


MEMORANDUM

TO: Council, SSC and AP Members

FROM: Clarence G. Pautzke  
Executive Director 

DATE: April 8, 1999

SUBJECT: Management of sharks and skates in the BSAI and GOA

ESTIMATED TIME  
8 HOURS  
(for all D-1 items)

**ACTION REQUIRED**

Initial review of an analysis to revise the management of sharks and skates in the BSAI and GOA.

**BACKGROUND**

The potential for rapid growth in commercial fishing, and the potential for over-exploitation in combined state and federal managed fisheries convinced the Alaska Board of Fisheries in February 1998, to close the directed commercial fishery for sharks and establish a Commissioner's permit requirement to commercially fish skates and rays in state waters of Alaska. Under these actions, the bycatch of sharks was allowed to continue consistent with general state regulations for the incidental take of fishery resources. The Board also took action to place an annual statewide harvest limit on the sport take of sharks.

The Alaska Department of Fish and Game submitted a proposal to revise management of sharks and skates in Alaska EEZ waters during the summer 1998 call for proposals. The Board brought the issue to the Council at the July 29-30, 1998 meeting of the Joint Committee of the Board of Fisheries/North Pacific Fishery Management Council. At this meeting, complementary federal action was discussed and the joint committee recommended that the Council proceed with development of an analysis of the proposed alternatives. In conformance with the precautionary approach for management of these long-living, slow-growing, and low fecundity April 9, 1999 fishes, the Council initiated analysis of the following four alternatives for plan amendments to the BSAI and GOA groundfish FMPs at its October 1998 meeting. Final action is scheduled for June 1999. The analysis was mailed to you on April 6, 1999. The executive summary is attached as Item D-1(e).

- Alternative 1: No action.
- Alternative 2: Separate sharks and skates from the "other groundfish" species category and enact specific federal regulations.
- Alternative 3: Separate sharks and skates from the "other groundfish" species category and defer management to the state.
- Alternative 4: Delete sharks and skates from the BSAI and GOA groundfish FMPs.

## EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

Little information exists regarding the stock structure or status of shark and skate populations in Alaska. Available life history information, however, suggests shark species are easily over-exploited and, once over-fished, recovery may take decades. Experiences in other jurisdictions show shark stocks in both the Pacific and Atlantic oceans to be over-exploited.

The potential for rapid growth in commercial fishing, and the potential for over-exploitation in combined state and federal managed fisheries, convinced the Alaska Board of Fisheries to take regulatory action to close the directed commercial fishery for sharks. In addition, the Board brought the issue forward at the July 29-30, 1998, meeting of the Joint Committee of the Board of Fisheries/North Pacific Fisheries Management Council. At this meeting, complementary federal action was discussed and the joint committee recommended that the Council proceed with development of an analysis of the proposed alternatives. Calling upon the precautionary approach to management of these long-living, slow-growing, and low fecund fishes and other regional and international efforts to conserve sharks, the Council initiated analysis of the following four alternatives for plan amendments to the BSAI and GOA groundfish FMPs at its October 1998 meeting.

Alternative 1: No action.

Alternative 2: Separate sharks and skates from the "other groundfish" species category and enact specific federal regulations.

Alternative 3: Separate sharks and skates from the "other groundfish" species category and defer management to the state.

Alternative 4: Delete sharks and skates from the BSAI and GOA groundfish FMPs.