

# North Pacific Fishery Management Council

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## NEWSLETTER – DECEMBER 2016

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### 40<sup>th</sup> Anniversary Celebration

Nearly 350 guests enjoyed a banquet at the Captain Cook Hotel on December 8 to celebrate the 40<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the Magnuson-Stevens Fishery Conservation and Management Act and the North Pacific Fishery Management Council.

At the event, Alaska Senators Lisa Murkowski and Dan Sullivan provided video addresses, thanking the Council and NOAA Fisheries for their efforts in maintaining profitable fisheries so important to Alaska. Past Council Chair Stephanie Madsen provided remarks that reflected on the actions the council has taken to achieve sustainable fisheries and how everyone involved in the process has contributed to achieving a successful fishery management program here in the North Pacific. Eileen Sobek, the

Assistant Administrator for NOAA Fisheries also provided congratulatory remarks, noting that the North Pacific Council has been a model for the nation.

Special 40<sup>th</sup> Anniversary recognition plaques were presented to individuals with a long history of service to the Council: Terry Quinn for his commitment to science and service as a member of the Council's Scientific and Statistical Committee; Dave Hanson for his dedication to the process and long membership on the Council, and Ken Bettisworth for his support as the Council's Audio Technician since 1977. Paul MacGregor was also recognized, roasted and "toasted" by his colleagues for his outstanding career as a fishing industry lawyer and representative. Glenn Reed hosted an interactive gameshow "Are You Smarter Than the Council Family?" which provided a light-hearted review of policy decisions and trivia from the last 40 years. The contestants (Glenn Merrill, John Gauvin, and Simon Kinneen) were good sports, and we all enjoyed more than a few laughs! A commemorative [booklet](#) documenting the history of the Council, as well as reflections of some members of the "Council Family", was distributed at the event. Please contact the Council office if you would like a paper copy of the booklet. A special thank you to the many individuals and organizations who donated wine and door prizes. It was an enjoyable evening for everyone!

## Council Appointments

The Council approved all current **SSC members** for another one-year term, as well as the appointment of Dayv Lowry from the Washington Department of Fish and Wildlife. On the **Pacific Northwest Crab Industry Advisory Committee** (PNCIAC), the following members were appointed for two years: Lance Farr (Chair), Kevin Kaldestad, Steve Minor, Gary Painter, Dale Schwarzmiller, Gary Stewart, Tom Suryan, Elizabeth Wiley, Ruth Christiansen, Brett Reasoner, Dean Fasnacht, Erling Jacobsen, and Stefanie Moreland. The **Advisory Panel** added two new members; Carina Nichols of Sitka, a commercial fisher who will replace Jeff Farvour for the remaining one year of his term; and John Scoblic of Ketchikan's Trident and Norquest Seafoods for a three-year term. The following AP members were re-appointed for three years: Ruth Christiansen, Kurt Cochran, Jeff Kauffman, Alexis Kwachka, Patrick O'Donnell, Sinclair Wilt; and Jeff Stephan for a one-year appointment.

Additional committee appointments:

IFQ Committee: Jared Bright, Jeff Farvour, Natasha Hayden, Jeff Kauffman, Nicole Kimball, Linda Kozak, Buck Laukitis (Chair), Bob Linville, Shawn McManus, Michael Offerman, Peggy Parker, Matt Robinson, and Erik Velsko.

BS Ecosystem Plan Team: Kerim Aydin, Mike Dalton, Diana Evans, Anthony Fischbach, Brandee Gerke, Brad Harris, Jim Ianelli, Jo-Ann Mellish, Heather Renner, Elizabeth Siddon, Ian Stewart, and Stephani Zador.

## Charter Halibut Management Measures

The Charter Halibut Management Implementation Committee met in October 2016, and again in December 2016 to consider management measures designed to keep the charter halibut harvest within each area's (2C and 3A) 2017 allocation. Management measures recommended by the committee were evaluated by Scott Meyer (ADF&G) to determine their likelihood to keep the charter harvest within the IPHC FCEY identified at the 2016 interim IPHC meeting, 0.747 million pounds in Area 2C and 1.778 million pounds in Area 3A. After receiving the report from Mr. Meyer, and from the Charter Halibut Management Implementation Committee, and hearing from members of the public, the Council

approved the following charter halibut management measures for recommendation to the International Pacific Halibut Commission for implementation in 2017:

Area 2C

- One fish daily bag limit
- If the halibut charter allocation is at the Blue Line, implement a reverse slot limit (U40:O80), with an annual limit of 3 halibut with a recording requirement.
- If the halibut charter allocation is below the Blue Line, implement an annual limit of 3 fish with a recording requirement, and a reverse slot limit with a maximum size limit of 80 inches. Incrementally reduce the lower size limit until projected harvest falls within the allocation.
- If the halibut charter allocation is above the Blue Line, but below the SPR, implement a reverse slot limit of U40:O80 and an annual limit of 5 fish with a recording requirement. Select a lower limit for the reverse slot to allow the largest lower limit while maintaining the projected harvest within the allocation.
- If halibut charter allocation is at or above the SPR, implement an upper slot limit of O80 and select a lower limit for the reverse slot to allow the largest lower limit while maintaining the projected harvest within the allocation. No annual limit.

Area 3A

- Two fish bag limit.
- Maximum size limit of 28 inches on one fish.
- Annual limit of four fish with a recording requirement.
- Prohibition on halibut charter fishing on Wednesdays, all year.
- Use of each charter halibut permit is limited to one charter halibut fishing trip per calendar day. Each charter vessel is limited to one trip per calendar day.
- Prohibition on halibut charter fishing on Tuesdays, as described in the table below, to bring projected charter removals below the charter allocation, as specified in the catch sharing plan.

No. closed Tuesdays	Projected Charter Removals (Mlbs)	Dates
0	1.951	NA
1	1.925	July 25
2	1.899	Jul 25 - Aug 1
3	1.874	Jul 18 - Aug 1
4	1.848	Jul 11 - Aug 1
5	1.822	Jul 11 - Aug 8
6	1.796	Jul 4 - Aug 8
7	1.771	Jul 4 - Aug 15
8	1.745	Jun - 27 - Aug 15

## Charter Halibut Permit Usage

The Council reviewed a discussion paper that presented information on the use of charter halibut permits (CHPs). The discussion paper addressed Council data requests on latent capacity and use of CHPs by non-CHP holders (i.e., leasing). The discussion paper highlighted some of the challenges

associated with the CHP database, including the lack of a verification process to determine whether non-transferable permits are still active (for example, if the permit holder passes away, a non-transferable permit is no longer valid), and previous obstacles the Council encountered when considering methods to limit the leasing of CHPs.

Based on this discussion paper, and concerns expressed in public testimony, the Council initiated an Initial Review analysis to consider developing an annual registration process for both transferable and nontransferable CHPs. The Council's purpose and need statement speaks to a desire for a clearer and more accurate understanding of CHP holdings, usage, and trends in active participation. The action alternative would implement an annual registration process to renew permits for the upcoming fishing year. Options that the Council will consider under the action alternative include a requirement to report

all CHPs held by an individual, partnership, or corporate entity (Option 1); the names of the individuals and/ or vessels that will use each CHP during that season (Option 2); and a requirement for non-transferable permits to list the beginning and ending ports where the CHP will be used during the upcoming season (Option 3). Sub-options for Options 2 and 3 are included that would penalize a CHP holder who allowed his or her non-transferable CHP to be used by a person or vessel (Option 2) or in a location (Option 3) that was not reported to NMFS during annual registration. The penalty under these sub-options for improper use of a non-transferable CHP would be that the non-transferable CHP would be invalid for the following year. Staff contact is Sarah Marrinan.

## Halibut Charter Recreational Quota Entity

**The Council took final action on a package that would allow the formation of a non-profit charter halibut recreational quota entity (RQE) to purchase and hold commercial halibut quota share (QS), to augment the charter catch limits in IPHC Regulatory Area 2C and Area 3A.** Under the Council's preferred alternative, any IFQ annually generated from the RQE's QS holdings would augment the pounds allocated to the sector through the Catch Sharing Plan (CSP). The charter catch limit plus any pounds of IFQ holdings would be the new basis on which halibut charter annual management measures are established (for example, size limits, annual limits, day of the week closure, etc.). In this way, RQE QS holdings would allow for an opportunity for the charter halibut sector to reduce the restrictiveness of annual management measures for all charter anglers in Regulatory Areas 2C and 3A.

The Council's preferred alternative sought to balance efficacy of this program, while mitigating the negative impacts on other halibut user groups by including a series of transfer restrictions. An RQE would have an annual transfer restriction of 1% of the commercial QS in Area 2C (based on the total Area 2C 2015 QS pool) and 1.2% of the commercial QS in Area 3A (based on the total Area 3A 2015 QS pool). The Council's preferred alternative also recommends a combined cumulative limit for both guided angler fish (GAF) usage and the RQE holdings of no more than 10% of the commercial QS in Area 2C and 12% of the commercial QS holdings in Area 3A (both based on the 2015 QS pools). The Council recommended GAF transfers would be restricted based on the annual RQE holdings.

In addition, the Council identified several specific prohibitions and limitations on RQE QS acquisition. In Area 2C an RQE would be limited to purchasing no more than 10% of the D Class QS pool (in Area 2C), and no more than 10% of the B Class QS pool (in Area 2C), and would be prohibited from purchasing blocked QS less than or equal to 1,500 pounds (in 2015 pounds). In Area 3A, an RQE would be prohibited from purchasing both D Class QS and blocked QS less than or equal to 1,500 pounds (in 2015 pounds).

The combination of the RQE's IFQ and the charter catch limit may allow annual management measures for the charter sector to be relaxed. However, the annual management measures for charter halibut anglers could only be relaxed up to the limits in place for unguided anglers (i.e., 2 fish of any size).

Charter anglers would not be allowed to catch more fish than unguided anglers, even if the RQE held enough QS to do so. The Council's PA included provisions to redistribute excess pounds of IFQ in the event that the RQE held more QS than was necessary to reach the unguided limit in either Area 2C or 3A. In this case, there would be an annual redistribution of the resulting pounds of IFQ to some of the commercial sector participants, issued at no cost to the recipient. The Council's preferred alternative recommends that 50% of this "excess" IFQ would be redistributed to all catcher vessels QS holders in the applicable area who hold not more than 32,333 QS units in Area 2C and 47,469 QS units in Area 3A, proportionately, based on their QS holdings (i.e., the amount of QS that yielded 2,000 pounds of IFQ in 2015). The remaining 50% of "excess" IFQ would be redistributed equally among the Community Quota Entities (CQEs) that held halibut QS in the applicable area in the preceding year. If no CQE held QS in the corresponding area, that portion of the excess IFQ would not be redistributed and would be left in the water for conservation.

The Council included a policy statement about the intended use of RQE funds, and a requirement to submit articles of incorporation, management organization, bylaws, and a list of board members (with some Council guidance on the representation of the board) to NMFS in order to be approved as an eligible entity to purchase and hold QS. An RQE would also be required to submit an annual report to the Council. The Council's preferred alternative lists several items of RQE activity and expenses that would be required in the annual report. Staff contact is Sarah Marrinan.

## Halibut Deck Sorting EFP

The Council reviewed a presentation on the exempted fishing permit (EFP) application to allow on-deck sorting of Pacific halibut on non-pelagic trawl catcher processor vessels, as a means of reducing halibut bycatch mortalities. Under the EFP, vessels are allowed to sort halibut removed from a codend on the deck, rather than routing halibut over the flow scale and below deck, and release those fish back into the water after sampling halibut for length and condition, using IPHC halibut mortality assessment methods. All groundfish and halibut harvested must be within existing allocations for groundfish and halibut mortality. For the period May – November 15, 2016, 12 boats have participated in the EFP, and it is estimated that deck sorting under the EFP has allowed a halibut savings of 288 mt.

The EFP granted to the Amendment 80 cooperatives and co-applicants expires at the end of April 2017, and the applicants and NMFS are working towards extending the EFP for another year. NMFS, after consultation with the Council at this meeting, will consider modifications to the permit that would begin at the start of 2017, which would allow the applicants to test different requirements for the number of observers, depending on vessel production constraints. It remains the intent of the Council that once the experimental work is complete, an analysis will be initiated to implement deck sorting in regulation. Staff contact is Diana Evans.

## BSAI Harvest Specifications for 2017/2018

The Council approved the BSAI Groundfish SAFE report and annual catch limits based on recommendations from its advisory committees. The sum of the total allowable catches (TACs) or quotas for all BSAI groundfish is 2 million t for 2017 and 2018. The TACs were set below the sum of the recommended ABCs. The sum of the recommended ABCs for 2017 and 2018 are 4,013,993 t and 4,214,648 t, respectively. The primary increase from previous years is due to EBS pollock. The abundances of all stocks with the exception of sablefish are projected to be above  $B_{MSY}$  or the  $B_{MSY}$  proxy of  $B_{35\%}$  in 2016. Overall, the status of the stocks continues to appear favorable. Nearly all stocks are above their target biomass size ( $B_{MSY}$ ). The sum of the biomasses for 2017 represents an 9% increase from 2015.

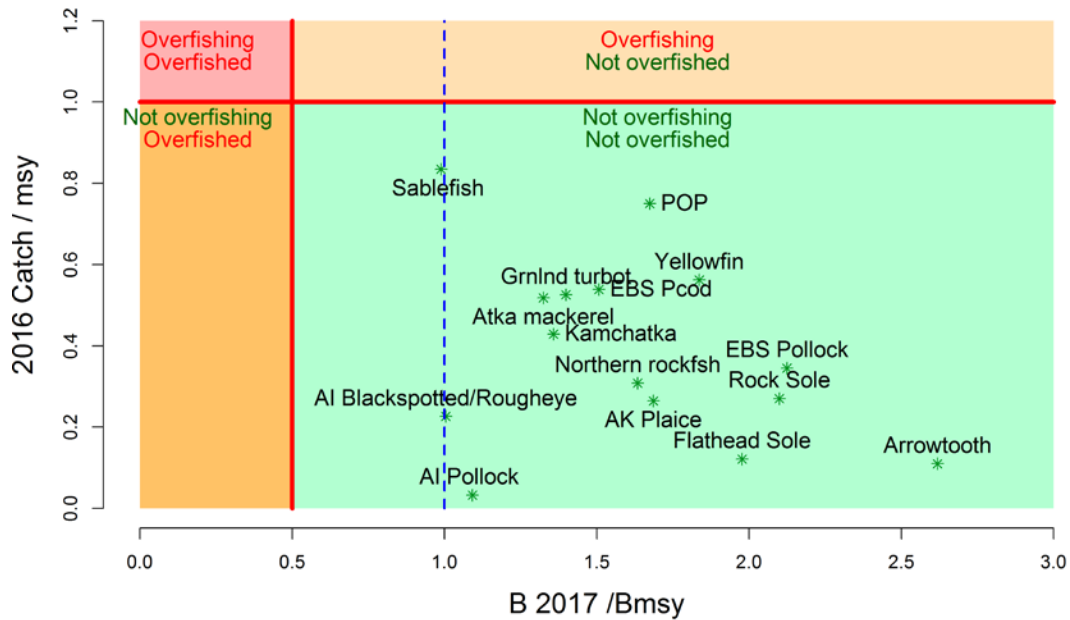


Figure 1. Summary of Bering Sea stock status next year (spawning biomass relative to Bmsy; horizontal axis) and current year catch relative to fishing at Fmsy (vertical axis).

The Council set the annual ABC reserve for three flatfish species, northern rock sole, flathead sole and yellowfin sole. The Council approved the entire ABC surplus as the ABC reserve. This ABC surplus is used to allow for more efficiency in the harvest of these flatfish species. The Council also adopted revised PSC limits for crab stocks, Pacific halibut, and herring including apportionments where applicable.

The final BSAI groundfish harvest specifications will be published as a final rule in the Federal Register by late February/early March 2017. They will replace the current 2016 harvest specifications that were approved by the Council in December 2015. Groundfish specifications for 2017-2018 as well as additional motions related to halibut indicators and consideration in TAC-setting are available on the Council’s website. Staff Contact is Diana Stram.

**Table 1-Final 2017 and 2018 BSAI overfishing level (OFL), acceptable biological catch (ABC), and total allowable catch (TAC) amounts recommended by the Council**

Species	Area	2016				2017			2018		
		OFL	ABC	TAC	12/5/2016	OFL	ABC	TAC	OFL	ABC	TAC
Pollock	EBS	3,910,000	2,090,000	1,340,000	1,352,007	3,640,000	2,800,000	1,345,000	4,360,000	2,979,000	1,345,000
	AI	39,075	32,227	19,000	1,288	43,650	36,061	19,000	49,291	40,788	19,000
	Bogoslof	31,906	23,850	500	1,005	130,428	<b>60,800</b>	500	130,428	<b>97,428</b>	500
Pacific co	BS	390,000	255,000	238,680	220,039	284,000	239,000	223,704	302,000	255,000	223,704
	AI	23,400	17,600	12,839	12,357	28,700	21,500	15,695	28,700	21,500	15,695
Sablefish	BS	1,304	1,151	1,151	525	<b>1,499</b>	1,274	1,274	<b>1,519</b>	1,291	1,274
	AI	1,766	1,557	1,557	349	<b>2,044</b>	1,735	1,735	<b>2,072</b>	1,758	1,735
Yellowfin	BSAI	228,100	211,700	144,000	135,346	287,000	260,800	154,000	276,000	250,800	154,000
Greenland	BSAI	4,194	3,462	2,873	2,230	11,615	<b>6,644</b>	4,500	12,831	10,864	4,500
	BS	n/a	2,673	2,673	2,108	n/a	<b>5,800</b>	4,375	n/a	9,484	4,375
	AI	n/a	789	200	122	n/a	<b>844</b>	125	n/a	1,380	125
Arrowtoot	BSAI	94,035	80,701	14,000	11,026	76,100	65,371	14,000	67,023	58,633	14,000
Kamchatk	BSAI	11,100	9,500	5,000	4,842	10,360	8,880	5,000	10,700	9,200	5,000
Northern r	BSAI	165,900	161,000	57,100	45,074	159,700	155,100	47,100	147,300	143,100	47,100
Flathead s	BSAI	79,562	66,250	21,000	10,194	81,654	68,278	14,500	79,136	66,164	14,500
Alaska pla	BSAI	49,000	41,000	14,500	13,291	42,800	36,000	13,000	36,900	32,100	13,000
Other flatf	BSAI	17,414	13,061	2,500	2,821	17,591	13,193	2,500	17,591	13,193	2,500
Pacific Oc	BSAI	40,529	33,320	31,900	31,401	53,152	43,723	34,900	51,950	42,735	34,900
	BS	n/a	8,353	8,000	8,179	n/a	<b>12,199</b>	11,000	n/a	<b>11,924</b>	11,000
	EAI	n/a	7,916	7,900	7,569	n/a	<b>10,307</b>	7,900	n/a	<b>10,074</b>	7,900
	CAI	n/a	7,355	7,000	6,765	n/a	<b>8,009</b>	7,000	n/a	<b>7,828</b>	7,000
	WAI	n/a	9,696	9,000	8,888	n/a	<b>13,208</b>	9,000	n/a	<b>12,909</b>	9,000
Northern r	BSAI	14,689	11,960	4,500	4,538	16,242	13,264	5,000	15,854	12,947	5,000
Blackspot rockfish	BSAI	693	561	300	158	612	501	225	750	614	225
	EBS/EAI	n/a	179	100	71	n/a	<b>306</b>	100	n/a	<b>374</b>	100
	CAI/WAI	n/a	382	200	87	n/a	<b>195</b>	125	n/a	<b>240</b>	125
Shortrake	BSAI	690	518	200	105	666	499	125	666	499	125
Other rockf	BSAI	1,667	1,250	875	794	1,816	1,362	875	1,816	1,362	875
	BS	n/a	695	325	281	n/a	791	325	n/a	791	325
	AI	n/a	555	550	513	n/a	571	550	n/a	571	550
Atka mack	BSAI	104,749	90,340	55,000	54,320	102,700	87,200	65,000	99,900	85,000	65,000
	EAI/BS	n/a	30,832	28,500	28,195	n/a	34,890	34,500	n/a	34,000	34,000
	CAI	n/a	27,216	16,000	15,795	n/a	30,330	18,000	n/a	29,600	18,500
	WAI	n/a	32,292	10,500	10,330	n/a	21,980	12,500	n/a	21,400	12,500
Skates	BSAI	50,215	42,134	26,000	27,564	49,063	41,144	26,000	46,583	39,008	26,000
Sculpins	BSAI	52,365	39,725	4,500	4,659	56,582	42,387	4,500	56,582	42,387	4,500
Sharks	BSAI	1,363	1,022	125	128	689	517	125	689	517	125
Squids	BSAI	6,912	5,184	1,500	1,282	6,912	5,184	1,342	6,912	5,184	1,342
Octopuse	BSAI	3,452	2,589	400	430	4,769	3,576	400	4,769	3,576	400
<b>Total</b>	BSAI	<b>5,324,080</b>	<b>3,236,662</b>	<b>2,000,000</b>	<b>1,937,773</b>	<b>5,110,344</b>	<b>4,013,993</b>	<b>2,000,000</b>	<b>5,807,962</b>	<b>4,214,648</b>	<b>2,000,000</b>

Sources: 2015 OFLs, ABCs, and TACs and 2016 OFLs and ABCs are from harvest specifications adopted by the Council in December 2014 and December 2015, respectively; 2015 catches through December 31, 2015 and 2016 catches through December 5, 2016 from



## GOA Groundfish Specifications for 2017/2018

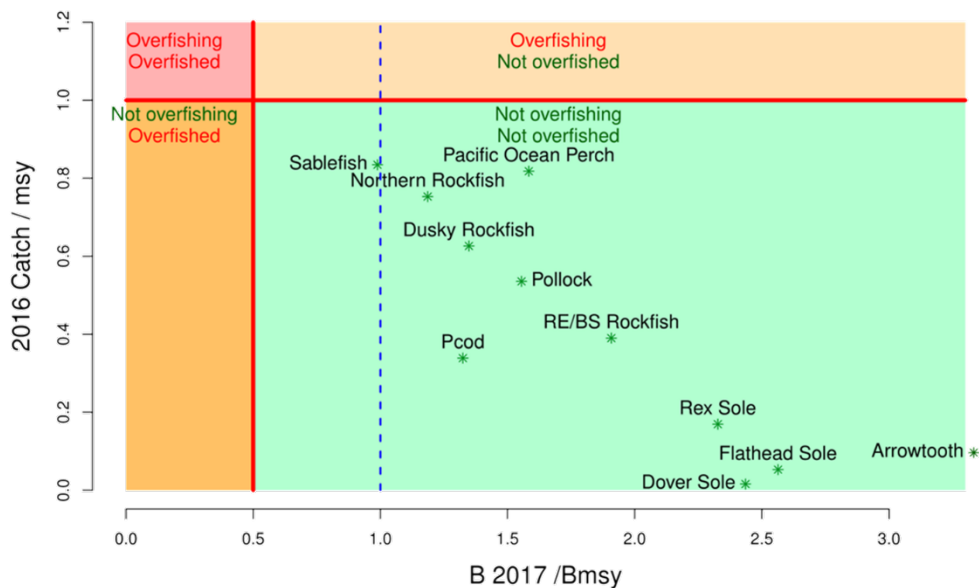
The Council approved the Gulf of Alaska Stock Assessment and Fishery Evaluation (SAFE) report and recommended final catch specifications for the 2017 and 2018 groundfish fisheries. The Plan Team presentations included stock status updates and a report on the ecosystem SAFE report section. Because there was no summer trawl survey in the GOA in 2016 full assessments were only conducted for GOA pollock, Pacific cod, and sablefish, with other species updated using primarily catch data.

The sum of the species' ABCs for 2017 decreased by 8% (-59,811 t) compared with 2016. This was primarily driven by decreases in pollock -50,541 t (-19%) and Pacific cod -10,258 t (-10%) ABCs as well as a 9% reduction (-408 t) for dusky rockfish and 5% reduction (218 t) for northern rockfish. Notable increases occurred for sablefish 987 t (+11%), and rex sole +818 t (+11%). All other GOA species' ABCs change by 2% or less.

For most stocks the Council established TACs equal to ABCs with some exceptions. For Pacific cod the ABC is reduced by 25% in EGOA and CGOA and by 30% in WGOA to accommodate the state managed fishery. Additional exceptions those fisheries where the bycatch of other target species is a concern, specifically for shallow water flatfish (W and Central GOA), flathead sole (W and C GOA), arrowtooth flounder (GOA wide) and other rockfish (EYAK/SEO). For those fisheries, the TAC is also set below the ABC. Specifications for 2017-2018 are posted on the Council's website.

None of the GOA groundfish stocks are overfished or experiencing overfishing. The abundances of all species except sablefish are above target stock size. Estimated sablefish female spawning stock biomass (91,553 t) is 1% below target stock size (92,606 t).

### Stock Status Summary from 2016 GOA SAFE report



### Whale depredation of sablefish

An important change in the sablefish assessment for this year is the correction for whale depredation that occurs both in the longline survey and the fishery. Sperm whales remove significant numbers of sablefish from the longline gear in the eastern GOA as the gear is being retrieved while killer whales predominantly do this in the western GOA. Total annual depredation in the fisheries is estimated to have ranged between 250 – 800 t. Correcting for this loss in the fishery-independent survey results in a larger biomass estimate than without the correction. The resulting larger GOA and BSAI ABCs, however,



are reduced to account for expected removals by whales in 2017 and 2018. Those reductions vary by area according to observed spatial distribution of whale depredation and are reflected in the apportionment of the ABCs

### **Prohibited species catch limits**

The Council approved halibut prohibited species catch (PSC) limits, by season and gear apportionment for 2017-2018 and further specified apportionments of the 'other hook and line fisheries' annual halibut PSC allowance between the hook-and-line gear catcher vessel and catcher/processor sectors following the Pacific cod sector split allocation. The PSC numbers for 2017 and 2018 are unchanged compared to 2016.

Gulf of Alaska Groundfish Specifications: Council recommended OFLs, ABCs and TACs for 2017 and 2018 (metric tons).

Species	Area	2016			Catch 11/5/2016	2017			2018		
		OFL	ABC	TAC		OFL	ABC	TAC	OFL	ABC	TAC
Pollock	State GHL	n/a	6,358	-	-	n/a	5,094	n/a	n/a	3,937	n/a
	W (610)	n/a	56,494	56,494	61,222	n/a	43,602	43,602	n/a	33,701	33,701
	C (620)	n/a	124,927	124,927	46,968	n/a	98,652	98,652	n/a	76,249	76,249
	C (630)	n/a	57,183	57,183	64,605	n/a	48,929	48,929	n/a	37,818	37,818
	WYAK	n/a	9,348	9,348	132	n/a	7,492	7,492	n/a	5,791	5,791
	Subtotal	322,858	254,310	247,952	172,927	235,807	203,769	198,675	182,204	157,496	153,559
	EYAK/SEO	13,226	9,920	9,920	-	13,226	9,920	9,920	13,226	9,920	9,920
Total	336,084	264,230	257,872	172,927	249,033	213,689	208,595	195,430	167,416	163,479	
Pacific Cod	W	n/a	40,503	28,352	17,539	n/a	36,291	25,404	n/a	32,565	22,795
	C	n/a	49,312	36,984	21,939	n/a	44,180	33,135	n/a	39,644	29,733
	E	n/a	8,785	6,589	66	n/a	7,871	5,903	n/a	7,063	5,297
	Total	116,700	98,600	71,925	39,544	105,378	88,342	64,442	94,188	79,272	57,825
Sablefish	W	n/a	1,272	1,272	1,037	n/a	1,349	1,349	n/a	1,367	1,367
	C	n/a	4,023	4,023	4,147	n/a	4,514	4,514	n/a	4,574	4,574
	WYAK	n/a	1,475	1,475	1,640	n/a	1,605	1,605	n/a	1,626	1,626
	SEO	n/a	2,317	2,317	2,457	n/a	2,606	2,606	n/a	2,640	2,640
	Total	10,326	9,087	9,087	9,281	11,885	10,074	10,074	12,045	10,207	10,207
Shallow-Water Flatfish	W	n/a	20,851	13,250	145	n/a	20,921	13,250	n/a	21,042	13,250
	C	n/a	19,242	19,242	3,445	n/a	19,306	19,306	n/a	19,418	19,418
	WYAK	n/a	3,177	3,177	-	n/a	3,188	3,188	n/a	3,206	3,206
	EYAK/SEO	n/a	1,094	1,094	1	n/a	1,099	1,099	n/a	1,105	1,105
	Total	54,520	44,364	36,763	3,591	54,583	44,514	36,843	54,893	44,771	36,979
Deep-Water Flatfish	W	n/a	186	186	4	n/a	256	256	n/a	257	257
	C	n/a	3,495	3,495	161	n/a	3,454	3,454	n/a	3,488	3,488
	WYAK	n/a	2,997	2,997	9	n/a	3,017	3,017	n/a	3,047	3,047
	EYAK/SEO	n/a	2,548	2,548	5	n/a	2,565	2,565	n/a	2,590	2,590
	Total	11,102	9,226	9,226	179	11,182	9,292	9,292	11,290	9,382	9,382
Rex Sole	W	n/a	1,315	1,315	169	n/a	1,459	1,459	n/a	1,478	1,478
	C	n/a	4,445	4,445	1,492	n/a	4,930	4,930	n/a	4,995	4,995
	WYAK	n/a	766	766	1	n/a	850	850	n/a	861	861
	EYAK/SEO	n/a	967	967	-	n/a	1,072	1,072	n/a	1,087	1,087
	Total	9,791	7,493	7,493	1,662	10,860	8,311	8,311	11,004	8,421	8,421
Arrowtooth Flounder	W	n/a	28,183	14,500	985	n/a	28,100	14,500	n/a	25,747	14,500
	C	n/a	107,981	75,000	17,970	n/a	107,934	75,000	n/a	98,895	75,000
	WYAK	n/a	37,368	6,900	25	n/a	37,405	6,900	n/a	34,273	6,900
	EYAK/SEO	n/a	12,656	6,900	13	n/a	12,654	6,900	n/a	11,595	6,900
	Total	219,430	186,188	103,300	18,993	219,327	186,093	103,300	196,635	170,510	103,300
Flathead Sole	W	n/a	11,027	8,650	214	n/a	11,098	8,650	n/a	11,282	8,650
	C	n/a	20,211	15,400	2,069	n/a	20,339	15,400	n/a	20,677	15,400
	WYAK	n/a	2,930	2,930	-	n/a	2,949	2,949	n/a	2,998	2,998
	EYAK/SEO	n/a	852	852	-	n/a	857	857	n/a	872	872
	Total	42,840	35,020	27,832	2,283	43,128	35,243	27,856	43,872	35,829	27,920

Sources: 2016 OFLs, ABCs, and TACs are from the harvest specifications adopted by the Council in December 2015; 2016 catches through November 5, 2016 from AKR Catch Accounting.

Gulf of Alaska Groundfish Specifications: Council recommended OFLs, ABCs and TACs for 2017 and 2018 (metric tons).

Species	Area	2016			Catch as of 11/5/16	2017			2018		
		OFL	ABC	TAC		OFL	ABC	TAC	OFL	ABC	TAC
Pacific Ocean Perch	W	n/a	2,737	2,737	2,627	n/a	2,679	2,679	n/a	2,627	2,627
	C	n/a	17,033	17,033	17,566	n/a	16,671	16,671	n/a	16,347	16,347
	WYAK	n/a	2,847	2,847	2,827	n/a	2,786	2,786	n/a	2,733	2,733
	W/C/WYAK	26,313	22,617	22,617	23,020	25,753	22,136	22,136	25,252	21,707	21,707
	SEO	2,118	1,820	1,820	-	2,073	1,782	1,782	2,032	1,747	1,747
	Total	28,431	24,437	24,437	23,020	27,826	23,918	23,918	27,284	23,454	23,454
Northern Rockfish	W	n/a	457	457	115	n/a	432	432	n/a	400	400
	C	n/a	3,547	3,547	3,274	n/a	3,354	3,354	n/a	3,108	3,108
	E	n/a	4	-	-	n/a	4	-	n/a	4	-
	Total	4,783	4,008	4,004	3,389	4,522	3,790	3,786	4,175	3,512	3,508
Shortraker Rockfish	W	n/a	38	38	52	n/a	38	38	n/a	38	38
	C	n/a	301	301	395	n/a	301	301	n/a	301	301
	E	n/a	947	947	299	n/a	947	947	n/a	947	947
	Total	1,715	1,286	1,286	746	1,715	1,286	1,286	1,715	1,286	1,286
Dusky Rockfish	W	n/a	173	173	91	n/a	158	158	n/a	146	146
	C	n/a	4,147	4,147	3,184	n/a	3,786	3,786	n/a	3,499	3,499
	WYAK	n/a	275	275	7	n/a	251	251	n/a	232	232
	EYAK/SEO	n/a	91	91	8	n/a	83	83	n/a	77	77
	Total	5,733	4,686	4,686	3,290	5,233	4,278	4,278	4,837	3,954	3,954
Rougheye and Blackspotted Rockfish	W	n/a	105	105	40	n/a	105	105	n/a	104	104
	C	n/a	707	707	467	n/a	706	706	n/a	702	702
	E	n/a	516	516	114	n/a	516	516	n/a	512	512
	Total	1,596	1,328	1,328	621	1,594	1,327	1,327	1,583	1,318	1,318
Demersal shelf rockfish	Total	364	231	231	115	357	227	227	357	227	227
Thornyhead Rockfish	W	n/a	291	291	207	n/a	291	291	n/a	291	291
	C	n/a	988	988	663	n/a	988	988	n/a	988	988
	E	n/a	682	682	222	n/a	682	682	n/a	682	682
	Total	2,615	1,961	1,961	1,092	2,615	1,961	1,961	2,615	1,961	1,961
Other Rockfish	W/C	n/a	1,534	1,534	1,294	n/a	1,534	1,534	n/a	1,534	1,534
	WYAK	n/a	574	574	48	n/a	574	574	n/a	574	574
	EYAK/SEO	n/a	3,665	200	38	n/a	3,665	200	n/a	3,665	200
	Total	7,424	5,773	2,308	1,380	7,424	5,773	2,308	7,424	5,773	2,308
Atka mackerel	Total	6,200	4,700	2,000	993	6,200	4,700	3,000	6,200	4,700	3,000
Big Skate	W	n/a	908	908	134	n/a	908	908	n/a	908	908
	C	n/a	1,850	1,850	1,874	n/a	1,850	1,850	n/a	1,850	1,850
	E	n/a	1,056	1,056	44	n/a	1,056	1,056	n/a	1,056	1,056
	Total	5,086	3,814	3,814	2,052	5,086	3,814	3,814	5,086	3,814	3,814
Longnose Skate	W	n/a	61	61	131	n/a	61	61	n/a	61	61
	C	n/a	2,513	2,513	843	n/a	2,513	2,513	n/a	2,513	2,513
	E	n/a	632	632	336	n/a	632	632	n/a	632	632
	Total	4,274	3,206	3,206	1,310	4,274	3,206	3,206	4,274	3,206	3,206
Other Skates	GOA-wide	2,558	1,919	1,919	1,568	2,558	1,919	1,919	2,558	1,919	1,919
Sculpins	GOA-wide	7,338	5,591	5,591	1,293	7,338	5,591	5,591	7,338	5,591	5,591
Sharks	GOA-wide	6,020	4,514	4,514	1,841	6,020	4,514	4,514	6,020	4,514	4,514
Squids	GOA-wide	1,530	1,148	1,148	241	1,516	1,137	1,137	1,516	1,137	1,137
Octopuses	GOA-wide	6,504	4,878	4,878	323	6,504	4,878	4,878	6,504	4,878	4,878
Total		892,964	727,688	590,809	291,734	796,158	667,877	535,863	708,843	597,052	483,588

Sources: 2016 OFLs, ABCs, and TACs are from the harvest specifications adopted by the Council in December 2015; 2016 catches through November 5, 2016 from AKR Catch Accounting.

## Halibut DMRs

As part of the specification process, the Council also established halibut discard mortality rates (DMRs) for use by NMFS in-season management for the 2017-2018 fishing years. DMRs are applied to halibut discards that occur in the groundfish fisheries for both the BSAI and GOA and reflect the estimated percentage of discarded halibut PSC that do not survive. Importantly, the methods for estimating and applying DMRs have changed significantly. The halibut DMR working group developed improved methods that follow the statistical design of the observer program and are applied to operational groupings within the groundfish fleet rather than fisheries defined by target species.

### 2017 and 2018 Final Halibut Discard Mortality Rates

Operational Group				Sample Size	Estimate	DMR
Sector	Region	Gear	Target	(Mean Annual N <sub>Viabilities</sub> )	DMR?	DMR
CP	BSAI	PTR	pollock	6,051	N	100%
			non-pollock	1	N	100%
		NPT	all	4,306	Y	85%
		HAL	all	11,210	Y	8%
	POT	all	686 <sup>b</sup>	Y	6%	
	GOA	PTR	pollock	0	N	100%
			non-pollock	0	N	100%
		NPT <sup>a</sup>	all	493	N	85%
		HAL	all	1,295	Y	11%
	POT	all	523 <sup>c</sup>	Y	10%	
CV	BSAI	PTR	pollock	569	N	100%
			non-pollock	14	N	100%
		NPT	all	2,174	Y	52%
		HAL	all	62 <sup>d</sup>	Y	14%
	POT	all	686 <sup>b</sup>	Y	6%	
	GOA	PTR	pollock	2	N	100%
			non-pollock	4	N	100%
		NPT	RPP <sup>e</sup>	103	Y	67%
			non-RPP	1,265	Y	65%
		HAL	all	490	Y	12%
POT		all	523 <sup>c</sup>	Y	10%	

<sup>a</sup> GOA CP NPT RPP and non-RPP pooled

<sup>b</sup> CV, CP pots in same group by design

<sup>c</sup> CV, CP in same group by design

<sup>d</sup> Most vessels not required to have observer coverage prior to 2013

<sup>e</sup> GOA CV NPT RPP based on GOA CV NPT rockfish target

## Bristol Bay red king crab savings area EFP

The SSC and Council reviewed an application for an exempted fishing permit to allow for some flatfish trawling within the Bristol Bay red king crab savings area (RKCSA) closure in order to evaluate the

relative differences in crab bycatch rates inside and outside of the closure area. The Bristol Bay red king crab savings area has been closed to bottom trawling since the mid 1990's. The underlying hypothesis of this EFP is that red king crab bycatch rates in the winter/spring flatfish fisheries could be reduced with access to the closed areas. The SSC provided extensive comments on the EFP design and expressed concerns regarding the proposed trawling in relation to low stock status for Bristol Bay red king crab and the potential for encountering molting male crab. The actual winter distribution of red king crab in this area is unknown. The Council had a lengthy discussion on the relative merits of this proposal as it relates to examination of the efficacy of the RKCSA closure. A motion to approve a modified EFP application did not pass. In the end the Council reiterated its general support of evaluating the efficacy of the RKCSA and other area closures but did not move forward with approval of this EFP at this time. The Council noted that a staff discussion paper specific to Bristol Bay red king crab PSC management measures will be reviewed in February and further discussion on evaluation of the efficacy of closure areas will likely ensue at that time. Staff contact is Diana Stram.

## Electronic Monitoring

The Council took final action to establish electronic monitoring (EM) as a part of the North Pacific Observer Program. Under the Council's preferred alternative, Alternative 2, regulations would be implemented to allow EM to be used for catch estimation. EM would be integrated into the established Observer Program process, by which the Council and NMFS can annually determine the best monitoring tool for the Alaska fixed gear fisheries, in the Observer Annual Deployment Plan. Through that process, the Council and NMFS will consider how to optimize observer and EM deployment for fisheries in the partial coverage category each year, based on an analysis of costs, budget, fishing effort, and monitoring needs. The Council also included Option A in the preferred alternative, which would allow vessels opting in to the EM selection pool to use EM for compliance monitoring when fishing IFQ or halibut CDQ in multiple areas.

The Council also specified additional tasking for the EM Workgroup, to continue to track the EM program over the next two years through the transition to implementation. Specifically, the Council directs the Workgroup to review the proposed rule for EM integration and provide comments to the Council; provide input to the Council about policy considerations that NMFS should address when developing the Request for Proposals for an EM service provider contract; continue to consider EM program efficiencies, costs and cost optimization, working closely with the Observer Program on EM metrics in the Annual Report and the Annual Deployment Plan; and review and provide feedback on EM research and development projects.

The Council also noted that there will be opportunities to discuss costs in the partial coverage category of the Observer Program more generally in conjunction with rebidding the human observer contract, which expires in 2019. The Observer Program will be developing a timeline for developing a combined EM and observer provider contract in early 2017, and the Council will be informed of the appropriate timing and mechanism for providing input into the Request for Proposals at the June 2017 Council meeting. It is likely that the Council will need to provide any input by October 2017. Staff contact is Diana Evans.

## GOA Trawl Bycatch Management

The Council received staff reports on three documents: a summary of the public comment scoping process that was undertaken over the summer, a preliminary draft Social Impact Assessment, and a

preliminary draft Regulatory Impact Review. After reviewing the staff reports and considering public testimony, the Council voted to postpone further action on this issue indefinitely.

The Council indicated its intent to consider other management options that could address GOA trawl vessel operators' and processors' concerns about their ability to minimize bycatch while executing the fishery in a viable manner. Staff contact is Sam Cunningham.

## EFH Fishing Effects Methods

The Council reviewed and approved a proposed method to evaluate the effects of fishing on Essential Fish Habitat for BSAI and GOA Groundfish and BSAI crabs, developed by a subcommittee of the SSC. The proposal presented a three-tiered approach to evaluating the effects of commercial fishing on EFH using the outputs from the Fishing Effects model developed by NMFS AKR and Alaska Pacific University researchers. This method makes use of substantial new habitat, sediment, and oceanographic data available since the last EFH review. Stock assessment authors will apply the new methods in January and February 2017, the results of their assessment will be reviewed by the BSAI and GOA Groundfish Plan Teams in March 2017, and by the Council in April 2017 as part of the Omnibus EFH package. Staff contact is Steve MacLean.

## EFH Non-Fishing Effects Report

The Council reviewed a report by NMFS AKR Habitat Conservation Division on the projected effects of non-fishing activities on Essential Fish Habitat. The report summarizes expected impacts on EFH from headwater streams to the offshore marine environments, and presents examples of mitigation measures that NMFS might suggest for projects in those environments with the potential to adversely affect EFH. The report will be finalized by NMFS and included as part of the Omnibus EFH package that the Council will review in April 2017. Staff contact is Steve MacLean.

## Salmon Excluder EFP

The Council received a final report on the exempted fishing permit for testing salmon excluder devices in the EBS pollock fisheries. The excluder tested in this EFP employs an 'over and under' (O/U) design that achieved successful escapement (33-54%) in the GOA pollock fishery during previous trials. Three vessels were used and testing spanned the 2015 A season, the 2015 B season and the 2016 A season. Overall salmon escapement rates were lower than in the GOA (3-18% across the three vessels.) Previous flapper-type excluders used in the EBS pollock fishery had achieved higher escapement rates than the new O/U design. Lower performance was related to a variety of factors including higher catch rates and fish flow through net differences between the GOA and EBS pollock fisheries. Further refinement of the O/U design for use in the Bering Sea is likely to occur in subsequent experiments. Staff contact is Diana Stram.

## Bering Sea FEP Update

The Council appointed 12 people to a Council Bering Sea FEP team, to begin developing the Council's Bering Sea Fishery Ecosystem Plan (FEP). The Team's primary responsibilities are to develop the core FEP document, to discuss potential and ongoing FEP action modules, make recommendations to the Ecosystem Committee and the Council about future steps, and to help communicate results to the Council. While the team is a scientific and technical team, the focus is also to ensure that FEP action modules interface with the Council's management needs, and can be integrated into the Council's decision making and management process. The intent has been to include a diversity of expertise and representatives from

various agencies on the team, which will function as a Council plan team. To that end, the Council has also requested that membership be expanded to include social science, crab/shellfish, and oceanography expertise, and potentially a member from the Coast Guard. The first meeting of the Team will be scheduled for early 2017. Staff contact is Diana Evans.

## Staff Tasking

In addition to discussing the relative priority of previously tasked projects, the Council initiated several new projects and clarified direction and tasking for its various committees. The Council also took the following actions:

- Send a letter to USFWS requesting continued monitoring of seabird colonies in the Bering Sea, to monitor effects of the seabird mortality events observed in 2016.
- Include in the annual management letter to IPHC a recommendation that the IPHC continue to examine biological and yield impacts of alternative lower size limits.
- Requested that NMFS provide information about Chinook salmon in the GOA, including contributions from hatchery fish and a description of what information is currently being collected, and what additional information might be collected in the future.
- Directed staff to prepare a discussion paper that explores changing the ownership cap on Charter Halibut Permits for the RQE to hold up to 30% of the permits in either Area 3A or 2C.
- Directed staff to prepare a discussion paper that examines mechanisms to reduce latent capacity in the Charter Halibut Permit program based on average minimum use of the permit, and a limit on the number of angler days per permit.
- Directed staff to include information on the GOA in the next discussion paper on halibut abundance based management PSC limits. Specifically, the staff will include considerations of what would it take to include the GOA in the ABM program for PSC limits.
- Directed staff to prepare a discussion paper that evaluates several measures as potential options to reduce PSC, including evaluation of temporal distribution of halibut PSC rates in the WGOA Pacific cod A season, evaluation of the timing of pollock harvest and Chinook salmon PSC in the WGOA C and D seasons, evaluation of the impacts of lowering the WGOA pollock trip limits to 200,000 lbs.
- Directed staff to prepare a discussion paper that evaluates the impacts and effects of stranding GOA Pacific cod in the trawl B season, including examination of sector splits, season dates, and apportionments, with an eye towards achieving OY in the fishery.
- Directed staff to prepare a discussion paper that summarizes actions taken to protect crab habitat in the CGOA and information on crab stock abundance and distribution, to determine if additional closures may be warranted.
- Announced appointments to the SSC, AP, PNCIAC, and BS Fishery Ecosystem Plan Team.



## Upcoming meetings

- Joint Groundfish PT meeting for Stock Prioritization: January 11-12, 2017, AFSC, Seattle WA
- Crab Plan Team meeting: January 17-19, 2017 The Mountaineers Club, Seattle WA.
- BS FEP Team meeting: January 19, 2017 AFSC, Seattle WA
- NPFMC Council meeting: January 30 – February 7, 2017 Renaissance Hotel, Seattle WA
- IFQ Committee meeting (T): January 30, 2017 Renaissance Hotel, Seattle WA
- Ecosystem Committee meeting: January 31, 2017 Renaissance Hotel, Seattle WA
- Scallop Plan Team meeting: February 22, 2017 Kodiak, Alaska
- EMWG meeting: March 28–29, 2017 AFSC, Seattle WA