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## North Pacific Fishery Management Council

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### Council Completes December Meeting

The Council met December 9-14 at the Hilton Hotel in Anchorage. The majority of the meeting was devoted to emergency actions by the Council in response to NMFS' jeopardy finding relative to Steller sea lions and the BSAI & GOA pollock fisheries. As described in this newsletter, the Council took significant actions which will affect the 1999 pollock fisheries. Details of these actions and other agenda items are inside.

The next Council meeting is scheduled for the week of February 1, 1999, at the Hilton Hotel in Anchorage. Note that a joint meeting of the Council and Board of Fisheries is scheduled for Tuesday,

February 2.

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### Scientific and Statistical Committee (SSC) Appointments

One new appointment to the SSC was confirmed at the December meeting. Appointed to his first term on the SSC is **Dr. Steven Hare** with the International Pacific Halibut Commission (IPHC) in Seattle, which brings the SSC membership to thirteen. The following twelve members of the SSC were reappointed for 1999:

*Jim Balsiger*--AFSC, NMFS, Seattle  
*Keith Criddle*--USU, Dept. of Economics  
*Douglas Eggers*--ADF&G, Juneau  
*Susan Hills*--UAF, School of Fisheries/Science  
*Steve Klosiewski*--USF&WS, Anchorage  
*Douglas Larson*--UC Davis, Dept Ag Economics  
*Seth Macinko*--ADF&G, Juneau  
*Richard Marasco*--AFSC, NMFS, Seattle  
*Terrence Quinn II*--UA Juneau Ctr. Ocean Sci.  
*Jack Tagart*--Washington DFW, Fish Mgmt.  
*Albert Tyler*--UAF, Sch of Fish/Ocean Sciences  
*Hal Weeks*--Oregon, Dept of Fish & Wildlife

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### 1999 Advisory Panel (AP) Appointments Announced

Three new members have been appointed to the Council's Advisory Panel for 1999:

<i>Erika Acuna</i>	Observer
Representative	
<i>Melody Jordan</i>	Icicle Seafoods,
Seward	
<i>Teressa Kandianis</i>	Kodiak Fish Company,
Washington	

The following twenty Advisory Panel members were reappointed for the coming year:

	Commercial Fisherman
Ragnar Alstrom	Tyson Seafoods Group
Dave Benson	Cook Inlet Processing
Tim Blott	Jubilee Fisheries
John Bruce	Alaska Dragger's Association
Al Burch	Commercial Fisherman/Alaska Trawl
Craig Cross	Fisheries
Dan Falvey	Commercial Fisherman/ALFA
Kris Fanning	Commercial Crab Fisherman
David Fraser	Commercial Fisherman
Arne Fuglvog	Commercial Fisherman
Steve Ganey	Alaska Marine Conservation Council
Justine Gundersen	Commercial/Subsistence Fisher
Spike Jones	Commercial Fisherman
John Lewis	Sportfishing Representative
Stephanie Madsen	Aleutian Seafood Processors Association
Hazel Nelson	Bristol Bay Economic Development Corp.
Jeff Stephan	United Fishermen's Marketing
Robert Ward	Association
Lyle Yeck	A-Ward Charters
Grant Yutrzenka	Commercial Fisherman UNISEA

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### **Council Moves to Further Protect Short-tailed Albatross**

The North Pacific longline fisheries for Pacific cod, sablefish, and halibut are at risk if the industry does not increase efforts to avoid further takes of endangered short-tailed albatross. NMFS has documented that seven albatross have been taken since 1983. The sixth and seventh albatross were taken in late September in the BSAI Pacific cod fishery. This is serious business with serious consequences for the industry. Endangered Species Act regulations allow four takes in 1997-1998 combined. The fishery could shut down upon the fifth take. Until a new biological opinion is drafted by NMFS and U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service, the four-bird limit, with two down already, will govern the 1999 fishery.

Both vessels that hooked short-tailed albatross in September 1998 were using seabird avoidance devices as required by law since 1997. Apparently, the measures were not enough. Therefore, industry representatives have come before the Council, urging it to strengthen protective measures.



Options include requiring freezer longliners to use lining tubes for deploying baited hooks, to add weights to lines, and to tow streamer lines, bird buoys or other devices over the baited lines. The Council accepted those options for analysis and also instructed the analysts to consider applying the restrictions to other longliners as well and possibly tailoring the options to vessel size class as appropriate. The analysis will be available for initial review in February and final action in April 1999. A NMFS bulletin on short-tailed albatross is available. Staff contact for this issue is Jane DiCosimo at the Council and Kim Rivera at NMFS Region in Juneau. [Back to top](#)

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### **Steller Sea Lion Action**

At this meeting, the Council reviewed the Biological Opinion (Section 7 consultation) from NMFS, which concluded with a 'Jeopardy Finding' relative to the pollock fisheries in both the BSAI and the GOA. In order to allow these fisheries to be prosecuted in 1999, the Council took emergency action to implement measures consistent with NMFS' proposed Reasonable and Prudent Alternatives (RPAs). The RPAs, in summary, proposed spatial and temporal distribution of the pollock fisheries as well as additional closure areas around specific rookery and haul-out sites used by sea lions. For the BSAI, the Council's actions include: (1) separating the pollock fisheries into four seasons (A1, A2, B, and C seasons), with a limit of 30% of the total TAC coming from any one season; (2) reducing the overall roe season fishery to 40% of the annual total TAC; (3) limiting the overall A season removals from the sea lion critical habitat area/catcher vessel operational area (CH/CVOA) to 62.5% of the total TAC for those seasons; (4) eliminating a directed pollock fishery in the Aleutian Islands subarea; and, (5) expanding closure areas around rookery and haul-out sites.

For the GOA, the Council also created four seasons with limits on the percentage of the TAC which can be taken from any one season, expanded the closure areas around rookery and haul-out sites, and established a 300,000 pound trip limit for pollock in the western and central Gulf areas. The specific motion adopted by the Council, including details related to the above measures, is contained below:

"There is considerable scientific uncertainty regarding the relationships between the pollock fisheries and the Western population of Steller sea lions. This uncertainty lies at the heart of the concerns expressed by the AP and the SSC. The Council recognizes and shares these concerns. This uncertainty has placed the industry at risk, and forced the Council to react to Endangered Species Act concerns in a very compressed time frame and make critical decisions based on incomplete and conflicting data. This is not acceptable.

Nonetheless, as the SSC has noted, the Endangered Species Act involves a fundamental shift in the burden of proof and some basic facts are clear: (1) The Western population of Steller sea lions is greatly reduced; (2) the Western population has been listed as endangered; (3) pollock forms a large

part of the contemporary diet of Steller sea lions; and (4) pollock fisheries remove and disperse potential prey. In view of the importance of the pollock fisheries, the Council is compelled to take immediate action to address the Endangered Species Act issues. Therefore, the Council adopts the following measures for emergency action in 1999:

**A) Aleutian Islands**

Close the Aleutian Islands area to directed pollock fishing.

**B) Bering Sea** (general rules - Item 7 contains more specific rules for each sector)

1. Establish a quarterly system of seasonal sector allocations (among A1, A2, B, and C seasons). Seasons to start on January 20, February 20, August 1, and September 15, respectively.

a) No pollock fishing between November 1 through January 19.

b) CH/CVOA = critical habitat/catcher vessel operational area (excluding NW corner)

2. The combined A1+A2 harvest for the non-CDQ fisheries is set at 40% of the annual non-CDQ TAC.

3. Set the A1 and A2 seasonal allocations at 27.5% and 12.5%, respectively, of each sector allocation in the non-CDQ fisheries.

4. No more than 30% of the annual TAC may be harvested in any single season.

5. Five-day closed period between the A1 and A2 seasons.

6. Allow rollover from one season to the next if it doesn't boost the following season's harvest over the 30% of annual TAC seasonal limit.

7. Establish seasonal harvest measures from inside Bering Sea CH/CVOA as follows:

***Catcher-processor Sector:***

a) Neither A1 or A2 harvest in CH/CVOA may exceed 40% of the respective A1 or A2 apportionments for the catcher-processor sector.

b) Prohibited from fishing in CH/CVOA in the B and C seasons.

***Catcher Vessels Delivering to Motherships:***

a) Single A season beginning February 1. 50% may come from the CH/CVOA.

b) B season starting September 1 (no C season). 50% may come from the CH/CVOA.

***Inshore Sector:***

a) Of the overall A1/A2 inshore cap, no more than 70% shall come out of the CH/CVOA.

b) In the B and C seasons fishing in CH/CVOA is limited to 80% of the inshore sector seasonal allocations.

c) Vessels delivering onshore that are 99 ft LOA or less shall not be excluded from the CH/CVOA during Sept 1 through March 31 during any time that the Bering Sea onshore pollock season is open. The intent would be to close the CH/CVOA to larger boats prior to the sector's CH/CVOA cap being reached leaving sufficient quota remaining within the CH/CVOA to allow smaller boats to fish for the duration of the onshore fishery while others would be fishing outside the CH/CVOA.

***CDQ Sector:***

a) Harvests in A1 and A2 seasons, combined, may not exceed 45% of the CDQ allocation. Closed periods do not apply.

b) Harvests in B and C seasons to be conducted as under present regulations.

8. Existing stand-down requirements of the A season (relative to non-pollock fisheries) shall be removed.

9. Exempt Cape Sarichef from sea lion closures.

**C. Gulf of Alaska**

1. Establish the following seasons and allocations:

<b>Season</b>	<b>Start Date</b>	<b>Allocation</b>
A	Jan. 20	30%
B	June 1	20%
C	Sept. 1	25%
D	No later than 10/1; no sooner than 5 days after close of C season	25%

a) Rollover allowed, subject to 30% rule, and November 1st closure still applies.



2. Limit the A season harvest from the Shelikof critical foraging area in accordance with the method described in the Final Biological Opinion (p. 122), i.e.: (Shelikof survey estimate/Total GOA survey estimate, multiplied by A season TAC).

3. Pollock Trawl Exclusion Zones:

Adopt the pollock trawl exclusion zones proposed by NMFS in the Biological Opinion with the following exceptions for 1999:

Cape Barnabas; Gull Point; Rugged Island; Point Elrington; Cape Ikolik; Needles; Mitrofanina; and Sea Lion Rocks.

4. Trip limits:

Establish a 300,000 lb. trip limit for directed pollock fishing in the W/C GOA.

#### **D. Other Actions**

These measures are being adopted as an Emergency Rule in accordance with the MSFCMA. They will be in effect for 180 days. In reviewing the possible extension of these measures for an additional 180 day period, the Council will pay great attention to NMFS' response to the following:

1. The Council requests that NMFS, in consultation with the Council, the Marine Mammal Commission, ADF&G, and other relevant management agencies, coordinate an independent scientific review of the biological data, Biological Opinion, and other relevant information relating to factors affecting Steller sea lions and their prey. The purpose of the scientific review is to provide guidance to the Council as it prepares to address the long-term aspects of the Steller sea lion situation through the plan amendment process. The Council requests that the scientific peer review be completed by April 1, 1999.

2. The Council requests that NMFS reconstitute the Steller Sea Lion Recovery Team to address concerns such as those expressed by the SSC to ensure that the Council has an appropriate additional source of advice as the Council prepares for long-term treatment of Steller sea lion issues.

3. The Council requests that NMFS prepare and submit a budget proposal for the FY 2000 budget for a sustained research program to investigate: the efficacy of the emergency actions adopted by the Council; sea lion dietary and foraging patterns; sea lion/fishery interactions; and current trends in sea lion population dynamics.

4. It is the intent of the Council that the NMFS move as quickly as possible to develop National Standards for Vessel Monitoring Systems (VMS) so that such systems can be required on fishing vessels engaged in the trawl fisheries of the Bering Sea and Gulf of Alaska. Furthermore, it is also

Council intent that in developing the National Standards that the NMFS consult with affected states, Councils and other federal and enforcement agencies with the intent that the U.S. Coast Guard and other regional enforcement agencies have timely and efficient access to VMS data.

The Council recognizes that these management measures represent an incremental step, and are for 1999 only. To fully comply with both the ESA and MSFCMA requirements, amendments to the BSAI and GOA FMPs will be necessary. Such FMP amendments may need to consider additional measures to satisfy statutory requirements."

These measures are expected to be implemented by emergency rulemaking for the 1999 fisheries. Follow-up amendments will have to be prepared for the year 2000 and beyond and could include similar, or additional, measures for sea lion protection. The specific 10- and 20-mile closure areas around rookeries and haul-outs will be detailed in the NMFS rulemaking for these actions. Staff contact is David Witherell. [Back to top](#)

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### **American Fisheries Act (AFA)**

The Council approved two emergency rules and provided staff guidance on the scope of analysis required for the American Fisheries Act amendments that are scheduled for initial review in April and final review in June. A status report on these analyses will be presented to the Council in February.

First, the Council passed an emergency rule that deals with pollock-to-opilio crab crossover vessels. The motion was, "of those vessels qualified under the American Fisheries Act to participate in the BSAI directed fisheries for opilio crab, only the vessels that landed opilio crab during the directed fishery for that species in 1996 or 1997 may participate in the directed fishery for that species in 1999." This action would reduce the number of vessels eligible for the opilio fishery in 1999 by approximately 30.

The second action was to "request NMFS to implement an emergency rule freezing participation in the pollock and non-pollock fisheries, in the BSAI and GOA, in place for 1999. Each gear type -- trawl, trawl catcher processor, longline, longline catcher-processor, pot, pot catcher processor -- would be limited to the average harvesting and processing levels achieved (as a proportion of TAC) in each GOA and BSAI non-pollock fishery for the years 1996, 1997, and 1998. Limitations under this emergency rule would not apply to (1) pollock catcher processors eligible to harvest pollock under the AFA in 1999, (2) trawl catcher vessels delivering catch to catcher processors under the AFA, or (3) to CDQ operations." Both of the emergency rules are subject to approval by NMFS. If these emergency rules are adopted, the industry will be noticed through the normal Federal Register process.



**The Council took formal action to put the industry on notice that 1999 will not count in determining catch histories as they pertain to developing sideboards to protect non-pollock fisheries.**

The third action taken by the Council was to provide staff direction on the analyses to be conducted to implement the AFA. Council recommendations for the 1999 fishery were provided in November. This meeting primarily dealt with requirements under AFA that must be completed by the July 1, 1999 deadline. However, some actions were taken by the Council with the understanding that they will likely not be available in April for initial review due to time constraints. Specific directions given at this meeting were:

**Initiate an analysis to establish duration for GOA to coincide with the BSAI**

An analysis will be initiated to extend the length of the GOA Inshore/Offshore 3 allocation to December 31, 2004. This is the date that the AFA allocations for the BSAI are set to expire.

**Catcher Processor Restrictions for 2000 and beyond**

For the year 2000 and beyond, the Council initiated an analysis for the 20 + 9 vessels listed in the AFA of their bycatch in both the directed pollock and non-pollock fisheries (1995, 96, 97) and associated PSC levels. The catch histories of the 20 listed vessels and the 9 vessels which are removed from the fishery and the catch in the pollock and non-pollock target fisheries will be treated separately. This will allow the Council to include either all catch or only catch in the non-pollock target fisheries (for either the 20 or 29 vessels) in the caps set for 2000 and beyond.

Sub-options:

- a.. The caps would close both the pollock and non-pollock groundfish fisheries when reached.
- b. The caps would close only the non-pollock groundfish fisheries when reached (only pelagic pollock fisheries would remain open).

**Catcher Vessel restrictions in other fisheries for 2000 and beyond**

**Crab Sideboards**

Initiate analysis of the following options to mitigate impacts of possible spillover effects of AFA on other fisheries:

Options For Section 208 Vessels:

1. No crossover allowed into any crab fisheries.

2. No crossover allowed in the Tanner crab fishery only (opilio and bairdi).
3. No crossovers at the endorsement level.
4. Allow crossovers into red king crab fisheries only (excludes brown and blue king crab).

Sub-options:

- a. Vessels which qualified based on bycatch of bairdi in red king crab would be restricted to bycatch of bairdi in the red king crab fishery (applied to #3 & 4 above).
- b. Only Section 208 catcher vessels that join a co-op (applies to #1-4 above).

Duration of sub-options:

- a. Permanent
  - b. Only for year vessel is involved in co-op.
  - c. Duration of AFA
5. Measures which would restrict pollock co-op vessels to their aggregate traditional harvest including:
- a. Restriction to the percentage of crab harvest in all species between 1995, 96, and 97.

***Groundfish Sideboards***

Participation in a co-op is defined as **ANY** use of a vessel's catch history by a co-op, whether by direct harvest, lease, sale, or stacking of quota.

***To Whom do Restrictions Apply***

Sideboards apply to all Section 208 eligible vessels.

Sub-option: Applies to Section 208 vessels only if they join a co-op.

***To What BSAI Non-Pollock Fisheries the Restrictions Should Apply***

1. Restrictions should apply to all non-pollock FMP fisheries.

***When the CV Restrictions Should Apply***

1. Harvest levels should be restricted only during the same time periods as the normal open access pollock fishery

2. At all times during the fishing year

Sub-option: Use 1998 open access season dates by sector as a base reference

Sub-option: Use 1999 sea lion modified season dates.

***Nature of CV Restrictions***

Option A: Absolute harvest amounts expressed in percentage of TAC in metric tons.

***Determination of "Traditional Harvest Level"***

1. The definition of "traditional" in non-pollock fisheries will be determined by catch history

a. On basis of percentage of groundfish harvest in non-pollock fisheries by species by fishery.

b. On basis of percentage of total groundfish harvest by species by fishery.

c. On basis of percent of TAC in non-pollock fishery by species by fishery.

Option A: Apply one time frame equally to all groundfish targets

Sub-option 1: Use average catch history in the years 1995, 96, and 97.

Sub-option 2: Use catch history based on years 1992-97.

Sub-option under 1 and 2: Utilize "best 2 years"

***Determination of "Aggregate"***

Option A: Apply and monitor by the vessel class and sector

Option B: Apply and monitor by individual co-op

***Management of Non-Pollock Fisheries***

Vessels limited to target fishing for non-pollock species during those times when the open access target fishery for the non-pollock species is open.

1. PSC in non-pollock groundfish caps would apply to all fisheries as true caps (i.e., when reached these vessels would stop fishing for all groundfish species).

2. PSC caps would only close the non-pollock target fisheries.



The VBA Committee will develop options for PSC caps for co-op vessels in non-pollock fisheries.

1. Use VIP rates to determine PSC
2. Use a fraction of the VIP rates to determine PSC.

### **Protective Measures For Pollock Ineligible Processors**

**An analysis be initiated examining options to mitigate potential adverse impacts from AFA on non-pollock processors including:**

1. The ability to allow processors not listed in Section 208 to process limited amounts of inshore pollock allocation, including requirement to participate in buyout provisions. Note that NOAA GC has provided an opinion that the Council is restricted under the Act from allowing additional pollock processors except when the TAC increases by 10 percent over 1997 levels, or one of the processors suffers a total or constructive loss (Section 208(f)(2)).
2. Excessive share caps on processors of 10%, 12%, 15% and 17.5%. The pollock, non-pollock groundfish, and crab fisheries should be examined. A sub-option should also be examined which allows differential caps between pollock and non-pollock processors.
3. Restricting vessels used for processing in the inshore sector to a single geographic location.
4. Measures to restrict pollock processor activity in non-pollock fisheries to no more than historic levels including options using years 1995, 96 and 97.

The analysis should consider the following:

1. list the adverse effects that the measures are aimed at protecting,
2. quantify how the measures will protect the non-eligible processor from the adverse effects, and
3. consider whether adverse effects have a high probability of occurring as opposed to being just perceived as a possibility of occurrence.

**Initiate a data gathering program to identify the benefits and impacts of AFA Information tracked should examine state and federal fisheries and include:**

ownership patterns  
processor activity  
product forms  
ex-vessel price

employment changes  
market share

### **Disclose catch and bycatch information by vessel**

The Council requests that NMFS and ADF&G initiate development of a discussion paper examining what disclosure of catch and bycatch information §211(d) of the AFA would allow that is currently restricted, any other legal impediments to such disclosure, and how that disclosure may be beneficial in implementing §301(a)(9) and §303(a)(11) of the Magnuson-Stevens Act.

### **Prevent excessive harvest/processing shares for all crab and groundfish (and excessive processing shares for pollock)**

Move forward with an FMP amendment to prevent excessive harvest/processing shares for all crab and groundfish (and excessive processing shares for pollock). The analysis should examine shares of fisheries as defined in the following options:

1. individual crab and groundfish species
2. pollock, non-pollock groundfish, crab.

This analysis likely will not be initiated until sometime after April 1999, though processor caps are included in the suite of potential measures recommended by the Council regarding protection of pollock-ineligible processors.

The Council asked staff to examine the following and report back to the Council:

1. Definitions used in AFA and Magnuson-Stevens for consistency.
2. The ability of pollock processors to expand their operations to other geographic locations, and
3. The ability of pollock processors to transfer their processing privileges.

The Council also tasked development of an amendment for species endorsements under LLP. Both the GOA and BSAI should be included in the analysis. The amendment should be based on the proposal submitted by the Groundfish Forum. This will not be initiated until sometime after April 1999.

### **Recommend measures to mitigate AFA impacts**

Add to staff tasking the framework proposal submitted by Alaska Groundfish Databank for pollock co-ops in the Gulf of Alaska. This task will not be started by staff until the Committee formed to study



this issue has completed its work. It is the Council's intent to disband the Western and Central GOA committee and reform it as the GOA Sideboard Committee which will begin consideration of these issues in 1999.

### **If necessary, change criteria for establishing Shoreside catcher vessel cooperatives in Section 210(b)(1)**

Further address in a discussion paper, options for compensation to inshore catcher vessels with catch history delivering to catcher processors that is no longer available to them under AFA. Additionally, examine inserting a clause replacing language in §210(b)(1) to add an option for determining catch history for catcher vessels on the basis of the best two of three years in 1995, 96, 97.

Preliminary analysis of these AFA related amendments will be reviewed by the Council at the February 1999 meeting in Anchorage. At that time, they will finalize the alternatives and options so that the sideboard amendment packages can be completed for review at the April 1999 meeting. Staff contacts are Darrell Brannan or Chris Oliver. [Back to top](#)

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### **Crab License Limitation Program (LLP) Eligibility**

The Council took action at the October 1998 meeting approving additional recent participation requirements for crab LLP qualification (as described in our October newsletter). They were scheduled at this meeting to discuss this issue and decide whether to rescind the October action and possibly approve more restrictive participation requirements. That decision has been postponed until the April 1999 Council meeting. The sideboard amendment package relative to the AFA also contains potential measures relative to crab fishery endorsement restrictions. That package is also scheduled for review in April with a final decision in June 1999. Staff contact is Chris Oliver. [Back to top](#)

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### **Bering Sea and Aleutian Islands Groundfish Specifications**

The Council adopted final groundfish specifications for the 1999 Bering Sea and Aleutian Islands (BSAI) groundfish fisheries, including Acceptable Biological Catch (ABC), Total Allowable Catch (TAC), and Prohibited Species Catch (PSC) limits and apportionments. The Council recommendations for ABCs, TACs, and apportionments are listed in **Table 1**. Abundance of Bering Sea and Aleutian Islands groundfish remains high overall, but has declined for some commercially important species.

The status of pollock in the Eastern Bering Sea (EBS) remains relatively stable at the biomass level that produces maximum sustainable yield. Projected 1999 biomass of age 3+ pollock in the Eastern Bering Sea stock was estimated at 7.04 million mt. The stock was estimated to have been 5.8 million



mt in 1998. Biomass is expected to remain stable in the near future with recruitment of a strong 1996 year-class. Although the maximum allowable ABC for this stock based on an MSY fishing rate is 1.37 million mt, the plan team and SSC recommended a more conservative harvest strategy for 1999. Based on this advice, the Council recommended a 992,000 mt ABC and TAC for Eastern Bering Sea pollock, a decrease of about 10% (118,000 mt) from 1998. Of the pollock TAC, 40% will be allocated to the roe seasons ("A") and 60% to the non-roe seasons ("B"). For CDQ pollock fisheries, the seasonal allocation will remain at 45% and 55%. Season dates for the "A" and "B" seasons will be established by the emergency rule to protect Steller sea lions (see related newsletter item). The pollock TAC for the Aleutian Islands area was set at bycatch amounts only (2,000 mt), and 1,000 mt for the Bogoslof district. The Council recommended that no directed fishing for pollock occur in these areas given current low abundance and the importance of pollock as prey for Steller sea lions. In addition, there will be no directed fishing for pollock using non-pelagic trawls in 1999.

The Council recommended a 177,000 mt TAC for Pacific cod, which was much lower than last year. This reduction was based on an observed biomass decline and a risk minimization analysis. The stock is expected to continue declining in the near future, because recent year classes have been below average. Under the allocations of Amendment 46, 2% of the TAC will be reserved for jig gear, 51% for fixed gear (longline and pot gear), and 47% for trawl gear. The trawl apportionment will be split between catcher vessels and catcher-processors 50/50. For the fixed gear seasonal apportionment of Pacific cod, the Council recommends that 60,000 mt be released the first trimester (January 1 - April 30), 8,500 mt for the second trimester (May 1 - September 1), and 15,000 mt for the third trimester.

Additional precaution was taken to protect other stocks that are declining and remain in low abundance. Greenland turbot has declined since 1975 due to poor recruitment. Given the status of this stock and a projected continued decline, the 1999 TAC was held at last year's catch. Similarly, the TACs for AI sablefish and EBS Pacific ocean perch were held to last year's quota despite projections for higher stock biomass.

Recommended apportionments of prohibited species catch (PSC) limits for 1999 trawl and non-trawl fisheries can be found [here](#). PSC limits for herring, red king crab, bairdi crab, and opilio crab are based on biomass. Halibut and crab PSC limits were further reduced due to pending regulations prohibiting the use of bottom trawl gear in the pollock fishery. For 1999, crab PSC limits will be 197,000 red king crab, 730,000 bairdi crab in Zone 1 and 1,845,000 bairdi crab in Zone 2, and 4,350,000 opilio crab. Halibut PSC was established at 3,675 mt of mortality. The Council recommended that no halibut PSC be apportioned to directed trawl fisheries for turbot, sablefish, or arrowtooth flounder. This recommendation essentially prohibits directed fishing for these species with trawl gear. The Council again recommended that pot gear, jig gear, and sablefish hook-and-line fisheries be exempt from the non-trawl PSC program for 1999. Staff contact is David Witherell.

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### Gulf of Alaska Groundfish Specifications for 1999

The Council approved a Gulf of Alaska (GOA) total Acceptable Biological Catch (ABC) for 1999 of 532,590 mt, a 3% decrease from the total 1998 ABCs of 548,650 mt. The Total Allowable Catches (TAC) was set at 306,535 mt, a 6% decrease from the 1998 TACs of 327,046 mt. **Table 4** shows the complete ABCs and TACs for the GOA for 1999. Overall, the status of the stocks in the Gulf of Alaska continues to appear relatively stable. ABC and TAC recommendations remain essentially unchanged from 1998 for flatfish, rockfish, and Atka mackerel. The pollock ABC declined from 130,000 mt in 1998 to 100,920 mt, reflecting a decline in exploitable biomass. Sablefish biomass continued to decline by about 9%, from 14,120 mt in 1998 to 12,700 mt in 1999. The Council combined the sablefish ABCs for the West Yakutat and East Yakutat/Southeast Outside (EY/SEO) areas to allow for a reallocation of the 5% eastern Gulf trawl allocation to West Yakutat due to the trawl prohibition east of 140° W longitude implemented in 1998. The fixed gear apportionment is 90% of the adjusted West Yakutat TAC and 100% of the adjusted EY/SEO TAC. The Council recommended that: (1) NMFS increase its efforts to incorporate observer data and log book information on CPUE, length, sex, and age data into the sablefish stock assessment for 1999; and (2) NMFS develop and test new assessment techniques, such as port sampling and pre-recruit surveys to improve the accuracy of the sablefish assessment under the IFQ fishing regime. Funds from the IFQ fee program should be prioritized for this work.

The Pacific cod ABC dropped to 84,400 mt and was set at the average of the Plan Team (77,900 mt) and stock assessment (90,900 mt) recommendations. The Council was concerned about uncertain 1995 year class projections and increasing the ABC and TAC amid projections of spawning stock declines for this fishery. The TAC was set below ABC to account for an expanding State waters fishery. The Board of Fisheries (BOF) initiated a state water Pacific cod fishery in the GOA in 1997. The BOF set a three-stage phase-in of the Western and Central Gulf guideline harvest level (GHL). The 1997 state Pacific cod fishery was set at 15% of the federal TAC for the Western and Central Gulf and 25% of the Eastern Gulf TAC. The Central Gulf fishery was apportioned: Cook Inlet 15%, Kodiak 50%, and Chignik 35%. While the Kodiak subarea in the Central Gulf reached the 1997 GHL and would have automatically been raised to 20% in 1998, the BOF chose not to do so during its groundfish review cycle for the Kodiak area. The Western Gulf, and Kodiak and Chignik subareas of the Central Gulf, will automatically increase to 20% for 1999. The Kodiak subarea increases from 7.5% to 10% in 1999 and the Chignik subarea increases from 5.25% to 7% (the subarea apportionment increases from 15 to 20%, respectively).

The Team examined separating the Eastern Gulf ABC for the West Yakutat and East Yakutat/Southeast Outside subareas on a case-by-case basis for 1999, pending resolution of this issue via the 1999 NMFS Gulf of Alaska trawl survey for calculating ABCs next year for the year 2000. Since this is an interim year pending a possible redesign of the 1999 GOA trawl survey in 1999, the Council recommended separation for species/complexes that would be disproportionately

harvested from the West Yakutat area by trawl gear. The Team did not split EGOA ABCs for species that were prosecuted by multi-gear fisheries or harvested solely as bycatch.

The final Prohibited Species Caps (PSC) limits for halibut in the Gulf of Alaska are set by gear type and may be apportioned seasonally over the fishing year. Since 1995, the combined halibut PSC limit for all fisheries and gear types has been 2,300 mt. The Council recommended that NMFS release the trawl halibut PSC for the third quarter on July 11.

Trawl gear			Hook and Line		
1st quarter			1st trimester	250 mt	(86%)
2nd quarter	600 mt	(30%)	2nd trimester	15 mt	(5%)
3rd quarter	400 mt	(20%)	3rd trimester	10 mt	(9%)
4th quarter	600 mt	(30%)	DSR		
	400 mt	(20%)			
	2,000 mt			300 mt	

Beginning in 1994, PSC limits for trawl gear were further apportioned by specific fishery. Apportionments of the overall cap may be made to a 'shallow water complex' and a 'deep water complex.' Species in the shallow water complex are: pollock, Pacific cod, shallow water flatfish, Atka mackerel, and other species. Deep water complex species include: deep water flatfish, rockfish, flathead sole, sablefish, and arrowtooth flounder.

Quarter	Shallow water Complex	Deep water Complex	Total
1	500 mt	100 mt	600 mt
2	100 mt	300 mt	400 mt
3	200 mt	400 mt	600 mt
4	No apportionment		400 mt

The Council recommended the **halibut discard mortality rates** as recommended by IPHC staff shown in Tables 5 (BSAI) and 6 (GOA), and recommended that the flathead sole halibut mortality rate be split: 58% for the catcher vessel fleet and 74% for the catcher processor fleet. Staff contact is Jane DiCosimo. [Back to top](#)

**Items Postponed until February 1999**



A few items on the Council's agenda which were postponed until the February meeting are: (1) a progress report on the Improved Retention/Utilization (IR/IU) program, and final action on a package of regulatory amendments to that program; (2) a report from Groundfish Forum on their Experimental Fishing Permit testing halibut excluder devices; and, (3) a report from the Council's Social and Economic Data Committee regarding possible Council initiatives to complement ongoing data collection efforts by NMFS. Action on a regulatory amendment to require retention of demersal shelf rockfish in the Area 650 fixed gear fisheries was also postponed and may be on the February agenda. [Back to top](#)

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### Upcoming Meetings

The **VBA/HMAP Committee** will meet January 7-8, 1999 in Seattle at the Alaska Fisheries Science Center, Room 2079. The meeting will start at 11:00 a.m. on Thursday, January 7, and should conclude in the early afternoon on Friday. The Council requested that the Committee develop a pilot program for both the HMAP and VBA. Additionally, the VBA Committee has been tasked with developing options for PSC caps for co-op vessels in non-pollock fisheries as part of the American Fisheries Act amendment measures. The Committee will report to the Council in February with their findings. Staff contact is Dave Witherell.

**Ecosystem Committee** is scheduled to meet Thursday and Friday, January 21-22, 1999 at the Anchorage Hilton Hotel, 500 W. Third Avenue, Anchorage (Phone: (907) 272-7411). On January 21, the meeting will be held in the Dillingham Room and on January 22, the meeting will be held in the Foraker Room. *(The Council has acquired a "room block" for this meeting at a rate of \$75 (single/double) per night. Just mention the NPFMC room block to get the special rate.)* The focus of the meeting is to provide the Council with concrete recommendations on how to move forward with ecosystem-based management. The four major topics to be discussed are as follows:

1. The NMFS Ecosystem Panel Report (due in December) recommendations and how the Council does/can implement them.
2. Regime shift/climate variability and fisheries in the northeast Pacific.
3. Marine reserves as a component of fishery management. Note that a framework is being developed to identify habitat areas of particular concern.
4. Time/area dispersal of fisheries.

A second joint meeting of the **Enforcement Committee** and **IFQ Implementation Team Weighmaster Sub-committee** will convene on February 1, 1999, from 6:30 p.m. to 9 p.m. at the February Council meeting at the Anchorage Hilton to further discuss the proposed IFQ weighmaster program. The joint committee is tasked with assessing: (1) adequate compliance monitoring levels of the IFQ program; (2) the potential for involving personnel from ADF&G, USCG, NMFS and the

IPHC in achieving the compliance monitoring program; and (3) proposals to address the remaining needs at achieving adequate compliance monitoring levels. Minutes from the December 10, 1998 meeting are available from Jane DiCosimo.

The **Halibut Guideline Harvest Level (GHL) Committee** is scheduled to convene on January 12, 1999 from 9 a.m. to 4:30 p.m. at the Anchorage Hilton Hotel. The NPFMC has arranged for a block of rooms with the hotel for this meeting - contact the hotel at (907) 272-7411 for more information. The committee will review 1998 ADF&G halibut charterboat logbook data and a staff discussion paper on a suite of alternatives approved for analysis by the Council to implement the guided halibut guideline harvest level and halibut charterboat moratorium. The discussion paper is available from Jane DiCosimo.

A meeting of the **Alaska Board of Fisheries and North Pacific Council Joint Committee** will be held on January 13, 1999, from 8:30 a.m. to 4:30 p.m. at the Anchorage Hilton Hotel. The NPFMC has arranged for a block of rooms with the hotel for this meeting - contact the hotel at (907) 272-7411 for more information. The **draft agenda** for the meeting is available.

The **International Pacific Halibut Commission** will hold its **1999 Annual Meeting** in Prince Rupert from January 25 through 28, 1999. The staff recommendations for halibut catch quotas for 1999 are listed below. The Council sets the subarea allocations for the combined Area 4C-E catch limit. Using the catch sharing plan allocations, the Area 4C and 4D quotas are each 1,866,500 lb. and Area 4E quota is 367,000 lb. Contact the IPHC for more details or visit its web site at <http://www.iphc.washington.edu>.

<b>1999 IPHC Staff Catch Limit Recommendations (million lbs)</b>		
<b>Regulatory Area</b>	<b>1998 Catch Limit Quota</b>	<b>1999 Staff Recommended</b>
2A	0.82	0.66
2B	13.00	11.22
2C	10.50	10.67
3A	26.00	24.73
3B	11.00	13.38
4A	3.50	4.31
4B	3.50	3.97
4C, D, E	3.50	4.10
<b>Total</b>	<b>71.82</b>	<b>73.04</b>

### **Documents Available to the Public**

1. IR/IU Amendment package.

2. Halibut Charter GHL discussion paper.
3. Demersal Shelf Rockfish Retention EA/RIR.
4. Changes Under Alaska's Sablefish IFQ Program, 1995-1997 (CFEC, November 1998).
5. Changes Under Alaska's Halibut IFQ Program, 1995-1997 (CFEC, November 1998).

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