North Pacific Fishery Management Council
Agenda Item C6 -- Squid to Ecosystem Component
6/11/2016

The Council requests an additional initial review of the Analysis to move squid to the Ecosystem Component category. For clarity, the Council replaces the purpose and need statement and revises Alternative 2. Staff should address the SSC recommendations as practicable in the next initial review draft.

Purpose and Need

Squid are short-lived, highly productive, and an important prey species. No conservation concerns exist for squid populations in the BSAI and GOA. Squid are thought to be substantially more abundant than can be estimated from trawl survey data. Trawl surveys do not employ the proper gear or sample in locations that can provide reliable biomass estimates for most squids. Limited information hinders the development of reliable biological reference points, particularly OFLs and ABCs. As a result, current OFLs for squid are based on average catch calculations that are poorly linked to abundance. OFLs that are not representative of abundance do not achieve management goals for squid and could constrain groundfish fisheries unnecessarily. There are no directed fisheries for squid in either the BSAI or GOA, however squid bycatch is retained in some fisheries and often utilized to prevent waste. Given these factors, conservation and management "in the fishery" for squid may not be required in the BSAI and GOA FMPs. Under the National Standard 1 guidelines, the Council and NMFS could place squid into the "ecosystem component" category. Moving squid to the ecosystem component category would maintain the recordkeeping and reporting requirements and constrain bycatch while alleviating unnecessary constraints on other groundfish fisheries.

Alternative 2: Move squid in both BSAI and GOA FMPs into the 'Ecosystem Component'. Catch specifications (OFL, ABC, TAC) will no longer be required.

Implement regulations for the groundfish fishery that:

- Prohibit directed fishing for squid
- Establish a squid maximum retainable amount (MRA) when directed fishing for groundfish species at a level to discourage retention while allowing flexibility to prosecute groundfish fisheries
    - Option 1 MRA = 2%
    - Option 2 MRA = 10%
    - Option 3 MRA = 20%
- Require recordkeeping and reporting to monitor and report catch of squid species annually.

Encourage the Alaska Fisheries Science Center to continue to explore methods to estimate squid abundance and assess the squid stocks.