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News & Notes

North Pacific Fishery Management Council

October 2010

Olson Re-Elected Council Chair

The Council unanimously re-elected Eric Olson as Chairman and Dave Benson as Vice Chairman. During the Special Meeting in August, Dr. Jim Balsiger administered the Oath of Office for newly re-appointed Council members Sam Cotten and Duncan Fields.

Denby Lloyd retirement

The Council hosted a reception for retiring Commissioner of the State of Alaska Department of Fish and Game. Mr. Lloyd served on the Council for 4 years. The Council family recognized him for his membership, and for his 37 years of dedication and leadership to the conservation and management of Alaska and the North Pacific fisheries.

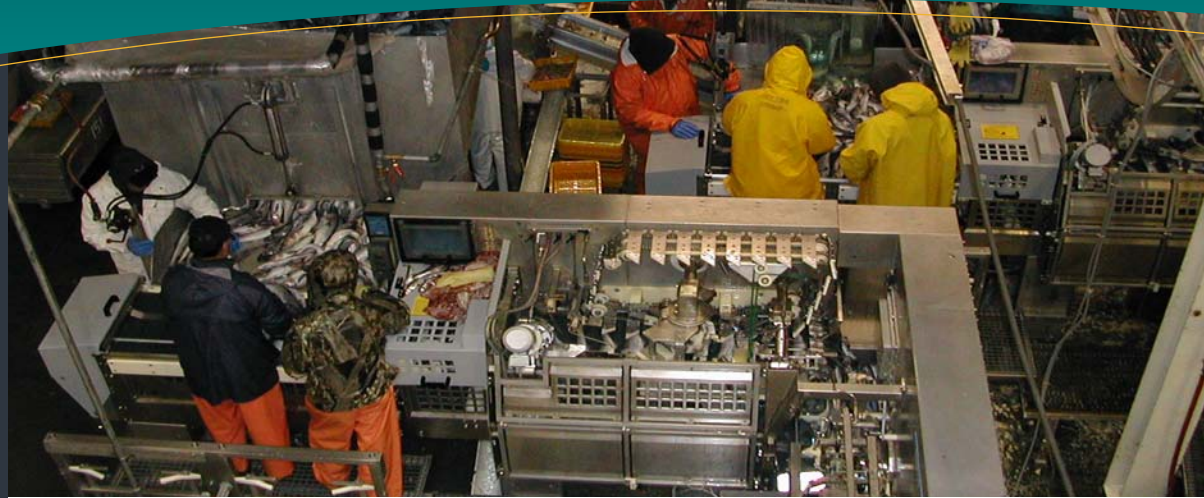
Upcoming Meetings

Crab Plan Team modeling workshop February 16-18 AFSC Seattle

Wakefield Symposium November 8-11, Anchorage

Groundfish Plan Teams – week of November 15, Seattle

IPHC Interim Meeting on Nov 30-Dec 1 and **IPHC Annual Meeting** on Tuesday, January 25 through Friday, January 28, 2011 in Victoria, B.C



Observer Program

In October, the Council reviewed the public review draft analysis on restructuring the observer program (BSAI FMP Amendment 86/GOA FMP Amendment 76) and a report from the Observer Advisory Committee (OAC). Upon review, the Council took final action to restructure the observer program for vessels and processors that are determined to need less than 100% observer coverage in the Federal fisheries (Alternative 3), including previously uncovered sectors such as the commercial halibut sector and <60' groundfish sector. The Council recommended restructuring the program such that NMFS would contract directly with observer companies to deploy observers according to a scientifically valid sampling and deployment plan, and industry would pay a fee equal to 1.25% of the ex-vessel value of the landings included under the program. (The Magnuson Stevens Act authorizes collection of an ex-vessel fee of up to 2%.) As all sectors benefit from the resulting data, the Council chose to apply the same fee percentage to all restructured sectors, in order to develop a fee program that is fair and equitable across all sectors in the restructured program.

The Council emphasized that under the status quo, NMFS cannot determine when and where to deploy observers in the sectors with less than 100% coverage requirements, coverage levels are fixed in regulation, and data gaps exist for sectors without any coverage. The restructured program is intended to provide NMFS with the flexibility to deploy observers in response to fishery management needs and to reduce the bias inherent in the existing program, to the benefit of the resulting data.

The industry sectors that are determined to need $\geq 100\%$ coverage would be included in the 'full coverage' category and continue to meet observer coverage requirements by contracting directly with observer companies under the status quo service delivery model. Vessels and processors in the full coverage category include: catcher processors and motherships; catcher vessels while fishing under a management system that uses prohibited species caps in conjunction with a catch share program (e.g., catcher vessels while participating in AFA pollock and GOA rockfish catch share program); and shoreside and floating processors when taking deliveries of AFA and CDQ pollock.

A provision was also included that would not require 100% coverage on catcher processors <60' with a history of CP and CV activity in the same year or any CP with an average daily production of less than 5,000 pounds (round pound equivalent) in the most recent full calendar year of operation prior to January 1, 2010. The timeframe for this evaluation would be determined in rulemaking, based on available data. Vessels that meet either of these criteria would make a one-time election as to whether they will be in the <100% coverage category and pay an ex-vessel value based fee, or in the $\geq 100\%$ coverage category and pay a daily rate directly to observer providers for coverage. This provision was adopted in order to provide some flexibility for the smallest class of catcher processors, and those vessels that currently operate as both a CP and CV during the year, to determine their observer coverage category and fee system.

(continued)

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 encouraging 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 30, 2010**. SSC appointments for 2011 will be determined by the Council at the December 2010 meeting. Council staff contact is Chris Oliver.

(continued from page 1)

All other catcher vessel sectors, including those participating in the halibut and sablefish IFQ program, would be included in the partial coverage category (<100% coverage) of the restructured observer program and pay the 1.25% ex-vessel fee. Note that while no exemptions were provided for any vessel class, no observer coverage is planned for vessels <40' length overall in the first year(s) of the program. Note also that vessels participating in the State managed guideline harvest level (GHL) and other state-managed non-groundfish fisheries (e.g., lingcod) are excluded from the program (no observer coverage or fee). However, non-GHL groundfish taken incidentally in those fisheries (the catch of which is taken off a Federal TAC) that are landed by vessels with Federal Fishery Permits would be subject to the fee assessment.

The Council motion requires NMFS to release a draft observer program sampling design and deployment plan for those sectors included in the new program annually by September 1, available for review and comment by the Groundfish Plan Teams, SSC, OAC, and Council. This report will also include information on the financial aspects of the program, and delineate how the fee proceeds were used in the prior year. NMFS will consult with the Council on this plan each year. The Council could provide input as to the sampling priorities of the Council prior to the coming year's deployment, as well as evaluate program revenues and costs. If the Council determined a different ex-vessel fee percentage is justified, it could initiate an analysis and rulemaking to change the fee at any time.

Note that the current schedule indicates that deployment under the new program would not occur earlier than 2013. The timeline depends on the availability of Federal funding to cover start-up costs, as funds would need to be in place prior to the first full year of deployment under the new program. The total cost of the restructured portion of the observer program, in order to deploy observers at levels determined necessary to meet initial catch and bycatch estimation needs, is approximately \$3.8 million. This estimate assumes that observers

would not be deployed on vessels <40' in the first year(s) of the program; if any coverage is necessary on this sector, or increased coverage is necessary in other sectors, more funding would be required. If no Federal start-up funding is available, NMFS would need to implement the fee assessment in the year prior to deployment under a new program (potentially 2012 or 2013). Given that the North Pacific is the only region in which industry pays all of the direct costs of deploying observers, and that the Council has now selected a preferred alternative, the Council approved writing a letter to NOAA HQ to again request Federal funds for start-up funding to implement a restructured observer program.

Given the implementation issues associated with this action, the Council requested that it schedule a review of the draft regulations prior to their submission to the Secretary of Commerce. The Council also intends to task the OAC to review and help resolve implementation issues that arise during the drafting of the proposed rule. In addition, in June, upon hearing public testimony about the limited ability for some smaller vessels to carry an observer, and recognizing that the recommended action provides a funding mechanism for electronic monitoring, the Council approved a motion to task the OAC and staff to develop electronic monitoring as an additional tool for fulfilling observer coverage requirements. The intent is for electronic monitoring to be available for specified sectors at the time a restructured observer program is implemented.

Given the new focus of the OAC, the Council approved a motion to reconstitute the Observer Advisory Committee, primarily with representatives of those included in the restructured program, and with experience and interest in electronic monitoring. **If you are interested in serving on the OAC, please provide a letter of interest by November 30.** All current members must also submit a letter.

The public review draft restructuring analysis, the September OAC report, and the final Council motion are posted on the Council website. Staff contact is Nicole Kimball.

Groundfish Workplan

The Council conducted their annual review of the groundfish management policy at this meeting, as well as the groundfish workplan which lists priority actions to implement the management policy. The Council chose not to make any changes to the policy or the workplan at this time, however they indicated that it may be appropriate to designate a workgroup to conduct a more focused review for a future meeting. NMFS and Council staff indicated that over the next year, they intend to begin internal planning to be ready with options for updating the programmatic groundfish FMP SEIS, which contained the analysis supporting the Council's adoption of the current groundfish management policy, at such time as the Council decides that an update is necessary. The management policy, workplan, and staff discussion paper are available on the Council website. Staff contact is Diana Evans.

BSAI Arrowtooth Flounder MRA Adjustment

At the October meeting, the Council took final action selecting a preferred alternative that would revise the maximum retainable amounts (MRAs) of groundfish in the BSAI arrowtooth flounder fishery. Specifically, the Council selected Alternative 2, which, with the exception of Greenland turbot and other species, would revise the MRAs in the arrowtooth flounder fishery equal to those in the Pacific cod fishery. For Greenland turbot and other species, the Council adjusted the MRAs for these species to 7% and 3%, respectively to allow for some retention of these incidental caught species while at the same time reduce regulatory discards for these species.

Currently, the MRAs for groundfish in the arrowtooth flounder fishery are set at zero percent. This was done in the mid-1990s to prevent vessels from using arrowtooth flounder to harvest more readily marketable species. However, since markets for arrowtooth flounder now exist enough to support a viable target fishery, the Council approved the adjustments to the MRAs in the arrowtooth flounder fishery to provide increased opportunity for retention of species harvested and reduce regulatory discards.

Finally, recognizing the development of a new quota category for Kamchatka flounder, the Council recommended that Kamchatka flounder be managed with arrowtooth flounder for purposes of MRA. Staff contact is Jon McCracken.

Scallop Annual Catch Limits

The Council took final action on an amendment to the Scallop FMP to address annual catch limits (ACLs) and accountability measures (AMs). This action was required in order to comply with statutory requirements resulting from the revised Magnuson Stevens Act and NMFS guidelines for complying with National Standard 1. The Council's preferred alternative includes the following:

An acceptable biological catch (ABC) control rule which established the maximum ABC as 90% of the overfishing limit (OFL) (Alternative 3a). The OFL is redefined to include all estimated sources of discard mortality (i.e. discard mortality in the directed fishery). The new OFL = 1.29 million pounds of shucked scallop meats. The ACL will be applied to the statewide stock. The annual ABC will be recommended to the Council by the SSC in April. Accountability measures will include that the annual GHL for each scallop management area will be established by the State as a level sufficiently below the ACL so that the sum of the estimated discard mortality in directed scallop and groundfish fisheries as well as directed fishery removals does not exceed the ACL. Anytime an ACL is exceeded the overage will be accounted for through a downward adjustment to the GHL during the fishing season following the overage.

In order to address ACL requirements for the non-weathered stocks, the Council selected

management option 2, to reclassify the non-weathered stocks into an Ecosystem Component (EC) under the FMP. ACLs do not need to be specified for these stocks. In order to have a target fishery for these stocks however, a follow-up FMP amendment would be necessary to move them into a target category. Under this new FMP structure, the weathered scallop stock is specified as the target stock (and defined as 'in the fishery') while the non-weathered stocks are in the Ecosystem Component and not subject to directed fishing. Implementation of this amendment is anticipated prior to the start of the 2011 fishing year. The full ACL analysis as well as the Council's motion is posted on the Council's website. Staff contact is Diana Stram.

Research Priorities

The Council identified its five-year research priorities for crab, scallop, and groundfish resources for 2011-2015, and relative to Steller sea lion research, based on recommendations from its scientific panels. The list of research priorities is posted on the Council website for use by state and federal governments, and academic and research institutions. Contact Diana Stram (Crab and Scallop) or Jane DiCosimo (Groundfish) or Jeannie Heltzel (SSL) for more information.

Call for AP and PNCIAC 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 managing 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 6 AP seats up for appointment. AP members whose terms expire at the end of this year include Joe Childers (AK), Mark Cooper (OR), Julianne Curry (AK), Tom Enlow (AK), Simon Kinneen (AK), and Ed Poulsen (WA).

Additionally, the Council is also seeking nominations to the Pacific Northwest Crab Industry Advisory Committee, PNCIAC. There are 13 seats available, and each member serves a two year term.

Letters of interest or nomination, along with a resume of experience, for persons wishing to be considered for either of these panels, should be sent to the NPFMC, Attention Maria Shawback; 605 W. 4th Avenue, #306, Anchorage, AK 99501, by 5:00 pm on Monday, **November 30th**. Appointments will be announced at the end of the next Council meeting the week of December 6th at the Hilton Hotel in Anchorage and will become effective in January 2011. For more information, contact the Council office.

HAPC Proposals

At the October Council meeting the Council reviewed proposals for HAPC skate nurseries and selected one for further review. The Plan Teams will assess the proposal using evaluation criteria adopted at the April meeting. Staff will review the proposal for socioeconomic considerations, and the Enforcement Committee will review for enforcement and management considerations.

HAPCs are geographic sites that fall within the distribution of EFH for the Council's managed species. The skate nursery sites must be responsive to the Council priority, must be rare (defined as uncommon habitat that occurs in discrete areas within only one or two Alaska regions), and must meet one of three other considerations: provide an important ecological function; be sensitive to human-induced degradation; or be stressed by development activities.

The six candidate HAPC sites are proposed to protect the eggs, egg casings, and developing embryos of skate species (Rajidae) in the eastern Bering Sea. The HAPC proposal as well as the request for proposals and the application package, are available on the Council website. Staff contact is Sarah Melton.

Crab Annual Catch Limits

The Council took final action on amendment 38 to the BSAI Crab FMP to establish annual catch limits (ACLs) and accountability measures (AMs) for BSAI crab stocks. This action was necessary to bring the BSAI crab FMP into compliance with revised Magnuson Stevens Act requirements to implement ACLs and AMs and NMFS guidelines for National Standard 1 (NS1) on addressing these requirements. The primary purpose of the requirements is to end overfishing and provide rebuilding for overfished stocks. The environmental assessment addressed both amending the FMP to establish the method by which ACLs will be established (Action 1) as well as to revise the snow crab rebuilding plan (Action 2; note the EBS snow crab rebuilding plan action is summarized under the crab rebuilding plan article in this newsletter).

ACLs are to be established based upon an acceptable biological catch (ABC) control rule in the FMP and are to account for the uncertainty in the overfishing limit (OFL) point estimate. Two alternative means of establishing the ABC control rule were considered: 1) a constant buffer approach where the ABC for each stock would be set by application of a constant pre-specified buffer value below the OFL; and 2) a variable buffer approach where the ABC would be established based upon a pre-specified percentile of the distribution for the OFL which accounts for scientific uncertainty regarding the OFL. Under this approach the decision-point is based upon a level of risk characterised by the probability of overfishing (P^*) should catch equal that amount. A range of constant buffers and probabilities were considered under each alternative approach.

The Council's preferred alternative established ABC control rules by Tiers under the FMP. For Tiers 1-4, the Council chose to establish an ABC control rule using a variable buffer (or P^*) approach. The Council selected a $P^* = 0.49$ (or an estimated 49% chance of overfishing) as their approach for these Tiers, including in the OFL point. The Council's preferred alternative provides that additional buffering to account for outside-of-model scientific uncertainty will be accomplished by the State of Alaska during the annual TAC/GHL setting process, which remains a category 2 measure under the FMP. This approach generally does not provide as large a buffer between OFL and ABC, but defers to the long standing expertise of ADF&G managers to provide additional buffering in the TAC/GHL setting process. The Council directed the plan team and SSC to continue exploring factors influencing scientific uncertainty in the OFL, and which factors should best be addressed in the setting of ABC and

TAC as reflected in the following attached motion.

The estimated buffers resulting from within-model uncertainty and the Council's selected risk policy range from 0.13%-0.21% for Tier 3 to 0.07% -1.43% for Tier 4 stocks. For Tier 5 stocks the Council chose a constant buffer approach (10%) where $ABC = 90\%$ of OFL. The control rules establish the maximum ABC under the FMP. Annual ABC recommendations to the Council by the SSC will occur in October which may cause a delay in TAC-setting due to the timing of the October meeting. Accountability measures are also identified in the Council's motion should the ACL be exceeded annually. The full Council motion as well as the analysis for the crab ACLs (and snow crab rebuilding plan) are also posted on the Council's website. Implementation is anticipated for the 2011/12 crab fishing year. Staff contact is Diana Stram.

BSAI Crab Stocks

BSAI crab stock status relative to status determination criteria and OFLs for the 2010/11 crab fishing year were determined at this meeting (see attached tables). Six of the ten stocks have OFLs established following the summer survey information availability. Two of the ten stocks (Norton Sound red king crab and AI golden king crab) have OFLs which were established following review and recommendations by the CPT and SSC in June of 2010 in order to allow for the summer fisheries for these stocks while the remaining two stocks (Adak red king crab and Pribilof Islands golden king crab) have OFLs recommended in June 2010 based on Tier 5 formulation (average catch). There are 10 crab stocks in the BSAI Crab FMP and all 10 must have annually established OFLs. Four of the ten stocks are estimated to be below B_{MSY} in the 2010/11 fishing year (EBS snow crab, EBS Tanner crab, Pribilof Islands red king crab, Pribilof Islands blue king crab). Of these, both Pribilof Islands blue king crab and EBS Tanner crab have an estimated mature male biomass (MMB) below the minimum stock size threshold (MSST) and are considered overfished. Two stocks (EBS snow crab and Pribilof Islands blue king crab) remain under current rebuilding plans. Three stocks are estimated to have MMB above the B_{MSY} (Bristol Bay red king crab, St. Matthew blue king crab and Norton Sound red king crab). Status determination for assessing stock status for the remaining three stocks (Aleutian Islands golden king crab, Pribilof Islands golden king crab and Adak red king crab) is unknown.

C-3 COUNCIL MOTION BSAI Crab ACLs/snow crab rebuilding

The Council adopts the purpose and need statement as amended and the following preferred alternatives for final action, as specified below.

Action 1: Establish Annual Catch Limits (ACLs) for 10 Crab stocks

On January 16, 2009, NMFS issued final guidelines for National Standard 1 of the Magnuson-Stevens Fishery Conservation and Management Act (MSA). They provide guidance on how to comply with new annual catch limit (ACL) and accountability measure (AM) requirements for ending overfishing of fisheries managed by federal fishery management plans. Annual catch limits are amounts of fish allowed to be caught in a year. A legal review of the BSAI King and Tanner Crab FMP found there were inadequacies in the FMP texts that need to be addressed. Several work groups (e.g., ABC/ACT Control Rules, Vulnerability Evaluations) have been created to produce reports on how to carry out the more technical components of the NS 1 guidelines. Statutory deadlines require compliance with the MSA by the start of the 2011 fisheries.

This action is necessary to facilitate compliance with requirements of the MSA to end and prevent overfishing, rebuild overfished stocks and achieve optimum yield. This action also recognizes and maintains the unique joint state-federal cooperative management structure of the BSAI King and Tanner FMP.

Alternative 2- Establish ABC control rule using constant buffer approach

Option 2: ABC = 90% of OFL (10% buffer) for all Tier 5 stocks.

Alternative 3- Establish ABC control rule using variable buffer (P*) approach

Option 1: P* = 0.49 for all Tier 1, 2, 3, and 4 stocks.

Under Alternative 3 buffers between the OFL and ABC for individual stocks will be based on a P* of 0.49 and the within-model scientific uncertainty in the OFL point estimate (σ_w) for each stock. Additional buffering to account for outside-of-model scientific uncertainty in the OFL point estimate will be accomplished by the State of Alaska as a Category 2 measure, which provides for federal oversight under the FMP, during the annual TAC/GHL specification process.

Factors that influence estimates of scientific uncertainty are currently considered by the State in TAC setting and are time-sensitive. It will not be possible for the CPT and SSC to make recommendations that incorporate all scientific uncertainty based on the best and most timely information available, as is recognized in defining the State's role under the FMP.

The Council encourages the CPT and SSC to identify factors influencing scientific uncertainty that could be incorporated in the ABC control rule, and which are best reserved for State consideration on an annual basis in TAC setting. Less time-sensitive factors could be reviewed during the normal crab assessment cycle (i.e., May CPT and June SSC).

In adopting this preferred alternative the Council requests the CPT and SSC continue work to improve understanding of scientific uncertainty in the estimation of crab OFLs and to ensure that crab stock assessment models and OFLs are risk-neutral. The Council requests that crab assessment and management staff work to evaluate all sources of uncertainty in assessments, develop methods to accurately quantify uncertainty, and to provide for SSC review.

Accountability Measures

The annual TAC for each crab stock will be established by the State of Alaska at a level sufficiently below the ACL so that the sum of State considerations of scientific and management uncertainty in the OFL estimate; the estimated discard mortality in directed crab, groundfish, and scallop fisheries as well as the directed crab fishery removals; and management uncertainty in bycatch estimates does not exceed the ACL. Anytime an ACL is exceeded the overage will be accounted for through a downward adjustment to the TAC for that species during the fishing season following the overage.

Options for modifying the NPFMC review process

Option 1: SSC recommends ABC levels annually at October Council meeting (delayed TAC-setting).

Optimum Yield specification: FMP will be amended to read "OY range 0 to < OFL catch".

Action 2: Rebuilding plan for EBS snow crab stock

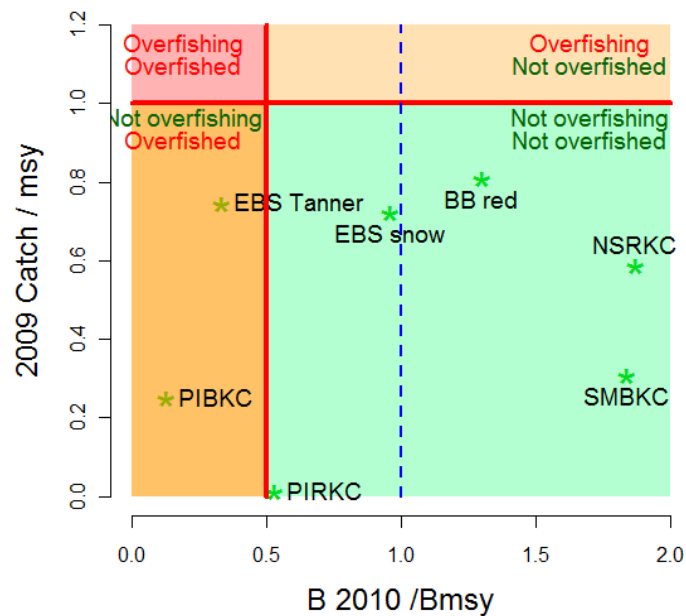
Alternative 1: No Action

Option for defining 'rebuilt' as one-year above B_{MSY}

Council Reviews Draft Regulations

At this meeting the Council reviewed draft regulations for two important management packages. The first review was a draft regulatory package for the GOA rockfish catch share program to ensure that the direction of that rulemaking was following Council intent. After review the Council determined that the regulatory package generally appeared to meet Council intent, and 'deemed' that NMFS continue working on the regulations, working with Council staff as necessary, and would be subject to review by the Chair and Executive Director prior to publication as a proposed rule. The second package reviewed by the Council was the halibut Catch Sharing Plan (CSP), which NMFS had brought back to the Council in order for the Council to see how the agency intended to implement a number of the CSP provisions. After review, the Council approved the approaches outlined by NMFS with minor clarifications. Council staff contacts are Jon McCracken and Jane DiCosimo respectively.

Crab stocks



Summary status of Tiers 3-4 BSAI crab stocks relative to 2009 catch levels (vertical axis) and projected 2010 mature male biomass relative to B_{MSY} levels. Note that the 2009 MSY level is defined as the 2009 catch at F_{OFL} .

Pribilof Islands blue king crab rebuilding plan

A revised rebuilding plan for the Pribilof Islands blue king crab stock is being analyzed. The Council reviewed a draft of the analysis at this meeting and revised the alternatives by removing Alternative 5 (a PSC cap on PIBKC which would close all groundfish fishing in the Bering Sea); to remove from consideration for closures any fisheries which have not contributed to PIBKC bycatch since 2003; to refine the description of the caps under consideration to indicate that they represent the bycatch component of the calculated OFL under Alternative 6; and to include a sub-option to the option for increased observer coverage that it would sunset upon implementation of the re-structured Observer Program. The Council also requested the inclusion of specific information on PI red king crab spatial distribution and overlap as well as blue king crab recruitment patterns in the revised document. The PIBKC rebuilding plan is scheduled for initial review in December with final action in February.

EBS Snow crab rebuilding plan

The Council took final action on the revised snow crab rebuilding plan at this meeting. The Council selected Alternative 1: No Action as the preferred alternative. This would serve to continue the current rebuilding plan until the stock is rebuilt. The Council also selected the option to redefine the rebuilt status as the first year the stock is above its B_{MSY} estimate. The stock is currently at 96% of B_{MSY} .

EBS Tanner crab rebuilding plan

The Council was notified that the EBS Tanner crab stock is overfished and that a new rebuilding plan for this stock must be implemented within two years. The Crab Plan Team will be convening a crab modeling workshop in February 2010 to evaluate a draft Tanner crab stock assessment model as well as to evaluate models for several other stocks (PIRKC, PIBKC, BBRKC). More information and an agenda for that meeting will be posted on the Council's website when drafted. Council motions on PIBKC rebuilding, Snow crab rebuilding (in conjunction with Crab ACLs) and the final SAFE report are posted on the Council's website. Staff contact is Diana Stram.

Data Collection

The Council addressed two data collection issues at its October meeting. First, the Council adopted a purpose and need statement to guide revisions to the **crab economic data reporting** program. That program is intended to provide information to analysts to assess the effects of the crab rationalization program and future management actions in the fishery. Yet, the Council (through its prior reviews of the data collection program, development of the metadata, and review of the data by the Pacific Northwest Crab Industry Advisory Committee and testimony from the industry) has identified substantial portions of the data that are inaccurate or wholly (or partially) redundant with other existing data collection requirements. In addition, the Council purpose and need statement provides that the cost to industry, both directly through data submission, and indirectly through cost recovery funding of program administration, outweigh the benefits of the resultant data and those costs appear to significantly exceed estimates provided in the development of the data collection program. To address these problems, the Council intends to amend the data collection program so that the data collected is accurate, informative to the Council, not redundant with existing reporting requirements, and can be reported by industry and administered at a reasonable cost. To achieve this end, the Council requested staff to develop the four alternatives for Council consideration that collect the following elements:

- 1) critical operational components by individual crab fishery,
- 2) critical operational components from all crab fisheries (aggregated across all crab fisheries),
- 3) critical operational components from all fisheries (aggregated across all fisheries), and
- 4) all operational components by individual crab fishery (similar to current data collection program).

In addition, the Council stated that, as analysts develop, refine, and verify methods for accurately collecting additional informative data elements, it will consider expansion of the data collection program to include those elements.

The Council also reviewed drafts of regulations and the accompanying regulatory package (including draft forms) that would implement the data collection program for assessing the effects of **Chinook salmon prohibited species catch reduction under Amendment 91**. The Council approved the package, proposing only minor, clarifying revisions to the data collection forms that were suggested by the Advisory Panel. Staff contact is Mark Fina.

Groundfish Proposed Specifications

The Council recommended proposed specifications for the GOA and BSAI groundfish fisheries for 2011 and 2012. NMFS will include the recommendations by the SSC for overfishing levels (OFLs) and acceptable biological catches (ABCs) and by the Council for total allowable catches (TACs) in the proposed rule that will be published in the *Federal Register*. This action will not affect the specifications for catch limits that start the 2011 groundfish fisheries which already are in effect for the start of the 2011 fishing season. 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 2011 and 2012 that will be decided in December 2010. The proposed specifications generally are based on rollovers of the specifications currently in effect for the start of the 2011 fishing year. Three changes were made to the rollover specifications in the BSAI. As a result of approval of plan amendments to eliminate the other species category and to manage sharks, skates, sculpins, squids, and octopuses at the group level, the proposed specifications include group level OFL and ABC recommendations for those groups. Other proposed changes in the BSAI include a separate target category for Kamchatka flounder, which has been managed in the arrowtooth/Kamchatka flounder complex (though the Council requested it continue to be managed as part of arrowtooth flounder), and separate area ABCs and TACs for blackspotted/rougeye rockfish complex in the Bering Sea and the Aleutian Islands. In the GOA, the Council established separate specifications for sharks, squid, sculpins and octopus. The Council also slightly reduced the TAC for BSAI Pollock to accommodate potential EFP needs. The proposed specifications are posted on the Council website.

The Council also received reports from the Groundfish Plan Teams on the results of numerous research surveys, working group reports, total catch accounting, and other research initiatives in support of stock assessments; Plan Team minutes are posted on the Council website. Of particular note from the eastern Bering Sea shelf bottom trawl survey, the biomass estimates of almost all species were higher than last year's (Alaska plaice was an exception). For Pacific cod, the 2010 biomass for the standard survey area is 860,000 t, which ranks 11th out of 29 survey biomass estimates and is about 13% above the 760,000 t average for 1982-2009. It was slightly more than twice the biomass for 2009 (421,000 mt). For pollock, the 2010 estimate is 3.75 million t and ranks 23rd out of 29 surveys. The estimate is below average by about 22% (the average is 4.83 million t), but represents a 64% increase from the 2009 value (which was 2.28 million t). This was another "cold" survey year, the fifth in a row.

In response to concerns that new requirements for ACLs for octopus may unnecessarily constrain commercial fisheries, the Council initiated an analysis for amendments to the BSAI and GOA Groundfish FMPs that would consider moving octopus into the ecosystem category or create octopus discard mortality rates. Initial review and final action are scheduled tentatively for April and June 2011, respectively. The intent is for the amendments to be implemented for the 2012 fisheries.

Contact Jane DiCosimo (BSAI) and Diana Stram (GOA) for more information.

Nominations for NPRB

The North Pacific Research Board is seeking nominations for its Advisory Panel. The Advisory Panel represents user groups and other interested parties from the various regions within the Board's purview. Advisory Panel members advise the Board on accomplishing its overall mission of fielding a high caliber, comprehensive research program that will improve our understanding of the Gulf of Alaska, Bering Sea and Aleutian Islands, and Arctic Ocean ecosystems and their fisheries, and help to sustain and enhance the living marine resources.

The Board believes it is important to incorporate meaningful community involvement throughout its science program from planning to oversight and review. The Advisory Panel has a significant advice-giving role, with active involvement in setting research priorities and defining questions, though it does not participate in reviewing research proposals. Advisory Panel members serve three-year terms and the new terms would commence on April 1, 2011. The Board covers travel, food and lodging for panel members.

Nominations and self-nominations may be submitted to the Board by email to cpautzke@nprb.org, or by regular mail to: Clarence Pautzke, Executive Director; North Pacific Research Board; 1007 West 3rd Avenue, Suite 100; Anchorage, Alaska 99501

Deadline for nominations is **Friday, December 31, 2010**. Please include a brief 1-2 page resume and full contact information, including email address. Please visit the Board's web site at www.nprb.org for more information about the Board and its activities.

Please note that the Board will not make a decision on new Advisory Panel memberships until after it has had the opportunity to consider any relevant recommendations of an external committee of visitors that is evaluating the Board and its activities and processes. That consideration will occur the week of January 17, 2011. New members will be informed shortly thereafter, well ahead of their anticipated first meeting in late April 2011.

GOA Tanner Crab Closures

The Council adopted three area closures around Kodiak, to reduce bycatch of Tanner crab in the GOA groundfish fisheries: in Marmot Bay, Chiniak Gully, and ADFG statistical area 525702 (see map). Marmot Bay will be permanently closed to fishing with trawl gear, except those vessels using pelagic trawl gear to fish for pollock. The remaining two areas are closed to all vessels using nonpelagic trawl gear unless they have 100% observer coverage. For all pot vessels, in order to fish in any of the three identified areas, vessels must have 30% observer coverage.

This action culminated Council discussions with respect to reducing bycatch of Tanner crab in the groundfish fisheries which have dated back for several years. The Council received testimony from trawl and pot fishermen participating in groundfish and crab fisheries, as well as other representatives from the community of Kodiak.

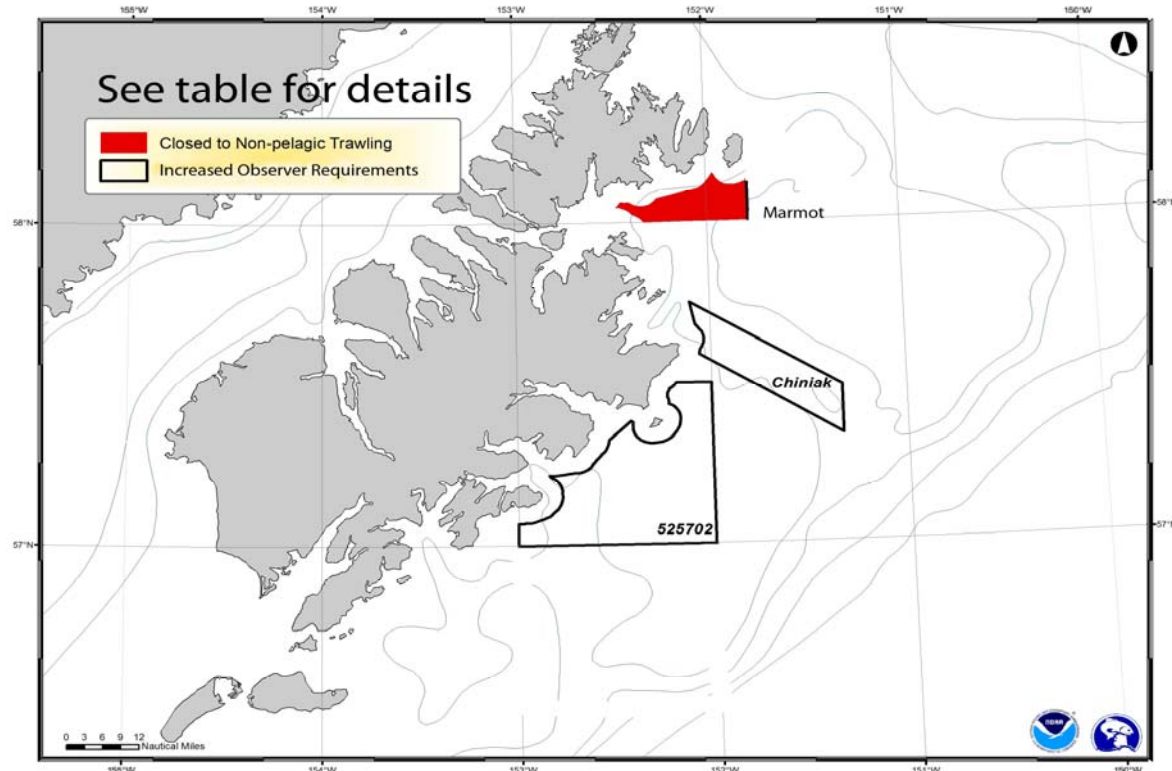
For most of the areas, the Council identified that vessels could fish in the closed areas provided they met a higher level of observer coverage. This requirement impacts trawl and pot vessels under 60 feet, which are currently unobserved. Additionally, trawl vessels between 60 and 125 feet, which

currently fall in the 30% observer category, must increase their coverage to 100% when fishing in the closed areas, and observer coverage in these areas will not apply to their regulatory 30% requirement. The Council noted that these observer coverage requirements would be in place until the new, fee-based observer program comes online (at which time the Council requested NMFS to initiate an observer deployment strategy that continues to ensure adequate coverage in these important areas).

The Council also initiated a trailing amendment to implement trawl sweep modifications for nonpelagic trawl vessels fishing in the Central GOA. This gear modification, which requires elevating devices to be placed on the trawl sweeps to lift the sweep off the seafloor, was recently regulated for flatfish vessels in the Bering Sea. Bering Sea research has demonstrated that elevated sweeps can reduce unobserved mortality of crab from interacting with the trawl sweeps. It is anticipated that Council and NMFS staff will interact with the trawl industry during the development of the amendment in order to ensure that regulations specifying the trawl sweep modification are both practicable and enforceable.

The Council reconsidered their motion on this issue during the course of the meeting. The final motion, as adopted on October 11, 2010, is on the Council website. Staff contact is Diana Evans.

	Trawl	Pot
Marmot Bay	Closed (vessels using pelagic trawl gear to fish for pollock are exempt)	Closed to pot gear unless 30% observer coverage
Chiniak Gully	Closed to nonpelagic trawl gear unless 100% observer coverage	
ADFG statistical area 525702		



SSL Biological Opinion and RPA

In October, NMFS gave the Council an update on the Steller Sea Lion Biological Opinion and presented a revised draft reasonable and prudent alternative (RPA). The draft Biological Opinion (BiOp) was released by NMFS in August 2010, and concludes that the status quo BSAI and GOA groundfish fisheries jeopardize the continued existence of the endangered western Distinct Population Segment (DPS) of Steller sea lions and adversely modify its designated critical habitat. The BiOp includes a draft RPA that would close the Atka mackerel and Pacific cod fisheries in the Western Aleutian Islands (Area 543), restrict the Atka mackerel and Pacific cod fisheries in the Central Aleutian Islands (Area 542), and restrict the Pacific cod fishery in the Eastern Aleutian Islands (Area 541). NMFS presented a revised draft RPA to the Council in October that incorporates four changes to the RPA presented in the draft BiOp:

- Permit non-trawl vessels < 60' length to fish for Pacific cod from 6- 10 nm in critical habitat year-round in Area 542.
- Permit non-trawl vessels ≥ 60' length to fish for Pacific cod from 6- 10 nm in critical habitat in the B season in Area 542.
- Permit trawl vessels to fish for Pacific cod from 10-20 nm of critical habitat from 178° W to 177° W in the A season.
- Permit trawl vessels participating in a harvest cooperative or fishing CDQ to fish for Atka mackerel from 10-20 nm of critical habitat from 179° W to 178° W year-round. Limit the amount of Atka mackerel harvest inside critical habitat to 10% of the entity's annual allocation. Divide the annual harvest inside critical habitat evenly between the A and B seasons.

NMFS did not present an updated EA/RIR at the October meeting evaluating the environmental, social, and economic effects of alternative Steller sea lion mitigation measures. The revised EA/RIR is tentatively scheduled to be released in early December when the final BiOp is released. NMFS will implement the mitigation measures as a Secretary of Commerce action under section 305(d) of the Magnuson-Stevens Act. The rulemaking to implement the management measures in the final RPA is scheduled to be completed by January 2011.

NMFS indicated that an independent review of the BiOp will be conducted by the Center for Independent Experts (CIE) during the CIE's 2011 review cycle, unless the Council requests a different review process. The Council asked that NMFS provide the Council with the CIE Terms of Reference prior to the December meeting, and indicated that it plans to discuss the CIE and other possible peer review processes at the December meeting. In addition, the Council passed a motion that recommends that a high level scientific institution, such as the National Research Council, conduct a programmatic review of NMFS's SSL research program. The review would evaluate the effectiveness of the research program, identify remaining data gaps, and make recommendations for a re-focused SSL research program to address pressing scientific and management needs. The Council requested that the Executive Director, working with the Council Chair, explore options for securing such a comprehensive programmatic review of the SSL research program. Staff contact is Jeannie Heltzel.

Tentative Meeting Dates for 2010-2012*

	February Week of/ Location	April Week of/ Location	June Week of/ Location	October Week of/ Location	December Week of/ Location
2010	8/Benson Hotel, Portland	6/Anchorage Hilton (AP and SSC start Tuesday, because of Easter, Council starts Thursday)	7/Sitka	4/Anchorage Captain Cook	6/Hilton
2011	January 31- February 8/ Seattle	March 28 - April 5 Anchorage	June 6-14 NOME	September 26- October 4 Unalaska	Dec 5-13 Anchorage
2012	January 30- February-7 Seattle	March 26-April 3 Anchorage Hilton	June 4-12 Kodiak	October 1-9 Anchorage Hilton	December 3-11 Anchorage Hilton

* Meeting dates are subject to change depending on availability of meeting space.

Any changes will be published in the Council's newsletter and updated on the website.

DRAFT NPFMC THREE-MEETING OUTLOOK - updated 10/21/10

December 6, 2010 Anchorage, AK Hilton Hotel	January 31, 2011 Seattle, WA Renaissance Hotel	March 28, 2011 Anchorage, AK
<p>P.cod Jig Fishery Management: Discussion Paper (T)</p> <p>SSL RPA/BiOp Review: Discuss</p> <p>CQE area 3A D class purchase: Initial Review CQE in Area 4B: Review Discussion paper Area 4B D shares on C vessels: Initial Review/Final Action Halibut Charter Permit Leasing: Discussion paper</p> <p>Am 80 GRS Program Changes: Initial Review</p> <p>BSAI Crab ROFR: Initial Review BSAI Crab Rationalization 5-year review: Receive report BSAI Crab Emergency Relief: Initial Review / Final Action</p> <p>GOA Halibut PSC Discussion Paper: Review disc. Paper and provide direction</p> <p>GOA Chinook Salmon Bycatch: Discussion paper (T)</p> <p>Salmon FMP: Discussion paper</p> <p>Pribilof BKC Rebuilding Plan: Initial Review Sablefish Recruitment Factors: Discussion Paper (T)</p> <p>Hagemeister Island: Initial Review</p> <p>Groundfish Specifications: PT reports; Approve SAFE report; Adopt Final Catch Limits</p>	<p>GOA Rockfish regulations: Update (T) BS&AI P.cod Split: Discuss plan/action as necessary (T)</p> <p>Halibut/Sablefish Hired Skipper: Initial Review (T) CQE area 3A D class purchase: Final Action Four new CQE eligible communities: Initial/Final Action</p> <p>Am 80 Replacement Vessel Sideboards: Discussion Paper Am 80 GRS Program Changes: Final Action</p> <p>BSAI Crab ROFR: Final Action</p> <p>AI P.cod Processing Sideboards: Initial Review (T)</p> <p>BSAI Chum Salmon Bycatch: Preliminary Review</p> <p>BBRKC Spawning Area/fishing effects: Discussion paper (T.)</p> <p>Pribilof BKC Rebuilding Plan: Final Action</p> <p>MPA Nomination Discussion Paper: Review Hagemeister Island: Final Action</p> <p>HAPC - Skate sites: Preliminary Review EFH Amendment: Initial Review (T)</p>	<p>Halibut/Sablefish IFQ Changes: Discussion paper Halibut/Sablefish Hired Skipper: Final Action (T)</p> <p>Octopus Management Alternatives: Initial Review</p> <p>Economic Data Collection (Crab EDR): Initial Review (T)</p> <p>AI P.cod Processing Sideboards: Final Action (T)</p> <p>BSAI Chum Salmon Bycatch: Review as necessary</p> <p>Salmon FMP: Preliminary Review (T)</p> <p>Tanner Crab Rebuilding: Initial Review (T)</p> <p>Groundfish PSEIS: Discuss schedule (T)</p> <p>HAPC - Skates sites: Initial Review EFH Amendment: Final Action (T)</p>

ACL - Annual Catch Limit
 AI - Aleutian Islands
 GOA - Gulf of Alaska
 SSL - Steller Sea Lion
 BKC - Bue King Crab
 BOF - Board of Fisheries
 FEP - Fishery Ecosystem Plan
 CDQ - Community Development Quota
 VMS - Vessel Monitoring System
 EFP - Exempted Fishing Permit
 BiOp - Biological Opinion
 MRA - Maximum Retainable Allowance

PSC - Prohibited Species Catch
 TAC - Total Allowable Catch
 BSAI - Bering Sea and Aleutian Islands
 IFQ - Individual Fishing Quota
 ROFR - Right of First Refusal
 GHF - Guideline Harvest Level
 EIS - Environmental Impact Statement
 LLP - License Limitation Program
 SAFE - Stock Assessment and Fishery Evaluation
 MPA - Marine Protected Area
 EFH - Essential Fish Habitat
 HAPC - Habitat Areas of Particular Concern

Future Meeting Dates and Locations

*Dec 6-2010 in Anchorage Hilton
 January 31-February 8, 2011-Seattle
 March 28-April 5, 2011-Anchorage
 June 6, 2011 - Nome
 September 26-, 2011 in Unalaska
 Dec 5 - 2011 in Anchorage*

(T) Tentatively scheduled