

North Pacific Fishery Management Council

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MINUTES

209th Plenary Session
North Pacific Fishery Management Council
Kodiak Harbor Convention Center, Kodiak, Alaska

APPROVED: _____ 

DATE: 10/9/2012

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Attachments:

1. Public Attendance Register
2. Time Log
3. AP Minutes

4. SSC Minutes
5. C-1 (b) GOA PSC Motion
6. Enforcement Committee Minutes
7. Newsletter

The North Pacific Fishery Management Council met in Kodiak Alaska in June 2012. The following Council, SSC and AP members, and NPFMC staff attended the meetings.

Council Members

Eric Olson, Chair
Dave Benson, Vice Chair
Sam Cotten
Duncan Fields
Dave Hanson
John Henderschedt

Roy Hyder
Dan Hull
Cora Campbell/Nicole Kimball
Jim Balsiger
Bill Tweit
RADM Ostebo/LT Tony Kenne

NPFMC Staff

Gail Bendixen
Jane DiCosimo
Diana Evans
Mark Fina
Peggy Kircher
Steve MacLean

Sarah Melton
Jon McCracken
Chris Oliver
Maria Shawback
Diana Stram
David Witherell

Scientific and Statistical Committee

The SSC met from June 4th through June 6th at the Kodiak Inn Harbor Room, Kodiak AK.

Members present were:

Pat Livingston, Chair
NOAA Fisheries—AFSC

Robert Clark, Vice Chair
Alaska Department of Fish and Game

Jennifer Burns
University of Alaska Anchorage

Henry Cheng
Wash. Dept. of Fish and Wildlife

Alison Dauble
Oregon Dept. of Fish and Wildlife

Sherri Dressel
Alaska Department of Fish and Game

Anne Hollowed
NOAA Fisheries—AFSC

George Hunt
University of Washington

Gordon Kruse
University of Alaska Fairbanks

Kathy Kuletz
US Fish and Wildlife Service

Seth Macinko
University of Rhode Island

Franz Mueter
University of Alaska Fairbanks

Jim Murphy
University of Alaska Anchorage

Lew Queirolo
NOAA Fisheries—Alaska Region

Terry Quinn
University of Alaska Fairbanks

Kate Reedy-Maschner
Idaho State University Pocatello

Farron Wallace
NOAA Fisheries—AFSC

Members absent were: Ray Webster, *International Pacific Halibut Commission*

Advisory Panel

The AP met from June 4-7 at the Elk's Lodge in Kodiak, Alaska.

Kurt Cochran
Craig Cross
John Crowley

Julianne Curry
Jerry Downing
Tom Enlow

Tim Evers
Jeff Farvour
Becca Robbins Gisclair

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Jan Jacobs
Alexus Kwachka
Craig Lowenberg
Chuck McCallum

Andy Mezirow
Matt Moir
Theresa Peterson
Ed Poulsen

Neil Rodriguez
Lori Swanson
Anne Vanderhoeven
Ernie Weiss

Appendix I contains the public sign in register and a time log of Council proceedings, including those providing reports and public comment during the meeting.

Mr. Hull moved, which was seconded, to approve the minutes of the previous meeting from April, 2012. Motion passed unanimously.

A. CALL TO ORDER

Chairman Eric Olson called the meeting to order at approximately 8:06 am on Wednesday, June 6, 2012. Mr. Olson introduced Mayor Pat Branson from the City of Kodiak, and Jerome Selby with the Kodiak Island Borough, who welcomed the NPFMC to Kodiak.

Mr. Bill Tweit participated in the entire meeting in place of Phil Anderson, WDF Director.

AGENDA: The agenda was approved with the change of taking the NOAA Enforcement report directly after B-1, the Executive Director's report.

B. REPORTS

The Council received the following reports: Executive Director's Report (B-1); NMFS Management Report (B-2); ADF&G Report (B-3); NOAA Enforcement Report (B-4); USCG Report (B-5); USFWS Report (B-6); Protected Species Report (B-7); AOOS Report on STAMP project (B-8); and IPHC Report (B-9).

Executive Director's Report:

Chris Oliver reviewed his written report and highlighted the Council Coordination Committee meeting that he had just recently attended. He noted that outcome statements and recommendations are included in his written report. Mr. Oliver also noted that all eight Councils will be providing a comment letter to the revisions to the National Standard 1 guidelines, and that the SSC and staff will be discussing this topic and will share their thoughts to draft into more formal comments.

Mr. Oliver noted that while working with NMFS staff on the chum salmon bycatch amendment package, there should be no delay in completing the environmental analysis and associated finding of no significant impact determination. Mr. Oliver continued reviewing his report and outlined upcoming Kodiak events during the meeting week.

NMFS Management Report

Glenn Merrill briefed the Council on the status of FMP amendments. There were brief comments regarding the pieces of the AFA vessel replacement amendment packages and Mr. Merrill noted that the Council should have information on the use of AFA vessels as AM80 vessels in October, and will discuss

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the final rule then. There was general discussion, and it was agreed that the Council could make a policy decision at that time.

There was brief discussion over commercial fishing categories, the definition of fixed gear, and regulations applicable to State of Alaska waters. Commissioner Campbell remarked that ADF&G will continue to have discussions with NMFS on non-commercial fishing in the EEZ.

Martin Loefflad gave a brief update on the deployment plan for the observer program, electronic monitoring, and an overall review of the entire project. There was general discussion regarding timelines and fisheries impacted.

ADF&G Report

Karla Bush (ADF&G) provided the Council with a review of the State fisheries of interest to the Council and answered general questions from the Council members.

NOAA Enforcement Report

Sherry Meyers, Susan Auer, and Bruce Buckson gave the NOAA Enforcement report. There was brief discussion regarding filled and vacant staff positions and questions about violation cases, specifically in regard to implementation of BSAI Amendment 91, the Salmon Bycatch EIS.

Mr. Buckson briefly discussed potential partnerships with other agencies, and noted that NOAA Enforcement have been working on regional enforcement priorities, and encouraged the Council to review them during the summer .

USCG Report

Lt. Tony Kenne of the USCG provided the Coast Guard report, after which RADM Tom Ostebo answered questions regarding the loss of a cutter, reduced assets, and increased violations. Admiral Ostebo noted that while technology is helpful, it may not be useful in all areas. RADM Ostebo presented Mr. Benson with a USCG coin as a token of appreciation in the fisheries and enforcement processes.

USF&W Report

The USF&W written report was included in the briefing books for the Council review.

Protected Species Report

Steve MacLean gave an update on his written report, including reviewing details on Eastern distinct population segment (DPS) and Western DPS of Steller sea lions. He noted that the Center for Independent Experts (CIE) has begun its review of the Biological Opinion, and the public review panel is scheduled for August.

Mr. MacLean noted the Steller Sea Lion Mitigation Committee met May 31 to review the purpose of the committee—to interact with NMFS in the development of the EIS, and to develop one or more alternatives for consideration in the EIS—to draft an organizational structure and to develop a schedule of upcoming meetings.

Melanie Brown of NMFS gave an update on the development of the Steller Sea Lion EIS, and specified that a notice of intent has been sent out to various tribal organizations and entities encouraging participation, and updated the Council on various meetings to date.

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IPHC Report

Dr. Bruce Leman and Gregg Williams of the IPHC gave a report to the Council regarding its annual meeting, and an update on various items of importance in the Halibut Commission. Dr. Leman noted that the Commission recently underwent a performance review and noted that the summary, as well as the audio from the review is available on their website. The report commented on the strengths as well as areas for improvement, and Dr. Leman noted that a summary of the report is also included in the packet. He briefly updated the Council on other activities and answered questions from the Council members.

Public comment was taken on all B items.

COUNCIL DISCUSSION/ACTION

Dan Hull thanked the NMFS for their presentation on the restructured observer program and for trying to integrate Electronic Monitoring into the program. He thanked the public and the stakeholders for their comments on EM, and encouraged the agency to redouble its efforts to incorporate the development of EM into the new program. Mr. Hull noted the OAC will address EM at its next meeting and can provide recommendations to the Council.

Mr. Cotten noted that many stakeholders are discouraged at NMFS' timeline in regard to EM and recognized that the agency is exercising extreme caution. Mr. Henderschedt noted that EM is a tool in a range of tools in the restructured program. Dr. Balsiger noted that NMFS' priorities are the Council's priorities and that there has been a lot of work done on the observer program focusing on big issues such as discards and bycatch. There was brief discussion, and it was generally agreed it will be reviewed again during the staff tasking agenda item.

It was also noted that a decision regarding Amendment 97 and vessel replacement will be discussed during staff tasking.

C-1 Halibut Bycatch

C-1 (a) Halibut Bycatch Workshop Report

BACKGROUND

A workshop on halibut bycatch estimation, halibut growth and migration, and effects on harvest strategy was held in Seattle on April 24-25, 2012. The workshop also included discussions concerning general halibut ecology, including recent trends in exploitable biomass, spawning biomass, and size at age, and information concerning the causes and implications of declining size at age of halibut.

The workshop was attended by 92 people, with an additional 111 people participating via webcast. The first day was spent reviewing the state of knowledge on halibut ecology and bycatch issues through presentations, followed by questions from the panelists. Public testimony was provided on the morning of the second day with panelists' discussion and summary presented in the afternoon.

Jane DiCosimo gave the background on the Halibut Bycatch Workshop report, and noted it had been developed through a cooperative effort involving NPFMC, NMFS, and IPHC, and was focused on halibut bycatch estimation, halibut growth and migration, and the effects on harvest strategy. Ms. DiCosimo noted that the workshop summary and all the meeting materials are available on the Council's website as well as IPHC's site. Gregg Williams of the IPHC noted that the Halibut Commission was pleased with the attendance and interest level.

C-1 (b) Final Action on GOA PSC limits

BACKGROUND

The Council is scheduled to take final action on proposed changes to the management of commercial groundfish fisheries in the Gulf of Alaska (GOA) that would occur through an amendment to the GOA Groundfish Fishery Management Plan. Prohibited species catch (PSC) or “bycatch” limits on removals of Pacific halibut can limit fishing activity on targeted groundfish fisheries or affect fishing practices. The fisheries that have the highest halibut PSC usage in the GOA are: 1) Pacific cod trawl and longline fisheries, 2) shallow-water flatfish complex and arrowtooth flounder trawl fisheries, and 3) rockfish trawl fishery. Some target fisheries do not typically fully utilize their PSC allowances while other fisheries typically are closed before reaching their TACs because they have fully utilized PSC allowances.

Current halibut PSC limits have remained unchanged since their implementation in 1986 for trawl fisheries and revision in 1995 for fixed gear fisheries. Recent declines in halibut biomass, particularly in the GOA, have exacerbated concerns about levels of PSC in groundfish fisheries because of the potential /effect of halibut PSC on other user groups.

In April 2011 the Council adopted a range of proposed reductions for analysis that would be implemented through the GOA groundfish harvest specifications process after scoping the issue through a number of discussion papers in 2011 and 2012. In addition to the No Action Alternative, the proposed alternative (Alternative 2) included options for reductions of a) 5 percent, b) 10 percent, and c) 15 percent of the 2,000 mt halibut PSC limit on trawlers and 300 mt halibut PSC limit on fixed gear groundfish operations. In June 2011, the Council reorganized the Alternative 2 suboptions.

In October 2011, the Council initiated a new action to 1) remove GOA halibut PSC limits from the annual harvest specifications process through an amendment to the GOA Groundfish FMP and 2) set halibut PSC limits in federal regulations. The proposed action would mirror the process for setting halibut PSC limits in BSAI groundfish fisheries. The Council also modified the options under the Alternative 2 and scheduled initial review of the analysis for February 2012.

During initial review of the analysis the Council requested that the analysts incorporate additional information. The Council also made several changes to Alternative 2 options and suboptions. And to accommodate the April 2012 halibut “bycatch” workshop, which the Council and stakeholders felt would be informative for selecting a preferred alternative, the Council set the date for final action for June 2012. Assuming Council final action and Secretarial approval, NMFS has advised the Council that the likely timeline for implementation of a preferred alternative would be 2014.

Jane DiCosimo began the staff report on this agenda item and reviewed the Environmental Assessment. Darrell Brannan reviewed changes to the RIR since the Council last reviewed the document, and Dr. Mike Downs reviewed the social and economic impacts of the proposed alternatives. Becca Robbins Gisclair gave the AP report and the SSC did not address this agenda item. Public comment was heard.

COUNCIL DISCUSSION /ACTION

Dan Hull distributed a written motion, (full motion included as ATTACHMENT 5) which was seconded by Ed Dersham.

The Council adopts the following preferred alternative:

Alternative 2. Amend the GOA Groundfish FMP to remove setting GOA halibut PSC limits from the annual groundfish harvest specifications process. GOA halibut PSC limits would be established (and amended) in federal regulation.

Option 2. Revise the current GOA halibut PSC limits and write the new limits into regulation

Suboption 1. Reduce the halibut PSC limit for hook and line gear CP sector by:

c) 15%

Suboption 2. Reduce the halibut PSC limit for hook and line gear CV sector by:

c) 15%

(Combined, a 15% reduction to the non-DSR hook and line sectors is 44 mt.)

Suboption 3. Reduce the halibut PSC limit for trawl gear sector by:

c) 15% (267 mt)

The PSC limit for HAL demersal shelf rockfish in SE Outside District would also be reduced by 15% to 9 mt (1 mt reduction).

The 15% reduction for the trawl and non-DSR hook-and-line sectors would be phased in over three years, as follows: 7% (first year); additional 5% (second year); and additional 3% (third year). All reductions are reflected in the attached tables. In the third year and after, the revised total non-DSR hook-and-line halibut PSC limit would be 246 mt and the total trawl limit would be 1,705 mt.

Suboption 3.1 AFA/Am 80/Rockfish Program sideboard limits will be:

a) Applied as percentage against the GOA halibut PSC limit

Suboption 3.2.

Allow the Amendment 80 sector to roll unused halibut PSC from one season to the subsequent season (similar to the non-Amendment 80 sectors).

Suboption 3.3

Allow available trawl halibut PSC in the second season deep water and shallow water complexes to be aggregated and made available for use in either complex from May 15th through June 30th.

Halibut PSC sideboards for the Amendment 80 and AFA sectors would continue to be defined as deep water and shallow water complexes in the second season.

NMFS will accomplish this by re-specifying halibut between the deep and shallow water complexes after the second season is complete to capture actual use.

Note: Any unused PSC will be rolled over to the complex to which it was initially assigned. (There are tables attached to the motion which are included as ATTACHMENT 5)

Mr. Hull noted the motion was based on AP recommendations, and that this alternative addresses NMFS and Council concerns about implementation and timing issues associated with revising halibut PSC limits through the annual harvest specifications process that are identified in the analysis. Mr. Hull discussed the basis for halibut PSC the reductions and the Council's responsibility under National Standard 9, to minimize bycatch to the extent practicable and to balance that with NS 1, to achieve Optimum Yield.

Mr. Hull continued, noting that the motion is not intended to correct a stock assessment model or biomass decline, but is a precautionary step warranted to maintain female spawning biomass as well as exploitable biomass by reducing PSC limits. He noted the reductions will be phased in, and it is appropriate for all users of the halibut resource to share in the responsibility. Mr. Hull then briefly cited concerns from the

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halibut workshop regarding the biomass, removals, productivity, and harvest rate, and emphasized the motion, and the Council's decision, uses the best available science.

Mr. Hull defined PSC allowances in National Standard 9 and noted that the PSC allowances do not convey property rights to use, but rather reflects an upper limit as to what is acceptable to incur in the harvest of GOA groundfish. He noted that this is the same view reflected in public comment.

Mr. Hull voiced his commitment as a Council member to follow this action immediately with an effort to provide the trawl sector with the tools it truly needs to make the kinds of gains in halibut and Chinook salmon PSC reductions that other fleets, such as the Amendment 80 sector and the Rockfish Program, have achieved in groundfish management programs elsewhere in Alaska. He answered questions of clarifications from the Council members.

There was brief discussion regarding language in a footnote, and **Mr. Fields moved to amend, which was seconded, to strike the footnote on the third page that begins with an asterisk and reads, "Note: excludes rockfish programs, etc..." and also strike the footnote with the asterisk that reads, "Excludes rockfish program halibut PSC allowance, . . . etc." Additionally, amend the motion exclusively on page 1 to strike the language "option" and language "suboption".**

There was brief discussion on the motion, and a statement from the parliamentarian, and Mr. Fields noted that he included "anywhere in the motion that reads 'option' or 'suboption.'" Mr. Dave Hanson remarked since this is final action, Mr. Fields should begin again to be clear and precise.

Mr. Fields, with concurrence of his second, withdrew his motion.

Mr. Fields moves to amend by striking the word "option" in the tables on pages 2, and 3. His motion was seconded by Mr. Henderschedt. It was noted that there should not be options on final action. The motion passed without objection.

Mr. Fields moved to amend to strike the asterisk on page 3, starting with "Note: Excludes Rockfish Program halibut PSC allowable and usage" as well as the asterisk that says "Excludes Rockfish Program halibut PSC allowance and deduction." The motion passed without objection.

There were questions of the staff regarding math and rounding of numbers, specifically in the Southeast Outside demersal shelf rockfish (DSR) hook and line fishery, and how it would be managed with the observer program. Mr. Brannan briefly discussed rounding the percentage reductions, and **Mr. Fields moved to amend that the Council strike the 15% and reduce the demersal shelf rockfish Southeast Outside District to 9 mt. Mr. Cotten seconded the motion.** Mr. Merrill explained how rounding affects management and the process of conversion.

Mr. Fields withdrew his motion, with the concurrence of his second, after Mr. Merrill's explanation.

Mr. Henderschedt moved to amend the main motion and to strike under suboption 1, suboption 2, and suboption 3, 15% and replace it with 12%. Also, in the paragraph that (now) starts "...the 12% reduction for the trawl and non-DSR hook-and-line sectors would be phased in over two years as follows, 7% the first year, and additional 5% the second year..." and the remaining part of that sentence would be stricken. Finally the numbers in the last sentence in that paragraph would be 255 mt instead of 246, and 1,759 mt instead of 1,705. His amendment was seconded.

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Mr. Henderschedt spoke to his motion, and thanked Mr. Hull for his hard work. He noted years down the road, without tools to manage bycatch, 15% is too high, and with the tools it may be potentially too low. He would like to have the ability to make further adjustments up to 15%. He noted that the objectives laid out in the main motion are still met, and that it's not his intent to have part of the motion be tied to a future action.

Mr. Tweit reiterated the importance of providing tools to the sector to get beyond 15%. He noted his concern is that the largest part of reduction still needs to happen within a timeframe that the Council needs to be putting other tools together.

Lauren Smoker, of NOAA GC, requested further clarification on the 12% number, and asked if the Council would want more than 12% in a future action? Mr. Henderschedt limited his steps to 2 steps, 5% then 7%. He noted that greater amounts refer to the Council's ability to respond to National Standards changes when tools are implemented in the management of caps. Larger percentages are referencing future actions, when the Council can use other tools: quota management systems, IBQ's, etc., so the Council can potentially move beyond the halibut mortality that is indicated in the main motion.

Mr. Fields noted he will be opposing the amendment and appreciates the original motion which clarifies the importance of reducing halibut bycatch. He noted he is unsure what the correct percentage is at this time.

Discussion continued regarding length of time the Council will need to develop other tools necessary to reduce bycatch. Mr. Henderschedt noted the Council may run the risk of losing momentum and losing progress. **Motion failed 2/9 by roll call vote, with Hyder and Henderschedt voting in favor.**

Mr. Tweit moved to amend, which was seconded by Dr. Balsiger to change in the paragraph that discusses the 15% reduction of trawl: In the first line, strike the word "three" and insert the word "four" (so it would be phased in after *four* years as follows...). After the words "additional 5%" strike "second year" and insert 3rd year, and insert 4th year, and in the sentence that begins "third year" strike "third" and insert "fourth." Mr. Tweit spoke to his motion, noting he is not changing the percentage reductions, just the timeframe they would be expected to occur. He noted that gives the Council a little more time to develop other tools. Dr. Balsiger noted that he is supporting this motion and noted that the trawl sector must share in the harvest reduction decline and that this is an equitable way to share the decline in the biomass of the halibut stock, and a good distribution of impacts. He also noted that an additional year can provide extra time to adjust.

Mr. Olson stated he wouldn't be supporting this motion, noting that he still supports 15% up front. Mr. Fields noted that Dr. Balsiger's reasoning is appealing, but waiting two years until implementation on top of the waiting in the percentage reduction, is too long.

Ms. Campbell noted she wouldn't be supporting the motion, and that Mr. Hull included a 3 year phase-in which provides the trawl sector time to adjust, and the main motion should not be stretched out further. Mr. Henderschedt will be supporting the amendment, and noted that the trawl fleet didn't ask for extra time in public testimony, they asked for tools and strategies, and that the fleet needs more than time.

Mr. Fields spoke, in response to NOAA GC, to the hook and line fleets being able to adjust to the changes in the motion over time.

The amendment to the motion failed 4/7, with Henderschedt, Hyder, Tweit, and Balsiger voting in favor.

Mr. Tweit moved to amend the motion to step-up to 7% in the hook and line CP sector (and delete the 15%). The motion was seconded by Mr. Benson. Mr. Tweit spoke to his motion, noting that other sectors have taken a reduction in the past few years, and the hook and line sector has already taken a step reduction in the past few years. There was brief discussion, and the **motion passed 8/3, with Campbell, Cotten, and Fields in opposition.**

Mr. Fields spoke to the main motion, noting that while the motion will impact multiple gear groups, reductions to trawl fleet will impact fishermen who deliver to Kodiak, and that it is largely a Kodiak issue. He noted the Council has a mandate to reduce bycatch to the extent practicable, and that this motion shows the Council is capable of stepping up and addressing this difficult issue. Mr. Fields noted that National Standard 8 has a preamble consistent with the conservation issues of this motion and that the motion also highlights community concerns and protections. He noted that this motion seeks to mitigate these protections, and further mitigates the PSC reductions by the phase-in of reductions over 3 years.

Darrell Brannan and Glenn Merrill reviewed changes in the options that will occur when the 7% is selected, and there was lengthy discussion on what areas would be affected and what the final results would be. Mr. Brannan noted they would change, depending on the catch.

Commissioner Campbell moved to amend the main motion, by striking sentence in parentheses that says the combined 15% reduction to the non-DSR sectors is 44mt, and change it to read, “the NON DSR hook and line CV sector”, and in the last line, strike 246mt and replace with “reduced.” Mr. Cotten seconded the amendment, and the motion passed without objection.

Mr. Hyder spoke to the amended main motion, and noted his disappointment that the Council couldn't develop a package that dealt with bycatch altogether. He noted he is not “against bycatch reduction” but that these measures will inflict a lot of pain.

Mr. Henderschedt spoke to the amended main motion and noted that it is a tough decision, as the Council has spent over a decade trying to reduce bycatch and rationalize the Gulf and he is now disappointed that the Council is at this point, and noted that this will affect how the CGOA fisheries are conducted. Mr. Henderschedt noted he will support the motion, and that the commitment to reduction of bycatch and a rational way to meet the mandates under NS 1 and 9 are the most important parts of his decision.

Mr. Benson noted that the Council now has a system for reducing bycatch, but it is not really solving the problem and that more tools are necessary. He remains concerned about how these measures will affect the trawl fleet.

Mr. Cotten thanked the public for their comments and engagement in this issue, and noted both he and much of the public has been better educated on halibut bycatch, and that there are other ways of achieving bycatch reduction, and remains encouraged that the dialogue continues to support continued programs and tools to accomplish that.

Mr. Tweit stated that while he will be supporting the motion, it is unenthusiastic, and thanked Mr. Hull for the staging of the 15% over the years. He noted that while the motion balances the national standards, he is concerned with the absence of a mechanism for coping with rising abundance, which will lead to rising bycatch. Additionally, he noted that he is concerned about equity in the design between CEY and biomass, that hard caps are a clumsy tool to manage with, and that punitive incentives are not a good management tool.

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Mr. Dersham thanked Mr. Hull for the motion and will support it. He noted his agreement with previous Council members' statements, and is appreciative of the balance between the national standards. Ms. Campbell stated she will support the motion and reminded the Council that OY is not MSY. She noted the halibut stock has changed as well as fishing behaviors, and that it is important for the Council to examine all removals to look at the impacts. She assured the Council this motion provides time for the fleet to modify behavior and identify areas for flexibility to use their halibut in the best way to harvest groundfish.

Mr. Henderschedt agreed with other comments, and noted in this instance the Council is in the position to make an appropriate trade off which highlights where we are and where we can be, and that with appropriate management measures it can be a win on all sides.

Mr. Olson noted his support for the motion and is hopeful that the tools will be developed to address halibut bycatch long term; however, action must be taken today to address the concern. He thanked Mr. Hull for his effort in crafting the motion.

Mr. Tweit moved, which was seconded, that the Council deems proposed regulations that clearly and directly flow from the provisions of this motion to be necessary and appropriate in accordance with section 303(c), and that the Council authorizes the Executive Director and the Chairman to review the draft proposed regulations when provided by NMFS to ensure that the proposed regulations to be submitted to the Secretary under section 303(c) are consistent with these instructions. Mr. Tweit briefly noted that the Council typically chooses this deeming motion when the intent is understood and the Council believes the Executive Director and Chairman can alert the Council if problems arise in the preparation of the regulations. **The amendment passed without objection.**

The main motion passed unanimously by roll call vote.

C-1 (c) GOA comprehensive halibut bycatch

BACKGROUND

Over the course of the past few years, the Council has advanced a number of actions to reduce the use of prohibited species catch (PSC) in the Bering Sea and Aleutian Islands and Gulf of Alaska groundfish fisheries. The Council recently introduced Chinook PSC limits in the Gulf pollock fisheries. The Council is also considering an action to extend similar Chinook PSC limits to non-pollock groundfish fisheries in the Gulf. At this meeting, the Council is considering taking action to reduce halibut PSC available to trawl and longline fisheries throughout the Central and Western Gulf. This series of actions reflects the Council's interest in controlling prohibited species catch in the Gulf groundfish fisheries. Participants in these fisheries have raised concerns that the current limited access management creates a substantial disincentive for participants to take actions to reduce PSC usage (particularly actions that could reduce target catch rates). Other participants, who choose not to exert efforts to avoid PSC, stand to gain additional target catch by continuing to harvest fish at a higher catch rate, at the expense of vessels engaged in PSC avoidance. Throughout the discussions of PSC reductions in the Gulf fisheries, the Council has acknowledged that a more comprehensive look at the available tools to aid fleets in achieving PSC reductions is needed.

Mark Fina gave the staff report on this agenda item and answered questions from the Council members. The SSC did not address this agenda item, and Becca Robbins Gisclair gave the AP report. Public comment was heard.

COUNCIL DISCUSSION/ACTION

Mr. Hull moved, which was seconded by Mr. Fields, that the Council will schedule a specific agenda item, preferably for the October meeting, that begins the process of developing a program to provide tools for effective management of PSC, incentives for the minimization of bycatch, and vessel level accountability for the Central Gulf of Alaska trawl groundfish fishery. The Council should develop a purpose and need statement with goals and objectives for a new fishery management system at that time.

Mr. Hull spoke to his motion, noting that this is what the fleet has been asking for, that this sector needs these tools, and the Council has expressed desire to do this. He noted the broad language change from the AP motion to not specify a Catch Share Program, but to look at tools identified in the discussion paper. He noted that this will provide Council guidance for identifying a focused approach in October. **Mr. Benson moved to amend to strike “for the October meeting.” It was seconded.** He noted that the Council doesn’t normally schedule things; that the Executive Director and Chairman will schedule events and can review during staff tasking. There was general discussion regarding the necessity of scheduling and the importance of the issue, and **Mr. Tweit moved a substitute amendment which would put “preferably” before the October meeting. It was seconded.** There was continued discussion regarding the importance of October and the importance of flexibility of scheduling, and the motion passed 8/3, with Fields, Olson, and Cotten voting in opposition.

There was general discussion of the distinction between Western and Central GOA, and Mr. Hull noted that the testimony and the AP motion had focused on CGOA, but at a later meeting the Council may hear from testimony from those in the Western GOA as well as other sectors.

Mr. Tweit appreciated the motion and Mr. Fields’ question, and would prefer the program to be strategic, instead of just another GOA Rationalization program. He noted that he remains hopeful that if stakeholders view themselves as affected by this action, they can work over the summer to get information as to what the goals and objectives should be, and the Council can solicit input from a broad range of sectors that may be affected by this action. He would like the stakeholders to be informed as broadly as possible.

Mr. Henderschedt emphasized that it is important to remain focused, narrow the options, and not allow the program to become an ever growing set of elements and options. He encouraged the Council to be clear in its objectives and follow a map as the Council proceeds.

Mr. Merrill noted his support of the motion and looks forward to working with the Council, but noted it will take much prioritizing.

The motion passed unanimously.

C-1 (d) BSAI halibut PSC limits

BACKGROUND

In April 2011, the Council requested development of discussion papers on both BSAI and GOA halibut prohibited species catch (PSC) limits. The Council has been considering the process by which changes might be made to the current PSC limits. Priority was assigned to action in the GOA, and the Council has since developed a Plan Amendment analysis under which it is considering changes to the GOA halibut PSC limits. The Council contracted with Northern Economics to prepare a discussion paper to assist the

Council in its consideration of potential changes to the BSAI halibut PSC limits.

Jane DiCosimo introduced the agenda item, and Marcus Hartley, a contractor from Northern Economics, reviewed the discussion paper on BSAI halibut PSC. Becca Robbins Gisclair from the AP gave the report, and public comment was heard.

COUNCIL DISCUSSION / ACTION

Mr. Fields noted he would prefer to take no action. He noted that there are substantive differences between GOA and BSAI, and that it may be appropriate at a later time to make adjustments, but not at this time. It was generally agreed to take no action. There was brief discussion regarding the halibut bycatch in the BSAI and its declining trend. It was generally agreed to keep the issue on the radar, and Mr. Merrill noted that the IPHC and NMFS will be working together on a bi-lateral working group and will be giving the Council updates as it progresses.

C-2 HAPC Areas of Skate Egg Concentration

BACKGROUND

In 2010, the Council set a habitat priority type—"skate nurseries"—and issued an RFP in conjunction with completion of its EFH five-year review. Council staff initially screened proposals, and the joint groundfish Plan Teams reviewed the HAPC proposals for rarity and ecological merit. The Council selected a HAPC proposal from the Alaska Fisheries Science Center (AFSC) for further analysis. In February and March/April 2012, the Council made initial reviews of an analysis of alternatives and options to identify and conserve six areas of skate egg concentration as HAPCs in the eastern Bering Sea. The Council refined its alternatives based on the recommendations of the Enforcement Committee and requested further analysis. Additionally, at the request of NMFS, option e was added to address a housekeeping issue for the BSAI Groundfish FMP.

Sarah Melton gave the staff report on this agenda item. The SSC had given its report earlier, Lori Swanson gave the AP report, and public comment was taken.

COUNCIL DISCUSSION/ACTION

Mr. Tweit moved the following, which was seconded:

The Council approves the Skate Egg Concentration HAPC EA/RIR/IRFA for release as a Public Review Draft analysis with the changes and edits as outlined by the SSC.

The Council adopts Alternative 2, Options a, d, and e as its preliminary preferred alternative.

Alternative 2: Identify skate egg concentration HAPC(s):

The Council may select to identify – individually, severally, or all six of the areas of skate egg concentration as HAPC. At each of the six areas of skate egg concentration, the spatial extent of research bottom trawls containing more than 1,000 egg cases per kilometer squared (km²) have been established. Boundary lines are then snapped outward to the nearest minute of latitude or longitude. The intent of Alternative 2 is to identify these areas as HAPCs.

Under Alternative 2, the six proposed areas of skate egg concentration will be identified as HAPC:

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Site name	Predominant skate species	Depth of max. egg density (m)	Maximum egg density (eggs/km ²)	Area of HAPC nm ²	Boundaries of HAPC (°N latitude or °W longitude)			
					North	South	West	East
1. Bering 1	Alaska	145	800,406	18.4	54°53'	54°49'	165°46'	165°38'
2. Bering 2	Aleutian	380	62,992	17.5	54°38'	54°33'	165°45'	165°34'
3. Bristol	Bering	156	6,188	13.7	55°21'	55°17'	167°40'	167°34'
4. Pribilof	Alaska	205	16,473	1.2	56°11'	56°10'	168°28'	168°26'
5. Zhemchug	Alaska	217	610,064	3.2	56°57'	56°54'	173°23'	173°21'
6. Pervenets	Alaska, Bering, Aleutian	316	334,163	27.7	59°28'	59°22'	177°43'	177°34'

Option a: NMFS would monitor HAPCs for changes in egg density and other potential effects of fishing, and the Council would request that industry support collection of data in evaluation of monitoring and management efforts relative to those HAPCs.

Option d: Suggest adding research and monitoring of areas of skate egg concentration to the Council's research priority list.

Option e: Adopt formatting standards as stated in the final rule implementing Amendment 89 to the BSAI Groundfish FMP.

With the addition of Option a, the intent of this alternative is to monitor the impacts of fishing activities in the proposed HAPC sites, primarily at the population level, and if practicable, develop additional information on fishery interactions with egg concentrations.

The Council also adopted the following modified Statement and Purpose of Need:

HAPC are geographic sites that fall within the distribution of Essential Fish Habitat for the Council's managed species. The Council has a formalized process, identified in its FMPs, for selecting HAPCs that begins with the Council identifying habitat priorities—here, areas of skate egg concentration. Candidate HAPCs must be responsive to the Council priority, must be rare (defined as uncommon habitat that occurs in discrete areas within only one or two Alaska regions), and must meet one of three other considerations: provide an important ecological function; be sensitive to human-induced degradation; or be stressed by development activities.

The candidate HAPC identify sites of egg concentration by skate species (Rajidae) in the eastern Bering Sea. Skates are elasmobranch fish that are long-lived, slow to mature, and produce few young. Skates deposit egg cases in soft substrates on the sea floor in small, distinct sites. A reproducing skate deposits only several egg cases during each reproductive season. Depending on the species, a single egg case can hold from one to four individual skate embryos, and development can take up to three years. Thus, a single egg case site will hold several year classes and species, and eggs growing at different rates.

Distinct skate egg deposition sites have been highlighted by skate stock experts while assessing skate information from research survey and catch locations. The scientists noted repeated findings of distinct sites where egg cases recruit to sampling or fishing gear contacting the sea floor: egg case prongs (or horns) entangle in or cases recruits into the gear. These sites are discrete areas near the shelf/slope break that serve as important spawning and embryonic development areas for skate species. It is therefore important to consider: 1) designating these areas as HAPCs; 2) to consider restricting activities which impact the habitat at these sites; and 3) to monitor the continued utility of these sites for skate spawning and embryonic development, and further study for the relationship between the habitat features of these sites and site selection for skate egg deposition.

Mr. Tweit spoke to his motion noting that these unique areas are worthy of preservation, and that these are sites that we want to protect from a broad range of fisheries and other potential impacts. He noted that by declaring the area a HAPC, it becomes a helpful tool in agency to agency consultation.

Mr. Henderschedt moved to amend, which was seconded, to add at the end of the purpose and needs statement in the analysis: These sites are discrete areas near the shelf/slope break that serve as important spawning and embryonic development areas for skate species. It is therefore important to consider: 1) designating these areas as HAPCs; 2) to consider restricting activities which impact the habitat at these sites; and 3) to monitor the continued utility of these sites for skate spawning and embryonic development, and further study for the relationship between the habitat features of these sites and site selection for skate egg deposition. The amendment passed without objection, and the amended main motion passed unanimously.

C- 3 (a) Crab Plan team Report

BACKGROUND

The Crab Plan Team (CPT) met in Anchorage, AK from May 7-10, 2012 to review draft BSAI Crab stock assessments and provide recommendations for OFL and ABC for 4 of the 10 stocks. There are 10 crab stocks in the BSAI Crab FMP and all 10 must have annually established OFLs. Six of the ten stocks will have OFLs and ABCs established in the fall following the summer survey information availability. Two of the ten stocks (Norton Sound red king crab and AI golden king crab) have OFL and ABC recommendations put forward at this time in order to have approved OFLs and ABCs prior to the summer fisheries for these stocks. The remaining two stocks (Adak red king crab and Pribilof Islands golden king crab) have OFLs recommended based on Tier 5 formulation (average catch) and OFLs and ABCs are recommended in the spring. The draft sections of the SAFE report introduction contain the OFL and ABC recommendations for these stocks.

Diana Stram and Dr. Bob Foy gave the background and staff report on this agenda item. The AP gave its report and the SSC had given its report earlier. Public comment was taken.

COUNCIL DISCUSSION/ACTION

Ms. Campbell moved to accept the Crab SAFE report, and to adopt the OFLs and ABC's recommended by the SSC for Norton Sound red king crab, AI golden king crab, Pribilof Island golden king crab, and Adak red king crab. The motion was seconded by Mr. Henderschedt. Ms. Campbell spoke to her motion, and her appreciation of the work of CPT. She noted that this year there is agreement on each of the numbers, and that the CPT is recommending holding another modeling workshop, which she supports. The motion passed without objection.

Ms. Campbell noted the CPT had recommendations to potential revisions to the Crab PSC alternatives, **and moved to request staff to revise the alternatives to reflect the recommendations by the CPT. Mr. Hull seconded the motion,** and Ms. Campbell noted the Council asked CPT to make recommendations, and they have, and as new information is available, the alternatives can be revised. **The motion passed without objection.**

C-3 (b) Pribilof Island blue king crab rebuilding plan.

BACKGROUND

On September 23, 2002, the Secretary of Commerce notified the Council that the PIBKC stock biomass was below the minimum stock size threshold MSST^d and was overfished. A rebuilding plan was implemented in 2003 that included a provision prohibiting directed fishing until the stock was rebuilt. The PIBKC fishery has been closed since 1999 and bycatch in 2010/11 was below the overfishing level.

NMFS notified the Council on September 29, 2009, that the current rebuilding plan has not achieved adequate progress to rebuild the stock by 2014. To comply with section 304(e) (7) of the Magnuson-Stevens Act, the Council is amending the PIBKC rebuilding plan to add measures to address bycatch in groundfish fisheries, the primary source of fishing mortality.

Under the Magnuson-Stevens Act, the Council has two years from notification to develop and implement a revised rebuilding plan for the PIBKC stock. However, development of additional rebuilding measures has required more time due to a number of difficulties and data limitations, including defining appropriate stock boundaries, identifying which groundfish fisheries to restrict, and determining the appropriate way to analyse the existing data on PIBKC bycatch in the groundfish fisheries. Therefore, the Council has taken the time necessary to address these issues and develop appropriate alternatives, recognizing that the current PIBKC protections remain in place.

Pursuant to the Magnuson-Stevens Act section 304(e)(4)(A) and the National Standard 1 Guidelines, the purpose of this proposed action is to develop an amended rebuilding plan to reduce the risk of overfishing and to rebuild the PIBKC stock in as short a time as possible with the understanding that the biology of this stock and environmental conditions will likely dictate that the time needed to rebuild will exceed 10 years. This action under any of the alternatives would amend the current rebuilding plan to minimize bycatch of blue king crab in the federally managed groundfish fisheries, in compliance with the Magnuson-Stevens Act and the National Standard 1 Guidelines. In minimizing PIBKC bycatch to the extent practicable, the Council intends to provide the maximum potential for rebuilding this very depressed stock.

The Pribilof Islands blue king crab stock remains overfished and the current rebuilding plan has not achieved adequate progress towards rebuilding the stock by 2014. Four of the alternatives are different closure configurations to restrict groundfish fisheries in the areas of the stock distribution. The fifth alternative considers trigger caps and associated area closures in specific groundfish fisheries while the sixth consists of a combination of a triggered closure for groundfish fisheries combined with a year-round closure to Pacific cod pot fishing. The Council has indicated that Alternative 2b, a closure of the Pribilof Island Habitat Conservation Zone is the preliminary preferred alternative (PPA). The impacts of these alternatives on rebuilding the Pribilof Island blue king crab stock as well as the environmental and social/economic impacts of these measures are considered in this analysis.

The Council will take final action at this meeting to select a final preferred alternative. Depending upon the complexity of the preferred alternative chosen, implementation of this action would be expected in 2013.

Dr. Diana Stram gave the staff report on this agenda item, and reviewed the history of related actions. Both Dr. Stram and Jennifer Mondragon reviewed information in the Environmental Analysis and

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supplemental information. Scott Miller reviewed the Regulatory Impact Requirements. The AP gave its report, and the SSC had given its report earlier. Public comment was heard.

COUNCIL DISCUSSION/ACTION

Mr. Merrill moved, which was seconded by Mr. Hull, to adopt Alternative 2b (Preferred Alternative) for final action. Change the problem statement to read as follows:

The Pribilof Islands blue king crab stock remains overfished and the current rebuilding plan has not achieved adequate progress to rebuild the stock by 2014. In order to comply with provisions of the Magnuson-Stevens Fishery Conservation and Management (MSA) an amended rebuilding plan must be implemented prior to the start of the 2011/2012 fishing season.

The directed blue king crab fishery has been closed since 1999 and action has been taken to limit bycatch mortality in other crab and groundfish fisheries occurring near the Pribilof Islands. Additional action to reduce bycatch in groundfish fisheries may be necessary. Recent trends in crab bycatch suggest that groundfish fisheries occurring near the Pribilof Islands have the potential to exceed the annual overfishing level and acceptable biological catch for this stock. This action is necessary to facilitate compliance with requirements of the MSA to end and prevent overfishing, rebuild overfished stocks and achieve optimum yield.

Mr. Merrill thanked the staff of the agencies for working on the action, and noted that the Council has taken a variety of actions over the last several years to minimize the potential bycatch of PIBKC. He noted the State of Alaska has been a cooperative co-manager, but still the PIBKC stock has failed to make adequate progress towards rebuilding and has continued to decline under status quo, and the Council is obligated under MSA to rebuild the stock and to minimize bycatch to the extent practicable.

Option 2b would prohibit bycatch in the PIBKC Conservation zone, which is the area with the highest concentration of PIBKC. Pot cod fishing has the highest bycatch, and Mr. Merrill stated that providing an overview to specific recommendations insures fishers are informed and stay out of areas of high bycatch.

Additionally, he noted that the motion is responsive to many of the National Standards, and if the cooperative management structure is not minimizing bycatch, the Council can revisit alternative measures for the pot cod sector.

Mr. Henderschedt moved to amend the problem statement by striking in the first sentence “and groundfish,” and in the following sentence, add: “action to limit PIBKC bycatch in groundfish fisheries may also be necessary.” Mr. Tweit seconded the motion. Mr. Henderschedt spoke to his motion, noting that the proposed original change in problem statement was focused on the fact that PIBKC has been closed to limit bycatch of PIBKC, and that this action is intended to limit, not just reduce catch of PIBKC. He wants to be precise of the intent and effect of this action.

Mr. Tweit moved, which was seconded, that the Council deems proposed regulations that clearly and directly flow from the provisions of this motion to be necessary and appropriate in accordance with section 303(c), and that the Council authorizes the Executive Director and the Chairman to review the draft proposed regulations when provided by NMFS to ensure that the proposed regulations to be submitted to the Secretary under section 303(c) are consistent with these instructions. Mr. Tweit briefly noted that the Council typically chooses this deeming motion when the intent is understood and the Council believes the Executive Director and Chairman can alert the Council if problems arise in the preparation of the regulations. **The amendment passed without objection.**

Mr. Fields noted his agreement with the comments of NMFS, particularly in regard to applicability to the National Standards. **The motion passed unanimously by roll call vote.**

There was brief discussion regarding ongoing genetic work and CPT recommendations and how to look at the issue more broadly in the future. It was agreed to discuss this under the research priorities agenda item.

C-5 (a) Freezer longline GOA Pacific cod sideboards

BACKGROUND

In October 2011, the Council tasked staff to prepare a discussion paper concerning the impacts of non-AFA crab sideboard limits for Gulf of Alaska Pacific cod on freezer longline vessels. The non-AFA crab sideboard limits were originally included in the crab rationalization program, which was implemented in 2005. When implemented, the non-AFA crab sideboard limits were aggregated at the inshore and offshore level and were shared by all gear types. However, as part of the GOA Pacific cod sector splits implemented in 2012, the non-AFA crab sideboard limits were modified from an inshore and offshore limit shared by all gears to a narrower sector limit. Concerned that this modification to the GOA Pacific cod sideboard limit could constrain the ability of the freezer longline vessels subject to sideboards to participate in the fishery, the Council approved a motion tasking staff to prepare a discussion paper that analyzes the impacts of the modified non-AFA crab sideboard limit on these freezer longline vessels.

Jon McCracken gave the staff report on this agenda item, and answered questions from the Council. The SSC did not address this agenda item. Lori Swanson gave the AP report, and public comment was heard.

COUNCIL DISCUSSION / ACTION

John Henderschedt moved, which was seconded, to develop an analysis that evaluates the following alternatives:

Alternative 1: No Action. Under this alternative, the current Freezer Longline GOA Pacific cod sideboards would continue to apply.

Alternative 2: Removal of Freezer Longline GOA Pacific cod sideboards.

The narrowing of the sideboard limit under AM83 from a non-gear specific sideboard to a sector specific sideboard significantly reduced non-AFA crab GOA cod sideboards for sideboarded freezer longline vessels active in the GOA Pacific cod fishery prior to the cod sector split. A recalculation of the Pacific cod sideboards resulted in the loss of fishing opportunities, future revenues, and an ability to participate in the GOA cooperative fishing efforts.

Under Amendment 83, the freezer longline (FLL) sector has a direct allocation, and due to the harvesting capacity available to participate in the GOA FLL sector, the FLL sector must establish cooperative harvest control measures in order for NMFS to make the sector GOA Pacific cod TAC available for directed fishing. Therefore, the need for CP hook-and-line GOA Pacific cod sideboards to limit the catch of these vessels may no longer exist.

Removal of the non-AFA crab GOA cod sideboards for FLLs would restore to the sideboarded vessels the ability to participate in the GOA cod fishery.

Mr. Henderschedt spoke to his motion, explaining that the discussion paper outlines the impacts that the rule has on the vessels and that removing the sideboards will likely have no impact on those vessels that participate in the GOA fishery and do not have BSAI endorsements. He noted that it is not an urgent action, but that there is adequate rationale to move this action forward.

Mr. Fields noted his concern about vessels that are sideboarded and not necessarily on vessels that may be impacted. Mr. Fields moved to amend at the end of the problem statement the following language:

Removing FLL sideboard vessels, however may adversely impact GOA-only FFL vessels, and a need, to the extent practicable, to minimize the impact. The motion was seconded by Mr. Cotten.

Mr. Fields noted that the Council needs to focus on all the impacts and that at a future date can revise the problem statement if necessary. **The amendment passed without objection.**

Mr. Fields spoke to the main motion, noting that there may be an inequity with some sideboard vessels, and when sideboards are developed, it is a balancing act and difficult to go back years later and try and reconstruct the situation in which they were created. He noted he will look forward to further analysis as to why we need to relax sideboards.

The amended main motion passed without objection.

C-5 (b) Adjust the MLOA on BSAI freezer longline LLP licenses

BACKGROUND

The analysis evaluates a change to criteria, in order to allow owners of Bering Sea / Aleutian Islands (BSAI) freezer longline (hook-and-line catcher processor) vessels that fish for Pacific cod, to replace or rebuild their vessels to a length greater than that specified under the restrictions of the License Limitation Program (LLP) and the American Fisheries Act (AFA). Specifically, the analyses considers adjustment to the maximum length overall (MLOA) specified on the License Limitation Program (LLP) license assigned to these freezer longline vessels, to accommodate larger replacement vessels. Originally implemented in 2000, each LLP license is endorsed for management areas, catcher vessel and/or catcher processor operation type, and the Pacific cod fixed gear target fishery, and specifies an MLOA for licensed vessels. The MLOA for the license was based on the length of the vessel initially receiving the license.

The analysis also considers allowing freezer longline replacement vessels that exceed 165 feet in length, or more than 750 gross tons, or with engines capable of producing more than 3,000 shaft horsepower to enter the groundfish fishery. Regulations at 46 U.S.C. 12106(c)(6) limit vessels greater than 165 feet in length, or more than 750 gross registered tons, or with engines capable of producing more than 3,000 shaft horsepower from entering fisheries unless the vessel carried a fisheries endorsement prior to September 25, 1997, or the Council has recommended and the Secretary of Commerce has approved a conservation and management measure to allow the vessel to be used in fisheries under its authority.

The Council reviewed a version of this analysis in December 2011, and made modifications to the problem statement and alternatives. In addition to the status quo, there are two alternatives that are considered. Alternative 2 would limit the MLOA adjustment to those LLP licenses that have an MLOA of

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less than 150', and would increase the MLOA for each of these LLP licenses by 20%, not to exceed 150'. Under this alternative, 17 LLP licenses would be affected. Alternative 3 would remove the constraint represented by the MLOA for all 37 freezer longline LLP licenses, and would also authorize vessels named on these licenses to receive a certificate of documentation as large vessels under the MARAD regulations. Under both Alternatives 2 and 3, two options would regulate whether a vessel that is named on one of the eligible LLP licenses, and is subsequently replaced, may be used in another Alaska groundfish or crab fishery. Additional options under Alternative 3 would set a maximum length for replacement vessels at 220' LOA, or require that the LLP license's MLOA still be applicable when the LLP is used in the BS or AI pot cod fishery.

Diana Evans gave the report on this agenda item, and CAPT Woodley of the USCG discussed the safety considerations of the actions. The SSC had given its report earlier and the AP gave its report. Public comment was heard.

COUNCIL DISCUSSION/ACTION

Mr. Henderschedt moved, which was seconded, to adopt the following problem statement and alternatives:

Problem Statement

Vessel length restrictions, included with LLP licenses and the AFA, established to maintain fleet capacity, inhibit the BSAI freezer longline fleet from replacing or rebuilding their vessels. Modifying or removing vessel length restrictions for BSAI freezer longline vessels to allow owners to rebuild or replace their vessels with larger vessels would allow for improved vessel safety, meet international class and loadline requirements that would allow a broader range of onboard processing options, and improve the economic efficiency of their vessels.

Description of the Alternatives

Alternative 1: No Action. Under this alternative, the BSAI Pacific cod hook and line catcher processor vessel length, horsepower, and tonnage restrictions currently in place would continue to apply.

Alternative 2: For those LLP licenses with catcher processor and hook-and-line Pacific cod endorsements for the BS or AI, with an MLOA of less than 150', increase the MLOA of the LLP license 20 percent, not to exceed a MLOA of 150'.

Option 2.1: Any vessel replaced under this program would not be eligible to be designated on an FFP (federal fisheries permit) or an LLP.

Option 2.2: Replaced vessels may not be used to replace other BSAI hook and line catcher processor vessels.

Alternative 3: The MLOA requirements on LLP licenses with catch processor and hook-and-line Pacific cod endorsements for the BS or AI would not apply and the Council recommends that vessels named on these LLP licenses be authorized for use in the EEZ under the jurisdiction of the North Pacific Fishery Management Council, which is intended to clarify that these vessels are eligible to receive a certificate of documentation consistent with 46 U.S.C. 12102(c) and MARAD regulations at 46 C.F.R. 356.47.

Option 3.1: Any vessel replaced under this program would not be eligible to be designated on an a FFP or LLP.

Option 3.2: Replaced vessels may not be used to replace other BSAI hook and line catcher processor vessels.

Option 3.3: The MLOA on LLP licenses with catcher processor and hook-and-line Pacific cod endorsements for the BS or AI would be modified to 220' MLOA.

Option 3.4: Owners of LLP licenses with catcher processor and pot cod endorsements will have 36 months from the implementation of this action to either surrender the pot cod endorsements and receive an LLP license at 220' LOA or the current LLP length restriction would continue to apply.

Preliminary Preferred Alternative

The Council adopts Alternative 3, with revised Options 3.3 and 3.4, as a preliminary preferred alternative.

Mr. Henderschedt spoke to his motion explaining that changes to the problem statement are from comments from the SSC stating that although relaxing MLOA constraints under Alternatives 2 and 3 may accelerate the timing of vessel replacement, the status quo does not impede vessel replacement. He also noted testimony from the public supports the preliminary preferred alternative.

There was discussion regarding the impact of options, and Mr. Merrill indicated that much of the information is available on the NMFS' RAM website and staff can evaluate and compare MLOAs and endorsements and licenses.

Mr. Fields moved to amend, which was seconded by Dr. Balsiger, the language in 3.1, to read: "except on an FFP or LLP, licenses with catcher processor and hook-and-line Pacific cod endorsements for the BS or AI." Mr. Fields noted he was copying the language from option 3.3. There were clarifications from staff, and Mr. Henderschedt moved to amend by striking FFP. It was seconded, and passed without objection. Mr. Fields discussed his amendment that this is not final action, and there is no reason to restrict replaced vessels and with this motion is trying to clarify this should the Council decide to use this option at a later time. The amended amendment passed without objection.

Mr. Hull wanted to ensure that because this is initial review and is specific to MLOA requirements for LLPs in the BSAI, he is concerned with the Council needing to consider requiring protections for the vessels.

Mr. Cotten moved to amend, which was seconded, to add a new option: MLOA on LLP licenses with catcher processor and hook-and-line Pacific cod endorsements for the GOA would be modified to 220' MLOA. Mr. Cotten spoke to his motion saying that it may be a possibility that a vessel designated as a CP may be treated differently than other vessels that may be fishing in the GOA. Mr. Merrill discussed the potential impacts larger vessels will have should they choose to operate in the hook-and-line CP fishery in the GOA, and noted that the Council can discuss this in the next version of the analysis. There was general discussion on the impacts of the amendment and its applicability to the problem statement. **Mr. Cotten, with the concurrence of the second, withdrew his amendment.**

The amended main motion passed without objection.

D-1 (a) GOA Pacific Cod Limit Gear on Board

BACKGROUND

At its March/April 2012 meeting, the Council considered a range of Gulf of Alaska (GOA) Pacific cod management issues, including a brief discussion paper on limiting other gear types on board a vessel jigging for Pacific cod in the Western and Central federal regulatory areas. The Council requested staff expanded the paper to include further discussion on issues already identified, suggestions from the Advisory Panel (AP), and recommendations from the Enforcement Committee. This request stems from December 2011, when the Council first requested a discussion paper on limiting other gear on board jig vessels targeting Pacific cod and for the Enforcement Committee to review the paper whenever it is presented before the Council.

As of May 19, 2012, the jig and longline sectors in the Western area remain open; all sectors are closed in the Central area. The Federal B season is scheduled to open June 10 for the jig sector and September 1 for all other sectors. It appears that the Amendment 83 stair-step allocations for the jig sector will provide the jig fleet an additional 1% of the TAC in both the Central and Western areas for the 2013 season.

Sarah Melton gave the staff report on this agenda item, and Mr. Hyder gave the Enforcement Committee report specific to D-1(a). The SSC did not address this agenda item and the AP report was given. Public comment was heard.

COUNCIL DISCUSSION/ACTION

Mr. Dersham moved, which was seconded, that the Council take no further action on this agenda item at this time.

Mr. Dersham noted that based on the analysis, AP recommendations, public testimony, and the Enforcement Committee comments, he sees this as the appropriate action at this time, and in making this motion, a future Council can put it in their priorities. **The motion passed without objection.**

D-1(b) Greenland turbot sector allocation.

BACKGROUND

In October 2011, the North Pacific Fishery Management Council (Council) received testimony during staff tasking requesting that the Council initiate a discussion paper to consider establishment of gear allocations for the Bering Sea and Aleutian Islands (BSAI) Greenland turbot fishery. The intent would be to establish allocations among the fixed gear and Amendment 80 sectors. A discussion paper summarizing the BSAI Greenland turbot longline and trawl fisheries, as well as information the Council may wish to consider if it chooses to advance the issue of gear allocation for the BSAI Greenland turbot fishery has been included in the Council's book.

Steve Maclean gave the staff report on this agenda item and answered questions from the Council. There was no SSC report on this agenda item, and the AP gave its report. Public comment was taken.

COUNCIL DISCUSSION/ACTION

Mr. Henderschedt moved that the Council begin an analysis with the following alternatives:

Alternative 1: Status quo. Bering Sea and Aleutian Island Greenland turbot TAC will continue to be allocated without gear specific split.

Alternative 2: Gear specific fixed gear / trawl gear Bering Sea and Aleutian Island Greenland turbot TAC split.

Option 1 - Roll over provisions: Any portion of Bering Sea or Aleutian Island Greenland Turbot TAC determined by NMFS to remain unharvested by the trawl or fixed gear sectors during the remainder of the fishery year will become available as soon as practicable to the other sector.

Options for historical catch:

- 1. 2002-2007**
- 2. 2002-2007 best 5 years**
- 3. 2002-2007 best 3 years**
- 4. 2002-2011**
- 5. 2002-2011 best 5 years**
- 6. 2001-2011 best 3 years**

And adopt the following purpose and needs statement:

The Bering Sea and Aleutian Island Greenland turbot fisheries limited access derby-style management has led to competition among the trawl and fixed gear sectors. 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. To reduce uncertainty and contribute to the stability across the sectors, the Council should consider dividing Bering Sea and Aleutian Island Greenland turbot Total Allowable Catch into separate allocations among trawl and fixed gear sectors.

Mr. Henderschedt spoke to his motion, noting that he is making it reluctantly and has hopes that the Council can achieve the right negotiating environment. He spoke to his frustration with two fleets' inability to manage in an unsubscribed fishery and is concerned it could derail the progress it has made so far. Mr. Fields also noted his frustration with the fleets, emphasizing the resolution needs to come from within the sectors, and that it would be an unwise use of staff time and resources should the Council need to get involved.

There was brief discussion regarding time and effort that would be needed and resources that would need to be used. Mr. Witherell noted that the options are straightforward. There was continued discussion as to what would be analyzed, specifically which gear and which area and the necessity of the action. Mr. Balsiger noted that if the Council votes to progress with the analysis, it should be ready for final action. It was agreed that the industry should update the Council on negotiations. **The motion passed with Mr. Cotten objecting.**

D-1(c) BSAI Flatfish Specification Flexibility

BACKGROUND

Staff produced a discussion paper that proposes a mechanism for the Amendment 80 sector and CDQ groups to have increased flexibility in their targeting of yellowfin sole, rock sole, or flathead sole, to

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maximize their harvest of these species while ensuring that the overall 2 million mt BSIA optimum yield, and ABCs for each individual species, is not exceeded.

The first iteration of this discussion paper was presented to the Council in February 2011, when the Council requested a review of using non-specified reserves or alternative measures to increase flexibility in the harvest of flatfish (yellowfin sole, rock sole, and flathead sole) in the Bering Sea and Aleutian Islands Management Area (BSAI) by the Amendment 80 sector (i.e., non-American Fisheries Act trawl catcher/processors). A revised discussion paper was also presented in February 2012, which was expanded to address legal, practical, and policy implications of the proposed action, and examine the possibility of including the CDQ sector. The Council postponed action pending the receipt of the Amendment 80 cooperative reports, scheduled for April 2012. The Council also asked for further work on the proposed approach to achieve flexibility.

Diana Evans gave the staff report on this agenda item and answered questions from the Council members. The SSC had given its comments earlier, the AP gave its report, and public comment was heard.

COUNCIL DISCUSSION / ACTION

Mr. Henderschedt moved, which was seconded by Mr. Benson, that the Council approve the following problem statement and alternatives and options for analysis:

Problem Statement:

Typically, the Amendment 80 sector is unable to fully harvest the TACs for flathead sole, rock sole, and yellowfin sole due to market limitations and limitations associated with allocations of certain species harvested incidentally in the directed flatfish fisheries. In an effort to create additional harvest opportunities for the above species, a new harvest and accounting methodology is needed that would provide the Amendment 80 sector and CDQ groups increased flexibility in using yellowfin sole, rock sole, or flathead sole allocations. A new harvest and accounting methodology would enable Amendment 80 cooperatives and CDQ groups to maximize their harvest of these three species under various regulatory, economic, and environmental constraints while also ensuring that the ABC for each individual species is not exceeded in order to avoid any biological or conservation concerns.

Alternative 1: No action.

Alternative 2: Allocate ABC surplus (the difference between ABC and TAC) for yellowfin sole, rock sole, and flathead sole among the Amendment 80 cooperatives and the CDQ Program, using the same formulas as are used in the annual harvest specifications process. Entities may exchange their yellowfin sole, flathead sole, and/or rock sole quota share for an equivalent amount of their allocation of the ABC surplus for these species. Quota share that is exchanged for ABC surplus may be credited back to the entity's allocation of the surplus if unused.

Note: options 2 and 3 are mutually exclusive.

Option 1: Each entity is limited to 3 exchanges per calendar year.

Option 2: Only allocate the ABC surplus for flathead sole and rock sole. Entities may, however, still exchange their yellowfin sole quota share to access their allocation of the rock sole or flathead sole ABC surplus.

Option 3: No entity may access more than [5,000 mt to 25,000 mt] of additional yellowfin sole.

Mr. Henderschedt spoke to the motion and each of the options. He specified that option 1 was noted in the discussion paper as a possible solution to having entities make numerous exchanges within a year, since that may be an administrative burden to NMFS not only to make the exchanges for several entities, but to then track new allocations of each species. Three is not necessarily the magic number, but this is intended to provide some helpful discussion to have in the initial review draft analysis.

Mr. Henderschedt noted option 2 is essentially Option 1 of the AP motion. It would allow only a one way exchange for yellowfin sole. It addresses the concern that yellowfin sole could otherwise be set artificially low. Option 3 addresses the same issue in a different way. In Option 3 he selected a range of additional yellowfin sole, based on recent history.

Mr. Balsiger noted that the problem statement specified that the Council didn't want to exceed the ABC for a specific species, and it was confirmed that the Council also did not want to exceed the 2 million metric ton cap.

The motion passed without objection.

D-1 (d) Grenadiers

BACKGROUND

Seven species of grenadiers (or rattails) occur in Alaskan waters, but only three are commonly found at depths shallow enough to be encountered in commercial fishing operations or in trawl surveys. Giant grenadiers are of interest due to its abundance and economic potential. Very little is known about their life history, habitat, and ecological relationships. The Council initiated action in June 2008 to move grenadiers from the non-specified category of the groundfish FMPs to the target category based on recommendations from its Groundfish Plan Teams, Scientific and Statistical Committee, and Non-Target Species Committee. In April 2010, the Council took final action to approve annual catch limit (ACL) amendments to the FMPs, and requested a discussion paper on grenadiers be prepared for further consideration of this issue.

Prior to the ACL amendments, grenadiers were considered a non-specified species, which were a "residual category of species and species groups of no current or foreseeable economic value or ecological importance, which are taken in the groundfish fishery as accidental bycatch and are in no apparent danger of depletion" and for which "virtually no data exists (that) would allow population assessments." Previously the FMPs also defined the "other species" assemblages as including species of "only slight economic value and are generally not targeted upon, but which are either significant components of the ecosystem or have economic potential." Based on these definitions, the Plan Teams recommended that grenadiers should be moved into the groundfish FMPs (originally intended to be included into the "other species" complex) and managed either "in the fishery" or in the ecosystem component category. Considerable information on giant grenadier exists that can be used for stock assessment (Tier 5 status).

Tom Pearson from NMFS gave the staff report on this agenda item. The SSC did not address this agenda item. Lori Swanson gave the AP report, and public comment was heard.

COUNCIL DISCUSSION/ACTION

Dr. Balsiger moved the following, which was seconded:

The Council initiates an EA/RIR/IRFA and approves the following problem statement and four alternatives provided in the discussion paper for analysis:

Purpose and need:

Grenadiers are not included in the BSAI or GOA groundfish FMPs. There are no limits on their catch or retention, no reporting requirements, and no official record of their catch. However, grenadiers are taken in relatively large amounts as bycatch, especially in longline fisheries; no other Alaskan groundfish has such high catches and is not included in the FMPs. Considerable information on giant grenadier exists that can be used for stock assessment (under Tier 5). Inclusion in the groundfish FMPs would provide for their precautionary management by, at a minimum, recording their harvest and/or placing limits on their harvest.

Alternative 1. No Action.

Alternative 2. Include Grenadiers in the BSAI and GOA FMPs as ‘in the fishery’

Alternative 3. Include Grenadiers in the BSAI and GOA FMPs as an ‘ecosystem component’

Alternative 4. Include Grenadiers in the BSAI FMP as an ‘ecosystem component’ and in GOA FMP as ‘in the fishery’

The species to be included (applicable to any action alternative):

Option 1. giant grenadier only

Option 2. giant, popeye, and Pacific grenadiers

Dr. Balsiger spoke to his motion, noting that recently there has been a substantial catch of grenadiers as incidental catch. The groundfish Plan Teams have recommended to move them into the FMP, and the SSC has recommended revising the management for grenadiers. He noted that this is a species group that warrants inclusion in the FMP, and the Council has identified the first 3 alternatives, and the options have been added to outline information that already exists. The Council will have to discuss what to do with the non-target species at a later date.

The motion passed without objection

D-1 (e) Research Priorities

BACKGROUND

The Magnuson-Stevens Act requires the Council to adopt a five-year research plan each year. The Council adopted its most recent five-year research plan in June 2011 based on recommendations from its four Plan Teams, the Scientific and Statistical Committee, and the Advisory Panel. At this meeting, the Council will update its five-year research plan for 2013-2017.

The recommendations from the Joint BSAI and GOA Groundfish Plan Teams from August 2011 are included and recommendations from a Pacific cod research workshop that met in February 2012 are being forwarded for consideration now, since the Groundfish Plan Teams will not meet again until after the 2013-2017 research priorities will be adopted. Additional recommendations from the Crab and

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Scallop plan teams as well as research recommendations from the Halibut Bycatch Workshop are included for consideration.

Diana Stram gave the staff report on this agenda item and answered questions from the Council. The SSC had provided their recommendations in an attachment to their minutes which Ms. Livingston addressed earlier, and the AP had given its report. Public comment was taken.

COUNCIL DISCUSSION/ACTION

Dr. Stram answered questions from the Council members, specifically in regard to intent of prioritization.

Mr. Tweit moved that the Council adopt the 5-year research priorities as noted by the SSC, with minor changes:

- **Insert under Stock Assessment, Immediate Concerns: Section B on page 18 – insert AP language regarding “genetic and crab movement research for Blue King crab to evaluate remaining questions of determining if BKC bycatch is comprised of Pribilof Island BKC, St. Matthews BKC, or other stocks.”**
- **Page 19 of the SSC minutes, Section C-5, change words “most beneficial” to “intended.”**

The Council endorses the SSC’s intent to revise the process by which research priorities are considered and recommended annually. The details of this revised process should be developed in conjunction with Council staff and plan team representatives. The motion was seconded by Mr. Hull.

Mr. Tweit spoke to his motion, noting that naming priorities is an annual event and is anticipated by other agencies. He also noted that the process for naming the priorities is in need of change, and what the SSC has proposed will provide a more effective tool. Mr. Balsiger noted that he agrees with Mr. Tweit, and that priorities may need to be highlighted in the future, especially in light of budget cuts. Mr. Hull specified that the halibut workshop and the annual IPHC research priorities should also be included in the future research priority-setting. There was general discussion regarding the importance of working collaboratively with other agencies, specifically the IPHC. **The motion passed without objection.**

D-1 (f) Programmatic Groundfish SEIS

BACKGROUND

Once a year, the Council conducts a review of the management policy objectives to assess how they are being implemented, and see whether changes are warranted². This review occurred most recently at the February 2012 meeting, when the Council also reviewed a discussion paper identifying factors that may influence the timing for supplementing or updating the 2004 Groundfish PSEIS. It has been eight years since the PSEIS was published, and at some point, the NEPA analysis will need to be supplemented. The February 2012 discussion paper suggested an approach to help the Council decide whether the time is right to update the PSEIS, which recommended soliciting input from its stakeholders.

At the February 2012 meeting, the Council had a long discussion about the need for revising the 2004 Groundfish PSEIS, and requested several additional items to assist in its consideration. The Council has asked for input from several sources to inform their discussions:

² Note that changes to the policy objectives require an FMP amendment.

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- *stakeholder input on whether the existing groundfish management objectives continue to be relevant, or are in need of revision;*
- *SSC scientific guidance on whether we understand the environmental impacts of the groundfish management program today, and the continued relevance of the analysis in the 2004 Groundfish PSEIS; and*
- *examples of how an updated PSEIS could address efficiencies in our analytical or regulatory process.*

The current discussion paper incorporates the additional input requested by the Council. A stakeholder listening session was held during the March/April Council meeting, and is summarized along with written comment in Section 3. The SSC also evaluated the continuing relevancy of the PSEIS at the March/April meeting, and their minutes on this topic are excerpted in Section 4. Finally, Section 5 provides some discussion of the Council's options for moving forward with respect to this issue. There are also several appendices included with this discussion paper, which are largely reference materials that have been included in previous presentations on this subject.

Diana Evans gave the staff report on this agenda item along with Gretchen Harrington of NMFS, and answered questions from the Council. The SSC did not address this agenda item and the AP gave its report. Public comment was taken.

COUNCIL DISCUSSION / ACTION

Mr. Tweit moved, which was seconded by Mr. Henderschedt, that the Council should proceed with evaluation of the need for a revised PSEIS through a supplemental information report (SIR) process. Mr. Tweit spoke to his motion, noting that the discussion of the timeframe listed in the discussion paper is what is possible, and is not directive. Mr. Tweit noted that with this motion the Council can track current information and, through a deliberative and systematic process, decide when it is appropriate to make changes. When the Council decides to proceed with a new PSEIS, much of the information will already be cataloged, available, and ready.

There was discussion regarding purpose of a SIR compared to beginning work on a PSEIS and its effect on timing and other actions. Mr. Tweit noted that essentially, the SIR is similar to the first step of that process. He also suggested the Council should rely on the advice of the Ecosystem Committee and have them review the analytical outline and make recommendations to the Council. **The motion passed without objection.**

D-2 Staff Tasking

Mr. Oliver reviewed various submitted requests for projects from members of the public and a list of items the Council had requested during the meeting to be brought up during staff tasking. Mr. Oliver also briefly reviewed the three meeting outlook and items that would need to be addressed during the October Council meeting.

Mr. Oliver also reviewed a staff tasking clarification from an April motion on the Halibut Catch Sharing Program, noting that the motion included the use of an adjustment factor and the percentages, which have now been changed with the corrected numbers of harvests attributed to skipper and crew, which was the Council's intent. This results in a .06% difference between what was reflected in the motion at the time, and what will be shown in the October analysis.

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Ken Hansen, from NOAA Enforcement, briefed the Council on enforcement issues in the Round Island area. He summarized the discussion of the Enforcement Committee regarding this issue, and stated to the Council he would prefer not to have an unenforceable regulation on the books. Vessels doing historical tendering in the Togiak herring fishery need a legal transit corridor, and he noted it only will apply to federally-permitted vessels. The Enforcement Committee will be discussing this issue at its next meeting, and Mr. Hansen noted it affects about 10-15 pot boats and that the USF&W will be willing to develop a “best practices” transit corridor.

There was brief discussion regarding a check-in/check-out system, and the necessity to either repeal the regulation or find some safe way the boats can transit, most likely through a regulatory amendment.

Mr. Hansen also discussed electronic software that displayed regulations and noted it should be available soon, along with a pilot mapviewer program which was briefly demonstrated to the Enforcement Committee.

Mr. Oliver briefly discussed the October meeting and agenda items, with Council input as to how things will be prioritized with a goal of managing expectations, and noted some things are time sensitive.

Lori Swanson gave the AP report. Public comment was heard.

COUNCIL DISCUSSION /ACTION

Mr. Fields moved, which was seconded by Mr. Hull, to approve the minutes of the April meeting as written. Motion passed without objection.

USCG resources.

Mr. Fields moved, which was seconded, to have the Council draft a letter that notes Council support for the USCG’s mission in Alaska, and can provide details relative to the USCG’s needs. It was noted that the issues are broader than the Coast Guard, and also take into consideration NOAA office of Law Enforcement. **The motion passed without objection.**

COE issues

Mr. Fields moved, which was seconded to draft a discussion paper to remove prohibition of CQE communities from buying small blocks of IFQ. Mr. Fields noted that the Council has heard testimony regarding this issue, and the paper on D class IFQ that the Council has received will encompass this issue. **The motion passed with Mr. Hyder objecting.**

Amendment 97/ Amendment 80 Vessel replacement

Mr. Henderschedt moved, which was seconded, to draft a discussion paper that examines the legal provisions and potential impacts regarding the use of AFA vessels as Amendment 80 (AM80) replacement vessels. Mr. Henderschedt spoke to his motion, noting that NMFS is intending to prohibit the use of AFA AM80 vessels as replacement vessels, however because of changing legal interpretations the issue has been less clear. There is confusion in the industry and fleet, and with this motion and brief review, the Council could decide to take no action, or could initiate an analysis that would allow the use of AFA vessels. He continued, noting that this could examine the economic impacts and help the affected sectors, and it was necessary to have a better understanding of the policy decision that led to the prohibition.

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Council discussion ensued. Ms. Campbell noted that this is a hypothetical situation, and no one in the fleet is interested in using an AM80 vessel as a replacement and resources the Council would use to analyze this could go to more pending things on the list. Mr. Henderschedt noted that concern with legal issues and the preservation of status quo within AM97 is a concern.

Mr. Fields noted his opposition of the motion and believes the Council needs to wait until final rule is established, and that it would be premature to create a discussion paper at this time.

Dr. Balsiger noted the situation was reviewed in the B reports, and had NMFS not included in the rule the prohibition on AFA vessels, it may have caused a problem. Dr. Balsiger looks forward to clarification from the Council and discussion paper.

The motion passed with 3 objecting: Mr. Fields, Ms. Campbell, and Mr. Cotton.

Turbot allocation

Mr. Henderschedt noted that due to a full agenda in October and December, there is no need to prioritize this issue at this time. Chairman Olson asked for industry to give an update on progress at the next meeting.

Observer Advisory Committee Tasking

Mr. Hull noted that the OAC has set aside 2 days in September to meet. The proposed agenda is to receive an update on implementation of restructuring, changes between the proposed and final rule, and the mechanics of implementation. Additionally, there will be a review of the deployment plan and discussions about development of electronic monitoring (EM) as part of the restructured observer program. The OAC will provide recommendations to the Council at their next meeting.

Mr. Fields requested that the Council would benefit from the OAC's review of exemption criteria relative to the vessels that may not be able to carry an observer.

There was discussion regarding EM, ongoing agency discussions and whitepapers. It was generally agreed that Council staff would continue to track the issue, and Mark Holliday from NMFS would be invited to address the Council at a future meeting to give an update on how EM is progressing at a national level.

National Standards Letter

Mr. Oliver noted that he will work with the SSC working group on providing comments for the National Standard 1 comment letter. Mr. Henderschedt noted that it would work well to solicit written comments to the SSC through the Council, and Mr. Oliver can work with Ms. Livingston electronically.

Round Island

Discussion began with Dr. Balsiger noting that there are no administrative options or waivers to comply with enforcement regulations. Mr. Lepore of NOAA GC noted that if there is a law on the books, then enforcement officials (NOAA Office of Law Enforcement, USF&W enforcement officers) are obligated to enforce the law. If there needs to be a change in position, then there needs to be rulemaking. **Mr. Hyder moved that the Council initiate an analysis to make appropriate adjustments in a regulatory amendment to allow transit, either through a check-in/check-out system or a transit corridor.**

Mr. Hyder spoke to his motion, stating that regulations can cause a problem for the fleet and the Council needs to take the time to make this correction; it should not be a complicated analysis and should move rapidly.

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Mr. Henderschedt noted that to expedite as much as possible, initial and final review could be done in one meeting. Mr. Hyder noted that even if the Council has difficulty getting this item on the agenda in an expedited manner, at least the enforcement entities will be aware that the issue is under consideration. Mr. Olson noted that even with an expedited schedule, changes may not be in place to effect the current year, but would be able to take effect for next year's season. **The motion passed without objection.**

Alaska Charter Association letter

Mr. Dersham addressed the Council, noting that there had been a teleconference with NMFS and ADF&G staff and those from the Alaska Charter Association (ACA) who had participated in writing the letter. Mr. Dersham assured them it was the Council's intent to take initial review in April and final action in October, and it would be unlikely that any requests from the ACA would succeed because of concerns of slowing the process.

Mr. Dersham emphasized that the adjustment in his April motion was a preliminary preferred alternative, that the Council always has a choice at final action within a range of options, and that there is ability for public comment between meetings.

Mr. Fields noted he agreed with Mr. Dersham's comments.

Non-target species committee

Mr. Olson noted he will be tasking the NTS Committee with reviewing the Grenadier analysis, and have Mr. Benson continue as chairman.

Mr. Olson reviewed the tasking list for October, which includes "must do" items such as: GOA PSC; BSAI Chum Salmon; ALL CRAB in its entirety; and that closer to October the Council can decide exactly what items will be on the agenda.

GOA trawl PSC tools

Mr. Fields stated he is interested in having public discussions relative to GOA regulatory changes in the trawl fleet, and is interested in delineating time for all stakeholders to get together to begin to think about goals for their community, and what the Council should do as more changes affect the trawl fleet.

Mr. Cotten commented that the Council has a lot of work to do with the comprehensive tools to reduce bycatch, and noted that the Council needs goals and objectives first, that the Community needs to be heard, and suggests foundation work before we can presume to identify qualifying years.

Mr. Dersham noted there may be many options as to how the Council proceeds in October, and action in the Western GOA is tied to the action the Council takes on halibut bycatch. Mr. Dersham recommended that participants should get together and decide what they want and be prepared to address the Council in October.

Mr. Hull noted that there is a strong desire from the trawl industry to make progress and develop an approach for the Council to consider. Other stakeholders think it may be too fast, but he commented that regardless of speed, the Council is getting started.

Mr. Hyder noted the Council is committed to "building a tool box" and not just talk about how the trawl fleet adjusts to the reduction, but will talk about how to minimize bycatch to the extent practicable. Discussions will involve OY and will broaden scope. He is concerned that aspects of comprehensive rationalization may slow or stop current progress.

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Mr. Merrill noted that NMFS is working on trying to figure out ways to do things better internally and using prioritization tools as a potential way to deal with complicated staff tasking issues.

GOA Chinook salmon excluder testing

Mr. Fields moved to draft a letter to the agency in support of testing salmon excluder devices in the GOA. The motion was seconded by Mr. Henderschedt. He spoke to his motion noting that he supports use of pollock or Chinook that it becomes available seasonally or spatially, and underscores the Council's commitment of support of ABC or OFL as broadly applied. He recognizes the industry has the ability to fund the EFP and that the Council should offer assistance to the agency in any way to encourage development and testing of salmon excluders in Alaska.

There was brief discussion regarding Chinook for testing for salmon excluder devices. Mr. Fields noted that his intent was not to provide a carte blanche, but to get support from the Council for testing of excluder devices. Dr. Balsiger noted that NMFS is committed to working effectively with other agencies to get EFPs tested and in the water. Mr. Henderschedt urged caution in expediting the testing at the cost of resources and time of other projects. **The motion passed without objection.**

Programmatic SEIS

Ms. Campbell noted that she is aware that the Council is taking on a substantial project, and requested a subcommittee to work with staff and stakeholders to give feedback to the Council so the Council can stay on track and get the support they need. Chairman Olson agreed that the subgroup would be able to review policy issues and feedback and provide comment to the Council. He noted he will be appointing a committee in the future.

Miscellaneous

Mr. Hull noted that the Council had received a letter from Mr. Kompkoff regarding subsistence halibut regulations and qualifications of crew. He noted that since the Council discusses subsistence halibut reports in October, NMFS can provide rationale for regulations then as a response to the letter.

Mr. Fields directed attention to prior public comment during staff tasking relative to the flatfish flexibility specifications paper and discussions on including cod as a hard cap. He wanted to clarify that he would prefer to have the existing state of the degree to which cod is a constraint for the fleet evaluated in the next version of the document.

Mr. Olson noted that it was Vice Chairman Benson's last meeting and handed him the gavel to adjourn. Mr. Benson gave final remarks, specifically thanking his wife and the many members of the Council and friends along the way who have made a commitment to the management and protection of the marine resources. Mr. Benson adjourned the meeting at 12:11 PM on Tuesday, June 12, 2012.

MEETING ATTENDEE SIGN-IN SHEET

June, 2012 N.P.F.M.C. MEETING

PLEASE REGISTER ATTENDANCE FOR MEETING RECORDS

PLEASE PRINT - THANK YOU!

NAME	AFFILIATION
Stephen R. Jansen	Groundwell Britain Movement
JAN EVANOFF	FISHERMAN
Don Lane	NPFA
BRENT PANK	UCB
IUEV MALUTIN	SELF KODIAR SUNAIQ TRIBE
VICKI VANEK	Alaska Dept Fish + Game
Shawn C. Dochterman	Commercial Fisherman
Susan Robinson	Fishermen's Front
STOIAN IANKOV	FLV Michelle Renee
Nancy Hillstrand	Pioneer Alaska Fisheries Inc
Kuo Novosy	Icelet Seafoods
Glenn REED	PSPA
Tom Miller	Glacier Bay
Robert McG. Day	GLACIER BAY
Peter Ivanoff	fisherman
Mike Fraccero	fisherman
Michelle Weekly	fisherman
Maya Cenn Dickey	fisherman

MEETING ATTENDEE SIGN-IN SHEET

June, 2012 N.P.F.M.C. MEETING

PLEASE REGISTER ATTENDANCE FOR MEETING RECORDS

PLEASE PRINT - THANK YOU!

NAME	AFFILIATION
Simeon Suetzof Jr.	City of St. Paul
Bill Jacobson	Kodiak Fisheries
ELIZABETH Wiley	WESTWARD
Maia Krueger	co-owner Map del Norte
MARIE Albert	Buccannan / Katherine
Vikki Jo Kennedy	Self Kodiak Fisheries
Heather McClarty	McPartys Assoc., Juneau
Jack Hill	F/V RUFF & Reddy
Clary Gromoff	The Alout Corp
PAUL Mac GREGOR	AT-SEA PROCESSORS ASSN.
Linda Kozak	Kozak + Associates
Jeff Stephan	UFMA
Todd Loomis	Ocean Peace, Inc.
Jan Warrick	Oceana
TERRY MAINES	FISH HEADS
Lorn Swanson	Groundfish Forum
Matt Upton	US Section
Frank Kelly	City of Unalakleet

NORTH PACIFIC FISHERY MANAGEMENT COUNCIL

Time Log of meeting: June 6–12, 2012

Recording Hour	Time (24-hr)	Topic of Discussion
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Wednesday, June 6, 2012

Call to order

0:00:00	8:07:21	Start Recording [8:07:21 AM]
0:00:06	8:07:30	Call to order
0:00:09	8:07:34	KIB mayor
0:07:11	8:14:45	agenda - move NOAA enforcement report
0:09:06	8:16:29	Chris Oliver, ED report
0:31:35	8:38:51	NOAA Enforcement report
0:34:50	8:42:08	Sherri Meyers, Susan Auer
1:21:59	9:29:00	Tony Kenne USCG Report
1:22:13	9:29:08	RADM Tom Ostebo
1:44:27	9:51:14	USCG Recognizes Benson
2:10:28	10:17:09	Glenn Merrill - Status of Actions, Inseason Management Report
2:52:56	10:59:12	Martin Lloeflad
3:54:39	12:00:42	Low Audio Level
5:00:24	13:05:47	Karla Bush
5:10:07	13:15:31	Steve MacLean Protected resources report
5:22:12	13:27:30	Melanie Brown
5:22:20	13:27:33	Bruce Leman
5:22:24	13:27:39	Gregg Williams IPHC report
5:33:30	13:38:40	Public Comment on B items
5:35:01	13:40:12	Mike Szymanski
5:42:31	13:47:52	Hermann Squartsoff, Darren Muller
5:49:08	13:54:15	Steve Taufen
5:56:54	14:02:10	Linda Behnken, Jeff Stephan, Julianne Curry
6:28:31	14:33:18	Don Lane
6:40:45	14:45:27	Paul Olson
6:44:25	14:49:04	Dave Wood
6:48:18	14:53:01	Stephanie Madsen
6:52:16	14:57:00	Keith Bruton
6:54:51	14:59:37	Todd Loomis,
7:30:36	15:35:08	C-1 A Jane DiCosimo and Gregg Williams
7:52:18	15:56:33	Darrell Brannan, C-1 b
9:06:09	17:09:49	Stop Recording [5:09:49 PM]

Thursday, June 7, 2012

0:00:00	8:06:56	Start Recording [8:06:56 AM]
0:00:04	8:07:06	Questions for Darrell and Mike Downs
0:16:28	8:23:21	IPHC Gregg Williams
0:16:39	8:23:33	Bruce Leaman
0:41:18	8:48:06	Becca Robbins Gisclair AP report C-1 b
0:51:03	8:57:41	Public Comment
0:51:19	8:57:58	Vikki Kenndry
0:55:51	9:02:35	Steele Davis

NORTH PACIFIC FISHERY MANAGEMENT COUNCIL

Time Log of meeting: June 6–12, 2012

Recording Hour	Time (24-hr)	Topic of Discussion
1:01:48	9:08:21	Joe Macinko
1:08:24	9:14:55	Peter Longrich
1:10:43	9:17:15	Holly van Pelt
1:14:55	9:21:23	Daniel Miller
1:18:59	9:25:34	Tim Greene
1:23:07	9:29:41	Darius Kasprzak
1:29:24	9:35:58	Bob Alverson
1:43:12	9:49:30	Jon Warrenchuck
2:22:12	10:28:12	Peter Allen
2:25:32	10:31:34	George Hutchings
2:38:01	10:43:54	Dave Kubiak
2:41:28	10:47:21	Paul Olson
2:53:57	10:59:46	Heath Hilyard
2:54:45	11:00:34	Mike Lonrich
2:56:45	11:02:48	Frank Miles
2:57:05	11:02:53	Kylee Miles
2:59:30	11:05:17	Bruce Lozekar
3:04:36	11:10:25	Jason Chandler
3:13:53	11:19:38	Patrick Odonnell
3:30:46	11:36:19	Iver Malutin
3:38:46	11:44:15	Don Lane
3:46:55	11:52:42	Peggy Parker
3:53:42	11:59:03	Stop Recording [11:59:03 AM]
3:53:42	13:02:57	Start Recording [1:02:57 PM]
3:55:07	13:04:28	Mike Friccero
4:00:19	13:09:40	Nick Morozov
4:04:03	13:13:17	John Gauvin
4:17:33	13:26:42	Peter Ivanoff
4:19:01	13:28:08	Clifton Ivanoff
4:22:04	13:31:09	Ian Ivanoff
4:34:41	13:43:41	Ryan Johnson
4:44:16	13:53:13	Mako Haggarty
4:50:06	13:59:04	Mike Friccero
4:55:18	14:04:10	Peter Thompson
5:01:59	14:10:57	Hailey Thompson
5:21:52	14:30:37	Jeff Stephan
5:37:57	14:46:25	Frankie Brown
5:45:22	14:53:34	Stojan Iankov
5:51:01	15:00:42	Susan Robinson
6:17:38	15:25:30	Chris Donich
6:22:32	15:30:35	Ernie Cudabus
6:30:45	15:38:34	Virginia Servida
6:30:54	15:38:39	Curt Waters
6:44:53	15:52:35	Chandler Johnson
6:48:07	15:55:49	Jeremie Pikus
6:55:46	16:03:23	Nancy Hillstrand

NORTH PACIFIC FISHERY MANAGEMENT COUNCIL

Time Log of meeting: June 6–12, 2012

Recording Hour	Time (24-hr)	Topic of Discussion
6:58:37	16:06:12	David Dahl
7:07:48	16:15:21	Enrique Perez
7:14:34	16:22:07	Bob Kruger
7:37:46	16:45:09	Brent Paine
7:49:20	16:56:44	Becca Robbins Gisclair
7:55:30	17:02:44	Steven Taufen
8:04:50	17:11:59	Scott Hockema
8:08:14	17:15:25	Chris and Ken Holland
8:14:58	17:22:03	John McCarthy
8:18:57	17:26:01	Paul MacGregor
8:29:38	17:36:50	Low Audio Level
8:36:33	17:43:27	Stop Recording [5:43:27 PM]

Friday, June 8, 2012

0:00:00	Call to order
0:00:00	8:06:52 Start Recording [8:06:52 AM]
0:01:29	8:08:26 Pat Livingston SSC report
0:53:14	8:59:47 Julie Bonney
1:23:32	9:29:52 Steve Spain
1:33:36	9:40:09 Don Ashley, Bert Asley
1:40:53	9:47:08 Linda Behnken
1:48:01	9:54:16 Julie Miller
1:51:04	9:57:15 Teresa Peterson
2:26:49	10:32:47 Mike Helligso
2:30:31	10:36:37 Alexis Kwachka
2:34:14	10:40:08 Darren Muller
2:38:00	10:43:59 Hermann Squartsoff and Gene Anderson
2:45:17	10:51:05 Rhonda Hubbard
2:48:33	10:54:33 Bill Malvert
2:53:33	10:59:18 mark levenson
2:58:16	11:03:59 Nora Agmata
2:59:56	11:05:39 Kurt Cochran
3:18:20	11:24:01 Jeff Farvor
3:21:58	11:27:38 Julianne Curry
3:30:18	11:35:28 Chuck McCallum
3:35:27	11:40:55 Yolanda Tuboy, Pedro Irahala, carlos Martinez
3:39:16	11:44:50 Tom Evich
3:41:38	11:46:37 Mike Alferi
3:48:41	11:53:37 Shawn Dochterman
3:55:57	12:00:49 Lou Dochterman
3:59:42	12:04:31 Tom Miller
4:02:40	12:07:39 Bob McGarry
4:06:54	12:11:40 Break
4:08:05	12:12:50 Stop Recording [0:12:50 PM]
4:08:05	14:00:55 Start Recording [2:00:55 PM]

NORTH PACIFIC FISHERY MANAGEMENT COUNCIL

Time Log of meeting: June 6–12, 2012

Recording Hour	Time (24-hr)	Topic of Discussion
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4:11:14	14:04:07	Dan Hull reads motion
6:53:10	16:44:52	Stop Recording [4:44:52 PM]

Saturday, June 9, 2012

0:00:00	8:34:55	Start Recording [8:34:55 AM]
0:00:02	8:35:00	Call to order
0:00:30	10:17:21	C-1 C Mark Fina
1:43:10	10:17:28	Becca Robbins Gisclair
1:43:18	10:17:33	AP report
1:47:04	10:21:18	Public Comment
1:47:32	10:21:48	George Hutchings
1:59:56	10:34:06	steven Taufen
2:04:03	10:38:10	Bob Kruger
2:11:17	10:45:23	Heather mccarty
2:26:55	11:00:53	Jeff Stephan
2:41:47	11:15:39	Teresa Peterson
2:43:48	11:17:40	Julie Bonney
2:49:58	11:28:24	Terry Haines
3:00:02	11:33:46	Curt Waters
3:29:40	12:03:11	Stop Recording [0:03:11 PM]
3:29:40	13:16:29	Start Recording [1:16:29 PM]
4:30:54	14:17:21	Marcus Hartley
4:31:00	14:17:28	C-1 (d)
4:31:05	14:17:35	Becca Robbins Gisclair, AP report
4:31:48	14:18:20	Simeon Swetzof Jr.
4:38:18	14:24:44	Heather McCarty
5:06:55	14:57:02	Sarah Melton , C-2 HAPC
5:31:25	15:17:31	Roy Hyder, Enforcement Committee Report
5:33:06	15:19:12	Lori Swanson, AP report
5:40:19	15:26:20	Donna Parker, Arctic storm
5:48:23	15:34:18	John Gauvin
5:54:28	15:40:27	Jon Warrenchuck
6:05:08	15:51:09	Diana Stram and Bob Foy, C-3 A Crab Plan Team Report
7:05:47	16:51:13	Lori Swanson, AP report
7:10:06	16:55:42	Low Audio Level
7:10:30	16:55:53	motion
7:10:34	16:55:56	recess for the day
7:10:40	16:56:01	Stop Recording [4:56:01 PM]

Sunday, June 10, 2012

0:00:00	8:00:31	Start Recording [8:00:31 AM]
0:00:01	8:00:37	Call to order
0:00:14	8:00:54	C-3 b Diana Stram
0:00:23	8:01:20	Pribilof Islands Blue King Crab
1:15:34	9:15:39	Lori Swanson, AP report

NORTH PACIFIC FISHERY MANAGEMENT COUNCIL

Time Log of meeting: June 6–12, 2012

Recording Hour	Time (24-hr)	Topic of Discussion
1:20:16	9:20:20	Public Comment, Kenny Down
1:28:30	9:28:33	Mateo Paz Soldan, Heather McCarty
1:39:06	9:39:00	Merrill Motion
2:17:12	10:21:01	Diana Stram - Research Priorities D-1 (e)
2:22:59	10:22:37	Lori Swanson, AP report
2:32:48	10:32:23	Diana Evans D-1 (f)
3:17:50	11:17:06	Lori Swanson AP report
3:18:34	11:17:52	Public Comment Stephanie Madsen
3:19:53	11:19:06	Jon Warrenchuck
3:32:04	11:31:27	C-5 B Diana Evans FLL Vessel Replacement
3:55:06	11:54:03	Stop Recording [11:54:03 AM]
3:55:07	13:19:38	Start Recording [1:19:38 PM]
4:17:15	13:41:48	CAPT Chris Woodley USCG
4:36:03	14:00:19	Diana Evans
4:36:09	14:00:29	C-5 (b) Initial Review of FLL Vessel Replacement
4:57:56	14:22:01	AP report
5:09:15	14:34:17	Public Comment, Kenny Down
5:22:39	14:51:15	Dave Little Joel Peterson
5:41:10	15:04:58	Julie Miller
5:41:12	15:05:01	Richard THummel
6:11:53	15:35:31	Henderschedt motion
6:57:16	16:20:36	Jon McCracken c-5 a freezer longline GOA sideboards
7:27:40	16:50:45	AP report
7:33:17	16:56:34	Low Audio Level
7:34:06	16:57:07	Normal Audio Level
7:34:12	16:57:16	Break for day
7:34:21	16:57:22	Stop Recording [4:57:22 PM]

Monday, June 11, 2012

0:00:00	8:29:38	Start Recording [8:29:38 AM]
0:00:01	8:29:41	call to order
0:00:04	8:29:50	C-5 (a) Kenny Down Public Comment
0:27:17	8:57:09	D-1 (a) Pcod gear on board
0:27:45	8:57:13	Sarah Melton
1:02:13	9:31:32	Lori Swanson AP report D-1 (a)
1:03:30	9:32:50	Roy Hyder Enforcement Committee Minutes
1:05:36	9:35:27	Public Comment Theresa Peterson
1:29:58	9:59:09	D-1 (b) Greenland Turbot
1:30:08	9:59:12	Steve MacLean
1:57:28	10:26:20	AP report
2:04:07	10:39:24	Public Comment - Lori Swanson
2:10:39	10:39:29	Joel Peterson
2:14:12	10:42:57	Dave Little
2:20:19	10:49:01	Todd Loomis
2:33:19	11:01:58	Kenny Down

NORTH PACIFIC FISHERY MANAGEMENT COUNCIL

Time Log of meeting: June 6–12, 2012

Recording Hour	Time (24-hr)	Topic of Discussion
3:09:17	11:37:47	D-1 (c) Diana Evans, Flatfish Flex
3:27:07	11:55:21	Stop Recording [11:55:21 AM]
3:27:07	13:31:41	Start Recording [1:31:41 PM]
3:27:47	13:32:25	Questions for Diana
3:34:10	13:38:43	AP report
3:34:12	13:38:48	Public Comment: Jason Anderson
3:40:03	13:44:35	Stephanie Madsen
3:52:01	13:56:28	Mike Szymanski
3:57:24	14:01:48	Bill McGill
3:59:25	14:03:52	Henderschedt motion
4:17:51	14:22:09	D-1 D Grenadiers
4:19:31	14:23:46	Tom Pearson
4:47:01	14:51:06	Lori Swanson, AP report
4:49:08	14:53:14	public comment
4:49:14	14:53:18	John warrenchuck
4:54:10	14:58:11	Jackie Dragon
5:06:10	15:10:06	recess for day
5:06:15	15:10:09	Stop Recording [3:10:09 PM]

Tuesday, June 12, 2012

0:00:00	8:36:06	Start Recording [8:36:06 AM]
0:00:00	8:36:08	call to order
0:00:41	8:36:50	Chris Oliver, staff tasking
0:10:02	8:46:37	Ken Hansen, Discussion on Round Island
0:40:20	9:16:12	AP report
0:42:44	9:18:40	Chuck McCallum, Hermann Squartsoff
0:44:45	9:20:35	Lori Swanson
0:48:07	9:23:55	Kenny Down
0:54:00	9:29:48	Stephanie Madsen
0:58:18	9:34:05	Stephan Taufen
1:03:38	9:39:23	Jackie Dragon
1:08:25	9:44:09	Shawn Dochtermann
1:16:07	9:51:45	Glenn Reed
1:29:22	10:04:57	Mike Szymanski
1:50:20	10:25:47	Lu Dochetermann
1:54:05	10:29:28	Julie Bonney
2:07:46	10:43:02	Terry Haines
3:36:39	12:11:21	Adjourned meeting. benson
3:36:47	12:11:25	Stop Recording [0:11:25 PM] Meeting adjourned

North Pacific Fishery Management Council

Eric A. Olson, Chairman
Chris Oliver, Executive Director



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ADVISORY PANEL MINUTES North Pacific Fishery Management Council June 4-7, 2012 Kodiak, Alaska

The following (21) members were present for all or part of the meetings:

Kurt Cochran	Jeff Farvour	Matt Moir
Craig Cross	Becca Robbins Gisclair	Theresa Peterson
John Crowley	Jan Jacobs	Ed Poulsen
Julianne Curry	Alexus Kwachka	Neil Rodriguez
Jerry Downing	Craig Lowenberg	Lori Swanson
Tom Enlow	Chuck McCallum	Anne Vanderhoeven
Tim Evers	Andy Mezirow	Ernie Weiss

Minutes of the March 2012 meeting were approved.

C-1(a) Halibut Workshop Report

The AP heard a report on the NPFMC/IPHC Halibut Workshop held in April 2012 from Jane DiCosimo (NPFMC) and Gregg Williams (IPHC).

C-1 (b) GOA Halibut PSC

The AP recommends the Council take final action to reduce halibut PSC limits in the GOA groundfish fisheries.

Preferred Alternative. Amend the GOA Groundfish FMP to remove setting GOA halibut PSC limits from the annual groundfish harvest specifications process. GOA halibut PSC limits would be established (and amended) in federal regulation.

Option 2. Revise the existing 2,000 mt trawl and 300 mt hook and line halibut PSC limits and write them into regulation

Suboption 1. Reduce the halibut PSC limit for hook and line gear CP sector by:
c) 15%

Suboption 2. Reduce the halibut PSC limit for hook and line gear CV sector by:
c) 15%

Suboption 3. Reduce the halibut PSC limit for trawl gear sector by:
c) 15% (267 MT)

All reductions are reflected in Table 1, Part 3 of the supplemental, option 3 – 15% reduction. Reductions are applied to the sideboard limits as reflected in Tables 2, 3 and 4, in Part 3 of the supplemental, option 3 – 15% reduction (see Attachment 1).

Suboption 3.1.

- a) Applied as percentage against the GOA halibut PSC limit

Suboption 3.2

Allow the Amendment 80 sector to roll unused halibut PSC from one season to the subsequent season (similar to the non-Amendment 80 sectors).

Suboption 3.3

Allow available trawl halibut PSC in the second season deep water and shallow water complexes to be aggregated and made available for use in either complex from May 15th through June 30th. Halibut PSC sideboards for the Amendment 80 and AFA sectors would continue to be defined as deep water and shallow water complex in the second season.

The halibut PSC used during that period will be deducted from where the PSC limit was originally designated for use. NMFS will accomplish this by re-specifying halibut between the deep and shallow complex halibut complexes after the fishery is complete to capture actual use.

Note: Any unused PSC will be rolled over to the fisheries where it was initially assigned.

PSC limit for HAL demersal shelf rockfish in SE Outside District: status quo of 10 mt.

Motion passed 12-9.

Minority Report on C-1(b), GOA Halibut PSC: *A minority of the AP opposed cutting PSC levels in the GOA by 15%, for the following reasons:*

The proposed PSC reduction is allocative and responsive to political concerns, not scientifically based, and does nothing to address wastage in the directed halibut fishery. Reduced size at age, the cause of decline is exploitable biomass, is not remedied by bycatch reduction. Reducing target catch of competing species may exacerbate the problem. Age 8+ total biomass and abundance coastwide is high, with strong year classes anticipated in the next several years. If this is an equity issue, PSC levels should be restored as Ebio increases.

Both hook and line CP and all trawl sectors have already experienced significant reductions in PSC caps (1995 longline split; cod sector split; rockfish program off-the-top and rollover reductions). The HAL CP fleet has developed a voluntary coop with internal and external review, 100% observer coverage, careful release, and other measures to minimize bycatch. The diversity between trawl sectors (WGOA, CGOA, CP and CV) precludes that option for trawlers, and realistic reductions under a race for fish have already been implemented. The community of Kodiak and the Nation as a whole will be significantly harmed by reduced bottom trawl deliveries and lost processing jobs under a 15% cap reduction. Rationalization of the fishery will provide tools for more significant PSC reductions, as demonstrated in other programs, and will result in increased observer coverage and possible further increases in PSC limits. The revised observer program will provide much better data on actual catch, bycatch and wastage.

Signed by: Kurt Cochran, Craig Cross, Jerry Downing, Tom Enlow, Jan Jacobs, Matt Moir, Neil Rodriguez, Lori Swanson, Anne Vanderhoeven

C-1 (c) GOA Comprehensive Halibut Bycatch Amendments

The AP recommends that the Council schedule a specific agenda item for the October meeting that begins the process of developing a catch share program for bycatch tools and reductions for the Central Gulf of Alaska trawl groundfish fishery. The Council should develop a purpose and need statement with goals and objectives for a new fishery management system at that time. *Motion passed 20 -1.*

C-1 (d) BSAI Halibut PSC Limits

The AP heard a report on the discussion paper from Marcus Hartley with Northern Economics.

C-2 BSAI HAPC Skate Egg Sites

The AP recommends that the Council release the document for public review. *Motion passed 21-0.*

C-3 (a) BSAI Crab Plan Team Report: Set Catch Specifications for 4 stocks

The AP recommends that the Council approve the BSAI Crab SAFE document. *Motion passed 19-0.*

The AP acknowledges the work the Crab Plan Team has done revising the PSC alternatives and looks forward to revising alternatives for crab PSC in the future. *Motion passed 20-0.*

C-3 (b) Pribilof BKC Rebuilding Plan

The AP recommends that the Council adopt Alternative 2b (Preferred Alternative) for final action. In addition, the AP recommends the following changes to the problem statement:

*The Pribilof Islands blue king crab stock remains overfished and the current rebuilding plan has not achieved adequate progress to rebuild the stock by 2014. In order to comply with provisions of the Magnuson-Stevens Fishery Conservation and Management Act (MSA) an amended rebuilding plan must be implemented prior to the start of the 2011/2012 fishing season. The directed blue king crab fishery has been closed since 1999 and action has been taken to limit bycatch mortality in other crab **and groundfish** fisheries occurring near the Pribilof Islands; ~~however no similar action has been taken for groundfish fisheries.~~ **Additional action to reduce bycatch in groundfish fisheries may be necessary.** Recent trends in crab bycatch suggest that groundfish fisheries occurring near the Pribilof Islands have the potential to exceed the annual overfishing level and acceptable biological catch for this stock.*

This action is necessary to facilitate compliance with requirements of the MSA to end and prevent overfishing, rebuild overfished stocks and achieve optimum yield.

Motion passed 18/2.

The AP notes that PIBKC stock boundaries are currently being re-evaluated. Prior to any further action, the AP recommends to the Council:

1. Work be done with NMFS to develop workable means of whole-hauling for PIBKC on trawl vessels participating in fisheries included in any future management actions.
2. Work be done to resolve bycatch extrapolation problems with observer data in fisheries with lower levels of observer coverage (pot, hook and line).

3. Work on genetic and crab movement research for PIBKC to evaluate remaining questions of determining if PIBKC bycatch is comprised of PIBKC, SMBKC or other stocks.
4. Improvements to weight to numbers conversions where average weight is used in lieu of actual weights or numbers.
5. Information be incorporated on seasonal movement and availability of groundfish stocks including effects of ice edge position on assumptions in the model used to look at economic effects of potential closures.
6. Consideration of 100% observer coverage on vessels fishing within the PIBKC stock boundaries.

Motion carried 19/0.

C-5 (a) Freezer Longline GOA cod sideboards

The AP requests that the Council develop a problem statement that includes the following:

- A description of the vessels eliminated from the GOA Pacific Cod fishery at sector split under the recalculated sideboards and the negative impacts that will occur to the crew and operators of these vessels if the current sideboard for these vessels is permanent.
- A description of the effects of narrowing of the sideboard limit under Amendment 83 from a non-gear specific sideboard to a sector specific sideboard and the significantly reduced sideboard limits for those sideboarded freezer longline vessels active in the GOA Pacific cod fishery prior to sector split.

The AP further requests that the Council develop a suite of alternatives that includes the following:

Alternative 1: No Action. Under this alternative, the current Freezer Longline GOA Pacific cod sideboards would continue to apply.

Alternative 2: Removal of Freezer Longline GOA Pacific Cod Sideboards.

Motion passed 18-1.

C-5 (b) Freezer Longline Vessel Replacement (MLOA adjustment)

The AP recommends that the Council release the document for public review with modifications to the options under Alternative 3 provided below:

Alternative 3: The MLOA requirements on LLP licenses with catch processor and hook-and-line Pacific cod endorsements for the BS or AI would not apply and the Council recommends that vessels named on these LLP licenses be authorized for use in the EEZ under the jurisdiction of the North Pacific Fishery Management Council, which is intended to clarify that these vessels are eligible to receive a certificate of documentation consistent with 46 U.S.C. 12102(c) and MARAD regulations at 46 C.F.R. 356.47.

Option 3.1 - Any vessel replaced under this program would not be eligible to be designated on an FFP or an LLP.

Option 3.2 - Replaced vessels may not be used to replace other BSAI hook and line catcher processor vessels.

~~Option 3.3: Any replaced vessel may not exceed 220' LOA.~~

Option 3.3 - The MLOA on LLP licenses with catcher processor and hook-and-line Pacific cod endorsements for the BS or AI would be modified to 220' MLOA.

~~Option 3.4: The MLOA requirements on LLP licenses with catcher processor and pot cod endorsements would continue to apply when the LLP is used in BS or AI fishery pot cod fishery.~~
Option 3.4 - Owners of LLP licenses with catcher processor and pot cod endorsements will have 36 months from the implementation of this action to either surrender the pot cod endorsements and receive a LLP license at 220' LOA or the current LLP length restriction would continue to apply.

Further, the AP recommends the Council adopt Alternative 3 with revised Options 3.3 and 3.4 as a Preliminary Preferred Alternative.

Motion passed 19-1.

D-1 (a) Limiting gear on jig vessels

The AP recommends that the Council take no action on this item at this time. *Motion passed 19-0.*

D-1 (b) Gear Specifications for BSAI Greenland Turbot TAC

The AP recommends that the Council move forward an analysis that would consider establishment of gear allocations for the Bering Sea and Aleutian Islands (BSAI) Greenland turbot fishery.

The AP requests that the Council develop a problem statement that includes the following:

- A description of the Bering Sea and Aleutian Island Greenland Turbot fisheries limited access derby-style management and the current competition among the trawl and fixed gear sectors.
- A description of the participants in the fisheries who have made long-term investments and are dependent on the fisheries and uncertainty as a result of the competition for catch shares among sectors.
- A description of changes in fishing practices resulting from Amendment 80, Amendment 85, formation of the Freezer Longline Coalition, and Steller sea lion protection measures.

The AP requests that the Council develop a suite of alternatives that includes the following:

Alternative 1: Status quo. Bering Sea and Aleutian Island Greenland Turbot TAC will continue to be allocated without gear specific split.

Alternative 2: Gear specific fixed gear / trawl gear Bering Sea and Aleutian Island Greenland Turbot TAC split.

Option 1 - Roll over provisions: Any portion of Bering Sea or Aleutian Island Greenland Turbot TAC determined by NMFS to remain unharvested by the trawl or fixed gear sectors during the remainder of the fishery year will become available as soon as practicable to the other sector.

Motion passed 18-2 with 1 abstention.

D-1 (c) BSAI Flatfish Specification Flexibility

The AP recommends initiating analysis of an option to allow Amendment 80 cooperatives and CDQ groups to access yellowfin sole, rock sole, and flathead sole in excess of their respective TACs in exchange for an equal quota amount for any of these three species. This option should ensure that individual species ABCs are not exceeded, and aggregate adjusted TACs do not exceed the 2 million mt

BSAI optimum yield. If potential negative effects are identified, the analysis should suggest options for mitigating these effects. The analysis should include:

Option 1 - Yellowfin sole could be used to fund rock sole/flathead but those species could not be used to fund yellowfin sole (one-way valve).

Option 2 - Limit the amount of rock sole/flathead sole that could be used to fund yellowfin sole.

Transfers between species within the Amendment 80 sector should be able to go back and forth between categories; i.e., a transfer from one species would not preclude transferring back to that species at a later date.

Motion passed 20/1.

D-1 (d) Grenadiers

The AP recommends the Council task the Non-target Species Committee to review the discussion paper to provide recommendations for future action, and report back to the Council at the October meeting.

Motion passed 19-0.

D-1 (e) 5-Year Research Priorities

The AP recommends the Council consider the list of research priorities from the recent IPHC/Council Halibut Workshop as priorities for this 5-year research plan. The AP also recommends that the Council add genetic and crab movement research for Blue King crab to evaluate remaining questions of determining if BKC bycatch is comprised of Pribilof Island BKC, St Matthews BKC, or other stocks.

Motion passed 19-0.

D-1 (f) Programmatic Groundfish SEIS

The AP recommends the Council evaluate the need for a revised PSEIS through a supplemental information report (SIR).

Motion passed 20-0.

D-2 Staff Tasking

The AP recommends the Council take no action on the letter from the Alaska Charter Association if it results in any delay in analysis and approval of the CSP in October.

Motion passed 20-0.

The AP recommends that the Council initiate a discussion paper to remove restrictions on CQE communities buying small blocks of IFQ at least and especially from CQE residents.

Motion passed 19-0.

North Pacific Fishery Management Council

Eric A. Olson, Chairman
Chris Oliver, Executive Director



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Certified: _____

Date: _____

REPORT SCIENTIFIC AND STATISTICAL COMMITTEE NORTH PACIFIC FISHERY MANAGEMENT COUNCIL June 4th – June 6th, 2012

The SSC met from June 4th through June 6th at the Kodiak Inn Harbor Room, Kodiak AK.

Members present were:

Pat Livingston, Chair
NOAA Fisheries—AFSC

Robert Clark, Vice Chair
Alaska Department of Fish and Game

Jennifer Burns
University of Alaska Anchorage

Henry Cheng
Wash. Dept. of Fish and Wildlife

Alison Dauble
Oregon Dept. of Fish and Wildlife

Sherri Dressel
Alaska Department of Fish and Game

Anne Hollowed
NOAA Fisheries—AFSC

George Hunt
University of Washington

Gordon Kruse
University of Alaska Fairbanks

Kathy Kuletz
US Fish and Wildlife Service

Seth Macinko
University of Rhode Island

Franz Mueter
University of Alaska Fairbanks

Jim Murphy
University of Alaska Anchorage

Lew Queirolo
NOAA Fisheries—Alaska Region

Terry Quinn
University of Alaska Fairbanks

Kate Reedy-Maschner
Idaho State University Pocatello

Farron Wallace
NOAA Fisheries—AFSC

Members absent were:

Ray Webster
International Pacific Halibut Commission

B-1(c) Advanced Notice of Proposed Rulemaking – revision to National Standard 1 Guidelines

Grant Thompson (NMFS-AFSC) presented this issue. An Advanced Notice of Proposed Rulemaking (ANPR) was published on May 3, 2012, to request comments on potential revisions to the National Standard 1 Guidelines. Comments are due 90 days after publication. Dr. Thompson effectively summarized previous comments by the SSC on earlier NS1 guidelines, reviewed the extent to which these comments were addressed in the revised NS1 guidelines of January 16, 2009 (74 FR 3178), presented relevant recommendations from a Joint Plan Team working group on Total Catch Accounting (TCA), and highlighted several issues that he thought needed attention. The ANPR is wide-ranging in scope and lists 11 topics that have been identified for possible revisions. In addition, NMFS welcomes any other suggestions that would improve the NS1 Guidelines. Public testimony was provided by Merrick Burden (Marine Conservation Alliance) and Arni Thomson (Alaska Crab Coalition).

Because of the broad scope of this action, the SSC plans to convene a working group made up of a subgroup of SSC and Plan Team members that will review the issues listed below, identify any additional issues for consideration, and provide more detailed comments to the Council for consideration.

The ANPR lists the following topics related to NS 1 that NMFS is seeking comments on:

1. Stocks in a fishery
2. Overfishing and multi-year impacts
3. Annual catch limits and optimum yield
4. Mixed-stock fisheries and optimum yield
5. Scientific uncertainty and management uncertainty
6. Data poor stocks
7. ABC control rules
8. Catch accounting
9. Accountability measures
10. ACL exceptions
11. Rebuilding progress and revising rebuilding plans.

Previous comments provided by the SSC raised a number of issues and concerns that were not resolved in the current guidelines, including the following:

1. *Guidelines should be simplified considerably with respect to OFL, ABC, TAC, ACL, etc.* NMFS responded that its language was as simple as possible. Given that the ACL rule has been implemented according to those provisions in the guidelines, the SSC does not wish to reconsider this issue. (Topic #3)
2. *Does SSC advice on "achieving rebuilding targets" occur once or every year?* (Topic 11)
3. *Avoid requiring stocks to be included in multiple FMPs.* (Topic 1)
4. *Further guidance on state-delegated fisheries should be provided.* (New topic)
5. *The document all but rules out using a decision-theoretic approach or other approaches to deal with risk and uncertainty that are not codified in the guidelines.* The need to revisit the treatment of risk and uncertainty in the current guidelines was also highlighted in public comment (Topic 5).

Dr. Thompson informed the SSC that a Joint Plan Team working group on TCA has discussed several outstanding issues that are specific to catch accounting in the Alaska region, but may benefit from additional guidance in the NS1 revisions (Topic # 8 'Catch accounting' in the ANPR). These outstanding issues revolve around the treatment of 'other' catches (e.g., research catches, catches from experimental fishing permits) in assessment and management, specifically the need to distinguish between simply listing catches, using those catches in the estimation of reference fishing mortalities ($F_{40\%}$, $F_{35\%}$, etc.), using those catches to calculate harvest amounts (maxABC, OFL, etc.) based on the estimated reference Fs, and including those catches in the total catch for comparisons against the TAC. Guidance on specific methods for including 'other' catches in the estimation of reference points and for dealing with incomplete time series of historical catches in doing so may also be needed.

Other issues identified in the staff presentation:

- With regard to Topic #1 ("Stocks in the Fishery"), the guidelines should clarify that the MSFCMA requires fishing to be regulated such that the *entire marine ecosystem* is protected, and that regulation is not limited to the fishery's impacts on stocks that are either "in the fishery" or in the ecosystem component.
- With regard to data-poor stocks (Topic #6), the guidelines should emphasize that some stocks are data-poor because there is no fishery that warrants federal management. Perhaps these stocks should be removed from the FMP rather than guessing at appropriate values for the management quantities that would be required to manage a fishery if one actually existed.

- The guidelines should clarify that FMPs necessarily contain a variety of accountability measures (Topic #9), and avoid giving the impression that the only accountability required is to prevent ACLs from being exceeded or to correct or mitigate overages of the ACL, if they occur.

Several other issues for consideration were identified in SSC discussions:

- The SSC is concerned that economic considerations (e.g., a focus on "maximum economic yield" or profit maximization), may dominate social and ecological considerations in the specification of TACs and OY (topic #3 in the ANPR). While fishery economic performance is of legitimate interest, it may conflict with competing objectives, needs, and purposes provided for under OY. The guidelines should emphasize that all three dimensions (economic, social, and ecological) need to be considered and, in particular, should provide additional guidance on how to account for the social effects of management actions on impacted communities.
- Several SSC members and members of the public noted the need for additional clarification of the concepts of risk and uncertainty and how to account for scientific and management uncertainty (Topic # 5).
- Additional guidance on rebuilding time lines and evaluating rebuilding progress for stocks whose growth may be limited by life history constraints or environmental factors are needed (Topic # 11). The Pribilof Islands blue king crab was cited as one example of this problem.

The working group will review each of the above issues to provide more specific suggestions and may identify additional issues that may help clarify the NS1 guidelines. Draft recommendations will be distributed electronically to the SSC for review and then be provided to the Council for consideration.

C-2 Initial review HAPC-Skate egg concentration sites

Sarah Melton (NPFMC) and David Witherell (NPFMC) provided an overview of an initial review draft EA/RIR/IRFA that describes action alternatives to identify, or identify and protect, up to six HAPC sites of skate egg concentrations in the Bering Sea. Public comment was provided by John Gauvin (Alaska Seafood Cooperative).

The SSC reviewed earlier versions of the initial review draft of this document in February and April 2012 and recommended that the document be returned to staff for additional work. The SSC recognizes the considerable work and resulting improvement in the document since it was last reviewed. **The SSC recommends that the document be released for public review after the following changes to the EA and RIR/IRFA portions of the document have been made.**

In response to our April 2012 comments on the EA, the authors provided clarification on the effects of fishing on the benthic habitat at egg concentration sites, methodology used to estimate the potential number of sites, information on the persistence of egg concentration sites over time, the distinction between information derived from research trawls and standard survey trawls or commercial trawls, and updated the descriptions of gear types and effects on bottom habitat. The SSC requests that the following items be addressed in the EA, prior to release of the document:

- On page 24-25 of the EA, there needs to be clarification on the concentration threshold used to determine the size of the HAPC sites. In particular, clarify the use of the 1,000 eggs/km² versus 10,000 eggs/km² thresholds in determining the size of the site throughout the EA.
- The total number of potential sites calculated and at the bottom of Table 6 (page 21 of the EA) represents a potential overestimate of the total number of sites, due to double counting of sites with multiple species present. A better estimate of the potential total number of sites is the difference in number of potential sites per species and the number of sites containing those species, summed across species and then added to the total number of known sites (6). This results in 13 to 14 potential total sites, not 16 to 19 sites.

- Provide more detailed information to support the statement describing the persistence of egg concentration sites over time.
- The document would also benefit from a careful review to fix numerous typos.

This is the third iteration of this draft RIR/IRFA that the SSC has evaluated. The RIR section reflects a very much improved economic impact analysis. The analysts have, by-in-large, been responsive to earlier SSC comments, suggestions, and concerns as these pertained to the RIR. The SSC would, nonetheless, recommend the analysts address the following concerns, to the extent practicable, before release for public review. In several places, the RIR incorrectly confounds the concepts of “harvest” and “value”. For example, on page 85, paragraph 2, the text reports, “*Testimony further suggested that the impacts on the maximum potential gross foregone harvest ...*” or, in the fourth paragraph, where it is reported that “... *option c) would result in a maximum foregone catch of approximately \$1,599,000 per year.*” [emphasis added]. In the first example, the analytical technique is treating “at-risk” catch amounts which, by definition, implies ‘gross’ foregone harvest (i.e., no offsetting catches made in alternative open areas). In the second example, it is the gross economic value of \$1.6 million that is identified, not the catch-amount. Several such misapplications have been identified in our review, and will be forwarded to the analysts for their consideration, along with some additional editorial recommendations.

In section 3.7.1.4 of the RIR, there needs to be an explanation as to why the effect on the fleet of moving to different areas was not presented in the analysis (i.e., due to the small amount of effort displaced).

Our review of the RIR also raised a question at section 4.5 Effects on Management, Monitoring, and Enforcement. The evaluation reflects the reported difficulty the USCG and OLE may have in verifying compliance with “gear-type” mandates and limitations within the subject skate egg HAPC areas. The specific concern cited pertains to distinguishing bottom-trawl gear from pelagic-trawl gear, given that the majority of monitoring and enforcement is anticipated to be accomplished through aerial over-flights of individual fishing operations. The assertion is made that, except in the fortuitous case of a USCG over-flight of a trawler while the terminal gear is on the stern ramp, it would be impossible to differentiate between, much less enforce a ban on only one of the two, trawl gear configurations. While this certainly appears to be factual on its face, it largely ignores the critical fact that 100% observer coverage aboard all trawlers active in the groundfish fisheries in these areas would represent a significant disincentive for use of illegal trawl gear. While referenced in passing in the final paragraph on page 89, the deterrent effect of having a fishery observer physically present on the deck at haul-back, seems to merit more discussion under this subject heading. The SSC recognizes fishery observers are not enforcement agents and should not be placed in that role. Nonetheless, it seems reasonable that an observer’s mere presence during the setting and retrieving of the trawl gear, given the very obvious physical differences between bottom and pelagic configurations, could be a compelling and effective deterrent to potential violators. A more considered examination of the ‘risk’ of detection incurred by a would-be violator of a trawl-type restriction might alter the relative advantage of alternatives that contemplate banning one, as opposed to both, trawl configurations in the proposed HAPC areas.

Finally, for the RIR, the Net Benefit to the Nation summary asserts that “... *the overall net benefit to the Nation would not be expected to change to an identifiable degree ...*”. This conclusion appears to be excessively pessimistic. It seems reasonable to conclude, given the EFH Habitat Area of Particular Concern status motivating this Council action, that each of the action alternatives and options would increase the net benefit to the Nation, when contrasted to the Status Quo.

With these observations, and the minor editorial recommendations referenced earlier, the SSC finds the RIR to be a complete and well reasoned analysis of the range of economic and operational outcomes that may accompany adoption of each of the competing HAPC Skate Egg action alternatives.

The IRFA, however, is deficient. Presently, the draft IRFA contains substantive errors, conflicting assertions, and incomplete treatment of required RFA elements. While recognizing that a fully compliant IRFA necessarily relies upon a declaration by the Council of a final “preferred alternative” (PA), the shortcomings of this draft extend beyond the PA considerations. The SSC encourages the analysts to reexamine the IRFA, especially sections 5.6 and 5.9. Inconsistencies are apparent in the treatment and interpretation of the entity size criteria, leading to contradictory and erroneous assertions concerning the number of directly regulated small entities to which the action may apply, as well as the nature and distribution of any attributable adverse economic effects. We believe the draft IRFA must be revised and corrected before the package is released for public review.

C-3(a) Crab Plan Team Report, Set Catch Specifications for 4 stocks

At this meeting, the SSC is providing the OFL/ABC recommendations for four crab stocks (Table 1). We also provide modeling advice for Tanner crab and St. Matthew Island blue king crab and recommendations on a variety of other issues. Diana Stram (NPFMC) and Bob Foy (NMFS-Kodiak) presented Crab Plan Team (CPT) recommendations for these four stocks, model reviews, and CPT discussions on a variety of other issues. Public testimony was provided by Linda Kozak (Golden King Crab Harvesters) and John Gauvin (Alaska Seafood Cooperative).

EBS Tanner Crab

Lou Rugolo (NMFS-AFSC) and Jack Turnock (NMFS-AFSC) presented an updated version of the Tanner crab stock assessment model. This model incorporates many of the recommendations made during the CPT meeting in May 2011, the SSC June and October 2011 meetings, the January 2012 modeling workshop and finally the CPT meeting in May 2012. During this time period, the model, data inputs, and model software have been updated numerous times. The SSC would like to express gratitude to the CPT, workshop participants and the assessment authors who have been responsive to requests for changes in model structure and update of data inputs.

The current base model incorporates: 1) two survey selectivity time periods, 2) an additional natural mortality term during the period between 1980 and 1984, 3) rescaled multinomial N values, 4) a revised method for estimating unobserved Tanner crab bycatch in the snow crab and BBRKC fisheries, and 5) a reduction in the fishing mortality penalty from 10 to 1 on the total likelihood. The CPT requested that the authors complete a number of analytical tasks to address a list of issues that should be completed prior to the September CPT meeting, and **the SSC agrees.**

Although a number of issues were identified in the current assessment, the CPT found the model adequately fitted the data sources and was sufficient to describe population dynamics of Tanner crab. The CPT agreed that adequate information was available on maturity and selectivity for the stock to be placed in Tier 3. **The SSC agrees with the CPT and recommends that the model be accepted to manage Tanner crab as a Tier 3 stock.**

Having accepted the Tanner crab model, the CPT also recommended that this Tanner crab model be used to make projections for the rebuilding analysis. Model projections estimate the yield- (catch)-per-recruit, and analysts must identify the level of recruitment (mean recruitment over a specified time-period) that scales the estimate to a measure of absolute abundance. The CPT recommended that the assessment authors bring forward $B_{MSY_{proxy}}$ estimates in September 2012 that are derived by averaging recruitment for a broad range of alternative $B_{35\%}$ definitions. The authors are also allowed to recommend any other subset of mean model year recruitments, so long as they provide justification based on agreed-upon CPT protocols. **The SSC agrees with these CPT recommendations and recommends that the authors bring forward several plausible models using various recruitment time series including a scenario that includes all years with reasonably estimated recruitment.** In addition, the authors should consider a rebuilding alternative that mimics the state harvest policy in the east and west.

Pribilof Islands Blue King Crab

In response to an SSC request, information was presented on the distribution of blue king crabs in the annual trawl survey and PSC in commercial fisheries, size/sex composition of the catch, and actual numbers of blue king crabs observed as PSC compared to extrapolated estimates of total blue king crab PSC. Unfortunately, the new information did not clarify the Pribilof Islands blue king crab stock boundary issue. The problem is that the current blue king crab distribution is not confined to the vicinity of the Pribilof Islands. Instead, blue king crabs are more broadly distributed away from the Pribilof Islands, including into Bristol Bay. Blue king crabs off St. Matthew Island are managed as a separate stock, and blue king crabs also occur off Nunivak Island and in Port Heiden. Thus, the stock assignments of crabs from Bristol Bay are highly uncertain. The CPT considered this issue in May 2012, and concluded that the current boundaries do not adequately describe the Pribilof Islands blue king crab stock, but they were unable to reach a definitive recommendation about specific changes to the boundary. Given these uncertainties, the SSC struggled with this issue, as did the CPT. **As the NMFS trawl survey consistently finds blue king crabs in stations 20 nm east of the Pribilof District, the SSC recommends, as an interim measure, moving the effective stock boundary 20 nm to the east for management purposes.** The following research would help inform this issue: (1) tagging studies to investigate potential movement of blue king crabs from the Pribilof Islands to Bristol Bay and vice versa, (2) collection of crab size measurements of blue king crabs taken as PSC, to understand whether these crabs represent juvenile settlement after larval drift or if instead they represent adult movements, and (3) insights about larval advection by ocean currents, gained from a Regional Ocean Modeling System (ROMS).

St. Matthew Island Blue King Crab

The St. Matthew Island blue king crab fishery had been managed under Tier 4 using a four-stage catch-survey analysis (CSA). However, some issues with the model emerged in 2010 and 2011, raised by the SSC, CPT, and during a crab modeling workshop in February 2011. While the model was being revised in response to these comments since 2010, the ABC and OFL for 2011 were instead calculated based on NMFS trawl survey estimates of mature male biomass and using a 10% buffer to account for uncertainty due to a mismatch between survey station distribution and the distribution of the crab stock. The assessment author has been developing a simpler three-stage CSA, which has undergone review by the CPT and SSC in the past year. The latest version was reviewed by the CPT at their May 2012 meeting and by the SSC at this Council meeting.

The CPT recommended using the three-stage CSA for the fall 2012 fishery and the SSC concurs with this recommendation. The assessment author has clearly described the model structure, data, parameters, and fitting procedure, including provision of the AD Model Builder code. The model fits the survey data reasonably well and residual fits to the three stage proportions are generally well behaved. The CPT has provided some very helpful recommendations to the assessment author, and the SSC supports these recommendations. In addition, the SSC offers the following comments and recommendations:

- Clarify that “recruits” corresponding to stage 1 are recruits to the model, not recruits to the fishery (page 2).
- In the section on model population dynamics, it is stated that the impact of groundfish fisheries on the stock are small. However, the survey-based methods document (Table 4) indicates that 300,000 lbs of blue king crab were caught in fixed gear in 2007/08, resulting in an estimated PSC mortality of 150,000 lbs. Please address this and explain whether the proposed approach adequately addresses such situations.
- On the bottom of page 3, please provide a little more explanation about the abundance index proportionality constants (Q_s) and trawl or pot survey abundance indices (A_s). Are the Q_s calculated as the abundance index for any one year divided by the largest abundance index in the

time series? Also, please explain the units for the As. For the trawl survey, are these total area-swept abundances or mean station densities? For the pot survey, do the As represent mean catch per pot?

- On the top of page 4, the stage mean weights are subscripted by year, suggesting that they are estimated annually. However, Table 5 indicates that the means for stage 1 and 2 are fixed and only the stage-3 mean weights are estimated annually. True stage-1 and -2 mean weights would vary by year depending on variability in year-class size and growth rates, so it should be mentioned that fixing these to constants is a simplifying assumption. Are data insufficient to reliably estimate these annually?
- The SSC appreciates the author's attempts to explore various weighting scenarios. As pots are designed to catch crab, one might expect to put a higher weight on the pot survey compared to the trawl survey. However, the trawl surveys are conducted annually and cover a wider area. Some additional explanation for the relative weights applied to pot and trawl surveys would be helpful.
- In eq. (3), stage 3 selectivity is set to unity and the selectivities of the other two stages are estimated in the model. However, the model estimates the trawl selectivity of stage 2 crab to be 1.24 (Table 6). It does not seem plausible that smaller crab (stage 2) would have a higher selectivity than larger crab (stage 3). The Crab Plan Team provided advice on this issue, which the SSC supports.
- The SSC appreciates the four alternative model scenarios that were considered. It would be more helpful if the alternative model fits were plotted with time series of survey estimates, as was done for the preferred model in Fig. 1. For viable alternatives, it would also be useful to plot residuals and other diagnostics, or using retrospective analysis to help confirm the model choice. The SSC is inclined to agree that it is best to estimate mortality for 1998/99, but remains interested in seeing a comparison of fits, as well as the diagnostics mentioned in the text.
- The SSC requests the assessment author work toward future development of both Tier 3 and 4 reference points for this stock, including a description of the quality of data used for each and the author's recommendation for choice of tier level.
- The SSC suggests estimating the natural mortalities corresponding to each size class. This can increase the understanding of the survival of this species directly and avoid confounding the effects of movement and growth on the natural mortality estimate. With the three known size classes, the mathematical symbols are M_1 , M_2 , and M_3 and they are independent from time t .
- The SSC suggests that the input data be corrected or adjusted for any bias due to the differences arising from data, index, or information collected at different time periods within a year.
- The authors might consider using the "universally optimal" concept from statistical experimental design to determine the weighting of each component of the likelihood. Universally optimal means the estimated variance-covariance matrix of the model is close to a completely symmetric matrix.
- The author might consider plotting the annual estimate of population size that is over the largest size class stated in the model.

Norton Sound Red King Crab

The CPT discussed a request from ADF&G staff to move the timing for specifications for the NSRKC stock to earlier in the year to allow additional time to set the GHl prior to the start of the CDQ portion of the fishery in late May. The author proposed three options:

1. Move the May CPT meeting to March and do specifications for all four stocks and model evaluations prior to the April Council meeting;
2. Have a one day CPT meeting (or possible teleconference) in March to discuss NSRKC only and make recommendations;
3. Set specifications for NSRKC in September, understanding that this would entail dropping data from the assessment, due to the time lag in acquiring the fishery-data.

The main concern is that CDQ fisheries could start in May, before TAC setting had been completed. SSC discussed the different options. The SSC suggested that the Council and ADF&G could also consider an option where preliminary TACs are specified for the upcoming year, which would be amended after the June Council meeting. The minutes of the CPT meeting include a discussion of the pros and cons of the three options. The SSC has deferred a recommendation on moving the specification timing until after the CPT provides their preferred option for next year's ABC/OFL setting.

The 2012 NSRKC assessment addressed the SSC concerns regarding retrospective patterns. The author introduced twelve models for consideration by the CPT. The author's preferred model introduces a high natural mortality on the largest size bin ($M=0.648$), increases the weight on the commercial CPUE, and reduces the maximum effective sample sizes. The SSC has examined the relative fits of the 12 models, and agrees with the CPT that there are several troublesome issues with the current model including:

- A lack of bycatch data. The CPT requests that some data on bycatch be collected in conjunction with the recently funded NPRB project.
- Length composition data have been downweighted, but there still is apparent conflict within the model. This is a possible indication of model mis-specification.
- A need for better biological justification for the higher natural mortality on animals in the largest length bin (none of the models address dome vs. asymptotic M).
- The recommended model does not fit early data.

The SSC requests that the author carefully consider these issues when preparing for the CPT modeling workshop that will be held in January 2013. In addition, the SSC notes that the current model assumes that selectivity of the trawl survey follows a sigmoid function and Q was estimated 1.0 for length classes 3 through 5. The SSC asks the author to review this assumption given the results of recent studies of trawl survey Q for Bristol Bay red king crab, snow crab and Tanner crab.

The SSC accepted the CPT recommendation that Model 12 be used for OFL and ABC specification. The SSC supports the recommendation that the NSRKC assessment model be reviewed at the January 2013 modeling workshop, particularly in light of requests to set specifications for this stock out of the current sequence in the future. The SSC observed that the current model produces a slightly more conservative estimate of MMB than previous models.

Based on this review, the SSC supports the CPT recommendations that the 2012/13 OFL be set at 0.24 kt and, given the uncertainty with this model noted above, a 10% buffer for the ABC which results in a recommendation of 0.22 kt. The stock is above the MSST and thus the stock is not overfished. The total catch in 2011/2012 did not exceed the OFL and thus overfishing has not occurred.

Aleutian Islands Golden King Crab

The directed fishery on this stock has been prosecuted annually since the 1981-1982 season. There are no biomass estimates, accepted stock assessment model, or comprehensive annual surveys available for this stock. Therefore, the Aleutian Islands golden king crab fishery is managed as a Tier 5 stock.

The OFL calculation incorporates the average ratio of PSC mortality from groundfish fisheries. In previous assessments this has been based on data collected over the 1985/86 through 2008/09 seasons. The authors recommended an alternative (Alt.2) for calculating the PSC mortality rate based on four years of data collected during the 1985/86 through 1995/96 fishing seasons. The CPT agreed with the author's recommendation. The rationale is that PSC mortality during this time frame is a better reflection of PSC mortality in the current fishery. The SSC concurs with the author's and CPT's recommendations.

Based on this approach, **the SSC agrees with the CPT recommendation that this stock continue to be managed using Tier 5 allowing a total catch OFL of 5.69 kt and ABC of 5.12 kt for 2012/2013. The ABC is based on the ABC control rule which specifies a 10% buffer between the OFL and ABC.**

The CPT received a comprehensive review of the sources of catch, catch-rate, and length-frequency data used in the Aleutian Islands golden king crab model. Pot sample data are collected by observers deployed on fishing vessels and retained catch is recorded on fish tickets. Analysts found that there was general agreement between the CPUE estimated from the pot sample data and the CPUE estimated from the fish ticket data. It is the intent of the analysts that these data be incorporated into the AIGKC model and treatments of these data are important to minimize any potential bias in the index.

Much of the SSC discussion was focused on treatment of the data and modeling aspects of the CPUE data. The SSC has the following recommendations for the analysts:

- Use bootstrapping or 'canned' software for the delta-lognormal or similar distributions (Zeileis, A., C. Kleiber and S. Jackman 2008. "Regression Models for Count Data in R." *Journal of Statistical Software*, **27**(8). URL <http://www.jstatsoft.org/v27/i08/>.) to estimate the statistical inference of annual CPUE or index.
- Investigate interactions among factors in the CPUE standardization (seasonally, different vessels, etc.).
- Examine potential post-rationalization correlation between gear and soak time
- Examine changes in seasonality and fishery distribution pre- and post-rationalization
- Provide plots of length frequency data and spatial location of harvest over time to consider changes in harvesting effort and possible issues arising from distributional changes.

Pribilof Islands Golden King Crab

The Pribilof Islands golden king crab fishery has supported a small and sporadic fishery that is concentrated in the Pribilof Canyon region. There was no fishing effort between 2006 and 2009 and only one or two vessels fished in 2010 and 2011 (and in 2012 to date). There is no state harvest strategy in regulation for this fishery and the GHL has been established at 0.15 million pounds (68 t) since 2000. This stock has been managed using Tier 5 with a retained catch OFL for 2009 and 2010 based on average catches during the 1993 through 1998 time period. This short period was chosen because it encompasses the longest continuous time period during which vessels participated in the fishery and during which retained catch data are available and not constrained by a GHL. In last year's assessment, the author recommended, and the SSC accepted, a total catch OFL that is based on the average of the retained catches in 1993 through 1998, an estimate of bycatch rates in the directed fishery during 2001 through 2010, and average bycatch mortalities in the non-target crab fisheries and PSC in the groundfish fishery during 1994 through 1998 and 1992/93 through 1998/99, respectively.

Last year, the CPT and the SSC encouraged the author to explore the use of the eastern Bering Sea slope survey for purposes of moving the stock to Tier 4. The author presented area-swept estimates of biomass for the area of the fishery (Pribilof Canyon) and for the whole EBS slope survey region (200-1200 m depth), as well as the size composition of male and female crab from the 2004, 2008, and 2010 surveys. However, no Tier 4 calculations were presented.

Following the advice of the assessment author and CPT, the SSC recommends a total catch OFL of 0.09 kt (91 t) and ABC (using the 10% buffer for tier-5 stocks) of 0.08 kt (82 t) for 2012/2013, based on Alternative 1 in the assessment, which uses bycatch data for the directed fishery through 2010 only.

For the next assessment cycle, the SSC requests that the slope survey data be used to bring forward Tier 4 calculations because biomass estimates from the slope survey appear reasonable, cover the known

depth range of golden king crab, and size composition data are available to calculate biomass of legal-sized males.

The SSC also notes that the assessment uses calendar year for all calculations except for PSC in the groundfish fisheries, which are estimated based on "crab fishing years". For consistency, the SSC suggests that calendar year be used throughout.

Adak Red King Crab

The SSC reviewed the 2012 SAFE chapter for Adak red king crab (RKC). There is no assessment model for this stock. The fishery has had limited openings since 1995/96 and was closed for the 2011/12 season. **The CPT recommended and the SSC agrees that this stock should be managed as a Tier 5 stock.** The SSC agrees that the OFL should be estimated as average total catch, using the same base period as recommended last year (1995/96 through 2007/08). Based on this designation, the **SSC agrees with the CPT recommendation that the OFL for 2012/13 be set at 0.05 kt (56 t).**

The minimal data available suggest that the Adak RKC stock continues to be at a very low stock size. Evidence to support this conclusion includes: (1) the retained catch declined to low levels in the mid 1970s and has remained at a low level, (2) the last ADF&G Industry Survey was in 2002 and it provided no evidence of populations of sufficient size to support a directed fishery, (3) a pot survey was conducted in 2006 and it provided no evidence of recruitment, (4) the trawl survey of Petrel Bank in 2009 found a small aging population with no expected recruitment, and (5) ADF&G approved a test fishery in 2009 and this yielded a single mature male crab.

The SSC agrees with the CPT recommendation that the directed fishery for Adak RKC should remain closed and that the ABC should be based on an amount sufficient to address bycatch and PSC in other fisheries. The maximum permissible ABC is 48.99 t, based on the 10% Tier-5 buffer. The CPT recommended an ABC of 33.57 t based on the maximum level of bycatch observed during the reference period 1995/96 through 2007/08. However, the SSC continues to disagree with the CPT's rationale for addressing bycatch needs in other crab and PSC in groundfish fisheries. In 2011, the SSC agreed that the Council should include an allowance for incidental capture of Adak RKC in non-directed fisheries. Review of the time series of bycatch and PSC shows an allowance based on the mean bycatch for the period 1995/96 through 2007/08 should be sufficient.

This year, the SSC also considered the amount of Adak RKC needed to prosecute a test fishery. The CPT reported that industry has expressed an interest in conducting a test fishery around the Adak area. ADF&G estimated that 20 t would be needed to prosecute this test fishery. The SSC continues to be concerned about the paucity of data for Adak RKC and places a high priority on the collection of data for this stock. **Therefore, the SSC recommends an ABC of 0.03 kt (34 t) for 2012/13 (the CPT's recommendation). This amount should be sufficient to allow for bycatch and PSC in non-directed fisheries and the proposed test fishery catch.**

Crab PSC in the BSAI Groundfish Fisheries

The CPT considered a Council motion C-2(c) titled "Crab bycatch in the BSAI groundfish fisheries" from the June 2010 Council meeting. The Crab Plan Team recommended retaining Alternative 3 only, because it provides for accountability of crab PSC in the groundfish fishery, and varies PSC limits with crab abundance, thus scaling this conservation measure with the conservation need. The CPT provided a number of constructive comments and the SSC supports their advice on this topic.

Table 1. SSC OFL and ABC recommendations for four crab stocks on June 4th, 2012. Bold indicates where SSC recommendations differ from Crab Plan Team recommendations. (Note diagonal fill indicated parameters not applicable for that tier level while shaded sections are to be filled out for the final SAFE in September 2012)

Chapter	Stock	Tier	Status (a,b,c)	F _{OFL}	B _{MSY} or B _{MSYproxy} (kt)	or Years ¹ (biomass catch)	2012 ²		/	Mortality (M)	2012/13 OFL (kt)	2012/13 ABC (kt)
							or MMB (kt)	MMB MMB _{MSY}				
1	EBS snow crab	3										
2	BB red king crab	3										
3	EBS Tanner crab	4										
4	Pribilof Islands red king crab	4										
5	Pribilof Islands blue king crab	4										
6	St. Matthew Island blue king crab	4										
7	Norton Sound red king crab	4	a	0.18	1.59	1980-current [model estimate]	1.93	1.2	1.0	0.18 0.68 (>123 mm)	0.24	0.22
8	AI golden king crab	5				See intro chapter					5.69	5.12
9	Pribilof Island golden king crab	5				See intro chapter					0.09	0.08
10	Adak red king crab	5				1995/96–2007/08					0.05	0.03

¹ For Tiers 3 and 4 where B_{MSY} or B_{MSYproxy} is estimable, the years refer to the time period over which the estimate is made. For Tier 5 stocks it is the years upon which the catch average for OFL is obtained.

² MMB as projected for 2/15/2013 at time of mating.

³ Model mature biomass on 7/1/2012

C-3(b) Final action Pribilof Is. Blue King Crab rebuilding

The SSC received a presentation of the EA from Diana Stram (NPFMC) and Jennifer Mondragon (NMFS-AKR), and the RIR/IRFA from Scott Miller (NMFS-AKR). Heather McCarty (Central Bering Sea Fisherman's Association) and Arni Thomson (Alaska Crab Coalition) provided comments relevant to this agenda item under the B-1(c) National Standard 1 ANPR agenda item.

The SSC provided comments on the earlier drafts of the rebuilding plan for Pribilof Islands blue king crab stock and was asked at this meeting to provide further comments regarding analytical methods to evaluate the efficacy of the closure described in the current Primary Preferred Alternative (PPA).

In order to evaluate which fisheries have contributed to the PIBKC PSC in the PPA, the analysts used several databases, including: the NMFS Catch Accounting System for PSC estimates of PIBKC (area 513 only), the observer program database for actual observed (only) PSC of PIBKC, and fish tickets for documented recordings of PIBKC PSC. This information was used to estimate PIBKC PSC and perform retrospective spatial extrapolations of the directed catch. Re-projection of directed catch of the target fisheries was spatially limited to 50 nm outside the PPA area closure. The spatial redistribution of catch within the closure area was used to illustrate where the fishery may redistribute when the closure area goes in effect. **Although the re-projection analysis is heavily dependent upon a number of strong assumptions, the SSC recognizes that this approach is reasonable, given available data and information.** There remain two areas that warrant further clarification.

First, the re-projection analysis begins with the assumption that the fleet will be able to fully recover the catch and associated revenue-at-risk in areas outside of the proposed blue king crab habitat conservation zones. However, in some parts of the document, this assumption is described as a "result" or a "conclusion" of the analysis (e.g., page 61 "This analysis concludes that it is likely that some or all of the catch can be made up outside of the smallest proposed closure areas"). This is a circular argument. Because the re-projection analysis begins with the assumption that the catch can be recovered elsewhere, this cannot subsequently be described as a conclusion of the analysis. This should be clarified throughout the document. In general, assumptions associated with the re-projection method need to be better described.

Second, the SSC reiterates its concern about the use of gross revenue at risk as a proxy for economic impacts. If the aforementioned assumption that the fleet will be able to recover the catch elsewhere is valid, then the gross revenue impacts are likely to be negligible. The meaningful economic impacts are more likely to be manifested as an increase in costs. As the document correctly notes, since these cost data are unavailable, it is not possible to conduct a useful analysis of the true economic impacts of the proposed action. Also, there needs to be, at least, a qualitative evaluation of the possible outcomes of vessels not re-supplying at the Pribilof Islands, following adoption of the action alternative.

To be consistent with adopted NMFS terminology, the capture of blue king crab by groundfish fishing operations should be described throughout the document as Prohibited Species Catch (PSC), not bycatch. These forms of removal are not equivalent within the BSAI (and GOA) Groundfish FMP that governs this action. Also, the round weight equivalent value of groundfish is mischaracterized in the text. While the numerical values are unaffected, their interpretation is altered.

C-5(b) Initial review of FLL vessel replacement (MLOA adjustment)

The SSC received a presentation of the subject RIR/IRFA from Diana Evans (NPFMC). Public testimony was offered by Kenny Down, Freezer Longline Coalition.

The SSC commented on an initial review draft at the December 2011 meeting and recommended that the document not be released for public review. The SSC appreciates the efforts of staff to address the

comments provided and finds the document is much improved. There are still deficiencies in the document that need to be addressed before release to the public.

While in some respects, the document is much clearer with regard to the primary source of concern, which is MLOA restrictions and not vessel replacement, this improvement is confounded by numerous references to the status quo as an “impediment” to vessel replacement. This erroneous assertion appears multiple times in the document (e.g., pages vii, 24-25, 39-40). Vessels can be replaced under the status quo, and the SSC received public testimony that at least two new vessels are currently under construction in this fleet. The document should clarify that, although relaxing MLOA constraints under Alternatives 2 and 3 may accelerate the timing of vessel replacement, the status quo does not impede vessel replacement.

In reference to National Standard 4 (page 39), the document asserts that the proposed alternatives “are intended to promote conservation of the groundfish resources in the BSAI and GOA.” This statement is not currently supported by the analysis.

While the document acknowledges the potential for fleet consolidation, the document would benefit from more discussion and analysis of the likely resulting impacts from consolidation, such as crew opportunities and effects on coastal communities, and the potential implications of increased harvesting capacity. Depending upon the level of consolidation expected from the alternatives, some discussion of the “excessive share” clause in NS 4 may be warranted. On page 40, during the discussion of National Standard 8, the document asserts that this action is “not expected” to have an adverse effect on coastal communities. There is little evidence provided in support of this assertion and, indeed, it appears that if the fleet is consolidated, it is possible that some communities may be affected.

Under the discussion of National Standard 9, the document asserts that replacement vessels could reduce bycatch and PSC. While this may be the case, the document would benefit from a brief discussion that supports this assertion.

On page 26, the document mentions anecdotal evidence that there is pressure to improve crew quarters. This is not relevant to the action at hand and should be removed from the document.

The claim (page 40) that “[t]he impacts on participants in the freezer longline groundfish fisheries in the BSAI, and participants in other fisheries, have been comprehensively evaluated” is unsupported.

The data for Table 3 are missing. Figure 1 is missing.

The first sentence in Section 3.3 (page 40) refers to the GOA when presumably the BSAI is intended.

Tables 10 and 13 indicate that sablefish harvests by the FLL fleet are noticeably declining, but no explanation is given. These sablefish catch estimates should be checked for consistency with those reported in the SAFE. Are the declines due to TAC reductions in the IFQ fishery or is there another explanation?

The SSC recommends release of the draft document for public review after addressing the principal concerns identified by the SSC and resolving editorial problems.

D-1(e) Review and approve 5-year research priorities

During the June 2012 SSC meeting, it became clear that a more orderly process of submitting and prioritizing proposals for research priorities is needed. The SSC received the Council’s list of research priorities from June 2011 and research priority lists from three Plan Teams, a halibut workshop report, a stakeholder-based research plan for the Aleutians, and staff summaries of EFH and protected species research. The lists were in different formats and some were quite lengthy. Thus, the SSC did not have

time to fully consider all the lists and requested changes. In particular, we did not have sufficient time to review the research in the halibut workshop report and incorporate that into our priorities. We recommend that the BSAI/GOA Plan Teams consider the research recommended in that report and, as appropriate, incorporate those of merit into their research priorities list this fall. **The SSC provides its recommended list of research priorities to the Council in Appendix A**, which follows at the end of this June SSC report and will provide Council staff with a track changes and commented version of the list. **In addition, the SSC proposes the following be considered for adoption by the Council as policy for the submission of Research Priorities to the SSC.**

The SSC will consider research priorities for inclusion in the annual NPFMC list of Research Priorities from the Plan Teams and members of the SSC. The SSC prefers to have Plan Teams be the initial filter for research priorities that come to the SSC. Sometimes EFH, protected species, and other issues relevant to a particular FMP may not be fully considered by each Plan Team, but the SSC recommends that Plan Teams make a more concerted effort to do so. Research priority lists should be provided by the Plan Teams in their Plan Team report, ideally to be received by the SSC no later than two weeks prior to the Council meeting at which the Plan Team Report is presented. The proposed research priorities should be entered in “Track Changes” in the Council’s list of Research Priorities, as “published” in the minutes of the previous year’s June Council meeting. The SSC will update a working copy of the Research Priorities list at each meeting at which it receives a list of priorities from a Plan Team, and will provide the Council with the full revised list at the June NPFMC meeting.

The SSC suggests that the Council consider adopting a process of evaluating and organizing the list of proposed Research Priorities using an Excel file or relational database type of system, with research priorities submitted on an Excel-based form to collect information about the proposed priority. When such a system is operational, the proposed research would include information on the question or data need to be resolved, whether the priority is an immediate concern or an ongoing need, relative rank (high, medium, low) among all priorities submitted by that Plan Team, impact on decision making, and species or fishery affected. Separate worksheets or database tables could be established for each Plan Team, the SSC, and the Council.

D-1(g) Pacific cod assessment models

Grant Thompson (NMFS-AFSC, and Pacific cod stock assessment author) presented Plan Team recommendations for models to consider in the 2012 preliminary Pacific cod assessment. These recommendations were based on proposals by the senior assessment author, the Plan Teams, the SSC, and the public. Following the process established in recent years, all proposals were evaluated and suggestions were allocated to a set of requested models for the 2012 preliminary assessment.

Eastern Bering Sea. Four models were recommended by the joint Plan Teams for Eastern Bering Sea, as well as one additional model recommended by the senior author:

- Model 1: Last year's final model (model 3b)
- Model 2: Last year's final model with re-tuned catchability
- Model 3: Last year's final model with new fishery selectivity in 2008 or 2010
- Model 4: Last year's final model without age data
- In addition, the senior author recommends a model similar to one brought forward in last year's preliminary assessment that addresses many of the suggestions received from the Plan Teams, SSC, CIE reviewers, and the public.

The SSC agrees with the selection of last year's final model as the baseline and with the proposed suite of alternative models. However, we note that there are limited data to assess any effects resulting from the creation of longline cooperatives in 2010 on fishery selectivity (Model 3). **Hence, the SSC recommends evaluation of a change in fishery selectivity in 2008 (in response to Amendment 80), but no change**

in 2010. In addition, we note that stock assessment authors are free to develop and bring forward an alternative model or models in both the preliminary and final assessment. However, given the Plan Team's (and SSC's) reluctance in previous years to consider a new author-recommended model in the fall that incorporates a large number of potentially influential changes in a single model (for example changes in growth, selectivities, and catchability), the SSC encourages the authors to evaluate changes in one or a few structural elements at a time.

Aleutian Islands. The SSC agrees with the Plan Team recommendation that the author bring forward a preliminary model for the Aleutian Islands *if there is enough time*. The author noted the lack of age data for the Aleutians Pacific cod stock, and the SSC agrees that length data should be used for all years (including for any year with age data). Authors should consider age composition sample size needs for the assessment and request aging of current sample collections for next year's assessment.

Gulf of Alaska. As for the EBS, the SSC agrees with the choice of last year's final model (formerly model 3, new model 1) as the baseline model for the Gulf of Alaska and a second model (model 2) that re-tunes catchability to match the empirical estimates from Nichol et al. (2007).

Catchability of Pacific cod in the survey remains one of the major unresolved issues. The SSC looks forward to ongoing research that will use acoustic technology (DIDSON) and gear comparisons to assess the catchability of cod in the GOA and EBS trawl survey gear. **We encourage the authors to incorporate results from these studies in this year's assessment to the extent practicable. This would involve tuning Model 2 to new estimates of catchability should they become available in time.**

The SSC also noted that the process of vetting models through a workshop and the Plan Team seems to be working well and should be used as long as model proposals are received from the public.

D-1(h) Receive report of the Recruitment Workshop

Grant Thompson (NMFS-AFSC) presented a Phase 1 report about a workshop dealing with issues related to spawner-recruit relationships (SRRs) held in Seattle and via Webex in April 2012. Holding this workshop was an SSC recommendation that resulted from an SSC workshop on recruitment issues at its February 2012 meeting. Attendees included members from the groundfish and crab Plan Teams, SSC members, stock assessment scientists, and members of the public. A working group was formed to report on the workshop. A final report is planned for review by the groundfish Plan Teams in September 2012 and by the SSC in October 2012. The workshop was held in April in order to provide guidance to the crab Plan Team at its May meeting.

The Phase 1 report covers three main topics: (A) how to identify regime shifts, (B) how to establish objective and consistent criteria for excluding individual years from a time series of recruitment estimates, and (C) how to forecast recruitment with environmental forcing. Current practice for groundfish is to use recruitment estimates from 1977 and later. Current practice for crab is to establish time periods for recruitment estimates with consideration of regime shifts, as identified through examination of changes in life history characteristics of the species and ecosystem characteristics.

The Phase 1 report should be viewed as preliminary. For topic A, the report identifies six alternatives for determining regime shifts, several of which involve breakpoint analysis. The recommended method is to fix the productivity parameter in the SRR and allow the scale parameter to differ between regimes. The workgroup and the SSC noted that for most alternatives a decision theory approach could also be used.

For topic B, the report identifies five alternatives for establishing criteria to exclude specific recruitment year classes, several of which involved excluding the last X years or excluding years with high absolute

or relative coefficients of variation. The report recommends a default of excluding the three most recent year-class estimates.

For topic C, the report identifies two alternatives that address whether or not to use environmental forcing in forecasting recruitment. The report recommends that we recognize that current knowledge of environmental forcing is insufficient to use when forecasting recruitment.

At its May 2012 meeting, the Crab Plan Team considered the results from the Phase 1 report. With regard to topic A, the team will develop software for breakpoint analysis, so that methodology will be standardized and attempts will be made to identify environmental covariates. With regard to topic B, the effect of tier status and fishing history are two factors that will be considered when determining what years to exclude. As a default, the full time series will be used after excluding the last three years, unless there is compelling evidence for a change in productivity. With regard to topic C, the team will follow the report's preliminary recommendation not to incorporate environmental forcing when forecasting recruitment.

The SSC views the April workshop as a great success and thanks Dr. Thompson for his clear presentation. The SSC agrees that the recommendations made in the Phase 1 report should be viewed as preliminary until the report is finalized and it receives review by both the Crab and Groundfish Plan Teams. The SSC notes that environmental forcing need not express itself through regime shifts and urges researchers to also consider environmental events and relationships. The SSC requests thorough documentation of the breakpoint analysis and software, including assumptions and statistical methodology or modeling. The SSC would also like to see some discussion of how workshop recommendations affect determination of virgin (or unfished) biomass. The SSC also suggests that life history, length frequency distribution, and ecosystem considerations could be useful in refining recommendations about analyzing SRRs. The SSC suggested that the Plan Teams consider life history when selecting the years to exclude from the time series. The SSC anticipates that a deliberative process will be needed to finalize recommendations and so does not expect all recommendations to be implemented until 2013. The SSC looks forward to the final workshop report.

Appendix A.

SSC's Five-Year Research Priorities: 2012 through 2016 (as proposed in June 2012)

The Scientific and Statistical Committee (SSC) has identified priorities for research in the next 1 to 5 years as those activities that are the most important for the conservation and management of fisheries in the Gulf of Alaska, Aleutian Islands, eastern Bering Sea, and the Arctic. This listing of priorities has two purposes: 1) to meet the requirements of the revised Magnuson-Stevens Act for the Councils to identify research that is needed in the next 5 years, and 2) to provide guidance on research priorities to the research community and to funding agencies.

The research priorities are separated into two categories: **Immediate Concerns** and **Ongoing Needs**. **Immediate Concerns** include research activities that must be addressed to satisfy federal requirements and to meet pressing fishery management and ecosystem issues related to fishery management. Within these categories, the SSC has indicated those Research Priorities for which **Research is Underway**. These are Research Priorities for which NPRB grants have been awarded or for which it is known to the SSC that one or more other agencies have undertaken the recommended research. These priorities will remain on the list until the recommended research is complete and evaluated in terms of its meeting the Research Priority that had been listed. **Ongoing Needs** include research to advance the Council's fisheries management goals as defined in the Groundfish PSEIS, other strategic documents of the Council (i.e., FMPs, AI FEP, and EFH, crab, salmon PSC, and other EISs) and NMFS. **Ongoing Needs** include efforts on which the assessment models depend for their annual updates. For example, without the survey information, the annual process of setting ABCs and OFLs for the managed stocks would be compromised. The Council sees these efforts as needed on an ongoing basis, and constituting the time series on which management is based. It should be recognized that research in these categories is being conducted or may be conducted through Federal, State of Alaska, North Pacific Research Board, and other funding sources.

Five-Year Research Priorities: 2012-2016

Immediate Concerns

I. Fisheries

A. Fish and Fisheries Monitoring

1. Non-recovering stocks. A pressing issue is why certain stocks have declined and failed to recover as anticipated (e.g., Pribilof Island blue king crab, Adak red king crab). Research into all life history components, including predation by groundfish on juvenile crab in near-shore areas, is needed to identify population bottlenecks, an aspect that is critically needed to develop and implement rebuilding plans.
2. Improvements are needed for catch accounting by sex and size for crab (genetic samples) in non-directed fisheries with high bycatch or PSCrates, particularly for blue king crab in the Pacific cod pot fishery in the Pribilof Islands.
3. Develop methods for reliable estimation of total removals (e.g., surveys, poorly observed fisheries) to meet requirements of total removals under ACLs. Improve species identification, by both processors and observers, for priority species within species complexes in catches. Methods that quantify and correct for misidentifications are desired.
4. There is a need to characterize the spatial distribution of male snow crab relative to reproductive output of females in the middle domain of the EBS shelf (partially underway)

B. Stock Assessment

1. Improve handling mortality rate estimates for crab and scallops. For crab, improved understanding on the post-release mortality rate of discarded crab from directed and non-directed crab pot fisheries and principal groundfish (trawl, pot, and hook and line) fisheries is required. The magnitude of post-release mortality is an essential parameter in the determination of total annual catch used to evaluate overfishing in stock assessment and projection modeling. For example, assess discard mortality rates of Tanner crab by size, month, sex, and fishery type. For scallops, conduct field studies to estimate scallop discard mortality (specifically the relationship between capture, release condition, and survival of scallops). (crab studies are partially underway: *Chionocetes* RAMP study)
2. Develop biomass indices for lowest tier species (Tier 5 for crab, Tier 6 for groundfish), such as sharks, and conduct net efficiency studies for spiny dogfish. Explore alternative methodologies for Tier 5 and 6 stocks, such as length-based methods or biomass dynamics models.
3. Owing to the lack of fishery-independent surveys for scallops, there is a need for analyses of fishery CPUE and observer data for use in assessing fishery performance and stock assessment. For instance, sharp declines in CPUE have occurred in some areas, such as Kayak Island and Alaska Peninsula, prompting concerns about local depletion. Additional new techniques may be desirable in regions with data-poor stocks.
4. New information and data are needed that would inform our understanding of the spawner - recruit relationship for groundfish and crab with sufficient precision to project year-class strength (e.g., Tanner crab, GOA pollock, sablefish, halibut). (Underway)
5. Conduct studies to determine stock structure and potential spatial management for BSAI pollock (e.g., movement).
6. Conduct district-wide surveys for demersal shelf rockfish in Southeast Alaska on an annual, biennial, or triennial basis.
7. Conduct a tagging study of red king crab in the region north of Bristol Bay to assess the movement between this region and the Bristol Bay registration area. Similar work on blue king crab in Bristol Bay relative to the Pribilof Islands is needed.
8. Research is needed on the vertical distribution of Pacific cod relative to the EBS bottom trawl and comparisons between the EBS and GOA trawl gear. (Underway).
9. Develop Pacific cod stock assessment for the Aleutian Islands region.
10. Tagging studies of Aleutian Islands Pacific cod and Atka mackerel are needed to create models of short-term movement of fish relative to critical habitat (tagging for Atka mackerel partly underway).
11. Studies are needed to validate and improve age determination methods for Pacific cod, Pacific sleeper sharks, and spiny dogfish. Conventional tagging studies of young of the year and/or one-year old Pacific cod would be useful in this regard (partially underway for cod and dogfish).
12. Maintain the core data from the eastern Bering Sea needed to support a diverse suite of models used to support the integrated ecosystem assessment program for the Bering Sea. Core data include inputs for single- or multi-species management strategy evaluations, food web, and coupled biophysical end-to-end ecosystem models (e.g. biophysical moorings, stomach data, zooplankton, age 0 surveys).

C. Fishery Management

1. Develop a research program that will facilitate evaluation of salmon (both Chinook and non-Chinook) PSC mitigation measures in the BSAI and GOA. This includes updated estimates of the amounts reasonably necessary for subsistence, timing of runs and openings relative to subsistence requirements, and access to cost data for the commercial pollock and salmon industries so that impacts on profits (not gross revenues) can be calculated.
2. Improve the resolution of Chinook and chum salmon genetic stock identification methods (e.g., baseline development, marker development), improve precision of salmon run size estimates in western Alaska, and initiate investigations of biotic and abiotic factors influencing natural mortality rate during ocean migration in the GOA and BSAI. (baseline development is nearing completion, more work on Cook Inlet Chinook and chums is needed)
3. Develop improved catch monitoring methods of fishery interactions including direct and alternative options (e.g., electronic logbooks, video monitoring), particularly on smaller groundfish, halibut, and commercially guided recreational fishing vessels, as well as an assessment of feasibility for small vessels. Investigate factors that affect angler demand in the guided angler sector of the halibut fishery resulting from regulatory changes or general economic conditions.(Underway)
4. Develop bioeconomic models with explicit age- or size-structured population dynamics for BSAI and GOA groundfish fisheries to estimate maximum economic yield and other bioeconomic reference points under uncertainty.
5. Research the benefits and costs of halibut and halibut PSC utilization in different fishing sectors. For halibut and other PSC and bycatch species, conduct research to better identify where regulations restrict the utilization of fish from its most beneficial use and evaluate how changes in existing regulations would affect different sectors and fisheries. (partially underway)
6. Initiate/continue research on developing and evaluating thresholds for ecosystem indicators, including ecosystem-level management strategy evaluation.

II. Fisheries Interactions

A. Protected species

1. Studies of the localized interactions between fisheries and protected species, such as interactions between Steller sea lions and commercial fish species in the Central and Western Aleutian Islands (particularly areas 541, 542, 543), are needed. These studies should be conducted at appropriate spatial and temporal scales with an emphasis on seasonal prey fields, diet, and movement of sea lions and their prey.
2. Assess age- and size-specific vital rates (i.e., reproduction and survival) of Steller sea lions in the western and central Aleutians at sufficient frequency to track population dynamics in the western DPS.
3. Assess possible indirect effects of fisheries removals via periodic health assessments, indices of body condition, survival of pups and juveniles, and pup-non pup ratios of Steller sea lions in the eastern DPS.
4. Quantify killer whale predation of Steller sea lions, particularly in the western and central Aleutian Islands.
5. Develop new methods to estimate sea lion abundance, such as the use of unmanned aerial vehicles, which could increase the probability of acquiring abundance estimates in remote areas. (underway)

6. Assess the impact of the displacement of the groundfish fleet due to Steller sea lions protection measures on the prey availability, foraging ecology, diet, movements, and vital rates for Northern fur seals (partially underway).

7. Assess the extent and impact of seabird incidental takes in fisheries on bird populations, and develop methods to reduce seabird incidental takes, particularly of protected species, such as short-tailed albatross.

8. Determine potential impacts of fishing activities on North Pacific right whales and the Eastern North Pacific blue whales in the GOA, particularly in identified critical (NPRW) or essential (NPBW) habitat.

III. Habitats

A. Evaluate habitats of particular concern:

1. Assess whether Bering Sea canyons are habitats of particular concern, by assessing the distribution and prevalence of coral and sponge habitat, and comparing marine communities within and above the canyon areas, including mid-level and apex predators to neighboring shelf/slope ecosystems. (partially underway)

B. Baseline Habitat Assessment

1. Dynamic ecosystem and environmental changes in the northern Bering Sea and Arctic are occurring on a pace not observed in recorded time. In response to the new Arctic FMP, assessment of the current baseline conditions and trophic interactions is imperative. This effort, while of great scientific importance, should not supplant the regular surveys in the BSAI and GOA, which are of critical importance to science and management. (partially underway)

C. Fishing Effects on Habitat

1. Research is needed on the effects of trawling on the distribution of breeding and ovigerous female red king crab and subsequent recruitment. Relevant studies include effects of potential habitat modifications on the distribution of females, particularly in near-shore areas of southwest Bristol Bay (partially underway), and environmental effects (e.g., trawling overlap in warm vs. cold years). Retrospective studies, the use of pop-up tags to identify larval release locations, and larval advection using Regional Ocean Modeling System would help address this need.

2. Impact of bottom trawl fisheries on invertebrate abundance and species composition in benthic habitats, especially as might be relevant to the foraging ecology of walrus (candidate species for listing under ESA), but also bearded seals (ESA determination due in July), and gray whales.

Ongoing Needs

I. Fisheries

A. Fish and Fishery Monitoring

1. Continuation of State and Federal annual and biennial surveys in the GOA, AI, and EBS, including BASIS surveys and crab pot surveys, is a critical aspect of fishery management off Alaska. It is important to give priority to these surveys, in light of recent federal budgets in which funding may not be sufficient to conduct these surveys. Loss of funding for days at sea for NOAA ships jeopardizes these programs. These surveys provide baseline distribution, abundance, and life history data that form the foundation for stock assessments and the development of ecosystem approaches to management. ***Although an ongoing need, these surveys are considered the highest priority research activity, contributing to assessment of commercial groundfish and crab fisheries off Alaska.***

2. Conduct routine subsistence use, fish, crab, and oceanographic surveys of the northern Bering Sea and Arctic Ocean. These surveys will become increasingly important under ongoing warming ocean temperatures because range expansions of harvested fishery resources may occur. If range expansions or shifts occur, data will be needed to adjust standard survey time series for availability.

3. Explore alternative approaches to the triennial ADF&G Aleutian Islands golden king crab pot survey to acquire fishery-independent abundance data on stock distribution and recruitment, including the potential for future cooperative research efforts with industry.

4. Continue and expand cooperative research efforts to supplement existing surveys to provide seasonal or species-specific information for use in improved assessment and management. The SSC places a high priority on studies that provide data to assess seasonal diets and movements of fish and shellfish, for use in studies of species interactions in spatially explicit stock assessments.

5. The HAPC action for skate egg case concentration sites included two recommendations that the Council suggested should be addressed during the annual research priority discussion: (a) skate egg case concentrations should be monitored every 2 to 3 years using non-invasive research design, such as in situ observation; and (b) skate conservation and skate egg concentration areas remain a priority for EFH and HAPC management and within Council and NMFS research plans.

6. For groundfish in general, and rockfish in particular, continue and expand research on trawlable and untrawlable habitat to improve resource assessment surveys. For example, improved surveys, such as hydro-acoustic surveys, are needed to better assess pelagic rockfish species that are found in untrawlable habitat or are semi-pelagic species, such as northern and dusky rockfish.

7. Studies are needed to evaluate effects of the environment on survey catchability. For groundfish and crabs, studies are needed on catchability, as it directly bears on estimates of the stock size for setting of catch quotas. Research to refine the estimates of survey catchability, q , used to infer absolute, rather than relative, abundance would substantially improve the quality of management advice. Particular emphasis should be placed on Tanner crab, because of recent trends in stock status, and on fishery and fishing gear selectivity for Aleutian Island golden king crab to improve the stock assessment model.

8. Continue research on the design and implementation of appropriate survey analysis techniques, to aid the Council in assessing species (e.g., some crabs and rockfish) that exhibit patchy distributions and, thus, may not be adequately represented (either over- or under-estimated) in the annual or biennial groundfish surveys.

9. Advance research towards developing a quantitative female reproductive index for the surveyed BSAI crab stocks. Research is needed on mating, fecundity, fertilization rates, and, for snow and Tanner crab, sperm reserves and biennial spawning, to develop annual indices of fertilized egg production that can be incorporated into the stock assessment process and to model the effects of sex ratios, stock distribution, and environmental change on stock productivity. Priority stocks for study are eastern Bering Sea snow and Tanner crab and Bristol Bay red king crab. (Ongoing for snow crab and red king crab)
10. Expand existing efforts to collect maturity scans during fisheries that target spawning fish (e.g., pollock). Time series of maturity at age should be collected to facilitate the assessment of the effects of density-dependence and environmental conditions on maturity.
11. Identification and recovery of archived data (e.g., historical agency groundfish and shellfish surveys) should be pursued. Investigate integrating these data into stock and ecosystem assessments.
12. There is a need for fishery-independent surveys of scallops on major fishing grounds, e.g., Yakutat, other areas.
13. Develop a long-term survey capability for forage fish (partially underway).

C. Stock Assessment

1. Acquire basic life history information needed for stock assessment and bycatch/PSC management of data-poor stocks, such as scallops, sharks, skates, sculpins, octopus, grenadiers, squid, and blue king crab (Bering Sea), golden king crabs (Aleutian Islands), and red king crab (Norton Sound). Specifically, information is needed on natural mortality, growth, size at maturity, and other basic indicators of stock production/productivity). For octopus, there is particular need for estimates of mortality and abundance, including verification of the cod consumption-based approach. Tagging studies would provide information on growth and movement of scallops and growth and absolute abundance estimates for golden king crab.
2. Improve estimates of natural mortality (M) for several stocks, including Pacific cod and BSAI crab stocks. **Develop and validate aging methods for crabs to improve estimates of M, including improved independent estimates of stage-specific M (e.g., large red king crab in Norton Sound).**
3. Studies are needed to validate and improve age determination methods for Pacific cod, Pacific sleeper sharks, and spiny dogfish. (partially underway for Pacific cod and spiny dogfish)
4. Evaluate the assessment and management implications of hybridization of snow and Tanner crabs.
5. Quantify the effects of historical climate variability and climate change on recruitment and growth, and develop standard environmental scenarios for present and future variability based on observed patterns. There is also a clear need for information that covers a wider range of seasons than is presently available.
6. There is a need for the development of projection models to evaluate the performance of different management strategies relative to the Council's goals for ecosystem approaches to management. Projection models are also needed to forecast seasonal and climate related shifts in the spatial distribution and abundance of commercial fish and shellfish. (partially underway)
7. To identify stock boundaries, expanded studies are needed in the areas of genetics, mark-recapture, reproductive biology, larval distribution, and advection.
8. Develop spatially explicit stock assessment models, where appropriate. High priority species for spatially explicit models include: snow crab, walleye pollock, Pacific cod, sablefish, yellowfin sole,

rock sole, arrowtooth flounder, Pacific ocean perch, black spotted rockfish, roughey rockfish, and Atka mackerel. (partially underway for some species)

9. Genetic studies to provide information on sources and sinks for scallop larvae are needed to improve our understanding of the rate of larval exchange between scallop beds. Age-structured models for scallop assessment are also needed.
10. Conduct multivariate analysis of bycatch data from the scallop observer program (haul composition data) to estimate abundance and trends of benthic communities on scallop beds and computerized image processing to facilitate scallop stock assessments from camera sled (CamSled) data.

D. Fishery Management

1. Refine methods to incorporate uncertainty into harvest strategies for groundfish for ACL estimation. Continue existing management strategy evaluations at the stock level. (underway)
2. Conduct studies documenting the subsistence harvest patterns, norms, and quantities in communities that depend upon resources that may be affected by Council action.
3. Examine interactions between coastal communities and commercial fisheries (e.g., subsistence-commercial linkages, adaptations to changes in resource use, economic opportunities for coastal communities).
4. Evaluate the effectiveness (e.g., potential for overharvest or unnecessarily limiting other fisheries) of setting ABC and OFL levels for data-poor stocks (Tier 5 and 6 for groundfish and Tiers 4 and 5 for crab, e.g., squid, octopus, shark, sculpins, other flatfish, other rockfish, skates, grenadier, and crab). Research is needed to refine the basis for setting gamma for Tier 4 crab stocks. (partially underway)
5. Conduct retrospective analyses to assess the impact of Chinook salmon PSC measures on the BSAI pollock fishery. Analyses should include an evaluation of the magnitude and distribution of economic effects of salmon avoidance measures for the Bering Sea pollock fishery. In this case, it is important to understand how pollock harvesters have adapted their behavior to avoid Chinook and “other” salmon, under various economic and environmental conditions and incentive mechanisms.
6. Develop forecasting tools that incorporate ecosystem indicators into single or multispecies stock assessments, to conduct management strategy evaluations under differing assumptions regarding climate and market demands. Standardization of “future scenarios” will help to promote comparability of model outputs.
7. Development of an ongoing database of product inventories (and trade volume and prices) for principal shellfish, groundfish, Pacific halibut, and salmon harvested by U.S. fisheries in the North Pacific and eastern Bering Sea.
8. Analyze current determinants of ex vessel, wholesale, international, and retail demand for principal seafood products from the GOA and BSAI.
9. Conduct pre- and post-implementation studies of the benefits and costs, and their distribution, associated with changes in management regimes (e.g., changes in product markets, characteristics of quota share markets, changes in distribution of ownership, changes in crew compensation) as a consequence of the introduction of dedicated access privileges in the halibut/sablefish, AFA pollock, and BSAI crab fisheries. “Benefits and costs” include both economic and social dimensions.
10. Conduct prospective analyses of the robustness and resilience of alternative management strategies under varying environmental and ecological conditions.

11. Conduct prospective and retrospective analyses of changes in the spatial and temporal distribution of fishing effort, in response to management actions (e.g., time/area closures, marine reserves, PSC and other bycatch restrictions, co-ops, IFQs).
12. Develop a framework for collection of economic information on commercial, recreational, and charter fishing, as well as fish processing, to meet the requirements of the MSFCMA sections 303(a)(5, 9, 13), 303(b)(6), and 303A.
13. Continue to evaluate the economic effects from crab rationalization programs on coastal communities. This includes understanding economic impacts (both direct and indirect) and how the impacts are distributed among communities and economic sectors.
14. Improve estimation of fishery interactions (including catch) with marine mammals (e.g., state managed gillnet fisheries), seabirds, and non-target groundfish (e.g., sharks, skates), and protected species.

II. Fisheries Interactions

A. Protected Species Interactions

1. Economic, social, and cultural valuation research on protected species (i.e., non-market consumptive use, passive use, non-consumptive use), particularly in the Arctic.
2. Foraging ecology and vital rate studies of Steller sea lions in the Gulf of Alaska, Russian Far East, and Commander Islands, including at-sea tracking of older animals, and diet composition of sea lions throughout the region. Emphasis should be placed on the use of methods that allow population abundance estimates to be directly compared between Russia and Alaska.
3. Linkages between fishery-induced disturbance or local prey depletion for northern fur seals in the Pribilof Islands region. (underway)
4. Gear modifications and fishing practices to reduce bycatch and, particularly, PSC (e.g., salmon and crab). (partly underway)
5. Studies of sperm whale depredation of catch in long-line fisheries and surveys to improve the quality of long-line fish abundance estimates. (underway)
6. Monitor interactions between fishing fleet and protected seabirds, particularly, in Aleutian Islands and the eastern Bering Sea shelf edge where numbers of albatross have increased.
7. Assess the potential for increased interactions between protected species (i.e., large whales and post-breeding/migrating seabirds) and fishing efforts in essential habitats, in particular throughout migratory routes, and with respect to changes in fish stock distribution and/or expansion into Arctic waters.

B. Bycatch/PSC Issues

1. There is a need to analyze the effects of recent Council actions on bycatch and PSC, including:
 - a. interaction among PSC reduction initiatives (e.g., halibut, salmon)
 - b. quantifying the effects of PSC reduction in groundfish fisheries to the target fisheries (e.g., charter and commercial halibut fisheries, salmon fisheries)
 - c. Research approaches to create bycatch and PSC reduction incentives.

III. Habitat

A. Habitat Mapping

1. Improved habitat maps (especially benthic habitats) are required to identify essential fish habitat and distributions of various substrates and habitat types, including habitat-forming biota, infauna, and epifauna in the GOA, BS, and Arctic. (partially underway)
2. Develop a GIS relational database for habitat, including development of a historical time series of the spatial intensity of interactions between commercial fisheries and habitat. Such time series are needed to evaluate the impacts of changes in fishing effort and type on EFH. Assess the extent of the distribution of *Primnoa* corals and skate egg case concentration sites in the GOA, and conduct routine monitoring of these areas.

B. Function of Habitat

1. Research is needed on the role of habitat in fish population dynamics, fish production (growth, reproduction), and ecosystem processes. Such research will improve the capability to identify and protect important habitats (including essential fish habitat and habitat areas of particular concern); help design effective habitat restoration efforts; improve the design and management of marine protected areas; improve fishery-independent population surveys; and improve stock assessments. Studies are needed to evaluate relationships between, and functional importance of, habitat-forming living substrates to juvenile and adult age classes of commercially important species and their preferred prey (forage fish). (partially ongoing)
2. Establish a scientific research and monitoring program to understand the degree to which impacts (habitat, benthic infauna, etc.) have been reduced within habitat closure areas, and to understand how benthic habitat recovery of key species is occurring. (This the objective of the EFH research approach for the Council FMPs).

IV. Other Areas of Research Necessary for Management

A. Ecosystem indicator development and maintenance.

1. Climatic indicators

- a) Develop a multivariate index of the climate forcing of the Bering Sea shelf. Three biologically significant avenues for climate index predictions include advection, setup for primary production, and partitioning of habitat with oceanographic fronts and temperature preferences.
- b) Develop bottom and water column temperature database for use in EBS, GOA, and AI stock assessments.
- c) Maintain sea ice formation and retreat index for the EBS.

2. Lower trophic level community production data

- a. Collect and maintain primary production time series in the EBS, AI, GOA, and Arctic; particularly in relationship to key climate and oceanographic variables.
- b. Collect and maintain zooplankton biomass and community composition time series in the eastern Bering Sea. Develop, collect, and maintain time series of zooplankton biomass and community composition for the GOA, AI, and Arctic.
- c. Collect and maintain data on forage fish community composition and abundance in the Bering Sea, GOA, AI, and Arctic.
- d. Collect and maintain time-series data on the community composition, production and biomass of benthic invertebrate and vertebrate fauna.

3. Develop methods for incorporating ecosystem indicators into stock assessments and ecosystem assessments. Specifically:
 - a. Maintain indicator-based ecosystem assessment for EBS.
 - b. Develop indicator-based ecosystem assessments for AI (in progress), GOA, and Arctic.
 - c. Develop stock-specific ecosystem indicators and incorporate into stock assessments. (in progress)
4. Develop methodologies to monitor for new/emerging diseases among exploited species and higher trophic levels.
5. Assess the impact of increases in recovering whale populations (e.g. gray, humpback, and fin) on lower trophic level energy pathways.
6. Ecosystem indicator synthesis research.
7. Continue and expand cooperative research efforts to supplement existing at-sea surveys that provide seasonal, species-specific information on upper trophic levels (seabirds and marine mammals). Updated surveys to monitor distribution and abundance of seabirds and marine mammals are needed to assess impacts of fisheries on apex predators, improve the usefulness of apex predators as ecosystem indicators, and to improve ecosystem management.
8. Initiate and expand non-market valuation research of habitat, ecosystem services, and passive use considerations.
9. Assess the relative importance of non-commercially exploited species (invertebrates, fish, marine mammals, and seabirds) to human communities, particularly in Arctic.

B. Research on Environmental Influences on Ecosystem Processes

1. Climate variability: monitor and understand how changes in ocean conditions influence managed species.
 - a) Maintain moorings. Development and maintenance of indices of the timing and extent of the spring bloom is a high priority. For this, maintenance of moorings, especially M-2, is essential. (underway)
 - b) Monitor seasonal sea ice extent and thickness: If recent changes in ice cover and temperatures in the Bering Sea persist, these may have profound effects on marine communities.
 - c) Measure and monitor fish composition: Evaluate existing data sets (bottom trawl surveys, acoustic trawl surveys, and BASIS surveys) to quantify changes in relative species composition of commercial and non-commercial species, identify and map assemblages, and monitor changes in the distribution of individual species and assemblages. Additional monitoring may be necessary in the Aleutian Islands, northern Bering Sea, and areas of the Gulf of Alaska.
 - d) Assess the movement of fish to understand the spatial importance of predator-prey interactions in response to environmental variability.
2. Improve understanding of ocean acidification and its effects on managed species
 - a) Collect and maintain time series of ocean pH in the major water masses off Alaska. (partially underway)
 - b) Assess whether changes in pH would affect managed species, upper level predators, and lower trophic levels. (partially underway for some species)
3. Species' responses to multiple environmental stressors

- a) Laboratory studies are needed to assess the synergistic effects of ocean acidification, oil, dispersants, and changes in temperature on productivity of marine species.
- b) Monitor contaminant flux and loads in lower and higher trophic levels, and assess potential for impact on vital rates.

C. Basic research on trophic interactions

1. Collect, analyze, and monitor diet information (species, biomass, energetics), from seasons in addition to summer, to assess spatial and temporal changes in predator-prey interactions, including marine mammals and seabirds. The diet information should be collected on the appropriate spatial scales for key predators and prey to determine how food webs may be changing in response to shifts in the range of crab and groundfish.
2. Ecosystem structure studies: Studies are needed on the implications of food web interactions of global warming, ocean acidification, and selective fishing. For instance, studies are needed to evaluate differential exploitation of some components of the ecosystem (e.g., Pacific cod, pollock, and crab) relative to others (e.g., arrowtooth flounder).
3. In the last decade, many whale populations (e.g., gray, humpback, and fin) have increased dramatically, after being depleted by whaling. These increases in abundance have the potential to alter lower trophic level energy pathways in the region. In addition, we should investigate potential impacts to other upper trophic level groups (i.e., pinnipeds, seabirds, large predatory fish).

D. Ecosystem Modeling

1. Modeling studies of ecosystem productivity in different regions (EBS, GOA and AI).

A. Habitat Mapping

1. Improved habitat maps (especially benthic habitats) are required to identify essential fish habitat and distributions of various substrates and habitat types, including habitat-forming biota, infauna, and epifauna in the GOA, BS, and Arctic. (partially underway)
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 - d) Assess the movement of fish to understand the spatial importance of predator-prey interactions in response to environmental variability.
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D. Ecosystem Modeling

1. Modeling studies of ecosystem productivity in different regions (EBS, GOA and AI).

Council motion

June 8, 2012

C-1 (b) Final action on GOA Halibut Prohibited Species Catch (PSC)

The Council adopts the following preferred alternative:

Alternative 2. Amend the GOA Groundfish FMP to remove setting GOA halibut PSC limits from the annual groundfish harvest specifications process. GOA halibut PSC limits would be established (and amended) in federal regulation.

Option 2. Revise the current GOA halibut PSC limits and write the new limits into regulation

Suboption 1. Reduce the halibut PSC limit for hook and line gear CP sector by:
c) 7%

Suboption 2. Reduce the halibut PSC limit for hook and line gear CV sector by:
c) 15%

Suboption 3. Reduce the halibut PSC limit for trawl gear sector by:
c) 15% (267 mt)

The PSC limit for HAL demersal shelf rockfish in SE Outside District would also be reduced to 9 mt (1 mt reduction).

The 15% reduction for the trawl and non-DSR hook-and-line CV sectors would be phased in over three years, as follows: 7% (first year); additional 5% (second year); and additional 3% (third year). All reductions are reflected in the attached tables. In the third year and after, the revised total non-DSR hook-and-line halibut PSC limit would be reduced and the total trawl limit would be 1,705 mt.

Suboption 3.1 AFA/Am 80/Rockfish Program sideboard limits will be:

- a) Applied as percentage against the GOA halibut PSC limit

Suboption 3.2.

Allow the Amendment 80 sector to roll unused halibut PSC from one season to the subsequent season (similar to the non-Amendment 80 sectors).

Suboption 3.3

Allow available trawl halibut PSC in the second season deep water and shallow water complexes to be aggregated and made available for use in either complex from May 15th through June 30th. Halibut PSC sideboards for the Amendment 80 and AFA sectors would continue to be defined as deep water and shallow water complexes in the second season.

NMFS will accomplish this by re-specifying halibut between the deep and shallow water complexes after the second season is complete to capture actual use.

Note: Any unused PSC will be rolled over to the complex to which it was initially assigned.

Trawl PSC limits under various percentage reductions

	Total allowance**	<u>1st season</u> January 20 to April 1	<u>2nd season</u> April 1 to July 1
<u>Total Allowance</u>			
seasonal share		27.5 percent	20 percent
Total Allowance (7% Reduction)	1,848	508	370
Total Allowance (12% Reduction)	1,759	484	352
Total Allowance (15% Reduction)	1,705	469	341
<u>Deep-water complex</u>			
seasonal share		12.5 percent	37.5 percent
7% reduction	739	92	277
12% reduction	704	88	264
15% reduction	682	85	256
<u>Shallow-water complex</u>			
seasonal share		50 percent	11.1 percent
7% reduction	832	416	92
12% reduction	791	396	88
15% reduction	767	384	85
<u>Undesignated</u>			
seasonal share			
7% reduction	277		
12% reduction	264		
15% reduction	256		

All values are metric tons, except where noted as percentages.

* Number in bracket is total allocation plus 191.4 metric ton rockfish program halibut PSC allocation

** The current 2,000 MT limit is reduced by the 27.4 MT Rockfish Program halibut PSC reduction.

Complex and seasonal amounts are based on 2012 division of the overall amount

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A80 sideboard limits

	Total sideboard	<u>1st season</u> January 20 to April 1	<u>2nd season</u> April 1 to July 1
<u>Deep-water complex</u>			
7% reduction	387	21	198
12% reduction	368	20	189
15% reduction	357	20	183
<u>Shallow-water complex</u>			
7% reduction	126	9	35
12% reduction	120	8	33

15% reduction	117	8	32
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All values are metric tons, except where noted as percentages.

Rockfish sideboard limits

	July sideboard tonnage	
	Deep-water	Shallow-water
	Complex	Complex
7% reduction	46	2
12% reduction	44	2
15% reduction	43	2

AFA non-exempt catcher vessel sideboard limits

	Total sideboard	<u>1st season</u>	<u>2nd season</u>
		January 20 to April 1	April 1 to July 1
<u>Deep-water complex</u>			
7% reduction	51	6	19
12% reduction	50	6	18
15% reduction	48	6	18
<u>Shallow-water complex</u>			
7% reduction	283	141	31
12% reduction	269	135	30
15% reduction	261	130	29
<u>Undesignated</u>			
7% reduction	57		
12% reduction	54		
15% reduction	52		

All values are metric tons, except where noted as percentages.

<u>3rd season*</u> July 1 to September 1	<u>4th season</u> September 1 to October 1	<u>5th season</u> October 1 through December 31
30 percent 554 528 512	7.5 percent 139 132 128	15 percent 277 264 256
50 percent* 178 (or 370) 160 (or 352) 150 (or 341)	0 percent	
22.2 percent 185 176 170	16.7 percent 139 132 128	
		100 percent 277 264 256

<u>3rd season*</u> July 1 to September 1	<u>4th season</u> September 1 to October 1	<u>5th season</u> October 1 through December 31
96 92 89	3 2 2	69 65 63
27 26	14 13	42 40

25

13

39

3rd season
July 1 to
September 1

4th season
September 1 to
October 1

5th season
October 1 through
December 31

25

0

25

0

24

0

63

47

60

45

58

44

57

54

52

Hook-and-line PSC limits - based on 2012 CP/CV division of total

	Total allowance**	1st season January 1 to June 10	2nd season June 10 to September 1
<u>Total Allowance</u>			
seasonal share		86 percent	2 percent
Total Allowance (Year 1)	270	232	5
Catcher Vessels (7 % based on 2012)	161	138	3
Catcher Processors (7% based on 2012)	109	94	2
Total Allowance (Year 2)	261	225	5
Catcher Vessels (12% based on 2012)	152	131	3
Catcher Processors (7% based on 2012)	109	94	2
Total Allowance (Year 3)	256	220	5
Catcher Vessels (15% based on 2012)	147	126	3
Catcher Processors (7% based on 2012)	109	94	2

3rd season*
September 1
through December
31

12 percent

32

19

13

31

18

13

31

18

13

Enforcement Committee Minutes
June 5, 2012
Kodiak Harbor Convention Center, Katurwik Room

Committee present: Roy Hyder (Chair), LT Anthony Kenne, Martin Loefflad, Asst. Special Agent in Charge Ken Hansen, Special Agent in Charge Sherrie Myers, Glenn Merrill, Major Steve Bear, Jonathan Streifel, and Jon McCracken (staff)

Others present: Sarah Milton, Steve MacLean, David Witherell, Chris Oliver, Brad Robbins, Bruce Buckson (Director of Office of Law Enforcement), Brent Pristas, Tom Pearson, LT Natalia Best, Stephanie Madsen, Donald Lane, Keith Bruton, Alan Kinman, and George Hutchings

I. C-2 Initial review of HAPC skate sites

Sarah Melton, Council staff, provided an overview of the revised analysis concerning designation of Habitat Areas of Particular Concern for egg concentration sites for several species of skates in the Bering Sea. At the April meeting, the Council asked staff to expand the analysis to include current technology, including VMS, to monitor activity in and around skate egg concentration sites.

If the Council intends to implement management measure to identify and conserve any combination of skate egg concentration sites identified under Alternative 3, the Enforcement Committee recommends adopting Option C, specifically to include pelagic trawl gear.

Additionally, if the above management measures are adopted for any combination of HAPC sites, the Enforcement Committee recommends adopting the boundaries identified in Alternative 2 in combination with “geo-fencing,” such that polling rates of vessel VMS units are increased when vessels near and/or cross the boundaries of the HAPC area. Any additional cost of increased polling rates while near and/or inside a geo-fenced area would be paid by the vessel. If “geo-fencing” is not adopted, and management measures are still retained, the Enforcement Committee recommends boundaries for HAPC areas as identified in Alternative 3 are maintained.

II. D-1(a) Discussion paper on limiting other gear on jig vessels

Sarah Melton, Council staff, presented the discussion paper on limiting other gear on board vessels jigging for Pacific cod in the GOA. The discussion paper stems from a foreseen need to limit other gear on board vessels jigging for Pacific cod, due to the new management and allocation structure implemented by Amendment 83. With separate sector allocations, there could be incentive to increase the duration of one sector’s fishing season at the expense of another; specifically extending the duration of the longline or pot sector season by misreporting catch from these gear types as jig-caught and/or increasing the likelihood of attaining the jig quota and thereby receiving subsequent ‘step-up’ in the jig gear allocation.

Recognizing the potential for increased incentive to misreport Pacific cod catch under sector splits, the Committee noted that there is no clear indication that widespread misreporting of catch is occurring at this time. The Committee recognized enforcement and compliance concerns with some of the current options, and discussed alternative methods of addressing the potential issues of misreporting. If the Council elects to move forward on this issue, the Committee recommends consideration of a check-in/declaration option, as outlined below, be included in the next iteration of the analysis. The Committee felt a check-in/declaration procedure worthy of consideration, as less burdensome to the industry and more practicable

for effective for law enforcement relative to other alternatives. Additionally, a check-in procedure may also interface well with a with the restructured observer program.

Potential elements of Check-In/Declaration approach

1. **Requirement for pre-fishing phone or web-based “check-in/declaration”**, prior to conducting directed fishing for Pacific cod with jig gear. Check-in remains valid until revoked by permit-holder. Check-in would deactivate upon closure of directed jig fishing season. Separate A and B season check-in would be required.
2. Prohibition on directed fishing for Pacific cod with other than jig gear when “checked-in” for jig directed fishing.

Enforceable at sea: Enforcement patrol units observing vessels fishing with jig or any other gear type would be able to consult listing of vessels on checked-into the fishery in real time or following patrol. While jig vessels are not currently required to operate VMS, other gear type vessels would be required to operate VMS while directed fishing for Pacific cod, and could be cross-referenced at any time against a list of jig-declared vessels.

Increased deterrence to misreport of gear type: The requirement to pre-register to jig-only directed fish provides a strong deterrent to any “opportunistic” ability to misreport gear type used at landing.

Allows for other fishing gear to be carried aboard a vessel while jig fishing: This draft regulatory program does not prohibit carrying onboard other gears, or create a problem to enforce/comply with the limitation on the number of “fishable” hooks aboard. This does not disrupt current fishing practices or those vessels traveling distances to conduct fishing operations in other areas/fisheries.

Interplay with directed halibut fishing: Jig vessels intending to fish for IFQ halibut during overlap of lawful jig directed season and IFQ season would simply check-in to Pacific cod jig directed fishery and would be lawful to directed fish for both species. Vessel operators using longline gear to harvest IFQ halibut would be lawful to land any amount of IFQ halibut and Pacific cod with longline gear, but would not be able to report any jig caught Pacific cod if not “checked-in” to jig fishery. Vessels would still be required to report catch from separate gears on different fish tickets.

B season jig directed cod season: Industry members indicated the jig “B” season was a period of high interest and importance for participants. This season opens on June 10 for the jig sector. Longline and pot “B” season opens September 1. Thus, this timing would not interfere with combined Pacific cod/IFQ halibut fishing, and, given other gear types would be closed for Pacific cod directed fishing, the compliance threat of misreporting gear type is moot, and there would be no further need for a prohibition on carriage of multiple gear types or number of hooks.

Level playing field: While the analysis indicates the primary concern is misreporting of longline harvests as jig harvests; if/when the full jig step-up allocation is realized, this regulatory program could also equally deter operators using jig gear from misreporting jig harvests as longline harvested.

III. Round island prohibitions

Special Agent Ken Hansen, OLE, provided an update on the existing Round Island transit prohibition. Per 50 CFR 679.22 (a)(4), between April 1 and Sept 30, vessels with an FFP are prohibited from transiting between 3 and 12 nm from the baseline at Round Island and The Twins (Northern Bristol Bay area) (see Figure 1). This is a longstanding prohibition, intended to provide reduced disruption to the walrus haulouts at these locations.

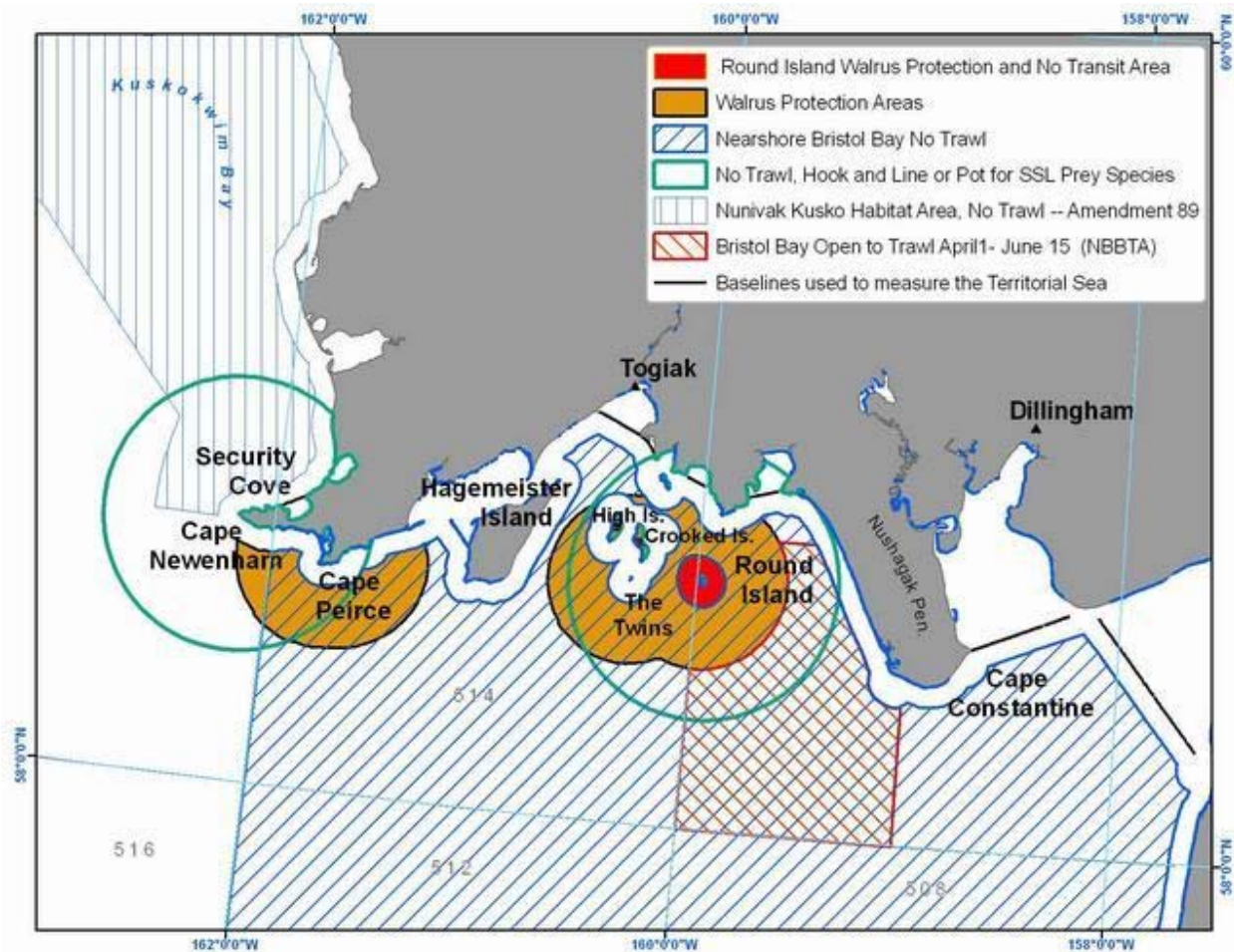


Figure 1. Hagemeister Island and Round Island Protection Areas

In 2010, as part of the potential action to create a new closed around a new walrus haulout at Hagemeister Island, there was Council discussion of this issue, and a proposed option for a “transit lane” through the Round Island area. This proposal did not move forward. Over the years, NOAA OLE has taken a proactive education approach with vessel operators and processors in the Northern Bristol Bay area. The primary fleet that this prohibition effects are the vessels serving as tenders between the Togiak area herring and maybe salmon fisheries and processors in Naknak and other areas within Bristol Bay.

In the past, this has not been an enforcement priority, due in part to there being a process for vessel owner/operators to “surrender” their FFP to exempt themselves from the application of this prohibition, then reapplying in the fall or when done tendering. However, with the recent passage of the suite of regulations implementing sector splits, the ability for a vast majority of vessels to surrender their FFP to comply with this prohibition has been precluded. A significant number of the vessels which operate as

tenders in this area hold a FFP to participate in other fisheries, and if the FFP were surrendered, could not be re-obtained during the 3 year cycle.

Going “around” these two islands requires a significant detour through more offshore waters. Informal discussions with USFWS indicate a strong desire to limit increases in vessel traffic past the walrus haulout on the NW shore of Hagemeister Island. Likewise, another possibility technically involves remaining inside 3 nm state waters on the very northern shore of Bristol Bay, between Togiak Bay and the Nushagak Pen, but this area is reportedly shallow and potentially presents increased safety considerations.

Vessel operators have approached OLE for their response to this new situation. Although the Round Island regulations are clear, it is recognized that the recent changes have exacerbated the enforcement and compliance situation. Compounding the issue is the regulation’s intent to afford some heightened protections for walrus, a species under primary management of USFWS. The Committee noted during their discussion on this issue, that a regulatory amendment that requires a vessel to check-in/check-out while transiting through the Round Island No-Transit Area may address concerns of federally permitted vessels moving through this area.

IV. “MapViewer” software for regulatory closure locations and boundaries

Special Agent Brent Pristas, NOAA OLE, provided a demonstration of the Arc View application, the interim replacement for the MapViewer application. At the April 2012 meeting, the Council tasked the Enforcement Committee to explore the availability of agency-issued software that could be integrated with the existing navigation software to show closed areas. Arc viewer is available for download by the industry from the NOAA Alaska Region website, and is provided to industry in a CD format by OLE. This program appears to provide much of the information the industry is requesting. Should it be desired, OLE is interested in providing an overview of this program to the AP at a future Council meeting.

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News & Notes

North Pacific Fishery Management Council

June 2012

Thank you, Kodiak

The weather cooperated, for the most part, during the Council's recent meeting in Kodiak. The City and Borough hosted a reception at the Kodiak Fisheries Research Center, and a BBQ was held on the Buskin River which was hosted by Kodiak Association of Charter Boat Operators. Many Council members, staff, and public were also privileged to attend a community reception at the village of Ouzinkie. In addition to the wonderful hospitality and food, the community had the opportunity to discuss various fishery issues. Kodiak residents were able to attend portions of the meetings, and Council members were able to get out and about in the Kodiak area. Thank you again for your hospitality and all who put in extra effort to make the meeting a success!

Benson retires

The Council said goodbye to Council member Dave Benson who has served 9 years on the Council and 10 years on the Advisory Panel. Benson joined the Council process initially representing Washington State trawl interests. A roast and toast was held during the City and Borough reception, and the Balsiger Blues Band sent him off with a short sing-along. Good luck in your future endeavors, Dave!



Halibut Workshop

The Council received a report on the recent workshop organized by the International Pacific Halibut Commission (IPHC) and the Council. The purpose of the workshop was to review the methodology and accuracy of the estimation of Pacific halibut bycatch in trawl and longline groundfish fisheries off Alaska, and the impacts of halibut bycatch on the halibut stock as a whole and by area, given the current understanding of halibut migration. The workshop also discussed general halibut ecology, including recent trends in exploitable biomass, spawning biomass, and size at age, and information concerning the causes and implications of declining size at age of halibut. More than 200 participants attended the two-day workshop in person or through a webcast of the meeting in late April 2012. Background papers, presentations, and a summary report are posted on the Council and Commission website.

Halibut Bycatch

At this meeting, the Council took final action to reduce halibut bycatch limits in GOA groundfish fisheries. The Council considered staff reports, its advisory panel recommendation, more than 400 pages of written testimony from more than 1,500 individuals, corporations, and communities, along with oral testimony from nearly 100 people over two days during the June meeting and adopted a preferred alternative to reduce halibut bycatch limits in the GOA trawl and hook-and-line groundfish fisheries with a vote of 10:1. Technically, the Council's preferred alternative would amend the

GOA Groundfish FMP to change the process for setting halibut bycatch limits. Instead of being set when the annual groundfish harvest specifications (quotas) are set each fall, halibut bycatch levels will be set in federal regulations; those limits would remain in effect until changed by a subsequent Council action to amend those regulations.

If approved by the Secretary of Commerce, the preferred alternative would reduce the GOA halibut PSC limit for the 1) groundfish trawl gear sector and 2) groundfish catcher vessel (CV) hook-and-line gear sector by 15%. The proposed reduction would be phased in over three years: 7% in year 1, 5% in year 2 (to 12%), and 3% in year 3 (to 15%). The proposed reduction for the 3) catcher processor (CP) hook and line gear would be 7% which would be implemented in one step in year 1. The Council intends that year 1 would occur in 2014 and that all reductions would occur by 2016.

This action would result in a new cap of 1,848 mt (in 2014), 1,759 mt (in 2015), and 1,705 mt (in 2016 and later years) for the trawl sector. The new hook-and-line halibut PSC limit may change annually, so the numbers reported are illustrative of what may occur in the future, based on the GOA Pacific cod split formula. Based on 2012 Pacific cod TACs in the Western and Central GOA the hook-and-line CP sector would fish under a 109 mt halibut PSC limit. The hook-and-line CV sector PSC limit would be 161 mt (in 2014), 152 mt (in 2015), and 147 mt (in 2016 and beyond). Note that the Council used 1,973 mt as the baseline for its proposed trawl PSC limit reduction, which results after deducting a 27.4 mt PSC limit reduction, which was implemented in

Grenadiers

The Council reviewed a discussion paper on a proposed action that the Council originally approved for consideration in 2008. At this meeting the Council initiated an analysis to consider four alternatives for moving grenadiers into the groundfish fishery management plans for the Gulf of Alaska and Bering Sea/Aleutian Islands. Additional regulatory options will be considered in the analysis. The paper and the June 2012 motion, which includes a problem statement and suite of alternatives, are posted on the Council's website. The Non-target Species Committee, which will continue to be chaired by retiring Council member Dave Benson, will convene to review and provide recommendations on the draft analysis prior to initial review by the Council. The Council will identify the timing of review of the analysis and committee meeting in the near future. Contact Jane DiCosimo for more information.



NMFS AFSC

(GOA Halibut Bycatch Caps Cont.)

This action would result in a new cap of 1,848 mt (in 2014), 1,759 mt (in 2015), and 1,705 mt (in 2016 and later years) for the trawl sector. The new hook-and-line halibut PSC limit may change annually, so the numbers reported are illustrative of what may occur in the future, based on the GOA Pacific cod split formula. Based on 2012 Pacific cod TACs in the Western and Central GOA the hook-and-line CP sector would fish under a 109 mt halibut PSC limit. The hook-and-line CV sector PSC limit would be 161 mt (in 2014), 152 mt (in 2015), and 147 mt (in 2016 and beyond). Note that the Council used 1,973 mt as the baseline for its proposed trawl PSC limit reduction, which results after deducting a 27.4 mt PSC limit reduction, which was implemented in 2012 under the Central Gulf Rockfish Program, from the 2,000 mt overall trawl cap.

The preferred alternative reduced the demersal shelf rockfish fishery halibut bycatch limit from 10 mt (22,000 lb) to 9 mt (19,840 lb). Given limited observer coverage in this fishery NMFS does not anticipate managing the fishery to that limit. The Council's motion also addressed three additional management issues, which are detailed in the Council motion which is posted on the Council website.

The Council balanced a number of national standards for fishery conservation and management. These include 1) achieving the optimum yield from each groundfish fishery without overfishing the stocks; 2) considering the importance of fishery resources to fishing communities and minimizing adverse economic impacts on such communities; 3) minimizing bycatch to the extent practicable; and 4) using best available science. The final analysis will be submitted to NMFS over the summer so that development of the proposed rule may begin this year. Contact Jane DiCosimo for more information.

GOA Comprehensive Bycatch The Council received a report concerning the development of measures to address prohibited species catch (PSC) in the Gulf of Alaska fisheries. Over the course of the past few years, the Council has advanced a number of actions to reduce the use of PSC in Gulf of Alaska fisheries. In addition to the reductions in halibut PSC adopted by the Council at this meeting, the Council also recently introduced Chinook PSC limits in the Gulf pollock trawl fisheries. The Council is also considering an action to extend similar Chinook PSC limits to non-pollock groundfish trawl fisheries in the Gulf. Participants in these fisheries have raised concerns that the current limited access management creates a substantial disincentive for participants to take

actions to reduce PSC usage (particularly actions that could reduce target catch rates). Other participants, who choose not to exert efforts to avoid PSC, stand to gain additional target catch by continuing to harvest fish at a higher catch rate, at the expense of vessels engaged in PSC avoidance. The paper is intended to provide a more comprehensive look at the available tools to aid fleets in achieving the desired PSC reductions by increasing incentives for PSC avoidance.

The paper provided a review of possible objectives for the proposed management action, as well as brief summaries of possible actions (such as area closures, bycatch quotas, comprehensive catch share allocations, and various incentive programs). In response to the paper and public testimony, the Council expressed its intent to schedule a specific agenda item, preferably for the October meeting, to develop a purpose and need statement identifying goals and objectives for the action and to begin the process of developing a program to provide tools for effective management of PSC, incentives for the minimization of bycatch, and vessel level accountability for the Central Gulf of Alaska trawl groundfish fishery. In the course of its deliberations, the Council encouraged participants in the Central Gulf trawl fishery and other stakeholders to provide input concerning objectives for the action, as well as the type of management actions that should be considered. Staff contact is Mark Fina.

Bering Sea/Aleutian Islands Halibut Bycatch Caps The Council reviewed background information on the status of the halibut bycatch caps in the BSAI and the process for revising them. The Council took no action at this time. Contact Jane DiCosimo for more information.

Charter Halibut Management

In April 2012 the Council adopted the unanimous recommendations of its advisory bodies and stakeholders to use ADF&G logbooks as the primary data collection method. The Council recommended using an adjustment factor based on the five-year average (2006 – 2010) of the difference between the harvest estimates provided by the logbooks and the SWHS, with an adjustment factor reduced by the amount of harvest attributed to skipper and crew. Council and ADF&G staff provided notice that a small error was found in the calculation to remove skipper and crew caught halibut from the adjustment factor that will affect the potential allocation to the charter sector in Area 3A only, since skipper and crew caught fish are prohibited in Area 2C.

(Charter Halibut Management cont.)

The Council affirmed that this correction is consistent with Council intent and that the revised analysis scheduled for review in October should use the corrected adjustment factor. The Council's revised understanding is that applying this adjustment factor would result in the following changes to the CSP allocations. No other changes to the motion or analysis were adopted.

Area 3A adjustment factor = ~~45.4%~~ 11.6%

Area 3A current CSP allocation in Tier 1 = 15.4%

Adjusted CSP allocation = (15.4% * ~~45.4%~~ 11.6%) + 15.4% = ~~17.8%~~ 17.2%

Area 3A current CSP allocation in Tiers 2 through 4 = 14.0%

Adjusted CSP allocation = (14.0% * ~~45.4%~~ 11.6%) + 14.0% = ~~16.2%~~ 15.6%

The **Charter Halibut Management Committee** will be scheduled to meet twice this fall to assist the Council in its selections of a preferred measure for Area 2C and Area 3A (if necessary) to keep the charter halibut sector under its respective Guideline Harvest Levels (GHLs) in 2013. The first meeting will be scheduled after the October 2012 Council meeting to provide recommendations for potential management measures for analysis. Another committee meeting will be scheduled between the dates of the interim IPHC meeting, when IPHC staff recommendations for 2013 GHLs and commercial catch limits are announced, and the December Council meeting. At its December meeting, the Council will review an analysis of potential management measures and recommendations from its committee, advisory panel, scientific committee, and stakeholders and select management measure(s) to be forwarded for consideration and adoption by the IPHC during the January 2013 IPHC annual Meeting. Contact Jane DiCosimo for more information.

Halibut/Sablefish IFQ Amendment

In 2006 the Council recommended to revoke quota shares (QS) that have been inactive since they were originally issued in 1995. Inactive QS are those held by persons that have never harvested their IFQ and have never transferred QS or IFQ into or out of their IFQ accounts. The action provides halibut and sablefish fishermen who hold active QS with an opportunity to fish for currently unavailable QS and more fully harvest TACs for these species. In the time since Council recommended this action, the amount of inactive QS and the number of inactive QS holders has reduced dramatically, as those inactive QS were transferred voluntarily to active fishery participants. There are 199 inactive QS.

The final rule to remove inactive QS from the Halibut and Sablefish IFQ Program becomes effective on Monday, June 18, 2012. *NMFS will **not revoke** the inactive QS of any person who responds in writing to NMFS within 60 days after NMFS issues a Notice of Determination of Quota Share Inactivity, requesting that the inactive QS not be revoked.* NMFS will allow transfers and fishing during the 60-day Notice period which would result in "activation" of the QS. These transfers could include gifting the QS to someone eligible to receive QS and IFQ by transfer. Even without payment, gifting would keep QS active and benefit communities as well as recipients.

The inactive QS and holder list is posted on the NMFS RAM web page under "Licenses Issued." A signed notice with an enclosed form to be returned to RAM will be mailed to all inactive permit holders on or about June 18; fishing, transferring QS or IFQ, or returning the form to RAM within the 60 day response period is the only way for those QS not to be revoked. Contact the RAM Program Division for more information: (800) 304-4846 #2, (907) 586-7202 #2.

Research Priorities

The Magnuson-Stevens Act requires the Council to adopt a five-year research plan each year. The Council adopted its most recent five-year research plan based on recommendations from its four Plan Teams, the Scientific and Statistical Committee, and the Advisory Panel. The Council also endorsed the SSC's intent to revise the process by which these priorities are annually considered. A workgroup consisting of members of the SSC, Plan Teams and staff will work to develop a database for use in considering and prioritizing research issues. Additional information will be available on this process for the October 2012 SSC meeting. The currently adopted research priorities are posted on the Council's website. Staff contact is Diana Stram.

Upcoming Meetings

Groundfish Plan Teams:
September 11-14 AFSC

Observer Advisory Committee,
September 17-18, AFSC

Crab Plan Team: September 18-21 AFSC

Charter Management Implementation Committee:
1) after October Council meeting in Anchorage
2) prior to December Council meeting in Anchorage

Groundfish Plan Teams:
November 13-16 AFSC

Crab Modeling workshop
January 7-11 AFSC

Non-Target Species Committee:
before February Council meeting (T) AFSC

SSLMC: July 15-17 – Seattle; July 30-31 – Seattle; August 1-2 - CIE Public Review panel – Seattle; Sept 5-7 - Juneau
Oct 2 - Anchorage during Council meeting; Oct 17-18 - Juneau
November 7-9 - Juneau

Arc Reader Application

At the April 2012 meeting, the Council tasked the Enforcement Committee to explore the availability of agency-issued software that could be integrated with existing navigation software to show closed areas in the North Pacific. Addressing this request, NOAA Office of Law Enforcement provided a demonstration of the Arc Reader application, interim replacement for MapViewer application, to the Enforcement Committee. Arc Reader is a stand-alone application that will allow one to download, view, query, navigate and print Steller sea lion protection measures charts and additional restricted groundfish areas from your PC without being connected to the internet. In addition, the Arc Reader application has GPS integration capabilities. This application is available for download to the industry at alaskafisheries.noaa.gov/maps/sslmapviewer.htm or can be provided in a CD format by NOAA Office of Law Enforcement.

Greenland Turbot Sector Allocation

The Council received a staff presentation summarizing the BSAI Greenland turbot longline and trawl fisheries and information the Council may wish to consider in advancing the issue of sector allocations for the BSAI Greenland turbot fishery. The Council heard about discussions between the Freezer Longline Coalition and the Amendment 80 Cooperatives to reach non-regulatory agreement to manage Greenland turbot catch in the Bering Sea and Aleutian Islands subareas. To date, those cooperatives have not been able to reach agreement on measures to ensure the directed fishery remains open. Because the cooperatives have not yet reached agreement, the Council voted, with one objection, to adopt a draft purpose and need statement, and advance alternative regulatory actions for analysis. The draft purpose and need statement, as well as the alternatives for consideration, are available on the Council's website.

The Council requested an update from the Freezer Longline Coalition and the Amendment 80 cooperatives in October, 2012 on progress toward reaching a non-regulatory agreement to manage Greenland turbot catch. Staff contact is Steve MacLean.

BSAI Crab Specs

The SSC recommended OFLs and ABCs for four of the ten crab stocks under the BSAI Crab FMP. ABC recommendations are made by the SSC to the Council in order to comply with Annual Catch Limit provisions. Six of the ten stocks will have OFLs and ABCs established in October following the summer survey information availability. Two of the ten stocks (Norton Sound red king crab and AI golden king crab) have OFL and ABC recommendations put forward at this time in order to have approved OFLs and ABCs prior to the summer fisheries for these stocks. The remaining two stocks (Adak red king crab and Pribilof Islands golden king crab) have OFLs recommended based on Tier 5 formulation (average catch) and OFLs and ABCs are recommended in the spring. The table of OFLs and ABCs for these stocks is posted on the Council website. The Crab SAFE report will be produced in the fall following the Crab Plan Team meeting and will include these 4 stocks as well as the recommendations on management of the remaining 6 stocks. The Crab Plan Team also reported to the Council on the acceptance of an approved Tanner crab stock assessment model to be used for fall specifications, model progress on other stocks and the intent to hold a model workshop in January 2013 to address the stock assessment models for the Aleutian Islands golden king crab stock and the Norton Sound red king crab stock. The CPT further provided input to the Council on revisions to the proposed alternatives for establishing PSC limits in all groundfish fisheries for all ten crab stocks. The Council requested that staff provide a discussion paper including the recommended alternative revisions from the team as well as noting any further clarifications needed from the Council to move the suite of alternatives forward for analysis. Staff contact is Diana Stram.

BS Flatfish Specifications Flexibility

The Council initiated an analysis to change the harvest and accounting methodology for yellowfin sole, rock sole, and flathead sole, in order to allow increased flexibility in targeting these species. Under the proposed approach, the ABC surplus (i.e., the difference between ABC and TAC) for these species would be allocated among the Amendment 80 cooperatives and CDQ groups, using the same formulas as are used in the annual harvest specifications process. These entities would be able to exchange their yellowfin sole, flathead sole, and/or rock sole quota share for an equivalent amount of their allocation of the ABC surplus for these species. The approach is intended to increase the opportunity for maximizing the harvest of these species, while ensuring that the overall 2 million mt optimum yield, and ABCs for each individual species, is not exceeded.

The analysis also includes options to restrict flexibility in the exchange of yellowfin sole; if the analysis shows that there is a potential negative impact of the approach on users of yellowfin sole in the Bering Sea trawl limited access sector. The Council's problem statement and alternatives are available on the Council website. Staff contact is Diana Evans.

Pribilof Islands Blue King Crab Rebuilding Plan

The Council took final action on a revised rebuilding plan for the overfished Pribilof Islands blue king crab stock. While the directed fishery for this stock has been closed since 1999, and bycatch in the crab fisheries has been minimized, PIBKC are currently caught as prohibited species catch (PSC) in the groundfish fisheries. The purpose of this action is to reduce the risk of overfishing the PIBKC stock by amending the rebuilding plan to minimize PSC of blue king crab in the federally managed groundfish fisheries, in compliance with the Magnuson-Stevens Act and the national standard guidelines. In minimizing PIBKC bycatch in groundfish fisheries to the extent practicable, the Council intends to provide the maximum potential for rebuilding this very depressed stock.

The Council recommended Alternative 2b as its preferred alternative. This alternative closes the Pribilof Island Habitat Conservation Zone (PIHCZ) to fishing for Pacific cod with pot gear. The PIHCZ is already closed to trawling. The PIHCZ is the area known have key habitat components important to PIBKC. The closure is being recommended for extension to fishing for Pacific cod pot gear as this is the gear type with the highest observed bycatch. This closure would decrease the mortality on this stock and reduce the potential for overfishing due to bycatch. Staff contact is Diana Stram.

Staff Tasking

In addition to discussing the relative priority of previously tasked projects, the Council initiated several new projects, requested that several letters be prepared, and clarified several issues. Letters to be prepared include a letter of support for the USCG and NOAA Office of Law Enforcement, a comment letter on National Standard 1 based on the process proposed by the SSC, and letter to NMFS Alaska Region encouraging creative approaches to authorizing the testing of salmon excluder devices. New projects include: 1) a discussion paper to remove restrictions on CQE communities buying small blocks of IFQ especially from CQE residents, 2) a discussion paper on the legal issues and potential impacts of allowing AFA vessels to replace Amendment 80 vessels, 3) an analysis to provide a check-in/out or transit corridor for vessels needing to pass through the Round Island walrus area. Further direction was provided to the Observer Advisory Committee relative to reviewing the deployment plan and electronic monitoring, direction to the Non-target Species Committee to review the initial draft of the grenadier analysis (when available), and establishment of a new committee of council members that will provide feedback to staff on the programmatic groundfish supplemental information report. Other items clarified under staff tasking included direction regarding inclusion of a discussion on Pacific cod caps for the Amendment 80 sector in the flatfish specification flexibility analysis, request for NMFS to provide rationale relative to the subsistence regulations as they apply to family members, and lastly, expectations relative to the October discussion of tools to address PSC in CGOA trawl fisheries.

Freezer Longline MLOA adjustment

The Council identified a preliminary preferred alternative (PPA) for an analysis evaluating a

change to criteria, in order to allow owners of Bering Sea / Aleutian Islands (BSAI) freezer longline (hook-and-line catcher processor) vessels that fish for Pacific cod, to replace or rebuild their vessels to a length greater than that specified under the restrictions of the License Limitation Program (LLP) and the American Fisheries Act (AFA). Under the PPA, the maximum length overall (MLOA) on all LLP licenses in the sector would be increased to 220', and the Council would clarify that the capacity restrictions of the AFA would not apply to this fishery. An option would also apply, which would require those LLPs that also have a BSAI Pacific cod pot catcher processor endorsement to choose either to receive the larger MLOA, or to surrender their pot gear endorsement.

The Council also made minor revisions to the problem statement, and to Options 3.1, 3.3, and 3.4. Staff will revise the analysis to ensure that it provides a clear understanding of how replaced vessels may be used, and what impacts may result to freezer longline vessels that are only endorsed for Pacific cod in the GOA. The Council's revised problem statement and alternatives are available on the Council website. Staff contact is Diana Evans.

Freezer Longline Sideboards

At this meeting, the Council reviewed a discussion paper of the impacts of non-AFA crab sideboard for GOA Pacific cod on freezer longline vessels. The non-AFA crab sideboards were originally included in the crab rationalization program, which was implemented in 2005. When implemented, the sideboards were aggregated at the inshore and offshore level and were shared by all gears. However, as part of the GOA Pacific cod sector allocations implemented in 2012, the sideboard was modified from an inshore and offshore limit shared by all gears to sector specific limits. Recognizing this modification to the GOA Pacific cod sideboard will constrain sideboarded freezer

longline vessels, the Council at this meeting approved the following problem statement:

The narrowing of the sideboard limit under Amendment 83 from a non-gear sideboard to a sector specific sideboard significantly reduced non-AFA crab Gulf of Alaska Pacific cod sideboards for sideboarded freezer longline vessels active in the Gulf of Alaska Pacific cod fishery prior to the Pacific cod sector split. A recalculation of the Pacific cod sideboards resulted in the loss of fishing opportunities, future revenues, and an ability to participate in the Gulf of Alaska cooperative fishing efforts.

Under Amendment 83, the freezer longline sector has a direct allocation, and due to the harvesting capacity available to participate in the Gulf of Alaska freezer longline sector, must establish cooperative harvest control measures in order for NMFS to make the sector TAC available for directed fishing. Therefore, the need for catcher processor hook-and-line GOA Pacific cod sideboards to limit the catch of these vessels may no longer exist.

Removal of the non-AFA crab GOA Pacific cod sideboards for freezer longliners would restore to the sideboarded vessels the ability to participate in the GOA Pacific cod fishery. Removing sideboarded freezer longline vessels, however, may adversely impact GOA only freezer longline vessels and, to the extent practicable, there is a need to minimize the impact.

In addition to the problem statement, the Council also approved two alternatives for analysis:

Alternative 1: No Action.

Alternative 2: Remove freezer longline non-AFA crab GOA Pacific cod sideboards.

The no action alternative would leave in place the current freezer longline non-AFA crab GOA Pacific cod sideboard, while the action alternative would remove only the freezer longline GOA Pacific cod sideboard. Other sideboards for other sectors would remain in effect. Staff contact is Jon McCracken.

Round Island

The Council initiated analysis for a regulatory amendment to make to appropriate adjustment for either a check-in/check-out or transient corridor through the Round Island no transit area. The intent of this proposed action is to allow tenders with federal fishing permits to transit through the Round Island no transit area to the Togiak area and back.

Per 50 CFR 679.22 (a)(4), between April 1 and Sept 30, vessels with an FFP are prohibited from transiting between 3 and 12 nm from the baseline at Round Island and The Twins (Northern Bristol Bay area) (see Figure 1). This is a longstanding prohibition, intended to provide reduced disruption to the walrus haulouts at these locations.

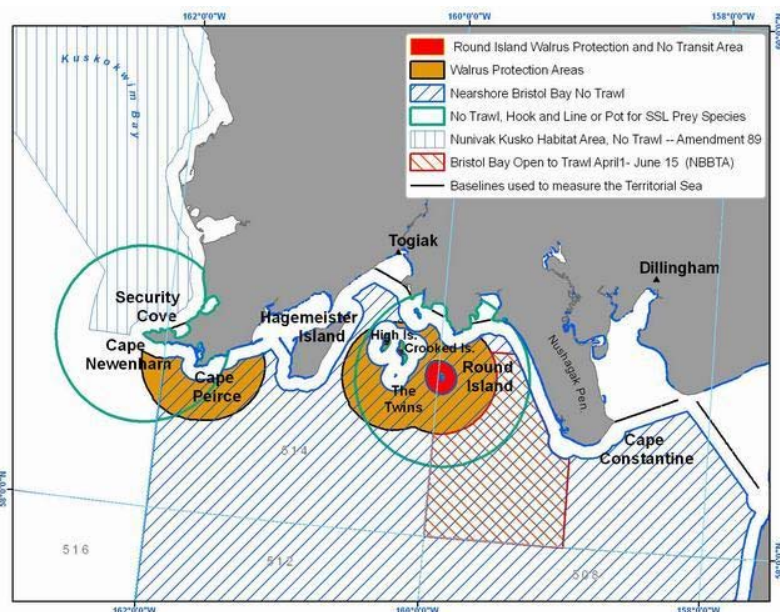
In the past, this has not been an enforcement priority, due in part to there being a process for vessel owner/operators to “surrender” their FFP to exempt themselves from the application of this prohibition, then reapplying in the fall or when done tendering. However, with the recent passage of the suite of regulations implementing GOA Pacific cod sector splits, the ability for a vast majority of vessels to surrender their FFP to comply with this prohibition has been precluded. A significant number of the vessels which operate as tenders in this area hold a FFP to participate in other fisheries, and if the FFP were surrendered, could not be re-obtained during the 3 year cycle. The primary fleet that this prohibition effects are the vessels serving as tenders between the Togiak area herring and maybe salmon fisheries and processors in Naknak and other areas within Bristol Bay.

Going “around” these two islands requires a significant detour through more offshore waters. Informal discussions with USFWS indicate a strong desire to limit increases in vessel traffic past the walrus haulout on the NW shore of Hagemeister Island. Likewise, another possibility technically involves remaining inside 3 nm state waters on the very northern shore of Bristol Bay, between Togiak Bay and the Nushagak Pen, but this area is reportedly shallow and potentially presents increased safety considerations.

Although the Round Island regulations are clear, it is recognized that the recent changes have exacerbated the enforcement and compliance situation. Compounding the issue is the regulation’s intent to afford some heightened protections for walrus, a species under primary management of USFWS. Staff contact is Steve MacLean.

AFA Vessels as AM80 Replacement Vessels

During staff tasking, the Council asked staff to prepare a brief discussion paper examining the legal provisions and potential impacts regarding the use of AFA vessels as Amendment 80 replacement vessels. Currently, NMFS is intending to prohibit the use of AFA vessels as replacement vessels, which is consistent with the Council’s understanding at the time Amendment 80 vessel replacement action was adopted by the Council. However, during the B reports at this meeting, NMFS informed the Council of a changing legal interpretation that would permit the use of AFA vessels as Amendment 80 replacement vessels. It was agreed by the Council that a brief review of NOAA GC interpretation of the Capacity Reduction Program legislation would help the Council better understand this issue. In addition, the discussion paper would be helpful for the Council as well as effected sectors to understand better in terms of the economic impacts and how AFA sideboards might apply, if the Council wanted to explicitly permit the use of AFA vessels as Amendment 80 vessels. After a review of the discussion paper, the Council could decide not to take any action, in which case AFA vessels would be prohibited for use as Amendment 80 replacement vessels or the Council could initiate an analysis of options that would allow the use of AFA vessels as Amendment 80 replacement vessels. Staff contacts are Mark Fina and Jon McCracken.



Programmatic Groundfish SEIS

The Council reviewed a discussion paper about whether the 2004 Programmatic Groundfish SEIS (PSEIS) is in need of revision, and opted to proceed with a more formal evaluation through a Supplemental Information Report process. The report will evaluate whether either of the requirements for supplementing an EIS have been met with respect to the PSEIS: a) whether there has been a substantial change to the groundfish fisheries that is relevant to environmental concerns, or b) whether there exist significant new circumstances or information relevant to environmental concerns, and bearing on the groundfish fisheries or their impacts. Staff will develop an analytical outline for the report and bring it back for Council approval at a future meeting. A Council member subcommittee, to be appointed, will provide direction on the development of the analysis. Staff contact is Diana Evans.

GOA Jig Gear

The Council and the Enforcement Committee reviewed a discussion paper on limiting other gear types on board vessels jigging for Pacific cod in the Gulf, and moved to table further discussion until such a time as more catch and participation data are available under the Amendment 83 sector split management structure. Under separate TAC allocations for each gear type sector, there could be incentives to increase the duration of one sector's season at the expense of another; the discussion paper stems from such a foreseen concern. It is unclear at this time, though, whether gear restrictions would adequately address accompanying issues of misreporting Pacific cod in the Gulf; for example, longline catch misreported as jig-caught. The federal B season for the jig sector opened on June 10. Based on catch data thus far in 2012, it is anticipated that the jig sector fleet will receive a 1% step-up in its TAC allocation for the 2013 season. Though recognizing the potential incentive to misreport Pacific cod catch under sector splits, the Council noted that there is no clear indication that widespread misreporting of catch is occurring at this time.



Photo: Tony Kenne, USCG

HAPC

The Council made an initial review of the analysis to identify areas of skate egg concentration as Habitat Areas of Particular Concern (HAPC); the Enforcement Committee also reviewed the analysis. The Council selected Alternative 2 and Options a, d, and e as its Preferred Preliminary Alternative (PPA), and released the document for public review.

The Council moved to strike from Alternative 2 its intent to “discourage fishing in these areas” of skate egg concentration with gear that makes contact with the sea floor. The Council adopted a revised statement of Purpose and Need, based on public comments. The motion is available on the Council's website.

Under Option a, NMFS would monitor HAPC

for changes in egg density and other potential effects of fishing, and the Council would request that industry support collection of data in evaluation of monitoring and management efforts relative to those HAPC. Under Option d, the Council would suggest adding research and monitoring of areas of skate egg concentration to the Council's research priority list. The intent of its PPA is to monitor the potential impacts of fishing activities in the proposed HAPCs primarily at the population level and if practicable to develop additional information on fishery interactions with areas of skate egg concentrations.

Finally, under Option e, the Council would adopt the formatting standards as stated in the final rule implementing Amendment 89 to the BSAI Groundfish FMP, which establishes Bering Sea habitat conservation

measures. This option is a housekeeping amendment to consolidate figures and tables that describe the Bering Sea Habitat Conservation Area (HCA), the Northern Bering Sea Research Area and Saint Lawrence Island HCA, and the Nunivak Island, Etolin Strait, and Kuskokwim Bay HCA. Staff contact is David Witherell.



Photo: Jane DiCosimo NPFMC



Photo: Peggy Kircher NPFMC

Above: Whale watching on the boat ride to Ouzinkie. Left: Hermann Squartsoff addresses the community and guests of Ouzinkie at a reception during the Council meeting. Below: The Coast Guard cutter Munro.



Photo: Mark Fina, NPFMC

DRAFT NPFMC THREE-MEETING OUTLOOK - updated 6/19/12

October 1-9, 2012 Anchorage, AK	December 3-11, 2012 Anchorage, AK	February 4-12, 2013 Portland, OR
SSL EIS scoping (T) SSL EIS analytical approach: SSC review Observer Deployment Plan: OAC report; action as necessary Charter Halibut: Review Methodology for 2013 limits (SSC only) Halibut CSP: Final Action CGOA trawl PSC tools: feedback; goals and objectives Halibut/Sablefish IFQ Leasing prohibition: NMFS Disc. paper (T) VMS Use and Requirements: Expanded Discussion Paper BSAI Crab ROFR: Initial Review (T) BSAI Crab active participation requirements: Initial Review BSAI Crab Cooperative Provisions for Crew : Discussion paper BSAI Crab Binding Arbitration - GKC: Workgroup report Binding Arbitration Issues (lengthy season, publishing decisions, IPQ Initiation): Discussion Paper Am 80 vessel replacement with AFA vessels: Discussion Paper AFA Vessel Replacement GOA Sideboards: Initial Review FLL Vessel Replacement (MLOA adjustment): Final Action Groundfish Catch Specifications: Adopt proposed specficiations BSAI Crab SAFE: Final OFL/ABC specifications for 6 stocks BSAI Tanner Crab rebuilding plan: Revise Alternatives EFH Consultations: Report BS Habitat Conservation Area Boundary: Review Northern Bering Sea Research: Discussion paper Research/EFP Catch: Discussion paper (T) GOA pollock EFP: Review (T)	AI Risk Assessment: Report (T) SSL EIS: Identify Alternatives for Analysis Charter Halibut: Recommendations for 2013 Definition of Fishing Guide: Discussion Paper Retention of 4A halibut in BSAI sablefish pots: Disc. paper (T) BSAI Chum Salmon Bycatch: Initial Review GOA Chinook Bycatch All Trawl Fisheries: Initial Review (T) H/S IFQ Disc papers (GOA sablefish pots, unharvested halibut, sablefish A-share caps) (T) BSAI Crab ROFR: Final Action (T) BSAI Crab active participation requirements: Final Action HAPC - Skate sites: Final Action AFA Vessel Replacement GOA Sideboards: Final Action Groundfish Catch Specifications: Adopt Final specifications BSAI Tanner Crab rebuilding plan: Initial Review (T) PSEIS/SIR: Progress Report	Round Island Transit: Initial Review (T) Genadier management: Initial Review (T) Greenland Turbot allocation: Initial Review (T) GOA Chinook Bycatch All Trawl Fisheries: Final Action (T) CQE small block restrictions: Discussion Paper (T) Crab bycatch limits in BSAI groundfish fisheries: Disc paper BBRKC spawning area/fishery effects: Updated Discussion paper GOA P cod sideboards for FLL: Initial Review (T) BSAI Flatfish Specification Flexibility: Initial Review (T) BSAI Tanner Crab rebuilding plan: Final Action (T) ITEMS BELOW FOR FUTURE MEETINGS Crab PSC numbers to weight: Discussion paper BS Canyons: Updated AFSC report; Fishing activities and management discussion paper MPA Nominations: Discuss and consider nominations

AI - Aleutian Islands
 AFA - American Fisheries Act
 BiOp - Biological Opinion
 BSAI - Bering Sea and Aleutian Islands
 BKC - Blue King Crab
 BOF - Board of Fisheries
 CQE - Community Quota Entity
 CDQ - Community Development Quota
 EDR - Economic Data Reporting
 EFP - Exempted Fishing Permit
 EIS - Environmental Impact Statement
 EFH - Essential Fish Habitat
 FLL - Freezer longliners
 GOA - Gulf of Alaska

GKC - Golden King Crab
 GHL - Guideline Harvest Level
 HAPC - Habitat Areas of Particular Concern
 IFQ - Individual Fishing Quota
 IBQ - Individual Bycatch Quota
 MPA - Marine Protected Area
 PSEIS - Programmatic Suplimental Impact Statement
 PSC - Prohibited Species Catch
 RKC - Red King Crab
 ROFR - Right of First Refusal
 SSC - Scientific and Statistical Committee
 SAFE - Stock Assessment and Fishery Evaluation
 SSL - Steller Sea Lion
 TAC - Total Allowable Catch

Future Meeting Dates and Locations

October 1-9, 2012 - Hilton Hotel, Anchorage
 December 3-11, 2012 - Anchorage
 February 4-12, 2013, Portland
 April 1-9, 2013, Anchorage
 June 3-11, 2013, Juneau
 September 30-Oct 8, 2013 Anchorage
 December 9-17, 2013, Anchorage

(T) Tentatively scheduled