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News & Notes

North Pacific Fishery Management Council

April 2012

New Appointments

Chairman Olson announced appointments to the SSC and Plan Teams. Dr. Craig Faunce, of the AFSC, has been appointed to the GOA Groundfish Plan Team. Dr. Brad Harris of Alaska Pacific University and Mr. Quinn Smith of ADF&G in Juneau have been appointed to the Scallop Plan Team, and Dr. Sherri Dressel and Dr. Henry Cheng have both been appointed to the SSC. Dr. Dressel will replace Doug Woodby from ADF&G, and Dr. Cheng will serve as the Washington Department of Fish and Wildlife representative. Bob Clark was elected as Vice Chair and will serve in that capacity for the remainder of the year.

Denny Lassuy, the Council representative for USF&W, will be leaving the Council due to a job change. We thank him for his time and contributions and wish him luck in his new endeavors.

Upcoming meetings

Crab Plan Team: May 7-10; Hilton Hotel, Anchorage, AK

NPFMC/IPHC workshop: April 24-25, Crowne Plaza Hotel, Seattle

Joint Groundfish Plan Team Pcod models: May 1, AFSC, Seattle



Photo Credit: Jeb Morrow

Halibut Issues

Commercial IFQ Fisheries

The Council took final action on an IFQ proposal submitted in 2009 to allow IFQ derived from Category D quota share (QS) to be fished on Category C vessels in Area 4B, also known as "fish-up." This is a similar action to one that was implemented for Area 3B and Area 4C in 2007. The Council considered, but did not expand, its action to Area 4A. The Council action would relieve a restriction placed on IFQ halibut fishery participants and would further program goals by increasing the amount of IFQs that may be harvested by the small boat fleet and increasing safety at sea for that fleet. This action would affect up to 12 Area 4B Category D QS holders, who hold < 3% of IFQs and a few owners of larger vessels upon which these IFQs would be allowed to be fished.

The Council also adopted recommendations from its IFQ Implementation Committee to rank four discussion papers that the Council previously had requested. The Council identified a 2009 proposal to consider allowing halibut to be retained in sablefish pots fished by sablefish IFQ holders who also hold halibut IFQs to account for the retained halibut. This proposal was forwarded to the Council by the International Pacific Halibut Commission which retains authority on the proposed action, since the proposed action also would affect the sablefish IFQ fishery, which is

under Council management. The Council could review an analysis of the effects of the proposed action and provide a recommendation on whether to expand the legal gear to include pot gear to the IPHC prior to its January 2013 meeting.

The Council's second priority was to develop a discussion paper to allow the use of pot gear in the Gulf of Alaska sablefish IFQ fisheries, after a new gear committee was formed and provided further recommendations to the Council. The remaining two proposals, as amended by the Council, were a) to assess whether the problem of unharvested halibut IFQ in Area 4 is attributable to the current vessel IFQ cap or are there other factors, and 2) to exempt A shares from the current vessel cap and set a separate sablefish A share vessel cap (for all areas). These lower priority issues will be scheduled for Council review after its higher priority action for halibut management actions (i.e., Area 2C/Area 3A Catch Sharing Plan, Gulf of Alaska Halibut Bycatch Reduction, and Observer Program Restructuring) are implemented.

The Council also requested that a recent paper on sablefish discard mortality rates be reviewed at the Joint Groundfish Plan Team meeting in September 2012. The Council suggested that another proposal to revise sablefish product recovery rates in the IFQ longline fishery could be addressed under an industry experimental fishing permit. Contact Jane DiCosimo for more information.

Halibut Catch Sharing Plan

After reviewing several staff reports, the Council amended its preferred alternative on the charter halibut catch sharing plan (CSP) and identified a new preliminary preferred alternative for final action in October 2012. The Council identified a new preferred alternative for each of the three main parts of the CSP: 1) allocations to the commercial and charter sectors, 2) compensated reallocation from the commercial sector to charter sector through the use of Guided Angler Fish (or GAF), and 3) management measures to keep the charter sector to its allocation in each area.

2012 Preliminary Preferred Alternative

Allocations. The Council recommended adoption of the Logbook Program under the CSP. 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 Statewide Harvest Survey (SWHS), with the adjustment factor reduced by the amount of harvest attributed to skipper and crew. Application of this adjustment factor would result in the following changes to the October 2008 CSP preferred alternative charter allocations:

Area 2C adjustment factor = 5.6%

Area 2C current CSP allocation in Tier 1 = 17.3%

Adjusted CSP allocation = $(17.3\% * 5.6\%) + 17.3\% = 18.3\%$

Area 2C current CSP allocation in Tiers 2 through 4 = 15.1%

Adjusted CSP allocation = $(15.1\% * 5.6\%) + 15.1\% = 15.9\%$

Area 3A adjustment factor = 15.4%

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

Adjusted CSP allocation = $(15.4\% * 15.4\%) + 15.4\% = 17.8\%$

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

Adjusted CSP allocation = $(14.0\% * 15.4\%) + 14.0\% = 16.2\%$

Guided Angler Fish Program

- GAF would be issued in numbers of fish.

Conversion of IFQ pounds to numbers of fish would be based on the average weight of GAF from the previous year.

- In the first year of the GAF program, the GAF weight to number of fish conversion factor would be based on the previous year's data or most recent year without maximum size limit in effect.
- Define the leasing limitation from one IFQ share holder as 10% of IFQ holdings or 1500 pounds in Area 2C and 15% or 1500 pounds in Area 3A, whichever is greater.
- Include a requirement to mark GAF by removing the tips of the upper and lower lobes of the tail and report the length of retained GAF halibut to NMFS through the NMFS approved electronic reporting system.
- A complete review within five years of the start of the GAF program, taking into account the economic effects of both sectors.

The Management Matrix would be replaced by the 2012 approach for setting annual management measures for the charter sector. This would result in 1) an annual analysis of potential management measures using the most current charter halibut harvest data and IPHC staff recommendation for a combined charter and commercial catch limit for each area, 2) review by committee, AP, SSC, and Council, 3) Council recommendation on appropriate management measures for each area to the IPHC, 4) consideration and adoption of the Council's Area 2C/3A CSP and area management measure(s) by the IPHC, and 5) implementation by NMFS of annual management measures.

Additional options for analysis

1) Allocations

Area 2C: At a combined catch limit of <5 mlbs, establish the CSP allocation at the upper end of the original range proposed for the CSP (20.8%); at a combined catch limit of ≥ 5 - <9 mlbs, establish the CSP allocation at the upper end of the original range proposed for the CSP (18.6%). At combined catch limits of ≥ 9 mlbs, maintain the original target CSP allocation of 15.1%.

Area 3A: At a combined catch limit of <10 mlbs, establish the CSP allocation at the

upper end of the original range proposed for the CSP (18.9%); at a combined catch limit of ≥ 10 - <20 mlbs, establish the CSP allocation at the upper end of the original range proposed for the CSP (17.5%). At combined catch limits of ≥ 20 mlbs, maintain the original target CSP allocation of 14.0%.

Note: Under the 2012 model, the +/- 3.5% range around the allocation would be removed, and the Council would be annually recommending management measures that minimize the difference between the projected harvest and the target allocation, without exceeding the allocation.

2) Separate accountability of wastage
The Council requested that the analysis consider separate accountability of wastage for the charter and commercial sectors. If adopted, a new proposed rule would describe the method that the Council would expect to be used by the IPHC when it set a combined catch limit for each area and adopted the Council's CSP.

Final action on the CSP preliminary preferred alternative is scheduled for October 2012, with the intent that implementation occur for 2014. In a separate motion later in the meeting the Council asked for a discussion paper to address different federal and state definitions of a charter guide in order to close a loophole that results in fishing practices that are inconsistent with Council intent. A future action would be required to revise the definition in federal regulations. Jane DiCosimo is the Council staff contact on this issue.

Scallop Management

The 2012 Scallop Stock Assessment and Fishery Evaluation (SAFE) report was compiled by the Scallop Plan Team, which meets annually to review the status of stocks and to update the SAFE report. The SSC reviewed the SAFE report and made a number of suggestions for inclusion in the document the following year. Management of scallop stocks is delegated to the State of Alaska under a Federally-approved FMP. The State manages the weathervane scallop stock by region in the Bering Sea, Aleutian Islands and Gulf of Alaska. Scallop harvests within registration areas are limited by the Guideline Harvest Levels (GHLs) established by the State. Information on scallop stocks is provided by biennial surveys in two regions and by the statewide scallop observer program. New video survey technology is being utilized to provide additional information on scallop stocks. The weathervane scallop stock in Alaska is neither overfished nor approaching an overfished condition. The SSC recommended an ABC = 1.161 million lbs shucked scallop meats for the 2012/13 fishery. The 2012 Scallop SAFE report and the minutes from the Scallop Plan Team are available on our website. Staff contact is Diana Stram.

Groundfish Programmatic SEIS

As announced in the February 2012 newsletter, the Council is evaluating its 2004 Groundfish Programmatic SEIS, and whether the time is right to revise it. The decision will take into account many different factors, and the Council is soliciting input from various sources to assist in the Council discussion, scheduled to occur in June at the Council meeting in Kodiak. On March 29, the Council hosted a stakeholder listening session to ask for stakeholder input on whether the existing groundfish management objectives continue to be relevant, or are in need of revision. **The Council continues to solicit written comments on the following questions:**

- Are the Council's current groundfish management approach, policy goal statements, and objectives still relevant?
- How is the Council doing relative to achieving its groundfish management objectives?
- Are there new objectives that ought to become part of the groundfish management policy?

Comments submitted to the Council office will be accepted until May 1, after which they will be compiled into a written report along with comments from the stakeholder session, for the Council's review at the June Council meeting.

At the March/April meeting, the Council's SSC also provided input on whether the scientific basis for the 2004 Groundfish Programmatic SEIS is still relevant, and whether, in combination with other more recent environmental assessments, the Council is able to understand the environmental impacts of the current groundfish management program. The SSC provided a detailed review of

these questions in their minutes (available on the Council website). In June, staff will compile SSC and stakeholder input, as well as a discussion paper from NMFS about ways the PSEIS may provide analytical efficiencies for other Council actions, and ways in which other Councils may meet programmatic NEPA requirements, for the Council's discussion. Staff contact is Diana Evans.

EFH Consultation Criteria

At the last two meetings, the Council has been discussing whether there is a need to formalize its role in the Essential Fish Habitat (EFH) consultation process that is undertaken by NMFS. The Council has an opportunity, and in some instances a statutory obligation, to comment on actions by Federal agencies that may affect habitats of direct concern to the Council. In response to input from NMFS and the Council's Ecosystem Committee, the Council has adopted a formal policy for EFH consultation, in order to ensure that activities that are of relevance to the Council are brought to their attention in a timely fashion, and not overlooked. As part of the policy, the Council has established a structured process for regular reports from NMFS, and has identified specific criteria that can be used to guide the agency in determining whether an activity is likely to be of particular interest to the Council. The complete EFH consultation policy is posted on the Council website. Staff contact is Diana Evans.

Bering Sea Canyons

During staff tasking, the Council initiated a discussion paper to examine new information on two Bering Sea submarine canyons, Zhemchug and Pribilof canyons. The Council has requested that the Alaska Fisheries Science Center review existing and new scientific information on the canyons, their habitat, and fish associations in those areas, and has requested staff to provide information on fishing activity within the canyons and past actions for protection in the areas, and to identify the process for any potential future actions. The intent is for the discussion paper to help the Council to understand what is known about issues related to protection of the canyons. Further specifics on the scope of the discussion paper are included in the Council motion, which is posted on the Council website. Staff contact is Diana Evans.

Habitat Conservation Area Boundary

Amendment 89 to the BSAI Groundfish FMP created a number of habitat conservation areas (HCAs) in which bottom trawling is prohibited, including the Nunivak Island – Etolin Straits – Kuskokwim Bay HCA (Nunivak HCA). The southern boundary of the Nunivak HCA was established after consultation with an industry and Association of Village Council Presidents (AVCP) working group, with the understanding that the working group would continue to communicate and share information and consider modifying the boundary line, if appropriate. Since early 2011, the working group has been meeting to share information and reconsider the southern boundary of the Nunivak HCA. At this meeting, the Council heard joint testimony from industry and community representatives requesting additional time to complete a proposal. The Council voted to reschedule the matter to no earlier than October 2012. Staff contact is Steve MacLean.

GOA Pacific Cod

Jig Gear Limits

The Council requested an expanded discussion paper on limiting other gear types on board vessels jigging for Pacific cod in the GOA.

Under the new sector split management structure, there could be incentives to increase the duration of one sector's season at the expense of another, specifically extending the longline or pot seasons by misreporting catch as jig-caught and/or increasing the likelihood that the jig sector will attain 90% of its allocation and receive a 1% step-up.

The expanded paper will include further discussion on the management issues already identified, suggestions from the AP, and recommendations from the Enforcement Committee.

The paper will discuss possible gear type limitations, such as deployable groundfish gear, other groundfish gear types, and the number of jig gear hooks allowed on board. The ability for a vessel to fish two gear types concurrently will also be evaluated.

The discussion will compare State and Federal regulations being considered because the Federal approach could differ from the State's, complicating reporting and catch accounting for individual gear types. The discussion will also evaluate the degree of flexibility afforded in possible Federal regulations versus ensuring accurate catch reporting.

The discussion will include descriptions of possible mixed-gear fishing trip scenarios and opportunities for jig vessels to operate other gear left on fishing grounds during a previous trip or left by another vessel to circumvent a jig-only gear restriction. The discussion will also touch upon possible operation standards to prevent jig vessels from operating other fishing gear during a jig-only fishing trip. Council staff contact is Sarah Melton.

Jig Parallel Fishery

The Council moved to take no further action on the reverse parallel concept for the GOA Pacific cod jig fishery, which was also the determination made at the Joint Protocol Committee meeting. It is very likely that jig fishermen will have access to fish outside three miles through an extended Federal A season without the necessity of implementing a reverse parallel fishery.

The Pacific cod jig fishery will continue to be managed under the sector split allocations, which can increase

1% each year (up to a 6% maximum) if 90% of the TAC is taken in a given year. Based on the 2012 experience in the jig sector thus far, this step up is expected in 2013 and 2014.

As the Federal TAC steps increases 1% each year, the likelihood there will be a dual fishery with access to Federal and State waters during the favorable fishing period from mid-March to late May increases as well. Therefore, fish on both sides of the three-mile line will be available through an extended A season even in the absence of a reverse parallel fishery.

Further, under the status quo, the State has the option to open the GHF fishery in mid-March and have catch accrue to the State quota, rather than to the Federal/parallel TAC, to ensure that the full GHF is taken and fish are not stranded or rolled over to other gear types. Council staff contact is Sarah Melton.

Revising "A" Season Dates

The Council considered a discussion paper concerning a potential action to revise the A season opening dates for the Gulf of Alaska Pacific cod fisheries. After considering the paper and public testimony, the Council elected to take no further action at this time. The Council's rationale for not advancing an action is that such a change would likely be disruptive to the various fleets in the fisheries that are in the process of adapting to a division of the Pacific cod total allowable catches among different sectors that NOAA Fisheries implemented at the start of the 2012 fishing season. Given the uncertainties associated with that transition and the variety of interactions among the various fleets and management areas that could be induced by the action, the Council elected to take no further action. Staff contact is Mark Fina.

Council to Meet in Kodiak

The next Council meeting is scheduled for June 4–June 12. The Council will be meeting at the new Kodiak Harbor Convention Center starting on the 6th, the AP will be meeting at the Elks Lodge starting on the 4th, and the SSC will be meeting at Fishermen's Hall, also starting on the 4th. As always, the Council meeting will be broadcast, this time using Webex. Look for a link to be posted on the Council's webpage closer to the meeting date. The agenda will be published next month and also available on the website.

Vessel Monitoring System

At this meeting, the Council reviewed a discussion paper regarding the use of and requirements of VMS in the North Pacific fisheries and other regions of the U.S. When the discussion paper was tasked in October 2011, the Council noted that there is uncertainty regarding whether a major change to or expansion of VMS requirements is necessary in the North Pacific, there is interest in reviewing the current state of the North Pacific VMS requirements in addition to other regions' application of VMS. As requested by the Council, the discussion paper was reviewed by the IFQ Implementation Committee and the Enforcement Committee.

After reviewing the discussion paper and listening to public testimony, the Council requested the discussion paper be expanded to identify the needs for management, enforcement, compliance, and safety in the fisheries and what is the appropriate technology for meeting those needs. The Council also requested that the expanded discussion paper should include:

- Targeted species, gear, and area declarations;
- Geo-fencing and the implications and cost ramifications to the fishing fleet and agency for use of this capability;
- Increase poll rates and the implications of this change to both the fishing fleet and enforcement agencies (for example, potentially smaller closed areas, economic impacts to the fishing fleet and the agency, management benefits associated with increased polling);
- Potential data transfer applications or electronic log books;
- Electronic monitoring and the tradeoffs between this technology and VMS;
- Purpose and need for VMS requirements in other U.S. regions and whether VMS used in these other regions has been successful in meeting the purpose and need; and
- Potential for including VMS cost in the observer fee.

The expanded discussion paper is scheduled for review at the October 2012 meeting. Staff contact is Jon McCracken.

GOA Trawl Sweep

At the April 2012 meeting, the Council took final action on a management measure requiring elevating devices on nonpelagic trawl sweeps for vessels targeting flatfish in the Central Gulf of Alaska. The purpose of the action is to reduce unobserved crab mortality in the Central Gulf of Alaska from the potential adverse effects of nonpelagic trawl gear used for flatfish fishing. The Council initiated this action in conjunction with final action on the GOA Tanner crab PSC measures, which created area closures around Kodiak to protect Tanner crab.

The management measure would combine a gear and performance standard to raise the elevated section of the sweep at least 2.5 inches, measured next to the elevating device. To achieve this performance standard, elevating devices would be required along the entire length of the elevated section of the sweep. To allow for some flexibility around the requirement, there would be two possible sweep configurations that meet the performance standard. In the first configuration, elevating devices that are spaced up to 65 feet apart must have a minimum clearance height of 2.5 inches when measured next to the elevating device. In the second configuration, the elevating devices may be spaced up to 95 feet apart, but they must have a minimum clearance height of 3.5 inches when measured next to the elevating device. In either case, the minimum spacing of the elevated devices is no less than 30 feet.

The Council also extended the exempted section from 180 feet to 185 feet to accommodate hammerlocks attached to net and door bridles. This change would apply to nonpelagic trawl gear used in both the BS and the Central GOA. Staff contact is Jon McCracken.

Council Accepts Email Comments

The April meeting was the first meeting the Council accepted public comments via email at npfmc.comments@noaa.gov. While there may be a few issues to iron out, many comments arrived this way for the Council notebooks. When commenting via email, please include the agenda item, your full name and affiliation, and have them submitted before the published deadline. If you have questions, please call the office.

BSIERP Management Strategy Evaluation

The Council received a report from a two-day workshop to discuss a management strategy evaluation (MSE) project in conjunction with the Bering Sea Integrated Ecosystem Program (BSIERP). The overall BSIERP is developing complex coupled oceanographic and biological models of the Eastern Bering Sea with specific focus on walleye pollock, Pacific cod, and arrowtooth flounder and their fisheries. This fully integrated model provides a unique tool to compare stock assessment methods (including applications of multi-species models). The MSE project is evaluating trade-offs among different management control rules that can be tested and evaluated against alternative climate scenarios. The workshop provided stakeholders an opportunity to provide input on the goals and objectives of the MSE and the specific control rules to be tested. The Council will receive periodic updates as the project progresses. Staff contact is Diana Stram.

Protected Resources

The Council reviewed a draft Memorandum of Understanding between the National Marine Fisheries Service (NMFS) and the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service (FWS) regarding the conservation of migratory birds. The MOU focuses on avoiding or minimizing adverse impacts on migratory birds and strengthening migratory bird conservation through collaboration between NMFS and FWS. The Council drafted a letter in support of the MOU and encouraged NMFS and FWS to work directly with the Council as they implement provisions of the MOU.

The Council reviewed and provided comment on a draft Notice of Intent (NOI) from NMFS Alaska Region to begin compiling an Environmental Impact Statement for Steller sea lion protection measures in the Bering Sea and Aleutian Island (BSAI) groundfish fisheries FMP. The NOI includes a timeline for completion of the EIS. The public scoping period will run from May – October 2012, and will conclude with a scoping meeting in conjunction with the October Council meeting in Anchorage. The Council also chose to reconvene the Steller Sea Lion Mitigation Committee (SSLMC) with Larry Cotter as Chairman.

The Council will be seeking nominations for the Committee. Please send a letter of interest to the Council by April 23. See the Council website for more information about the SSLMC and EIS. Staff contact is Steve MacLean.

Chum Salmon Bycatch

The Council reviewed an analysis of chum salmon PSC management and made a number of modifications for future review of a revised draft. The Council also received updated reports on the genetic stock composition of samples from the 2010 Bering Sea groundfish fisheries bycatch of chum and Chinook salmon.

The Council's suite of alternatives include PSC limits for either June and July or for the entire B-season, as well as triggered area closures with provisions for a rolling hot spot (RHS) program. The Council received detailed reports from Council and NMFS staff on the analysis of the alternatives on subsistence and commercial fisheries, adult equivalency estimates of bycatch to river system by genetic stock aggregation (i.e., the estimated number of salmon in the bycatch returning to streams in any given year), impacts to the directed pollock industry and impacts to other marine resources and cumulative impacts. The Council and the public expressed concern regarding the potential for management measures for chum salmon to impact rates of Chinook salmon bycatch later in the B-season. In response to this, the Council made a number of modifications to the suite of alternative management measures with the intent to better develop measures that might minimize western Alaskan chum salmon without undermining the efforts to minimize the bycatch of Chinook salmon in the pollock fishery.

The Council moved to include a new alternative that relies primarily on the RHS program as the primary management tool, with suggestions for modification to a RHS program to increase the efficacy of the program and to focus efforts on balancing conserving western Alaskan chum with efforts to conserve Chinook. The Council further requested that additional information be included in a subsequent analysis regarding the necessary provisions of the RHS program that would need to be in regulation. The full Council motion as well as a revised description of alternatives following Council action at this meeting is posted on our website. Initial review of a revised analysis is scheduled for October 2012. The revised document will be available on the Council's website by the first week in September. Staff contact is Diana Stram.

HAPC Skate Egg Sites

The Council made an initial review of the analysis to identify skate egg sites as Habitat Areas of Particular Concern (HAPC). Options c and d will be removed from Alternative 3, which would have prohibited the use of all gear types (including longline and pot gear) within skate egg HAPC. A new option was added to Alternative 2 to require NMFS to monitor areas of skate egg concentration. Under this option, NMFS would monitor skate egg concentration HAPC for changes in egg density and other potential effects of fishing. The industry would support collection of data in evaluation of monitoring and management efforts relative to those HAPC.

The analysis will also be revised to include additional information. The analysis will be expanded to evaluate the use of the most updated VMS technology to monitor activity in and around skate egg concentration sites. Council, NMFS, and OLE staff, together with industry, will discuss the use of increased polling rates and geo-fencing to monitor fishing activity. Gear descriptions and potential fishery impacts will be updated to reflect the most recent changes in gear type technology, and survey trawl gear will be differentiated from commercial trawl gear. A description of the methodology used in determining target catch rates in skate sites will be added, as will descriptions of existing fishery closures that may overlap these sites. The analysis will also include other revisions suggested by the SSC to the extent practicable.

A revised analysis is being prepared for initial review, tentatively scheduled for June. Council staff is Sarah Melton.

Observer Program Restructuring

The Council received an update from NMFS on progress with implementing observer restructuring, which covered a number of different topics. The agency noted that the availability of Federal **startup funding** for implementation of the program looks promising. Implementation of the program in 2013 is currently on track. The **proposed rule** will publish shortly. NMFS noted that very few substantive changes have been made to the proposed rule since the Council reviewed it in October 2011, and those were primarily made directly in response to Council comments. However, one exception is to the program provision stating that a vessel selected for observer coverage is required to have an observer onboard. The original language allowed a vessel to have either an observer or an **electronic monitoring** system onboard. The Council noted dissatisfaction with this change, and opted to comment formally on the proposed rule. The Council requested NMFS to consider allowing vessels to take an electronic monitoring camera in lieu of an observer, in order to facilitate the continued development of electronic monitoring, and suggested options to achieve this intent. In their report, the agency did identify that specific funds have been allocated to the development of electronic monitoring capacity in 2013, within the restructured observer program.

The agency has scheduled **public hearings** associated with the proposed rule: in Seattle, WA, and Newport, OR, in mid-April; and in Juneau, AK in early May. The exact locations will be available on the NMFS and Council websites after the proposed rule is published. Additionally, the agency will be hosting a workshop in Kodiak during ComFish. Further **outreach** is planned to familiarize fishers with the registration system and other aspects of the restructured program, beginning at an evening session of the June Council meeting in Kodiak, and continuing in the fall. The pre-solicitation notice for the **observer contract** has also been published.

The draft **deployment plan** for 2013 will be available September 1, 2012 and will then be reviewed by the Observer Advisory Committee, the Plan Teams, and the Council. However, the Council requested that NMFS also provide a report in June about their progress in developing criteria about how to allocate the limited number of observer days in the partial coverage category. Staff contact is Diana Evans.

Upcoming Meetings:

April 12, 1:30-2:30 p – Kodiak Comfish, Kodiak, AK
Restructured observer program presentation

April 17, 1-4 pm – Seattle, WA
Public hearing on observer program proposed rule.

April 19, 1-4 pm – Newport, OR
Public hearing on observer program proposed rule.

May 2, 1-4 pm – Juneau, AK
Public hearing on observer program proposed rule.

Upcoming Meetings

June - week of June 4, Kodiak

October - week of October 1, Anchorage Hilton

December - week of December 3, Anchorage Hilton

2013

February - week of February 4, Portland, OR

April - week of April 1, Anchorage Hilton

June - week of June 3, Juneau, AK

October - week of September 30, Anchorage Hilton

December - week of December 9, Anchorage Hilton

The Council reviewed its pending action to modify **rights of first refusal** on processor quota shares (PQS) in the Bering Sea and Aleutian Islands crab fisheries. The Council had requested that stakeholders consider issues that arise under the proposed actions. Stakeholders convened a voluntary workgroup to discuss potential changes to the proposed actions in March. Coming into the meeting, the Council's alternatives included 1) revisions to the timeline for exercise and performance of rights, 2) the removal of terms under which the right lapses, 3) applying the right only to processor shares (rather than processor shares and other assets in the transaction), 4) prohibiting the use of IPQ outside of the community benefiting from the right of first refusal without the consent of that community, and 5) requiring additional notices to NMFS and the right holder from PQS holders concerning the use and transfer of individual processing quota and PQS to ensure that the status of rights could be better monitored. In response to testimony from stakeholders, the Council added an alternative that would allow rights to arise in a new community, if a right holder failed to exercise the right when it is triggered. The Council also included an alternative under which the right would apply to PQS and any assets based in the community holding the right (but not to assets that are not based in that community). The Council requested staff to prepare an initial review draft of the analysis for consideration at an upcoming meeting. Staff contact is Mark Fina.

DRAFT NPFMC THREE-MEETING OUTLOOK - updated 4/6/12

June 4 - 12, 2012 Kodiak, AK	October 1-9, 2012 Anchorage, AK	December 3-11, 2012 Anchorage, AK
SSL EIS scoping (T) Limit Other Gear on Jig Vessels: Expanded Discussion Paper Halibut workshop report: Review GOA Halibut PSC: Final Action GOA comprehensive halibut bycatch amendments: Disc paper BSAI halibut PSC limit: Discussion paper (T) BSAI Greenland turbot allocation: Discussion paper BSAI Crab Binding Arbitration - GKC: Workgroup report BSAI Crab ROFR: Initial Review (T) Binding Arbitration Issues (lengthy season, publishing decisions, IPQ Initiation): Discussion Paper Revise FLL GOA cod sideboards: Discussion paper FLL Vessel Replacement: Initial Review BSAI Flatfish specification flexibility: Discussion Paper HAPC - Skate sites: Initial Review (T) Crab Plan Team Report: Set Catch Specifications for 4 stocks Pribilof BKC Rebuilding Plan: Final Action BSAI Tanner Crab rebuilding plan: Revise Alternatives 5-Year Research Priorities: Review and Approve PSEIS: Review comments & reports; action as necessary Total catch and ACLs: Discussion paper (T) Grenadiers: Discussion paper (T) GOA pollock EFP: Review (T)	SSL EIS scoping (T) Observer Deployment Plan: OAC report; action as necessary Halibut CSP: Final Action Definition of Fishing Guide: Discussion Paper BSAI Chum Salmon Bycatch: Initial Review Halibut/Sablefish IFQ Leasing prohibition: NMFS Disc. paper (T) Retention of 4A halibut in BSAI sablefish pots: Disc. paper (T) VMS Use and Requirements: Expanded Discussion Paper BSAI Crab active participation requirements: Initial Review BSAI Crab Cooperative Provisions for Crew : Discussion paper BSAI Crab ROFR: Final Action (T) BS Habitat Conservation Area Boundary: Review Northern Bering Sea Research: Discussion paper AFA Vessel Replacement GOA Sideboards: Initial Review FLL Vessel Replacement: Final Action Groundfish Catch Specifications: Adopt proposed specifications HAPC - Skate sites: Final Action (T) BSAI Crab SAFE: Final OFL/ABC specifications for 6 stocks BSAI Tanner Crab rebuilding plan: Initial Review (T)	AI Risk Assessment: Report (T) Charter Halibut: Recommendations for 2013 GOA Chinook Bycatch All Trawl Fisheries: Initial Review H/S IFQ Disc papers (GOA sablefish pots, unharvested halibut, sablefish A-share caps) (T) BSAI Crab active participation requirements: Final Action BBRKC spawning area/fishery effects: Updated Discussion paper AFA Vessel Replacement GOA Sideboards: Final Action Groundfish Catch Specifications: Adopt Final specifications BSAI Tanner Crab rebuilding plan: Final Action (T) ITEMS BELOW FOR FUTURE MEETINGS Crab PSC numbers to weight: Discussion paper Crab bycatch limits in BSAI groundfish fisheries: Disc 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 Supplemental 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
 June 4-12, 2012 - Best Western, Kodiak
 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