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News & Notes

North Pacific Fishery Management Council
October 2011

Olson Re-Elected Council Chair

The Council unanimously re-elected Eric Olson as Chairman and Dave Benson as Vice Chairman. Also at this meeting, Dr. Jim Balsiger administered the Oath of Office for newly re-appointed Council members Eric Olson and John Henderschedt.

Thank you Dutch Harbor

The Council would like to express thanks to the city of Unalaska and the Port of Dutch Harbor. The weather partially cooperated, and the community receptions and events scheduled gave those who attended a chance to see the area and meet the people. Thanks to all those individuals and organizations who helped make the meeting a success, with a special thanks to the management and staff of the Grand Aleutian Hotel, and an extra-special thanks to Frank Kelty who was everywhere doing everything—it seemed like there were five of him!

Upcoming Meetings

Groundfish Plan Teams, November 14-18, AFSC, Seattle

Charter Management Implementation Committee, October 26, Anchorage

Crab Modeling Workshop: January 9-13, AFSC, Seattle

Observer Restructuring

In October, the Council reviewed the draft proposed preamble and regulations, developed by NMFS, stemming from the Council's October 2010 action to restructure the North Pacific observer program (BSAI Am. 86/GOA Am. 76). Upon review, the Council deemed the proposed final regulations, which clearly and directly flow from the Council's review of the draft regulatory package, to be necessary and appropriate in accordance with section 303(c) of the MSA.

The Council also reviewed an Observer Advisory Committee (OAC) report, which provided recommendations to the Council on the draft proposed regulatory package. The Council recommended that NMFS address several of the issues highlighted in the OAC report prior to publishing the proposed rule in early 2012. These issues center on revising language in the preamble that discusses the potential use of electronic monitoring in the 40' to 57.5' halibut and sablefish IFQ sector and the process for receiving a 'release' from observer coverage requirements from NMFS on a case by case basis. In addition, the Council asked NMFS to evaluate the regulations to ensure that IFQ vessels that belong in the vessel selection pool are properly identified for inclusion in the sampling frame on an annual basis, and to continue to work toward providing a receipt of observer program fees to fishermen for each trip (as opposed to only providing a receipt to processors and IFQ registered buyers, who are responsible for submitting the fee).

The Council also approved sending two letters: 1) to the Alaska Fisheries Science Center, to support internal NMFS funding for EM development and staff; and 2) to NOAA, to again request start-up funds for the restructured observer program (to fund year-1 deployment).

Finally, the Council requested that the agency provide a progress report on observer program restructuring in April 2012, with specific information to be included in the annual sampling and deployment plan each fall that is pertinent primarily to those operators in the vessel selection pool (fixed gear groundfish and halibut vessels 40' – 57.5'). The Council also urged NMFS to make as many EM systems available as possible to vessels in the vessel selection pool, within identified data, budgetary, and logistical constraints, as an alternative monitoring tool.

The Council's action in October allows NMFS to move forward with the development of the proposed rule and regulations to meet the scheduled goal of publication in early 2012. However, the schedule and rulemaking package assumes that Federal start-up funding will be obtained to pay for deployment in the first year of the new program (2013). Absent Federal funding, NMFS would need to develop further regulations to collect the observer ex-vessel fee from industry the year prior to deployment under the new program, which would necessarily delay implementation.

The Chair also stated its intent to add an observer representative on the OAC. Please submit letters of interest to the Council office by November 28. The draft proposed rule reviewed by the Council, the OAC report, and the Council motion on this issue, are on the Council website. Staff contact is Nicole Kimball.

Call for SSC Nominations

The Council's Scientific and Statistical Committee (SSC) is widely recognized as a critical foundation to the North Pacific fisheries management success story. The SSC advises the Council on numerous management decisions, including stock assessment and modeling techniques, data collection, ABC recommendations, achievement of rebuilding targets, social and economic impacts of management decisions, protected species interactions, and sustainability of fishing practices. SSC members shall be federal employees, state employees, academicians, or independent experts not employed by advocacy or interest groups. SSC members serve one-year terms, but may be reappointed indefinitely. The SSC generally meets five times per year, for three days at a time, and stipends are provided to non-governmental SSC members. The Council is accepting nominations to the SSC for 2011 in all areas of fishery-related expertise (biology/stock assessment, statistics, resource economics, sociology/ anthropology, marine mammals, or other relevant disciplines). Please submit resume' and cover letter to the Council offices by **November 28, 2011**. SSC appointments for 2012 will be determined by the Council at the December 2011meeting. Council staff contact is Chris Oliver.

Electronic Data Reporting

The Council reviewed an analysis of alternatives to modify the crab fishery economic data reports (crab EDR). The Council's purpose and need statement—adopted at its April 2011 meeting—states that the action is intended to address data inaccuracies, redundancy of the crab EDR with other data collections, and the cost of the program. Alternatives to meet this purpose and need would revise the collection of some data elements and eliminate the collection of others. While the Council recommended the release of the document for public review, it also requested several changes to the analysis. First, the Council adopted an option for analysis that would eliminate the blind formatting of the EDR data, which is intended to protect confidentiality of submitters. Under the current rule, a third party manages EDR data, providing it to analysts in a format that does not reveal the submitters' identities. The Council specifically requested that the analysis of the removal of blind formatting examine the potential for inadvertent releases of data that could arise as a result of the distribution to analysts of data identifying the submitter. The Council also adopted a variety of revisions recommended by its advisory panel, in many cases to increase the contrast between the two action alternatives. An additional option advanced by the Council would provide for the collection of all unique crew contracts and settlement sheets in the fishery to aid the Council in understanding changes in crew compensation arising under the rationalization program. The Council also directed staff to revise the alternatives for catcher processors to collect elements consistent with those of catcher vessels and processors, in the event that a catcher processor makes deliveries to a processor or receives deliveries from a catcher vessel. The Council also requested that the analysis address any relevant comments and information from the recent review of the program by the Council for Independent Experts. That review is expected to be released in two parts: the first part by the 7th of October and the second part by the 15th of October. The Council also requested staff to include in the analysis information and recommendations concerning any potential improvements in the accuracy and informative nature of elements collected under the status quo that might allow for their inclusion in the proposed action alternatives. This item is currently scheduled for final action at the Council's December meeting. Staff contact is Mark Fina.

GOA Pacific Cod Jig Management

In its December 2009 final action on the Gulf of Alaska Pacific cod sector split, the Council supported increasing entry-level fishing opportunities for the jig sector, recognizing that fishery as the primary tool for the Council and the Board of Fisheries to provide true entry-level fishing opportunity in the GOA. At its October meeting in Dutch Harbor, the Council recognized that NMFS' proposed rule on the sector split (GOA Amendment 83) provides maximum flexibility to the Board for management of the State Guideline Harvest Level and parallel fisheries.

The Council requested that the Board, at their October meeting, consider the Council's intent per Amendment 83 during Board deliberations on proposals received on the State GHL and parallel fisheries for GOA Pacific cod. The Council further recommended that the Board focus on State water considerations relative to NMFS' proposed rule, and that any longer-term solutions should be a separate discussion at a Joint Protocol Committee meeting. Finally, the Council requested that the Board consider options to provide jig fishing opportunities concurrently in State and federal waters when the regulations allow, and where the Board and State managers find it practical to implement.

At the Board's October meeting, Council Member Ed Dersham gave a presentation on the Council's recent motion from its October meeting and tracked Board deliberations throughout the week along with Council and agency staff. The Board took public comment on a myriad of issues such as: options for opening and closing the State parallel and GHL fisheries; allocations between gear types; and stand-down time periods for switching gear types.

Board actions for each management area were generally consistent with the Council's recommendations, and aligned season opening and closing dates to the extent practicable with the Federal management provisions under Amendment 83. Longer-term issues, to be first vetted through the Joint Protocol Committee, include further consideration of the reverse parallel fishery concept and the Board's discussion of recommendations it received to consider possible increases in the State GHL fisheries. An update is scheduled for the December 2011 Council meeting in Anchorage. Staff contact is Sarah Melton.

Salmon FMP

The Council reviewed an Initial Review draft analysis of options to revise and update the Salmon FMP. The Council chose to retain Alternative 3 as its Preferred Preliminary Alternative (PPA), which it adopted in April 2011. The Council's PPA modifies the FMP to exclude from its scope the three historical net commercial salmon fishing areas in the West Area EEZ (west of Cape Suckling), consistent with Council action in April, and to maintain the prohibition on commercial salmon fishing in the remaining West Area. The sport fishery in the West Area would also be removed from the scope of the FMP. The FMP would remain in effect in the East Area EEZ, and the State would continue to manage the commercial salmon troll and sport fisheries in Federal waters under delegated management authority.

The Council recommended adopting FMP provisions identified in the analysis, including management and policy objectives, stock status determination criteria, optimum yield, and the Federal review of State management measures for the East Area. In addition, the Council recommended addressing points raised by the SSC and in public comments on the analysis to the extent practicable, within the next version of the analysis. The Council's PPA would retain the State's deferred management authority for commercial and sport salmon fisheries in the East Area (i.e., Southeast Alaska), and management of commercial and sport salmon fisheries in the West Area.

The Council also received a report on the Salmon FMP public workshop which provided stakeholders and interested members of the public the opportunity to review the analysis and gain a better understanding of the issues, and also assisted in formulation of informed written comments and public testimony. Final action on the Salmon FMP is scheduled for the December 2011 meeting in Anchorage. Staff contact is Sarah Melton.

Pribilof Islands Blue King Crab Rebuilding Plan

The Council delayed final action on the Pribilof Islands blue king crab rebuilding plan. Final action was delayed due to a number of data-related concerns raised in the analysis as well as a new OFL which is a 36% decrease from the OFL employed in the current draft analysis for calculation of the trigger caps under consideration. The data-concerns raised in the analysis are related to two issues: the area over which the catch accrues towards the OFL and the lack of observed vessels from which these estimates are calculated. The Council requested additional information on the implications of both of these data-related issues as well as recalculation of the impacts of trigger caps under the revised 2011/12 OFL and ABC.

The Council identified a preliminary preferred alternative (PPA) for inclusion in the revised analysis. This alternative combines elements of two different alternatives under consideration. The PPA would impose a year-round closure to Pacific cod pot fishing in the Pribilof Island Habitat Conservation Zone (PIHCZ) and to include a larger additional triggered closure (Area 5d) to which qualified fisheries would be closed upon attainment of the cap of 75% of the ABC. The cap itself is apportioned by sector 45% to trawl gear, 45% to pot gear and 30% for hook and line gear, understanding that these sector apportionments over-apportion the cap to allow for greater flexibility by sector.

The Council also included a trigger cap option under Alternative 2 for Pacific cod pot fishing in the PIHCZ. This additional option also includes the provisions that to fish in the PIHCZ, Pacific cod pot vessels must carry 100% observer coverage.

Additional requests for clarification and discussion were also included in the Council motion which is posted on the Council website. Final action for this rebuilding plan will occur in February. The revised analysis will be available on the Council's website in early January. Staff contact is Diana Stram.

GOA D-Season Pollock

The Council reviewed a discussion paper on issues involved in redistributing pollock TAC from the D-season to the A-, B-, and C-seasons on the GOA. Any reallocation of TAC likely will require formal consultation under Section 7 of the ESA to ensure the action does not result in findings of Jeopardy or Adverse Modification for Steller sea lions. The Council requested an expanded discussion paper to examine alternative methods of apportioning pollock TAC in the Western and Central GOA to improve the fishery and protect Chinook salmon. The discussion paper would include Chinook salmon bycatch data from 2011 and a summary of current Steller sea lion telemetry data from the Western and Central GOA. Staff contact is Steve MacLean.

Call for AP Nominations

The Council is calling for nominations to the Council's **Advisory Panel** (AP). The AP is composed of representatives of the fishing industry and others interested in the management of the North Pacific fisheries, and provides advice from those perspectives. Members of these panels are expected to attend up to five meetings, three to six days in length, each year. The AP appointees serve three-year terms. There are seven AP seats up for appointment. AP members whose terms expire at the end of this year include John Crowley (WA), Jerry Downing (WA), Jeff Farvour (AK), Chuck McCallum (AK), Theresa Peterson (AK), Ernie Weiss (AK), and Lori Swanson (WA). The Council also confirmed Ernie Weiss (Aleutians East Borough, Anchorage) to the AP for the remainder of 2011.

Letters of interest or nomination, along with a resume of experience, for persons wishing to be considered for the AP should be sent to the NPFMC, 605 W. 4th Avenue, #306, Anchorage, AK 99501, by 5:00 pm on Monday, **November 28th**. Appointments will be announced at the end of the next Council meeting the week of December 5th at the Hilton Hotel in Anchorage and will become effective in January 2012. For more information, contact the Council office.

EBS Tanner Crab Rebuilding Plan

The Council reviewed an action plan containing draft alternatives and draft model projections for the overfished EBS Tanner crab stock. A stock assessment model is under development and will be employed to estimate time frames for rebuilding in the analysis. Preliminary projections indicate that catch constraints will be considered in the directed Tanner crab fishery and EBS snow crab fishery as alternative management measures for rebuilding the Tanner crab stock. Additional consideration will be given to spatial closures in the snow crab fishery to address the bycatch of Tanner crab. The stock assessment model will be evaluated during a NPFMC sponsored crab modeling workshop to occur in Seattle January 9-13. Further development of the time frames for rebuilding, associated catch constraints to rebuild under these time frames and potential snow crab fishery spatial closures will be discussed at that time. The Council adopted a problem statement and draft alternatives for the Tanner crab rebuilding plan. These are posted on the Council website. Preliminary review of the Tanner crab analysis and a report from the modeling workshop will occur at the February Council meeting. Staff contact is Diana Stram.

Proposed Groundfish Harvest Specifications

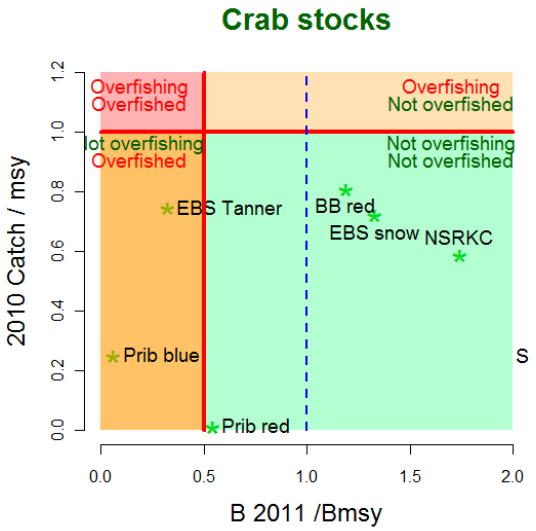
The Council recommended proposed specifications for the GOA and BSAI groundfish fisheries for 2012 and 2013. NMFS will publish overfishing levels (OFLs), acceptable biological catches (ABCs), total allowable catches (TACs), and prohibited species catch (PSC) limits in the proposed rule that will be published in the *Federal Register* before the end of the year. This action will not affect the harvest specifications that start the groundfish fisheries on January 1, 2012 as those were set based on Council recommendations in December 2010 and published in the *Federal Register* on March 1, 2011. The purpose of the proposed specifications is to provide notice and to allow the public an opportunity to review and comment on potential final specifications for 2012 and 2013 that will be decided during the December 2011 meeting. The proposed specifications generally are based on rollovers of the specifications currently in effect for the start of the next fishing year. One change was made to the rollover specifications in the GOA: a) widow and yellowtail were moved from the pelagic shelf rockfish (PSR) category into the "other slope rockfish" complex and b) dusky rockfish remains under the PSR complex until such time that a housekeeping amendment can revise those categories in the GOA Groundfish FMP. The proposed specifications for the two areas are posted on the Council website.

The Council also received reports from the GOA and BSAI Groundfish Plan Teams on the results of research surveys, working group reports, total catch accounting, and other research initiatives in support of stock assessments. Of particular note was a report on a NMFS Stock Assessment Prioritization Working Group, which was formed to respond to a request from the Office of Management and Budget in order to plan for the potential for allocating available funding among stock assessments, both regionally and nationally. The teams forwarded comments to the Council, which were supported by the SSC, that shifting prioritization toward poorly assessed stocks may take resources away from stocks of national importance, which could result in decreased support for North Pacific stocks that are recognized as being very well assessed and managed. The Council intends to submit written comment to the agency on this issue. The teams and SSC also supported a biennial cycle for all Tier 5 and 6 stocks, which will be timed to coincide with new survey biomass estimates, as already is the case for rockfish stocks. The teams reiterated its previous recommendations for the Council to consider moving grenadiers into the two groundfish FMPs as a high priority. Plan Team minutes are posted on the Council website. Contact Jane DiCosimo (BSAI) and Diana Stram (GOA) for more information.

Crab OFLs and ABCs

The Council reviewed the final SAFE report for the BSAI crab stocks. The SSC recommended the OFLs and ABCs for the remaining six of the ten stocks (four stocks have already had specifications set in June). This is the first year that ABC recommendations are made by the SSC to the Council to comply with Annual Catch Limit (ACL) provisions. Stock status in relation to status determination criteria are shown in the figure below.

Two of the 10 BSAI stocks are overfished: Pribilof Islands blue king crab and EBS Tanner crab. Biomass estimates for Bristol Bay red king crab (BBRKC), EBS snow crab, Norton Sound red king crab and St. Matthew blue king crab are all above their B_{MSY} estimates. No BSAI crab stock experienced overfishing in 2009/10. The Council reviewed an analysis for the Pribilof Islands blue king crab stock at this meeting and discussed alternatives for the Tanner crab stock (see separate newsletters on each item). The final SAFE report and a table with final OFL and ABC recommendations for all stocks are posted on the Council's website. Staff contact is Diana Stram.



Summary status of Tiers 3-4 BSAI crab stocks relative to 2010 catch levels (vertical axis) and projected 2011 mature male biomass relative to B_{MSY} levels. Note that the 2010 MSY level is defined as the 2010 catch at F_{OFL}. St. Matthew blue king crab is not shown as it is > 2.0 B2011/B_{MSY}

BS/AI Pacific Cod Sector Allocations

For several years, the Council has considered potential alternatives to manage Pacific cod (non-CDQ) sector allocations in the BSAI, should the BSAI ABC and TAC be split into separate BS and AI ABCs and TACs in a future harvest specifications process. In February 2011, the Council was made aware that the Pacific cod stock assessment author planned to develop a separate Tier 5 assessment for AI Pacific cod, and that the BSAI Groundfish Plan Team was tasked with developing a plan of action for the BSAI, both of which may have implications for the assessment model in the future. The Council also recognized the dynamic nature of the AI cod fishery and the difficulty in predicting the likely outcomes of a TAC split, given that 1) all gear sectors have varied the proportion of their total cod harvest they take from the AI over time; and 2) Steller sea lion protection measures implemented in 2011 reduce a large portion of the fishable area, and further restrict the Pacific cod seasons, in the AI.

In February 2011, the Council narrowed the management alternatives to: 1) the no action alternative, and 2) an action alternative to explicitly maintain the existing combined (non-CDQ) BSAI Pacific cod sector allocations under BSAI Amendments 85 and 80. Sectors would have a BSAI allocation to fish in either sub-area (BS and AI) as long as the sub-area is open for directed fishing and TAC is available. The Council noted that it did not intend to force a conservation decision on this issue at a particular time, but that the intent was to have a clear default position, should a TAC split be determined necessary in the future.

The Council reviewed a discussion paper on this issue at the October meeting. Upon preliminary analysis, staff recognized that Alternatives 1 and 2 are identical, for analytical purposes. This is, in part, because the 'default' scenario described to the Council under Alternative 1 at previous meetings, has changed. For the past several years, the Council has understood that NMFS' likely default scenario under a TAC split, absent further FMP or regulatory changes by the Council, would be to establish separate BS and AI Pacific cod allocations for each sector, at the same percentage of the sector's combined allocation (i.e., if a sector received 40% of the BSAI Pacific cod ITAC, it would receive an allocation of 40% of the BS ITAC and 40% of the AI ITAC, to be fished in the respective areas only). That alternative was not acceptable to the Council, nor was it supported by industry, as it was not based on any sector's recent history in the AI and would be extremely disruptive to the fishery. Thus, the Council was compelled to take action prior to an ABC/TAC split, in order to avoid the default scenario. However, recent evaluation from NMFS confirms that, absent further Council action and in the event of a TAC split, the only interpretation of the current regulations is that the allocations would continue to apply at the BSAI-wide level.

In October, the Council also explicitly removed an option which is no longer pertinent related to area endorsements. Thus, based on the change in interpretation of Alternative 1, and the removal of the other action alternatives in February, no further action is required by the Council to implement its intent to maintain the status quo allocations under a TAC split. Neither alternative proposes any changes to the existing BSAI Pacific cod allocations, thus they do not require any substantive changes to the regulations or BSAI FMP.

Under the review of the BSAI stock assessments in October, the Council also received reports from the BSAI Plan Team and SSC that the author of the BSAI Pacific cod assessment plans to develop finer geographical divisions of BSAI Pacific cod ABC and OFL for consideration during next year's harvest specification process for 2013/2014. The discussion paper on management alternatives of the allocations is on the Council website. Staff contact is Nicole Kimball.

Individual Bycatch Quotas

The Council received a staff discussion paper describing various programs that use Individual Bycatch Quotas to manage species that may not be retained (such as halibut in the trawl fishery). The Council elected to take no action in response to the discussion paper; however, the Council requested additional information concerning management programs in the West Coast and British Columbia groundfish trawl fisheries at a future meeting. This information could be received either through the report of the International Pacific Halibut Commission's halibut bycatch workgroup or by inviting representatives of the management agencies governing those fisheries to address the Council. Staff contact is Mark Fina.

A sunny day in Dutch!

Other Staff Tasking

In its discussion of staff tasking, committees, and other business the Council approved development of the following items: (1) a letter to U.S. State Department regarding the Council's interest in international RFMOs, the U.S/Russia Intergovernmental Consultative Committee (ICC), and the role of the Bering Sea Fisheries Advisory Body in those forums; (2) a discussion paper on the impact of GOA cod sector allocations on crab sideboarded Freezer Longline Vessels; (3) a letter to NMFS regarding the 2011 research/assessment activities of the R/V Oscar Dyson; (4) a discussion paper regarding the use of VMS in North Pacific Fisheries and other fisheries around the U.S.; (5) a discussion paper on a proposal from the Freezer Longline Coalition to develop a gear type split for Greenland turbot; and, (6) a report from NMFS on the agency's EFH consultation process. The newly tasked discussion papers will be developed and placed on the Council agenda as time and staff availability allow. A revised 3-meeting outlook is attached.

Halibut Issues

Catch Sharing Plan

At this meeting, NMFS informed the Council that it would need to revisit its proposed Area 2C/3A halibut catch sharing plan (CSP), citing policy and technical issues which compromise their ability to proceed to a final rule. Specifically, NMFS requested additional Council input on the following three concerns, along with other technical issues that may be identified by NMFS after further review:

(1) Evaluation of the management implications at lower levels of abundance;

(2) Economic impacts of the CSP under all potential combined catch levels; and,

(3) Methods for calculating the average weight for guided angler fish (GAF) that may be leased from commercial IFQ operators, and the specific means for tracking and reporting GAF.

NMFS also strongly encouraged the Council to schedule time at the December 2011 Council meeting to provide guidance to the International Pacific Halibut Commission (IPHC) for actions on the specific allocation and management measures appropriate for the charter halibut fisheries in Southeast and Southcentral Alaska for 2012. The IPHC meets in Anchorage in January 2012 to set fishing levels and management measures for halibut along the Pacific Coast. The Council also requested that NMFS provide additional detail in December regarding perceived deficiencies in the CSP, so that the Council can discuss an appropriate course of action, including the process and timing to address the concerns identified by NMFS.

For December 2011, the Council also had previously scheduled 1) a review of the ADF&G estimates of sport halibut data for 2010; 2) review committee recommendations to consider alternative management measures under Tier 1 of the charter halibut CSP. Contact Jane DiCosimo for more information.

Gulf of Alaska Bycatch Limit

The Council reviewed an initial draft of an analysis that examined proposed changes, which were adopted for consideration by the Council in June 2011, to the management of commercial groundfish fisheries in the Gulf of Alaska (GOA) through the 2012/2013 harvest specifications process. In addition to the No Action Alternative, the Council had analyzed a range of proposed reductions of (a) 5 percent, (b) 10 percent, and (c) 15 percent for the trawl halibut PSC limits and fixed gear halibut PSC limits. Additional suboptions addressed effects on trawl halibut PSC limit apportionments.

The Council decided instead to consider an amendment to the GOA Groundfish FMP in order to set GOA halibut PSC limits in federal regulations, as is the case under the BSAI Groundfish FMP. The Council modified its problem statement and suite of alternatives for action and included it under this new management action. One change to the proposed alternatives for analysis was breaking out the hook-and-line catcher-processor sector from the catcher-vessel sector for proposed reductions to halibut PSC limits. The Council noted that the CP sector has achieved significant savings in halibut PSC reductions and halibut discard mortality rates and that severe reductions may be needed to see benefits to the halibut stock. The Council requested discussion of the benefits and impacts of modifying both seasonal and fishery apportionments of halibut PSC limits for the deep water and shallow water complexes. The Council requested a number of other additions to the analysis, to the extent practicable, and identified a timeline so that the proposed action could be implemented in 2013. Initial review will be scheduled for February 2012 and final action will be scheduled for April 2012. Jane DiCosimo is the Council contact for this action.

CQE Program in Area 4B

In October, the Council completed initial review of an analysis (BSAI FMP Amendment 102) which evaluates the impacts of establishing a Community Quota Entity (CQE) Program in Area 4B of the Aleutian Islands. Adak is the only community in Area 4B that meets the proposed eligibility criteria, which targets small, rural, non-CDQ communities in Area 4B with commercial halibut and sablefish participation. The overall intent of the program would be to allow a community non-profit organization (Adak Community Development Corporation) to represent Adak for the purpose of purchasing Area 4B halibut catcher vessel quota share (QS) and Aleutian Islands sablefish catcher vessel QS, to promote long-term community access to the commercial halibut and sablefish fisheries.

In October, the Council released the analysis for public review with requested changes, slightly revised the problem statement, and adopted Alternative 2 as its preliminary preferred alternative (PPA). The PPA would allow Adak to purchase up to 15% of the Area 4B halibut QS pool and up to 15% of the AI sablefish QS pool. The PPA also allows the IFQ resulting from the community QS to be leased to individuals that are not residents of Adak for a period of up to five years after the effective date of implementation of the program. After that time, the CQE may only lease the IFQ to residents of Adak.

The initial review draft analysis and the Council's motion are on the Council website. Final action is scheduled for December 2011. Staff contact is Nicole Kimball.

CQE vessel use caps

In October, the Council reviewed an analysis (GOA FMP Amendment 94) evaluating the impacts of revising the vessel use caps for halibut and sablefish IFQ derived from quota share held by Gulf of Alaska Community Quota Entities (CQEs). The overall intent of the CQE Program is to allow community non-profit organizations representing small, rural communities in the Gulf of Alaska to purchase catcher vessel quota share (QS), in order to lease the annual IFQ to community residents and maintain long-term access to the halibut and sablefish fisheries.

The existing CQE Program limits the annual amount of halibut IFQ that can be fished on a vessel to 50,000 lbs of IFQ halibut, if that vessel is used to harvest any amount of IFQ halibut derived from QS held by a CQE. Similarly, it limits the annual amount of sablefish QS that can be fished on a vessel to 50,000 lbs of IFQ sablefish, if that vessel is used to harvest any amount of IFQ sablefish derived from QS held by a CQE. The vessel use caps for IFQ derived from CQE-held QS are inclusive of any individually-held IFQ being used on the vessel, on an annual basis, and are not based on a percentage of the IFQ TAC. These vessel use caps are much more restrictive than those applicable to IFQ held by any other entity in the IFQ Program.

The Council took final action in October, recognizing that the current vessel use caps are unnecessarily restrictive and may reduce the flexibility that small communities need to develop long-term plans for using the potential opportunities afforded by the CQE Program. The current vessel use caps may discourage vessels from using IFQ derived from CQE-held QS onboard, as the vessel would otherwise be subject to the higher individual vessel use caps for the IFQ Program in general. The Council approved a problem statement and Alternative 2 for recommendation to the Secretary of Commerce:

Alternative 2. Revise current regulations such that:

- No vessel may be used, during any fishing year, to harvest more than 50,000 lbs of IFQ halibut derived from quota share held by a CQE; and no vessel may be used, during any fishing year, to harvest more than 50,000 lbs of IFQ sablefish derived from quota share held by a CQE.
- The vessel would also be subject to the same vessel use caps applicable in the overall IFQ Program.

The final motion is on the Council website. Staff contact is Nicole Kimball.

The Council took no action on a 2009 IFQ proposal to allow Area 4B IFQ category "D" quota shares to be fished on category "C" vessels. The Council cited several reasons for not scheduling final action on this topic: 1) the presence of Icicle Seafoods in Adak, 2) a potential for a newly created market for “D” class QS through an action to allow the community of Adak to purchase QS, and 3) the low amount of “D” class QS available for new entrants in Area 4B and the impact on the price of D class QS if it could be fished on C class vessels. The Council identified that it could schedule final action on this analysis in the future if conditions warrant it. Contact Jane DiCosimo for more information.

Rural Outreach Committee

In October, the Council reviewed a report and recommendations from the Rural Community Outreach Committee, the meeting of which occurred September 13. The Council approved the committee’s list of short-term priorities, as stated in the report. These include a recommendation to conduct a second statewide teleconference on the proposed action to reduce Bering Sea chum salmon bycatch, to explain the changes in the suite of alternatives and options from June 2011, the schedule, and the revised draft analysis. This teleconference will likely be scheduled in early March, prior to the Council’s next review of the draft analysis in April 2012.

The recommendations also include outreach relative to the proposed rule for GOA Chinook salmon bycatch reduction measures, the Northern Bering Sea Research Area, and GOA halibut issues in general. The Council recommended evaluating the feasibility of holding Council meetings in Alaska locations that are outside of the normal Alaska rotation; the Council is required to hold one meeting in Alaska that is not in Anchorage each year, and has some flexibility to consider rural locations, recognizing logistical and other constraints. The Council emphasized that the committee should continue to highlight where the Council needs to target its outreach efforts, in order to reach rural stakeholders and communities that either the Council does not typically reach, or who cannot attend a Council meeting in Anchorage, Seattle, or Portland. The Council also emphasized the advantages of having individual Council members and staff travel to rural locations to discuss issues and facilitate two-way communication with stakeholders.

The Council approved a future committee meeting in spring 2012. The September committee report, which outlines all of the short-term outreach priorities, is on the Council website. Staff contact is Nicole Kimball.

Steller Sea Lion Biological Opinion

The Council received information about the independent review of the Bering Sea and Aleutian Islands Groundfish FMP Biological Opinion that was solicited by the States of Alaska and Washington. A draft review was released in June, and the final review was just released and is posted on the Council’s website.

The Council also received information about the revised Terms of Reference (ToR) for a Committee of Independent Experts (CIE) Review of the BSAI Groundfish Biological Opinion. The revised ToR was sent to the Council in a June 29, 2011 letter from NMFS Alaska Region Administrator, Dr. Jim Balsiger, which indicated that NMFS has decided to delay a CIE review until the States’ review, described above, has been completed. Dr. Balsiger also encouraged the Council to review the revised ToR and provide comments. The Council adopted a draft ToR to facilitate discussions between NOAA and the Council to further develop and refine ToR for a CIE review. Although some of the terms in the adopted ToR may not comply with the contract between CIE and NOAA, the proposed discussions may result in some revisions to the ToR. The Council will address this at the December 2011 meeting. Staff contact is Steve MacLean.

NPRB Request for Proposals

NPRB is pleased to release its 2012 Request for Proposals for a total of $4.0 million. The 2012 RFP is similar in form and content to **past NPRB RFPs** with research priorities structured around the 2005 NPRB **Science Plan**. Please consult the 2012 RFP (see sidebar) and the NPRB Science Plan for further details on this year’s research priorities. The deadline for online proposal submission is **4 p.m. (Alaska Time) Monday, December 12, 2011.**

Additionally, the North Pacific Research Board announces a special call for proposals for data management for the Gulf of Alaska Integrated Ecosystem Research Program. Proposals to this special RFP are requested to provide data management and communication services from April 1, 2012 to April 2015. A total of $500,000 is available, with a proposal deadline of 14 December 2011. More information and a downloadable copy of the full announcement are available on the NPRB homepage: www.nprb.org or on the Gulf of Alaska project homepage.

DRAFT NPFMC THREE-MEETING OUTLOOK - updated 10/12/11

December 5-13, 2011 Anchorage, AK	January 30 - February 7, 2012 Seattle, WA	March 26 - April 3, 2012 Anchorage, AK
SOPP: ***Review and Approve***		
SSL CIE: ***Review Terms of Reference***		EFH Consulation process: ***Review***
Halibut Subsistence: ***Update***	IPHC Report	
	Halibut Bycatch in BC and West Coast: ***Report (T)***	Halibut Migration Model review; workshop report: ***Review***
Sport Halibut 2010 Catch: ***Update***		
Halibut CSP: ***Review Committee Report and Disc Paper; Discuss 2012 fishery & CSP deficiencies***		
	GOA Halibut PSC: ***Initial Review***	GOA Halibut PSC: ***Final Action***
GOA Pacific cod A-season opening dates: ***Discussion paper***		
GOA P.cod Jig Fishery Management: ***Report on BOF action; Discuss next steps***	GOA Pollock D-season: ***Discussion paper***	
Salmon FMP: ***Final Action***	Northern Bering Sea Research: ***Discussion paper***	
CQE in Area 4B: ***Final Action***	Halibut/sablefish IFQ changes: ***Discussion paper***	
	Halibut/Sablefish IFQ Leasing prohibition: ***Discussion paper***	
GOA Chinook Bycatch All Trawl Fisheries: ***Discussion Paper***		BSAI Chum Salmon Bycatch: ***Initial Review***
	GOA Flatfish Trawl Sweep Modifications: ***Initial Review***	GOA Flatfish Trawl Sweep Modifications: ***Final Action***
	BSAI Flatfish specification flexibility: ***Discussion Paper***	
FLL Vessel Replacement: ***Initial Review***	FLL Vessel Replacement: ***Final Action***	Grenadiers: ***Discussion paper***
	AFA Vessel Replacement GOA Sideboards: ***Discussion Paper (T)***	
	Crab EDR Revisions: ***Final Action***	
	Pribilof BKC Rebuilding Plan: ***Final Action***	
BSAI Crab: ***Report from stakeholders***	BSAI Tanner Crab rebuilding plan: ***Preliminary Review***	BSAI Tanner Crab rebuilding plan: ***Initial Review***
Deep Sea Coral Research: ***Report***	HAPC - Skate sites: ***Initial Review***	HAPC - Skate sites: ***Final Action***
		ITEMS BELOW FOR FUTURE MEETINGS
BS Habitat Conservation Area Boundary: ***Review***	BBRKC spawning area/fishery effects: ***Updated Disc paper (T)***	Crab PSC numbers to weight: Discussion paper
		Crab bycatch limits in BSAI groundfish fisheries
Groundfish SAFE Report: ***Adopt final harvest specifications***	Groundfish PSEIS: ***Discuss schedule***	AI P.cod Processing Sideboards: Initial Review
		Greenland turbot allocation: Discussion paper
		VMS use and requirements: Discussion paper
		BSAI halibut PSC limit: Discussion paper
Halibut mortality on trawlers EFP: ***Review/Approve (T)***		GOA comprehensive halibut bycatch amendments: Disc paper
		BS FLL GOA cod sideboards: 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

December 5-13, 2011 - Hilton Hotel, Anchorage
January 30-February 7, 2012 - Rennaissance Hotel, Seattle
March 26-April 3, 2012 - Hilton Hotel, Anchorage
June 4-12, 2012 - Best Western, Kodiak
October 1-9, 2012 - Hilton Hotel, Anchorage
December 3-11, 2012 - Anchorage

(T) Tentatively scheduled