described within this newsletter. The next Council meeting is scheduled for the week of June 7, 1999, at the Kodiak Inn in Kodiak, Alaska.

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Advisory Panel Holds Election of Officers

John Bruce and Stephanie Madsen were unanimously re-elected Chair and Vice Chair, respectively. John is the Personnel Director for Jubilee Fisheries in Seattle, Washington and has been a member of the AP since 1991. Stephanie is the Executive Director of Pacific Seafood Processors Association in Juneau, Alaska and has been a member of the AP since 1993.

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American Fisheries Act (AFA)

The Council reviewed the analysis for the AFA sideboard measures and AFA housekeeping amendments and voted to send the documents out for public review, with some changes and additions. A final Council decision on these issues is scheduled for June 1999. The primary additions approved by the Council include: a further discussion of the effects of a full pollock closure if a sideboard limit is attained; a specific list of vessels which are AFA qualified, and a histogram of catch levels of pollock across AFA vessels; further analysis of the pollock compensation formula for catcher vessels delivering to both onshore and offshore sectors; adding an option to base GOA flatfish sideboards on historical catch (as well as historical PSC bycatch); and, information on general groundfish discard rates by sector.

The Council also requested revision of the initial analysis of the independent catcher vessel proposal (Dooley-Hall Proposal) which was included in Chapter 10 of the document. Specifically, the Council placed that issue on a separate timeline for consideration and reaffirmed their earlier request for a discussion paper which would examine the broader policy and economic issues associated with formation of inshore co-ops. An initial draft likely will not be completed until the October meeting, where the Council will also be looking at a wide range of implementation issues surrounding co-op formation and sideboard limits.

During the meeting the Council heard testimony on and discussed legal issues associated with co-op formation in the inshore sector. A letter will be sent from the Council to NOAA General Counsel requesting that they confer with the Department of Justice regarding the legal issues surrounding

inshore co-op formation, particularly with regard to vertically integrated plant/catcher vessel co-ops.

The Council also established a BSAI Co-op Implementation Committee representing industry and NMFS to examine possible inshore co-op structures and monitoring issues to facilitate development of the regulations necessary to implement inshore pollock co-ops. This committee is tentatively scheduled to meet May 17-19 in Seattle. Staff contacts are Darrell Brannan and Chris Oliver.

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Halibut Charter GHL Management

The Council approved four alternatives to: (1) implement management measures to limit the harvests of guided (charter) halibut under the guideline harvest levels (GHL) that the Council approved in October 1998, and (2) institute a moratorium for entry into the halibut charter fishery. The Council added bag limits to the list of possible management measures that could be adjusted annually, and deleted a moratorium-only alternative from the analysis. The analysis also will include a list of the communities in Areas 2C and 3A developing tourism-related charter industry businesses, communities with local area management plans (LAMPs) in process, and a discussion of the impacts of the five listed alternatives on those communities. The analysis will also qualitatively discuss the impacts of the alternatives on unguided anglers. Initial review is set for December 1999, with final action in February 2000. The Council also requested that the October 1997 analysis on halibut possession limits be brought back for review at the December 1999 Council meeting. Staff contact is Jane DiCosimo.

Alternatives for Analysis

Alternative 1: Status quo. Do not develop regulations to implement a halibut Guideline Harvest Level.

Alternative 2: Convert the GHL to an allocation.

The guided sport halibut fishery would be allocated 12.76% of the combined commercial and guided sport halibut quota in area 2C, and 15.61% in Area 3A. The commercial fishery would be allocated 87.24% and 84.39% of the combined quota in Areas 2A and 3C, respectively. Under a GHL as an allocation, the guided sport fishery would close when that sector reached its allocation.

Option A: Area-wide moratorium

Sub-option: Prohibit new charter licenses upon attainment of the GHL.

Option B: Local moratorium

Alternative 3: Convert the GHL to an allocation range.

The allocation range will have an upper and lower limit and would be a fixed amount expressed in numbers of halibut. The allocation range would be set by IPHC Areas 2C and 3A. Some or all of the management measures listed below would be implemented up to 2 years after attainment of the GHL (1 year if data is available), but prior to January 1 for industry stability. If the guided sport halibut harvest exceeds the upper limit of the range in a year, the guided sport fishery would be restricted to reduce the harvest back within the allocation range using management actions listed below. If the guided sport halibut harvest is restricted and the harvest is reduced below the lower limit of the range guided sport fishery management measures would be liberalized to increase the harvest back within the allocation range.

<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● line limits ● annual angler limit ● vessel trip limit 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● super-exclusive registration ● sport catcher vessel only area ● sportfish reserve ● bag limits
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Option A: The upper limit of the allocation range would be set at 125% of the 1995 guided sport halibut harvest. The lower limit of the allocation range would be set at 100% of the 1995 guided sport halibut harvest.

Sub-option 1: Reduce the guided sport halibut allocation to a target range of 75-100% of base year amount during times of significant stock decline. This reduction would be IPHC area-specific and would occur in any year that the guided sport allocation exceeds a specified percentage of the combined commercial and guided sport TAC. Percentages to be analyzed should include:

- a. 15%
- b. 20%
- c. 25%

Sub-option 2: Reduce the guided sport halibut allocation for conservation purposes by a set percentage in years of significant stock decline. The range of analysis for the percentage reduction would include 10%, 15% and 20%. The trigger for implementing the reduction would be based on total removals and would be IPHC area-specific. For Area 2C, the

analysis would review triggers of 4 million, 6 million, and 8 million pounds, or any value within that range. For Area 3A, the analysis would review triggers of 10 million, 15 million, and 20 million pounds, or any value within that range.

Option B: The upper limit of the allocation range would be set at 125% of the 1998 guided sport halibut harvest. The lower limit of the allocation range would be set at 100% of the 1998 guided sport halibut harvest.

Sub-option 1: Reduce the guided sport halibut allocation to a target range of 75-100% of base year amount during times of significant stock decline. This reduction would be IPHC area specific and would occur in any year that the guided sport allocation exceeds a specified percentage of the combined commercial and guided sport TAC. Percentages to be analyzed should include:

- a. 15%
- b. 20%
- c. 25%

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Option C: Moratorium (applies to all of the above)

- a. area-wide
- b. local

Alternative 4: Under a GHL, apply a range of management measures listed below to curtail catch rates of guided anglers once GHL is attained.

The GHL functions as a cap. Apply management measures up to 2 years after attainment of GHL (1 year if data is available, but prior to January 1 for industry stability).



<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • time limits • boat limit • annual angler limit • vessel trip limit 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • super-exclusive registration • sport catcher vessel only area • sportfish reserve • rod permit • bag limits
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Option A: Area-wide moratorium

Sub-option: Prohibit new charter licenses upon attainment of the GHL.

Option B: Local moratorium

The criteria for an area-wide halibut charter moratorium under Alternatives 2, 3, and 4 are:

Years of participation

- Option 1: 1995, 1996, and 1997 IPHC licenses and 1998 logbook
- Option 2: 2 of 3 years (1995-97) plus 1998 logbook
- Option 3: 1 of 3 (1995-97), plus 1998 logbook
- Option 4: license or logbook in any one year (1995-98)

Owner vs Vessel

Option 1: owner/operator or lessee (the individual who has the license and fills out logbook) of the charter vessel/business that fished during the eligibility period (based on an individual's participation and not the vessel's activity)

Option 2: vessel

Evidence of participation

- mandatory:
 - IPHC license (for all years)
 - CFEC number (for all years)
 - 1998 logbook
- supplementary:
 - Alaska state business license
 - sportfish business registration
 - insurance for passenger for hire
 - ADF&G guide registration
 - enrollment in drug testing program (CFR 46)

Vessel upgrade

Option 1: license designation limited to 6-pack, if currently a 6-pack, and inspected vessel owner limited to current inspected certification (held at number of people, not vessel size)

Option 2: allow upgrades in southeast Alaska (certified license can be transferred to similar sized vessel)

Transfers

will be allowed

Duration for review

Option 1: tied to the duration of the GHL

Option 2: 3 years

Option 3: 5 years (3 years, with option to renew for 2 years)

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Sitka Sound LAMP

The proposed rule for the Sitka Sound local area management plan (LAMP), approved by the Council in February 1998, was published in the Federal Register on April 28, 1999. Comments on the rule must be received by NMFS by May 28, 1999. A copy of the rule is available from the NMFS home page (<http://www.fakr.noaa.gov/pr/sitkalamp.pdf>) or the Council office. Staff contact is Jane DiCosimo.

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Steller Sea Lions

In December, the Council reviewed the NMFS Biological Opinion (Section 7 consultation) which concluded with a 'Jeopardy Finding' relative to the pollock fisheries in both the BSAI and the GOA. In order to allow these fisheries to be prosecuted in 1999, the Council took emergency action to implement measures consistent with the NMFS proposed Reasonable and Prudent Alternatives (RPAs). The RPAs, in summary, proposed spatial and temporal distribution of the pollock fisheries as well as additional closure areas around specific rookery and haul-out sites used by sea lions. For the BSAI, the Council's actions include: (1) separating the pollock fisheries into four seasons (A1, A2, B, and C seasons), with a limit of 30% of the total TAC coming from any one season; (2) reducing the overall roe season fishery to 40% of the annual total TAC; (3) limiting the overall A season removals from the sea lion critical habitat area/catcher vessel operational area (CH/CVOA) to 62.5% of the total TAC for those seasons; (4) eliminating a directed pollock fishery in the Aleutian Islands subarea;

and, (5) expanding closure areas around rookery and haul-out sites. For the GOA, the Council also created four seasons with limits on the percentage of the TAC which can be taken from any one season, expanded the closure areas around rookery and haul-out sites, and established a 300,000 pound trip limit for pollock in the western and central Gulf areas. These measures were implemented by emergency rulemaking for the first half of 1999. At the June 1999 meeting, the Council will need to take final action on permanent regulations to protect Steller sea lions for 2000 and beyond, as well as adopt additional emergency rules for the second half of 1999.

In April, the Council approved the analysis and released it for public review with several additional options to be analyzed, as well as additional information to evaluate the alternatives and options. Options run the gamut from season dates and apportionments, trip limits, tendering limits, exemptions, no trawl zones, stand-down periods, and apportionments inside and outside critical habitat.

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Seabird Protection

The Council approved additional seabird avoidance measures for groundfish and halibut longline fisheries, under Alternative 2, Option 1 of the analysis. All vessels greater than 35 ft LOA using hook-and-line gear in all BSAI and GOA waters would be required to do the following:

1. Use groundlines which are sufficiently weighted to cause the baited hooks to sink out of reach of seabirds promptly after they are set.
2. If offal is discharged while gear is being set or hauled, it must be discharged in a manner that distracts seabirds from baited hooks, to the extent practicable. The discharge site on board a vessel must either be aft of the hauling station or on the opposite side of the vessel from the hauling station. Hooks must be removed from any offal (i.e., fish heads) that is discharged; and
3. Make every reasonable effort to ensure that birds brought aboard alive are released alive and that wherever possible, hooks are removed without jeopardizing the life of the bird.
4. Employ one of the following seabird avoidance measures:
 - a. Tow a bird scaring line during deployment of the gear to prevent birds from taking baited hooks. The bird scaring line would be towed directly over the baited hooks and would be of a sufficient length and attached to the vessel at a sufficient height to protect the entire area behind the stern of the vessel where baited hooks are accessible to seabirds. If multiple bird scaring lines are used, they would be immediately adjacent, on

each side, of the groundline bearing the baited hooks.

b. Towed buoy bags, float devices, or bird streamer lines would qualify as bird scaring lines if they are properly constructed to effectively deter and prevent seabirds from accessing baited hooks.

c. Towing a board or stick must be accompanied by a or b above to be considered an acceptable measure.

d. In addition to 4a or b above, deploy hooks underwater through a lining tube at a depth sufficient to prevent birds from settling on hooks during deployment of gear.

(Note, "night-setting" per current regulations at § 679.24(e)(3)(iv) is still an acceptable option for seabird avoidance measures; night-setting would not have to be accompanied by the use of a bird scaring line.)

The Council recommends that NMFS provide programmatic research funding for seabird bycatch studies. These studies should consider:

1. Size and type of hook
2. Use of tory lines on different sizes of vessels
3. Use of the line shooting device
4. Sablefish survey information in terms of seabird interaction.

The Council approved an experimental fishing permit (EFP) application from Ed Melvin, University of Washington Sea Grant Program, to study the effectiveness of seabird avoidance devices in the Bering Sea Pacific cod fishery and Gulf of Alaska halibut and sablefish longline fisheries. The Council also approved a second application for an additional 1,754 mt of Bering Sea P. cod per year, for two years, to the two freezer longliners participating in the study. NMFS would review the work and pending acceptable completion of the first year of the study, NMFS would approve the 1,754 mt amount for the second year of the study. Staff contact is Jane DiCosimo.

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Crab License Limitation Program (LLP)

A motion to rescind the Council's October action with regard to the crab LLP program failed. Given that direction, NMFS will continue to move towards implementing the crab LLP as amended last October. That action reduced the number of crab licenses from an estimated 357 to an estimated 284. Interim licenses for the program are expected to be issued late in 1999 so the program can be in

place on January 1, 2000. The final configuration of crab licences and endorsements could still be impacted by Council action under American Fisheries Act sideboard measures, scheduled for June. Staff contact is Darrell Brannan.

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BSAI Pacific Cod Fixed Gear Split

A motion to begin an analysis which would split the fixed gear allocation of Pacific cod in the BSAI was adopted by the Council. The proposed amendment would divide the BSAI Pacific cod between the various components of the fixed gear sector, and will be brought back to the Council for initial review in June 1999, with a final decision planned for October. The intent is for implementation in year 2000 if approved by the Council. This proposal will not affect the trawl apportionment of BSAI Pacific cod. Specifically, the analysis will examine separate apportionments of the Pacific cod TAC among freezer longline vessels, non-freezer longline vessels, and pot gear vessels. An option would make the split between all longline vessels and all pot gear vessels.

The split may be apportioned according to recent catch histories to be determined as a percentage of cumulative catches of the fixed gear TAC of BSAI Pacific cod by gear type for:

- Option 1: 1996, 1997
- Option 2: 1997, 1998
- Option 3: 1996, 1997, 1998
- Option 4: 1995, 1996, 1997, 1998

While not included as an explicit alternative, 1999 fisheries participation will be discussed, including any available data from the 1999 fisheries.

Future trawl or jig roll-overs would be apportioned according to the same formula applied to the overall allocation of the BSAI Pacific Cod TAC among fixed gear components. An additional provision was approved by the Council as follows:

During each year that an allocation of Pacific cod between the components of the fixed gear sector that is under Council consideration is not implemented, the Council would, at the time that it adopts final groundfish specifications in December of the prior year, apportion 10 percent of the BSAI Pacific cod fixed gear TAC to the 2nd trimester, and apportion no halibut PSC bycatch to the 2nd trimester.

Staff contact is Darrell Brannan.

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Pacific Cod Species/Gear Endorsements

As a follow-up to the action described above, the Council approved a motion to begin development of species/gear endorsements for BSAI Pacific cod under the LLP. Specifically, the motion was approved as follows: (1) request National Marine Fisheries Service (NMFS) to issue interim groundfish licenses in the year 2000 under the License Limitation Program (LLP); (2) maintains the Council's position from December 1998 that landings in 1999 and beyond will not count in qualification for Pacific cod species endorsements under LLP; and, (3) request the staff to begin an analysis as soon as possible to provide for separate licenses with Pacific cod species endorsements for the fixed gear components of freezer longline, catcher longline, and pot vessels in the BS/AI.

To further analyze minimum catch requirements to qualify for a BS/AI Pacific cod license as follows:

Freezer Longline Vessels:

Minimum catches in 1996, 1997, or 1998 of:

- Option 1: 100 metric tons
- Option 2: 200 metric tons
- Option 3: 300 metric tons

Catcher Longline Vessels:

Minimum catches in 1996, 1997, or 1998 of:

- Option 1: 7.5 metric tons
- Option 2: 15 metric tons
- Option 3: 25 metric tons

Pot Gear Vessels:

Qualification Years:

- Option 1: Any three years of 1995, 1996, 1997, 1998.
- Option 2: Any two years of 1995, 1996, 1997, 1998.
- Option 3: Any two years of 1995, 1996, 1997.
- Option 4: Any two years of 1996, 1997, 1998.
- Option 5: Any one year 1995, 1996, 1997, 1998.

AND

Qualification landings (minimum landing requirements):

Minimum pounds required for delivery during each of qualifying year:

- Option 1: 25,000 lbs. - 50,000 lbs.
- Option 2: 50,001 lbs. - 100,000 lbs.
- Option 3: 100,001 lbs. - 300,000 lbs.
- Option 4: > 300,000 lbs.

OR

Minimum pounds required for delivery during any of the qualifying years:

- Option 1: 25,000 lbs. - 50,000 lbs.
- Option 2: 50,001 lbs. - 100,000 lbs.
- Option 3: 100,001 lbs. - 300,000 lbs.
- Option 4: > 300,000 lbs.

This analysis would begin this summer and may be available for initial review at the October Council meeting in Seattle. If approved, these endorsements would become effective in 2001. Staff contact is Darrell Brannan.

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MS-CDQ Program Issues

Program Management

In its discussion of proposed changes to the State of Alaska CDQ regulations, the Council reaffirmed its intent that day-to-day monitoring and implementation of the CDQ program continue to be carried out by the State of Alaska with general oversight by the Secretary of Commerce. The Council also reaffirmed its intent that the program be targeted towards fishery-related economic development in Western Alaska. However, in light of the recommendations of the National Academy of Science report on the CDQ program, and some of the public testimony heard at the April meeting, some non-fisheries-related projects in the villages or the vicinity of the villages could be beneficial. The Council also encourages the State to work with NMFS and the CDQ groups to revise regulations to improve monitoring to assure that adequate performance standards are applied, and to determine the scope and nature of projects which are non-fishery related but which may be appropriately conducted as a

part of the CDQ program. General guidelines should ensure that these projects contribute to sustainable economies and resource health in Western Alaska.

Eligible Communities

The Council accepted a report by NMFS staff on the addition of eight additional Bering Sea communities (listed below) to the MS-CDQ program. The proposed communities were originally excluded in 1992 because eligibility determinations were based on statute miles instead of nautical miles.

Levelock	Napaskiak
Ekwok	Mountain Village
Oscarville	Grayling
Napakiak	Portage Creek

The Council also reaffirmed that the Bering Strait was the northern boundary for determining eligibility for the CDQ programs, defined as a straight line from Cape Prince of Wales to Cape Dezhneva, Russia.

Observer Coverage on Longline Catcher Vessels 60 ft

At the February 1999 meeting, the Council requested that NMFS require 30 percent observer coverage in all CDQ fisheries for longline catcher vessels meeting the following requirements: (1) the vessel is between 60 ft and 80 ft LOA, (2) the vessel participated in a CDQ fishery prior to December 31, 1998, and (3) has sufficient halibut IFQ or CDQ to cover halibut bycatch in their groundfish CDQ fisheries. In preparation of rulemaking on this action, NMFS determined that additional alternatives would need to be reviewed by the Council. A revised analysis was reviewed for final action by the Council, and they approved a combination of Alternatives 3 and 4, with some changes as listed below.

The Council approved requiring "30% observer coverage" for catcher vessels equal to or greater than 60 ft and less than 125 ft LOA using non-trawl gear (hook-and-line, pot, or jig) while sablefish or halibut CDQ fishing if vessel operators have sufficient amounts of halibut IFQ or CDQ so that any legal sized halibut caught while CDQ fishing could be retained rather than discarded as prohibited species. Vessel operators without sufficient halibut IFQ or CDQ would be required to carry one CDQ observer at all times while groundfish CDQ fishing. In addition, NMFS would revise regulations to clarify catch accounting and equipment requirements for observed and unobserved trips.

The Council also approved requiring "100% observer coverage" for catcher vessels equal to or greater than 60 ft LOA using non-trawl gear while groundfish CDQ fishing for other than sablefish. They also requested NMFS to revise regulations to allow unsampled sets so that no more than one

CDQ observer would be required and to clarify catch accounting and equipment requirements. NMFS notified the Council that it did not support the Council motion, and supported Alternative 4 that would require 100% coverage on these catcher vessels in all of their CDQ fisheries.

AFA Omnibus Amendments

An emergency interim rule was published on January 26, 1999, to implement CDQ program-related requirements of the American Fisheries Act for the start of the 1999 fishing year. This emergency rule is effective through July 19, 1999, and will need to be extended for the remainder of 1999. The Council recommended the addition of two alternatives to the draft EA/RIR for permanently implementing these same regulatory amendments for 2000 and beyond. The alternatives in the analysis that will be available for public review by mid-May are listed below. Final action is scheduled for June 1999.

Alternative 1: No action.

Alternative 2: Implement regulations that would:

- (1) allow pollock bycatch in the non-pollock groundfish CDQ fisheries to accrue against the allowance for incidental catch of pollock established by section 206(b), and
- (2) remove the allocation of squid from the CDQ Program to allow the CDQ groups to fully harvest the pollock CDQ directed fishing allowance.

Directed fishing for pollock CDQ will be defined as fishing that results in the following catch composition:

- For each haul by a catcher/processor, the round weight of pollock represents 40 percent or more by weight of the total weight of all groundfish in the haul; and
- For each delivery by a catcher vessel, the round weight of pollock represents 40 percent or more by weight of the total weight of all groundfish delivered to a processor from a fishing trip.

Alternative 3: Apply a 40% threshold over a weekly reporting period instead of a haul for catcher/processors.

Alternative 4: Define directed fishing for pollock CDQ in the same way directed fishing is defined by non-CDQ fisheries -- by requiring vessels that are not directed fishing for pollock CDQ to discard catch that exceeds the maximum retainable bycatch amounts.

Observer Coverage at Shore Plants

In February, the Council requested that NMFS reduce CDQ observer coverage at shore plants. The Council rescheduled action on this issue for the October 1999 meeting, if necessary. Staff contact on all CDQ issues is Jane DiCosimo.

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Shortraker/Rougheye MRB Reduction

The Council took final action to revise the maximum retainable bycatch (MRB) rates of shortraker and rougheye (SR/RE) rockfish from the current 15% to 7% for the deepwater complex in the hook and line fisheries in the Eastern regulatory area of the Gulf of Alaska. Target date for implementation is the July opening of the directed fixed gear rockfish fishery. The deepwater complex is comprised of sablefish, rockfish, rex sole, and deepwater flatfish. The MRB for arrowtooth flounder will remain at 0%. The Council further recommended that NMFS continue to examine: (1) hook-and-line bycatch of SR/RE and thornyhead in the halibut ITQ fishery; (2) natural bycatch rates of SR/RE and thornyhead in the halibut/sablefish ITQ fishery; and (3) spatial and temporal analysis of SR/RE bycatch in the halibut and sablefish ITQ fisheries.

The Council did not take up two other actions for groundfish management. Initial review of analyses to prohibit non-pelagic trawling in federal waters of Cook Inlet, and revise management of sharks and skates in the BSAI and GOA will be rescheduled for the October Council meeting. Staff contact is Jane DiCosimo.

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HMAP Pilot Program

In February 1999, the Council reviewed the HMAP Committee's recommendation that a pilot halibut mortality avoidance program (HMAP) be developed. The Council requested that groups interested in developing HMAP programs submit detailed proposals to NMFS and the Council for review. Groundfish Forum, Inc., submitted a revised proposal for a HMAP pilot program that was very similar to one recommended by the HMAP Committee. The Council reviewed the proposal and requested NMFS initiate a regulatory amendment to implement a HMAP pilot program. Staff contact is Dave Witherell.

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Species Composition Experimental Fishing Permit

The Council recommended approval of the second experimental fishing permit application by Groundfish Forum to test species composition sampling methods in the Bering Sea flathead sole fishery in August/September 1999. The goal of the test is to: (1) evaluate the accuracy of basket sampling; (2) develop an automated random sampling method to select fish from the haul; and (3) provide preliminary information on the effects of stratification of catch on current size composition methods. NMFS will have to prepare an EA/RIR to allocate additional groundfish TAC to the project.

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Notice to Industry on Cost Data Collection Efforts

Economists with the Alaska Fisheries Science Center (AFSC) and the Pacific States Marine Fisheries Commission (PSMFC) are close to finalizing cost, earnings, and employment surveys which will be sent to participants in the BSAI pollock fisheries. This is an important first step in a more comprehensive effort to improve economically sound management of our fisheries. These surveys have been compiled with the input and assistance of various industry representatives and are expected to provide critical information to the fisheries management process. While voluntary, the Council strongly encourages the industry to respond to these surveys which are expected to be mailed out in early June.

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Committee Reports/Minutes

Minutes for the following three meetings are available from Jane DiCosimo at the Council office.

Weighmasters

The second meeting of the Enforcement Committee and IFQ Implementation Team Weighmaster Subcommittee convened on Tuesday, April 20, 1999. The committee recommended the following actions to the Council:

- To not proceed, at this time, with the weighmaster program as presently described.
- That it submit a letter to Assistant Administrator for Fisheries, Penny Dalton, and the new Chief of NMFS Enforcement, emphasizing its strong interest in continued funding for IFQ enforcement, and to request funding of the nine positions previously identified under AFA to address additional enforcement workload in other groundfish fisheries, particularly BSAI pollock co-ops.
- Request NMFS Enforcement to prepare a report on a reassessment of the recommended 20% IFQ enforcement coverage by determining an appropriate coverage rate, including U.S. Coast Guard (USCG) IFQ enforcement efforts in determining current coverage levels. The report should reexamine the materials used in developing the original determination of the 20% target IFQ enforcement coverage and the four tier enforcement concept. This could include an assessment of additional agency coordination, although the committee commends the current levels of NMFS/USCG coordination. The report should be presented at the October IFQ Implementation Team meeting, which would then submit recommendations to the Council.
- Request NMFS Enforcement to prepare an annual report on IFQ enforcement to be provided at each February Council meeting.

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Pelagic trawl definition

The Enforcement Committee convened on April 21, 1999, to discuss the different State and Federal regulations defining pelagic and non-pelagic trawl gear. The committee determined that no problem exists in terms of the ability to enforce the respective gear definitions. The committee determined that the State and Federal pelagic trawl definitions are clear and not confusing within the separate governmental jurisdictions. The committee heard testimony from the public that the industry accepts the inconvenience of the different definitions due to its overwhelming support of the federal definition which can allow for truly incidental contact with the bottom. The committee recommends not changing the federal definition. Additional consideration of gear impacts on the bottom may be addressed by the Council with other management mechanisms, such as habitat areas of special concern. The committee report will be provided to the Joint Board/Council Committee at its summer 1999 meeting.

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Gulf Co-ops

The GOA Co-op Committee convened on April 22, 1999, for an organizational meeting. The committee decided to limit its current focus to a review of the applicability of fishery cooperatives in the GOA, but noted that other options may be considered by the committee. It will provide a

preliminary report to the Council at the October 1999 meeting to coincide with a NMFS discussion paper on co-ops. The next meeting will be scheduled during the week of the next Council meeting.

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Ecosystems Committee

The Ecosystem Committee met informally to review the NMFS Ecosystem Principles Advisory Panel report and the National Research Council report "Sustaining Marine Fisheries." The committee is preparing a preliminary evaluation of our current management programs to see if there are additional ecosystem-based management measures that could be implemented for the North Pacific. A committee meeting to review these findings has tentatively been scheduled for October. Ecosystem reports are available from the Council web site. Staff contact is Dave Witherell.

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Documents Available to the Public

The Steller Sea Lion and American Fisheries Act (AFA) analyses will be available from the Council office on Monday, May 10, 1999.

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