



NORTH PACIFIC FISHERY MANAGEMENT COUNCIL

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Action Memo

File Number: REP 17-035

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Dan Hull, Chairman
David Witherell, Executive Director

Executive Director's Report

(including Legislative update, Bowhead whale entanglement review, Amendment 80 Cooperative report)

Staff News

I am pleased to introduce our new Alaska Sea Grant Fellow, Ms. Sara Cleaver. Sara recently received her Master's Degree from Duke University, the Nicholas School of the Environment, where she focused on fisheries ecology and management. Her thesis project examined the distribution of highly migratory species in the South Atlantic Bight to develop management alternatives and regulations that allowed for increased catch of target species and a decrease in discards of protected species. She has also worked for the Forest Service in Yakutat as a fisheries technician assisting with salmon research, data analysis, and outreach. Sara will be working on a number of Council projects during her 12-month stint as a Fellow under the guidance of Sarah Marrinan and other staff. Welcome aboard Sara!

Steve MacLean coauthored an article entitled "Inuit and Marine Mammals" that was recently published in the Encyclopedia of Marine Mammals (Vol 3). The paper is **attached**. Congratulations Steve!

Plan Team nominations

Dr. Kresimir Williams (**letter and resume attached**) has been nominated by the Alaska Fisheries Science Center for membership to the GOA Groundfish Plan Team. Dr. Williams has worked at the AFSC Midwater Assessment and Conservation Engineering Program for the past 15 years, where he works on survey design and execution, data analysis, and related research.

Ms. Katie Palof (**letter and resume attached**) has been nominated for appointment to the Crab Plan Team by the Alaska Department of Fish and Game to replace Karla Bush. Ms. Palof is a biometrician in the shellfish program and is responsible for stock surveys and assessments of Southeast Alaska crab stocks.

Mr. Bill Gaeumen (**letter and resume attached**) has been nominated for appointment to the Crab Plan Team by the Alaska Department of Fish and Game to replace Ms. Laura Slater. Mr. Gaeumen is a biometrician in the Westward Region, and is responsible for the Pribilof Islands golden king crab stock assessment and other crab stock assessments.

The SSC will review the Plan Team nominations and provide a recommendation to the Council during this meeting.

SSC and AP nominations

The USFWS has nominated Ms. Heather Renner to replace Dr. Lew Coggins on the SSC. Ms. Renner is the

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Supervisory Wildlife Biologist for the Alaska Maritime National Wildlife Refuge, based in Homer. A nomination letter and resume are **attached**.

SSC Chairman Farron Wallace had decided to retire from the SSC, and this will be his last meeting. He has been an SSC member since December 2003, and has been the SSC Chairman for the past 3 years. Mr. Wallace has led the SSC through some difficult scientific issues and has provided expertise to the SSC on issues ranging from the observer program to stock assessments. Farron, we thank you for your service on the SSC and continued dedication to the conservation and management of fisheries in the North Pacific.

As a replacement for Mr. Wallace on the SSC, the AFSC has nominated Dr. Dana Hanselman. Dr Hanselman is currently the co-chair of the BSAI Groundfish Plan Team, and has extensive experience with stock assessments. A nomination letter and resume are **attached**.

The Council will review these SSC nominations, along with other nominations for SSC and AP membership during its Executive Session on Friday. Announcements will be made at the end of the meeting.

Public Comments

Beginning in October of this year, we extended the comment deadline from Tuesday to Thursday before the meeting to allow a longer public comment period. To facilitate the deadline change, public comments are now posted electronically the Friday before the Council meeting. Printed copies of the comments will be made available in a limited number of reference books in each of the meeting rooms, and on the documents table.

Additionally, we are working on developing an online commenting portal for possible implementation prior to the February 2018 Council meeting. This process will allow the public to choose an agenda item from a drop-down menu, and comment either directly on a form or by uploading an attachment. Not only will this streamline the administrative side of the commenting process, it will allow for seamless receipt, storage and review of comments. Comments could be made available for view either immediately upon submission or once the comment period is closed. Once the online application is developed, staff will no longer make public copies, which means the comment deadline could be further extended until Friday, or even just prior to the start of each Council meeting.

Lastly, the staff is developing a written comment sample, or template, to assist members of the public with preparing written testimony.

Young Fishermen's Summit

The Alaska Sea Grant Marine Advisory Program is hosting its seventh Alaska Young Fishermen's Summit this week from December 6-8 at the Dena'ina Center in Anchorage. The Summit is designed to provide training, information and networking opportunities for commercial fishermen early in their careers. The summit focuses on building leadership and networking capacity in the Alaska commercial fishing industry through three days of intensive training.

The overlap in timing of the summit and our Council meeting provides a great opportunity for these fishermen to become familiar with the Council process. During the last hour of our meeting on Thursday, December 7, participants will be attending the AP and Council meeting to observe the process. After the meeting ends, staff and willing Council members will provide some context for understanding what the participants observed, and be available to answer questions. Immediately following this discussion will be a public reception at the 49th Street Brewery for participants to further interact with staff, members of the Council and Advisory Panel, and industry participants. The reception is jointly hosted by the Alaska Sea Grant and the Council, and everyone is

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invited to attend.

On Friday morning, three Summit participants will have a unique opportunity to shadow a Council member and get a perspective of what it is like to be a Council member by sitting up at the table for the morning session. Thank you to Council members Mr. Laukitis, Mr. Tweit, and Mr. Mezirow for volunteering to participate in this pilot program!

Central Arctic Ocean Agreement

A draft *Agreement to Prevent Unregulated High Seas Fisheries in the Central Arctic Ocean* was recently negotiated between the US, Canada, China, Denmark, the European Union, Iceland, Japan, South Korea, Norway and Russia. This is a direct result of the House and Senate Joint Resolution (SJR 17 **attached**), and the work of the Council on the Arctic FMP. The Chairman's statement on the Agreement is **attached**. The Agreement complements the Council's approach to managing commercial fisheries in the Arctic and provides for a multi-national approach to scientific research in the region.

Ecosystem Symposium

We are working with Fisheries Forum to plan our Ecosystem workshop during the February Council meeting. The workshop will be on Wednesday, February 7th, and the Council, AP, and SSC will all break in order to participate in the workshop. The goals of the workshop are: 1) to provide the Council and stakeholders with an overview of current scientific efforts to understand the impacts of climate change on the BSAI, GOA, and Arctic ecosystems, fisheries, communities, and subsistence lifestyles, and the robustness of the management framework with respect to long-term environmental shifts, and 2) to provide a forum for Council members, scientific and industry advisors, and stakeholders to discuss how to stay abreast of the results of these efforts, and incorporate that knowledge into Council processes (e.g., Bering Sea FEP, others). Fisheries Forum will write up a workshop report for the Council.

We have recently set up a steering committee with Council, AP, SSC, and staff representatives, and intend to have information about the general structure and a draft agenda to distribute in January.

Legislative Update

Following the October meeting, the Council sent a letter to Senator Sullivan on several MSA bills and other legislation. The letter is **attached** for your reference. Also **attached** is the CCC letter to Secretary of Commerce Wilber Ross and the CCC Working Paper with consensus findings and regional perspectives on MSA reauthorization issues. I have also **attached** the most recent Congressional Activities reports from the CCC's legislative liaison Dave Whaley.

On October 24, 2017, the Senate Commerce, Science and Transportation Committee's Subcommittee on Oceans, Atmosphere, Fisheries, and Coast Guard, held a hearing titled "Reauthorization of the Magnuson-Stevens Fishery Conservation and Management Act: Fisheries Science". Chairman Dan Sullivan (R-Alaska) presided over the hearing, and witnesses included Mr. Karl Haflinger and Dr. Ray Hilborn among others. Written testimony and an archived webcast of the hearing can be found at:

<https://www.commerce.senate.gov/public/index.cfm/hearings?ID=5F5D04BA-CF9D-48F6-B8F1-4E1C17805DF5> Other than this hearing, there has not been much legislative activity on MSA to report since the October meeting.

Future Council meeting Schedule

At the October meeting, I discussed the overlap of meeting dates with the June meetings of the PFMC and

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NPFMC. We noted that our meetings June 1-9, 2020 and June 7-15, 2021, would avoid meeting overlap for those years, but 2022 overlap might be unavoidable, assuming we begin our meeting on June 6, 2022. The Council further identified the potential conflict with the April meeting dates.

I contacted the Pacific Council staff, and they responded that they would be able to plan around our June meeting dates, but couldn't change their April meeting dates from the first week in April as they need to take final action on salmon regulations by April 15 to get them implemented on time. The meeting dates (including the 2 days of committees prior to the meetings) are shown in the table below.

Year	Pacific	North Pacific
2018	April 4-11	April 2-10
2019	April 9-16	April 1-9
2020	April 3-10	April 6-14
2021	March 31- April 7	April 5-13

Based on this schedule, partial meeting overlaps will occur in 2018 and 2020. I plan to explore other options for our 2020 April meeting dates (perhaps by delaying the start of the Council meeting a day or two), and will provide additional information at a future meeting.

We also have a conflict with meeting dates in 2019 for the December Council meeting (currently scheduled for the week of December 2) and the interim IPHC meeting (currently scheduled for December 3-4). The IPHC staff has requested that we consider shifting our dates to accommodate their meeting. In response to this request, I am looking into the possibility of delaying the start date of the AP and Council meeting a day or two, such that the Council meeting begins on December 5th or 6th. Another option is to shift the Council meeting to the following week (the week of December 9).

Committee Meetings

The Charter Halibut Management Committee, chaired by Mr. Mezirow, met on October 10 to identify a suite of potential management measures for analysis by ADF&G to keep the sector catch within allocations established under the Halibut Catch Sharing Plan. The Committee met again this past Monday to develop recommendations for 2018 management measures. These recommendations will be provided as part of the C-1 agenda item.

Other recent Staff/Council activities

Diana Evans gave a presentation on the Council fisheries, and Alaska's approach to bycatch management, for a Pacific Islands delegation representing the Parties to the Nauru Agreement (PNA) on October 12th. The delegation was visiting Alaska for a week to learn about other models for creating bycatch reduction incentives.

On October 19-20, the administrative staff (Maria, Peggy, Shannon and Nicole) attended training along with NMFS employees in Anchorage on creating documents that comply with section 508 of the Rehabilitation Act. Under Section 508, Federal agencies are required to make electronic and information technology accessible to people with visual and/or mobility impairments. Staff is developing templates and best practices as a proactive measure to ensure that all our documents and technology are accessible to people with disabilities as well as to those without.

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On October 31-November 2, I attended this year's Council training along with Mr. Laukitis, Angel Drobica, and Sam Cunningham. The agenda and presentations are all posted online at <https://www.fisheries.noaa.gov/event/2017-council-training>.

On November 17th, Mr. Cotten, Mr. Hartill, Mr. Laukitis, and Diana Evans attended the Aleutians East Borough semi-annual meeting, updating constituents on upcoming Council issues.

On November 28-30, Chairman Hull and I attended the IPHC Interim meeting in Seattle and Chairman Hull provided a report (**attached**) on recent Council activities related to halibut. IPHC Executive Director David Wilson will be providing a report of the Interim IPHC meeting in a later B-report.

Events this week

On Tuesday evening, December 6, from 5:30-7pm, Mr. Andy Wink from the McDowell Group will be presenting an overview of the Alaska seafood markets. In his presentation will be information from the ASMI report, "The Economic Value of Alaska's Seafood Industry" that was prepared by McDowell Group and published in September 2017. The document is available at the following link: <http://www.alaskaseafood.org/wp-content/uploads/2015/10/AK-Seafood-Impacts-September-2017.pdf>

On Wednesday at noon, we have scheduled a joint lunch with the SSC on the first floor in the Birch/Willow Room.

On Wednesday evening, December 6, 5.30-6.30 pm, Dr. Ian Stewart (IPHC staff) will be giving a presentation on the stock assessment and status of halibut stocks.

On Thursday evening, December 7, from 6-8pm, there will be a reception at the 49th Street Brewery on 3rd Avenue to welcome young fishermen attending the Summit. Everyone is invited to attend.

Also on Thursday evening, from 5:30-8:30 pm, the Pacific Seafood Processors Association is hosting a seafood dinner event to raise money to fight hunger. A flyer for the event is **attached**. Additional information and tickets can be found at www.BeansCafe.org <http://www.BeansCafe.org>.

On Friday at 4pm, we have an Executive Session to review nominations for Plan Team, SSC, and AP membership.

Bowhead whale entanglement research

In June 2017, the Council was updated on the occurrence of bowhead whales entangled in Bering Sea crab pot gear, and the apparent increase in the number of whales seen with entanglement scars. At this meeting, Dr. Craig George with the North Slope Borough Department of Wildlife Management is here to present historical and current data on bowhead whale entanglement rates, and how those rates compare to cetacean entanglements worldwide.

AM 80 report on Halibut Avoidance

In 2015, the Council requested that Amendment 80 cooperatives report on halibut PSC avoidance plans and their performance under those plans. The cooperatives provided a follow-up report in 2016, and have volunteered to provide another report this year. Because all sector members have worked closely in halibut avoidance efforts in recent years, a single consolidated report for the sector is provided (see **attached** report). Representative from the cooperatives (Dr. Mark Fina and Ms. Beth Concepcion) will be here to provide a

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summary of their halibut avoidance plans and performance, and be available to answer questions.