



NORTH PACIFIC FISHERY MANAGEMENT COUNCIL

605 W. 4th Ave. Suite 306
Anchorage, AK 99501
(907) 271-2809
Fax (907) 271-2817

Action Memo

File Number:Cons 14-028

Agenda Date12/8/2014

Agenda Number:D3

Dan Hull, Chairman
Chris Oliver, Executive Director

SUBJECT:

Pribilof Canyon Corals: Receive comments on range of alternatives

ESTIMATED TIME:

3 hours

ACTION REQUIRED:

Receive comments from public regarding range of alternatives for potential Bering Sea Canyons conservation measures.

BACKGROUND:

In June 2013, the Council passed a motion to identify and validate areas of coral concentrations for possible measures for the conservation and management of deep sea corals in Pribilof and Zhemchug Canyons. The Council also directed staff to meet with the Alaska Fisheries Science Center (AFSC) and other stakeholders to discuss possibilities for collaboration in order to survey areas of coral abundance and to identify and develop tools for coral impact reduction. In February 2014, Council staff hosted a workshop on Bering Sea canyons in Seattle. The results of that workshop, and updated models to identify potential coral habitat in the Bering Sea were presented to the Council in April 2014 ([see attached discussion paper](#)).

In April 2014, the Council adopted a purpose and need statement. Specifically, the purpose of this action is to determine whether and how the Council should recommend amendment of the BSAI Groundfish and Crab FMPs to protect known, significant concentrations of deep sea coral in the Pribilof Canyon and adjacent slope from fishing impacts ([see attached motion](#)). In passing this motion, the Council noted that they have consistently acted to identify significant concentrations of deep sea corals and to protect those areas from fishery impacts. This action continues a process to re-examine the potential value and need for management measures to protect habitat in the Bering Sea canyons. The Council also requested that time be scheduled for public scoping to focus on two topics: (1) the general range of alternatives that should be considered under this action; and (2) the best process by which to identify, develop, and refine alternatives. At this meeting, the Council will take testimony on these two topics.

The Council noted that alternatives will not be finalized until there has been adequate review of the data. In October, NMFS provided a presentation on the preliminary results from the 2014 drop-camera survey ([see attached presentation](#)). A final review of the survey data, and a report to the Council, is tentatively scheduled for June 2015. The Council may wish to discuss next steps.