

ADVISORY PANEL
Motions and Rationale
October 4-7, 2022 - Anchorage, AK

C2 BSAI Pcod Small Boat Access

The AP recommends the Council take final action and adopt their preliminary preferred alternative:

Alternative 1: Status quo

Alternative 2: Redefine the current BSAI Pacific cod jig sector to include H&L/pot CVs less than or equal to:

Option 1: 55' LOA

Option 2: 56' LOA

Suboption: B-season fishery would remain jig gear only fishery.

Motion passed 12- 3.

Rationale in Favor:

- *This action addresses an issue that has been of concern for several years. While there has been an increase in the number of cod fishery participants in the Under 60' sector, especially in higher-capacity vessels over 57' LOA, there has been a decline in small boats under 55' LOA coupled with increasingly shortened seasons, sometimes lasting only a few weeks in January. Due to their size, smaller vessels in this sector are particularly affected by these shortened seasons and poor weather. Additionally, these smaller vessels typically fish in waters closer to port, which may further constrain their ability to compete within the sector as they may be limited to fish in less productive waters near port due to their size.*
- *This action directly meets the Purpose and Need Statement by preserving the historic small boat fishery and community of Dutch Harbor. This action will preserve entry-level opportunities for small HAL vessels and is directly responsive to small vessels currently reliant on Bering Sea Pacific cod to help them stay viable. It will also provide some protection from vessels of similar size but with higher capacity and efficiency. It is important to help ensure that small vessels maintain access to fisheries. In this way, this targeted action is similar to purposefully leaving the trawl C season unallocated under the newly finalized PCTC program for the under 60' fleet.*
- *This action allows small vessels to fish off of the jig allocation, which has not historically been fully utilized, particularly in the A and C seasons. The jig allocation was intended to support entry-level and small-boat opportunities. Preserving opportunity for smaller vessels using hook-and-line and pot gear to harvest cod from the jig sector allocation will help to increase stability and provide additional opportunities for current participants and potential new entrants without negatively impacting catcher vessels using jig gear. Inclusion of the suboption also helps to preserve opportunity and maintain safety for the jig sector. Concern has not been raised by participants in the jig sector regarding this action.*
- *Under this action, it is anticipated that the BOF will work in coordination with the Council to adequately address management of the new cod fishery (i.e., establishing a trigger for opening). It is also anticipated that NMFS in-season managers will administer rollovers to*

successfully ensure that available cod is not left in the water. Additionally, under this action opportunity to fish the already established state waters Area O fishery is retained for those vessels that do not fall into this newly defined sector.

Rationale in Opposition:

- *This action would extend the amount of cod TAC available to the 55' and under fleet, thereby increasing the amount of time available to these vessels to fish around adverse weather. However, the remaining under 60' vessels would be fishing on a smaller TAC and shorter season. As it is, the A season, with rollovers from the jig sector, has closed between January 12th and 26th in the last three years and as public comments noted, in Bering Sea conditions, a 58' vessel is still a small boat.*
- *It is unclear if the new small boat sector would be able to harvest the entire jig sector allocation and whether rollovers to the remaining under 60' vessels would continue. For the A season, if the under 60' sector were already closed and a reallocation could be made, it does not necessarily mean NMFS would reopen the sector; NMFS would only reopen the sector if there were enough TAC to conservatively manage the fishing activity and if vessels are available to target federal Pacific cod. For the C season, there has historically been little to no participation by the jig sector. NMFS has been able to reallocate projected unused B and C season TAC to the current less than 60' H&L or pot CV sector on or near September 1st. Under this action, it is likely NMFS would not be able to reallocate C season TAC from the new Pacific cod small vessel sector on or near September 1 because smaller H&L or pot vessels historically fish in the fall and NMFS may not be able to determine how much the sector would need.*
- *The loss of opportunity to fish these rollovers may significantly harm vessels in the remaining under 60' sector. The top 10 vessels most dependent on the federal Pacific cod fishery have a reported LOA of 58' and there are seven H&L or pot vessels in this vessel group that depend on the fishery for more than 80 percent of their total revenue.*
- *Over time, larger vessels have not shown to be more competitive within the sector. Vessels greater than 56' LOA have harvested 84 percent of the sector's final allocation on average from 2008 through 2021. However, in the most recent five years of available data these vessels have harvested 79 percent of the sector's final allocation on average. As such, it does not appear vessels greater than 56' are harvesting a larger portion of the sector's final allocation over time.*
- *This action may have been more relevant in past years. Currently, however, there is on-going opportunity for the entire under 60' sector to harvest cod. Both the State and federal fisheries are open. There are approximately five vessels fishing and processors are buying cod. These vessels are greater than 56'.*
- *Compounding the potential negative impacts of this action are uncertainties related to actions that the BOF may take (i.e., how the BOF chooses to establish the trigger for the DHS state fishery; potential closure of parallel waters fishery to pot vessels 58' and under when DHS is open; potential requests to reduce the GHL quota in years of low abundance).*