

Year End Report of The Fishing Company of Alaska

Offshore Rockfish Cooperative

Respectively submitted to:
Regional Administrator
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Section I INTRODUCTION

In Section 802 of the Consolidated Appropriations Act of 2004, the U.S. Congress included a directive to the Secretary of Commerce to establish, in consultation with the North Pacific Fishery Management Council (the Council), a pilot program for management of three primary rockfish species in the Central Gulf of Alaska (CGOA): Pacific Ocean perch (POP), northern rockfish (NR), and pelagic shelf rockfish fisheries (PSR).¹ The ensuing Rockfish Pilot Program (RPP) allowed for the formation of rockfish fishing cooperatives in the catcher vessel (CV) and catcher processor (CP) sectors, the latter of which requires at least two limited license permits (LLP's).

The Fishing Company of Alaska (FCA) Rockfish Cooperative was one of three offshore/catcher processor cooperatives formed first in 2007, 2008, 2009, 2010, and again in 2011 in accordance to Amendment 68 of the Fishery Management Plan for Groundfish of the Gulf of Alaska. During this 2011 fishing season the FCA cooperative performed quota transfers between with Gulf of Alaska Rockfish Best Use Cooperative.

Each cooperative received an annual harvest share allocation based on the qualified harvest history of its members (combined vessel quota shares or QS). In addition to the allocation of primary rockfish species (POP, NR, PSR), catcher processor cooperatives also received allocations of secondary species, which included sablefish, thornyhead, shortraker, roughey rockfish and halibut PSC mortality. The catcher processor (CP) vessel co-ops did not receive allocations of Pacific cod. The CP cod was managed as a maximum retainable amount (MRA's in the CP sector) but was allocated shortraker and roughey rockfish. Allocations to both the inshore and catcher processor sectors were based on the average percentage of retained catch and halibut PSC mortality usage of these species in the target rockfish fisheries during the qualifying period. These allocations were distributed to the cooperative members based on the amount of primary rockfish that the cooperative member held.

Provisions in the RPP regulations allowed for only one-way transfers of CQ from a CP offshore co-op to a CV inshore co-op, and during the 2011 RPP season no such transfers were made.

This year (2011) marked the fifth and last year of the five year Rockfish Pilot Program and, in compliance with Amendment 68, this annual report is submitted to the Council as a summary of harvests, transfers and cooperative performance during the 2011 rockfish fishing season in the Central Gulf of Alaska (CGOA).

Section II COOPERATIVE MEMBERSHIP

The 2011 Fishing Company of Alaska Cooperative (FCA) consisted of three member vessels, AK Spirit (LLP #3043), AK Victory (LLP #2080) and AK Warrior (LLP # 2083); the Alaska Spirit and Victory actively fished in the RPP.

Member Licenses

Vessel Name	ADF&G	USCG	LLP
Alaska Spirit	59870	554913	3043
Alaska Victory	61083	569752	2080
Alaska Warrior	56965	590350	2083

Section III COOPERATIVE MANAGEMENT- MONITORING

The Fishing Company of Alaska (FCA) cooperative was represented and managed by Bill McGill of Fishing Company of Alaska, Inc. in collaboration and coordination with the other offshore cooperatives, Gulf of Alaska Rockfish Best Use Cooperative, the inshore inter-cooperative manager, Julie Bonney of the Alaska Groundfish Data Bank, and the National Marine Fisheries Service (in-season management).

FCA's 2011 cooperative harvesting strategy was to bring the entire allocation under one cooperative and manage the harvesting in the central GOA utilizing the AK Spirit and AK Victory to take the quota.

Based on its previous years fishing experience, FCA was able to develop an effective onboard catch monitoring program and employ fishing techniques that maximized harvest and minimized PSC bycatch without exceeding any species or PSC allocations. The ability to coordinate harvesting of relatively small TACs between the vessels proved to be a key factor in this program.

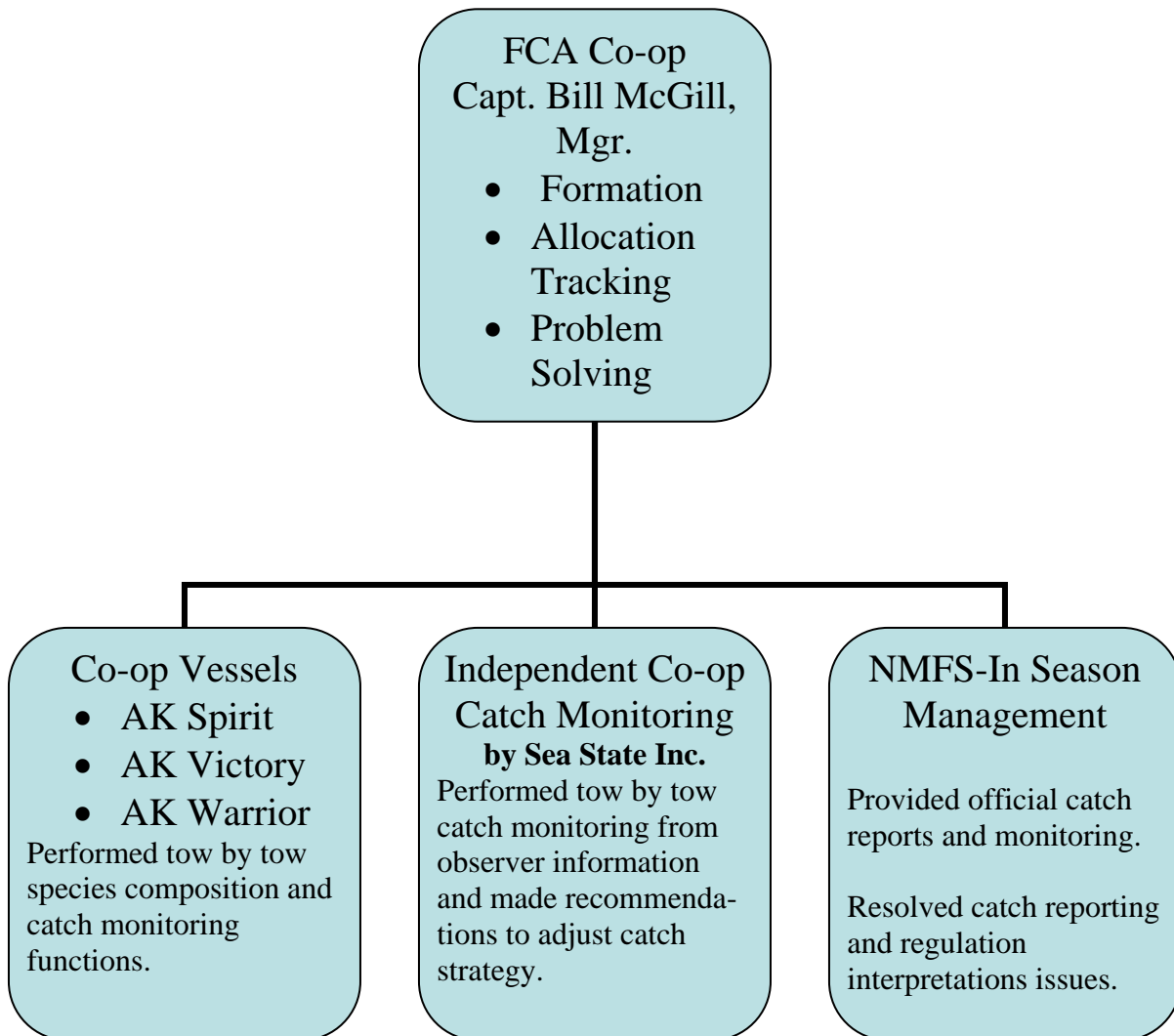
Vessel Catch-Monitoring

All of FCA's co-op vessels were equipped with onboard catch monitoring systems that allowed them to compute and monitor catch on a tow by tow basis based on real time haul estimates, species composition and observer information. Each vessel's accounting was compared to catch reports compiled by an independent catch monitoring company, Sea State Inc., who utilized the most current official NMFS observer catch information. The comparative data was then transmitted to the vessels via the co-op manager and any discrepancies between the vessels catch estimates and those compiled by Sea State were immediately rectified.

In addition to the above, a third check of catch data accuracy was made when the co-op manager also compared the vessels and Sea State catch numbers with the NMFS co-op manager's official catch accounting in Juneau to ensure no species allocations were exceeded. While all of this may have seemed a little redundant, it gave all concerned confidence that over harvesting of CQ would not happen.

Figure 1 below shows the schematic outlining the co-op's operations and flow of information among the contributing parties.

Figure 1. Schematic of Fishing Co. of Alaska Rockfish Cooperative Operations and Management.



Section IV CO-OP ALLOCATIONS, TRANSFERS and PERFORMANCE

FCA cooperative allocations and transfers for the 2011 season are summarized by species in Table 1.

The FCA cooperative did perform inter-cooperative transfers between the other two off shore cooperatives in an effort to maximize the offshore sectors total harvest and balance out accounts within the cooperative. More cooperatives in 2011 improved the off shore sectors ability to operate under the program. It should be noted that while post delivery transfers are permissible between cooperatives, the ability to make these finite changes is complicated by the agency making after the fact adjustments to the account balances.

Table 1 Central Gulf of Alaska Allocations and Transfers IN and OUT of Cooperative by Species.

NAME	FCA CQ Allocation	Transferred IN from the coop listed	Transferred OUT to the coop listed	In Transfers	Out Transfers	Catch	CQ not harvested	Percent ¹ Harvested
Pacific Ocean Perch	2,382.129		Gulf of Alaska Best Use Cooperative	0	43.0	2297.220	41.909	98%
Pelagic Shelf Rockfish	166.956		Gulf of Alaska Best Use Cooperative	0	66.9	99.646	0.410	100%
Northern Rockfish	237.728		Gulf of Alaska Best Use Cooperative	0	60.0	179.114	0	100%
Sablefish	73.719		GOA BUC	0	9.4	64.319	0.092	100%
Shortraker Rockfish	35.300		Gulf of Alaska Best Use Cooperative	0	12.7	22.557	0.043	100%
Rougheye Rockfish	184.820		Gulf of Alaska Best Use Cooperative	0	184.3	0.497	.023	100%
Thornyhead Rockfish	52.853		Gulf of Alaska Best Use Cooperative	0	43.4	9.429	0.024	100%
CGOA Halibut - PSC	39.207			0	0	11.751	27.458	30%
GOA DW Complex Haliibut	8.889			0	0	8.162	0.726	92%
GOA SW Complex Halibut	1.683			0	0	0	1.683	0%

¹ Percent is after adjusted transfers in/out of co-op.

Section V WESTERN GULF OF ALASKA (WGOA) SIDEBOARDS

During the fifth year of the program, Fishing Company of Alaska chose to manage its cooperative in a conservative manner; focusing on catch monitoring, individual vessel accountability and developing inter-cooperative transfer relationships with other cooperatives. All co-op vessels fished in the WGOA sideboard fishery. The Western GOA fishery competition (race for fish) has intensified as a result of the CGOA rockfish program. The last real race for fish in Gulf remains in the Western area where the fishing days have been reduced from one week, to 3 days and only two days during the 2010 fishing year. WGOA POP was a one day fishery in 2011.

Table 2 Western GOA Sideboard Species

Species Group	Area	Sideboard Percentage	Total CP Sideboard Limit (mt)	FCA Co-op Sideboard Limit (mt)	FCA Catch (mt)	FCA Balance (mt)	FCA % Remaining
Northern Rockfish	WG	78.9	1,830	1,462	477.357	984.643	67%
Pacific Ocean Perch	WG	61.1	1,710	1,542	668.993	873.007	57%
Pelagic Shelf Rockfish	WG	63.3	387	352	103.545	248.455	71%

(* The POP fishery closed on TAC after one days, so the coop vessels could not reach the limit.

Section VI CO-OP CENTRAL GOA PROHIBITED SPECIES CATCH (PSC)

The FCA co-op was allocated 39.207 mts of halibut PSC and used 11.751 mts. Any unused halibut PSC automatically became available to the inshore sector on November 15th.

Section VII PROGRAM SIDEBOARDS

The Rockfish Pilot Program established sideboard limitations (not allocations) that limited LLP holders participating in the program from expanding their harvests in other fisheries. These sideboard limits applied only in July, historically the most active month for rockfish fishing.

All three of the FCA cooperative vessels participated in the Western Gulf co-op sideboard fisheries. The side board limits shown in Table 2, were not limiting on the FCA cooperative because the POP fishery was only open for 24 hours due to increased

fishing effort by non-central Gulf of Alaska Rockfish participants (Amendment 80 vessels) and the CGOA Rockfish CPs.

Section VIII PENALTIES/CIVIL ACTIONS

There were no NMFS enforcement actions or other sanctions taken against the FCA cooperative fishing in the RPP.

Section IX SUMMARY COMMENTS

The most discouraging aspect of the program seems to be the side effect of the intensified race for fish in Western GOA. The lack of rationalization in Western GOA will continue to intensify the race for fish and limit the total benefits that could be obtained for the sector that harvests offshore rockfish in the GOA.