



**NOAA
FISHERIES**

**Alaska Fisheries
Science Center**

Stock structure and spatial management policy

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Part 1: identifying levels of “concern”

Last year we were waiting for guidance

- September 2013: The BSAI Team identified a scale consisting of *monitor*, *alert*, and (eponymously) *concern*; but these were developed in the context of “awaiting future guidance on the Council’s future spatial management policy”
- October 2013: The Council adopted the following policy, which did not address the above (or any other) scale of concern:
 1. “As soon as preliminary scientific information indicates that further stock structure separation or other spatial management measures may be considered, the stock assessment authors, plan teams (groundfish, crab, scallop), and SSC should advise the Council of their findings and any associated conservation concerns.
 2. “With input from the agency, the public, and its advisory bodies, the Council (and NMFS) should identify the economic and management implications and potential options for management response to these findings and identify the suite of tools that could be used to achieve conservation and management goals. In the case of crab and scallop management, ADF&G needs to be part of this process.
 3. “To the extent practicable, further refinement of stock structure or other spatial conservation concerns and potential management responses should be discussed through the process described in recommendations 1 and 2 above.
 4. “Based on the best information available provided through this process, the SSC should continue to recommend OFLs and ABCs that prevent overfishing of stocks.

Additional steps taken in 2013

- November 2013: The Joint Teams discussed, but stopped short of adopting, the following scale (with the understanding that all actions described here would be contingent on SSC concurrence):
 - a. Little or no concern, in which case no action needs to be taken
 - b. Moderate concern, in which case special monitoring (e.g., frequent updating of the template) is required at a minimum and Steps 2 and 3 of the Council's process *may* be activated
 - c. Strong concern, in which case Steps 2 and 3 of the Council's process *must* be activated
 - d. "Emergency," in which case the Team will recommend separate harvest specifications at the ABC level, the OFL level, or both, for the next season (straight to Step 4 of the Council policy)
 - Although the Joint Teams had not adopted the above scale, the BSAI Team implicitly did so during the same meeting in its discussion of blackspotted/rougeye rockfish, referencing the Joint Team discussion in the process
- December 2013: The SSC accepted the BSAI Team's designation of "strong concern" for the WAI component of this stock complex

Where we are this year

- In September of this year, the BSAI Team reverted to the monitor-alert-concern scale it had adopted as an interim measure in September 2013
- The SSC attributed the monitor-alert-concern scale to both the BSAI and GOA Teams, and requested that the Teams, at their November 2014 meeting, use this scale to assign levels of concern to all stocks for which a stock structure template has been completed and a level of concern has not previously been specified (Table 1)
- Some possible actions for the Teams at this time include the various possible combinations of the following two factors:
 - Factor 1:
 - Use the monitor/alert/concern scale
 - Use the little/moderate/strong/emergency scale
 - Factor 2:
 - Fill in the blanks in Table 1 at this meeting
 - Fill in the blanks in Table 1 at the September 2015 meeting

Table 1

FMP	Chapter	Stock	Author	Level
BSAI	1A	AI pollock	Barbeaux	little
BSAI	2	BS Pacific cod	Thompson	little
BSAI	4	Yellowfin sole	Wilderbuer	little
BSAI	6	Arrowtooth flounder	Spies	little
BSAI	13	Northern rockfish	Spencer	little
BSAI	14	Blackspotted/rougheye rockfish	Spencer	strong
BSAI	15	Shortraker rockfish	Spencer	moderate
BSAI	16	Other rockfish	Spies	moderate
BSAI	17	Atka mackerel	Lowe	little
BSAI	18	Skates	Ormseth	little
BSAI	21	Sharks	Tribuzio	little
GOA	1	Pollock	Dorn	little
GOA	7	Arrowtooth flounder	Spies	little
GOA	9	Pacific ocean perch	Hanselman	little
GOA	12	Dusky rockfish	Lunsford	little
GOA	13	Rougheye/blackspotted rockfish	Shotwell	little
GOA	17	Atka mackerel	Lowe	little
GOA	18	Skates	Ormseth	strong
GOA	20	Sharks	Tribuzio	little

Part 2: remaining issues

Issues previously raised by Teams (except #1)

1. Does the Council's policy apply only to spatial structure, or does it also apply to stock structure? For example, does it apply to the process of splitting a stock out from a complex, or only to spatial management of the complex?
2. Need for specific guidance on the role of the Teams
3. Need for a proactive default policy that covers both of the following cases: 1) data are insufficient to determine whether a biological concern exists, and 2) sufficient data exist to make such a determination but time or other resource constraints are anticipated to prevent those data from being analyzed for several years
4. Clarification of whether the current inconsistencies in spatial management between the two FMP areas that were summarized by the Stock Structure Working Group should be further examined or revised (and to whom such a charge would be assigned)
5. How much time is allowed for acceptance (by the Council or SSC) of an industry response to a management concern?
6. What is the relationship between evidence of stock structure and degree of concern? Two possibilities have been discussed: 1) degree of concern is synonymous with strength of evidence of stock structure, and 2) degree of concern is a function of both the strength of evidence of stock structure and the extent to which the fishery is impacting that structure