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Reasonable and Prudent Alternative (RPA) Committee

Report to the
North Pacific Fishery Management Council
September 2001

Larry Cotter, chair
Dave Witherell, staff

RPA Committee Members

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| ■ Larry Cotter (chair) | ■ John Winther |
| ■ Dave Benson | ■ Bob Small |
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| ■ Doug DeMaster | ■ Gearald Leape |
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| ■ Sue Hills | ■ Tony DeGange |
| ■ Wayne Donaldson | |

Background

- In June, the Committee proposed an alternative for analysis, which was included as Alternative 4.
- The Committee met August 23-24 to review the draft SEIS and draft Biological Opinion (BiOp4).
- The Committee developed recommendations re:
 - season dates/TAC apportionment for W-C GOA pollock
 - the 3 options listed for Alternative 4
 - additional measures for Alternative 4 to address NMFS concerns raised in the BiOp4 cover letter

W-C GOA Pollock Recommendation

- In June, the Council asked the RPA Committee, when reviewing the analysis, to examine the opportunity to adjust the alternatives to address:
 1. The effects of making the Western and Central GOA pollock "C" season start date August 25 vs. the proposed September 1 date.
 - The Committee agrees that a August 25 date would be better for the fleet, and would have no impacts to sea lions.
 2. The effects of making the W GOA "A" season pollock allocation 30% and "B" season 20% vs. the proposed "A" 25% and "B" 25%.
 - The Committee believes that a 25%/25% allocation should remain. Although there may be economic benefits (better roe), there were sea lion concerns raised about allocating more TAC to mid-winter months.

Option 1 and 2 Recommendation

Option 1. Establish a limited fishing zone in the Chignik area (area 4) for fixed gear out to ten (10) miles from Castle Cape to Foggy Cape for vessels under 60 ft.

Option 2. Establish a limited fishing zone in the Dutch Harbor area (area 9) for fixed gear out to ten (10) miles from Cape Cheerful to Umnak Pass for vessels under 60 ft.

- The Committee recommends that neither of these options be adopted:
 - the zones have not been critically important to the small boat fleet based on historical performance (see Figures E3-26 through E3-32)
 - the zones would reduce the value of areas 4 and 9 as control sites for evaluating the efficacy of management actions.

Option 3 Recommendation

Option 3. Establish the AMCC zonal approach for GOA Pacific cod.

Buffers zones would be established as measured from land as follows:

0-3 nm	3-12 nm	12-20 nm	outside 20 nm
pot vessels with 60 pot limit, jig vessels with a 5 machine limit	pot vessels with 60 pot limit, jig vessels with a 5 machine limit, and longline vessels < 60'	all pot vessels, all jig vessels, all longline vessels	all vessels and gears

- The Committee recommends that this option not be adopted:
 - there would be potentially significant adverse social and economic impacts (reduced catches, reallocation of TAC, added operational costs, community impacts, etc.).
 - there would be safety concerns for small vessels forced to fish outside of 20 nm from shore.

Additional Recommendations: Atka mackerel platoon management

- Revise the program details for platooning the Central and Western AI Atka mackerel fleet to address management, monitoring, and fairness concerns.
 - Pre-registration required 10 days prior to season.
 - Random assignment of vessels into 2 teams, with catch levels in proportion to number of vessels in each team.
 - Catch quotas for teams established for the critical habitat portion only.
 - Season lengths would be predetermined based on vessel capacity in each team.
 - Stand down time would be commensurate with fishing season length.

Additional Recommendations: BSAI cod and pollock fisheries

- Add 10 nm closures to cod longlining around Reef-Lava and Bishop Point haulouts.
- Split the trawl cod into three seasons 1/20-3/31 (60%), 4/1-6/10 (20%), 6/11-10/31(20%). Catcher vessels would have % seasonal allocation of 70-10-20, and c/p's would have 50-30-20.
- Limit the pollock harvest in the SCA to 28% of the annual TAC prior to April 1 (70% of A-B season harvest).
- These actions further reduce the potential for temporal and spatial overlap of fisheries with Steller sea lions. Increases the 'bump' index from -0.41% to -0.28%.

Summary

- The Committee (with 3 objecting) recommends that Alternative 4 (with no options) be selected as the preferred alternative with several modifications:
 - Change the W-C GOA pollock 'C' season start date to August 25.
 - Revise the program details for platooning the Atka mackerel fleet to address management, monitoring, and fairness concerns.
 - Add two 10 nm haulout closures to longline fisheries in Area 8.
 - Split the BSAI cod trawl fishery into 3 seasons.
 - Restrict the SCA pollock harvest such that only 70% could be taken within the SCA prior to April 1.

