


MEMORANDUM

TO: Council, SSC and AP Members

FROM: Clarence G. Pautzke  
Executive Director 

DATE: September 25, 1998

SUBJECT: Initial BSAI Groundfish Specifications for 1999

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| ESTIMATED TIME<br>2 HOURS<br>(for all D-2 Items) |
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**ACTION REQUIRED**

- (a) Review Preliminary 1999 BSAI Stock Assessment and Fishery Evaluation (SAFE) document.
- (b) Approve preliminary BSAI groundfish specifications for 1999.
- (c) Recommend bycatch rate standards for the Vessel Incentive Program.

**BACKGROUND**

(a,b) Specifications and SAFE

Normally, at our September/October meeting, the Council makes initial recommendations for groundfish and bycatch specifications. These initial specifications are used to manage the groundfish fisheries until superseded by publication of the Council's final specifications.

In April 1998, the Council approved Plan Amendments 48/48 to revise the annual specification process. This amendment will eliminate publication of proposed and interim specifications for BSAI and GOA groundfish fisheries. The previous year's specifications will remain effective until superseded, and no preliminary ABC recommendations will be made by the Plan Teams, SSC, or Council. Although Amendments 48/48 have yet to be approved by the Secretary, the Council can recommend "rolling over" specifications, as was done last year. Catch specifications for 1998 BSAI groundfish fisheries are listed in Table 1, and bycatch limit specifications are listed in Table 2.

The Groundfish Plan Teams met on September 15-17 to prepare the preliminary SAFE report, which was distributed prior to the Council meeting. Due to changes adopted by NMFS-AFSC and the Plan Teams under Amendment 48/48, the preliminary SAFE no longer contains ABC recommendations. Instead, the report includes revised assessments for those stocks where additional information has become available. This year's preliminary SAFE contains updated Bering Sea pollock and Atka mackerel assessments. NMFS staff will be on hand to discuss the results of these assessments.

(c) Bycatch rate standards for the Vessel Incentive Program

The Vessel Incentive Program (VIP) rate for halibut and crab Prohibited Species Catch (PSC) includes all trawl fisheries in both the BSAI and GOA. The grouping for VIP fishing categories is:

|      | <u>Fishery</u>   | <u>PSC Species</u>       |
|------|------------------|--------------------------|
| BSAI | midwater pollock | halibut*                 |
| BSAI | bottom pollock   | halibut                  |
| BSAI | yellowfin sole   | halibut; red king crab** |
| BSAI | other trawl      | halibut; red king crab   |
| GOA  | midwater pollock | halibut                  |
| GOA  | other trawl      | halibut                  |

\* % of groundfish

\*\*number of crabs per ton of groundfish

Note that regulations specify that the vessel incentive program for the midwater pollock fishery becomes effective after the directed fishery for pollock by trawl vessels using non-pelagic gear is closed.

Item D-2(c)(1) is a letter from the Regional Administrator containing the VIP rate standards used in 1998 and catch rates observed during past years for these fishery categories. The Council will need to recommend the bycatch rate standards for these categories for the first two quarters of the 1999 fishery.

Table 1

**Bering Sea and Aleutian Islands  
Council Recommended 1998 Catch Specifications (mt)**

| Species            | Area              | 1998              | 1998             | 1998             | 1998             | 1997             | 1997             |
|--------------------|-------------------|-------------------|------------------|------------------|------------------|------------------|------------------|
|                    |                   | Biomass           | OFL              | ABC              | TAC              | TAC              | Catch*           |
| Pollock            | EBS               | 5,820,000         | 2,060,000        | 1,110,000        | 1,110,000        | 1,130,000        | 1,033,463        |
|                    | <i>"A" season</i> |                   |                  |                  | 45%              | 45%              |                  |
|                    | <i>"B" season</i> |                   |                  |                  | 55%              | 55%              |                  |
|                    | AI                | 106,000           | 31,700           | 23,800           | 23,800           | 28,000           | 24,819           |
|                    | Bogoslof          | 280,000           | 8,750            | 6,410            | 1,000            | 1,000            | 162              |
| Pacific cod        | BS/AI             | 1,340,000         | 336,000          | 210,000          | 210,000          | 270,000          | 234,552          |
| Yellowfin sole     | BS/AI             | 3,010,000         | 314,000          | 220,000          | 220,000          | 230,000          | 166,684          |
| Greenland turbot   | BS/AI             | 164,000           | 22,300           | 15,000           | 15,000           | 9,000            | 7,666            |
|                    | BS                |                   |                  |                  | 67%              | 67%              |                  |
|                    | AI                |                   |                  |                  | 33%              | 33%              |                  |
| Arrowtooth         | BS/AI             | 869,000           | 230,000          | 147,000          | 16,000           | 20,760           | 9,651            |
| Rock sole          | BS/AI             | 2,360,000         | 449,000          | 312,000          | 100,000          | 97,185           | 67,520           |
| Flathead sole      | BS/AI             | 824,000           | 190,000          | 132,000          | 100,000          | 43,500           | 20,272           |
| Other flatfish     | BS/AI             | 789,000           | 253,000          | 164,000          | 89,434           | 50,750           | 22,131           |
| Sablefish          | EBS               | 18,200            | 2,160            | 1,300            | 1,300            | 1,100            | 547              |
|                    | AI                | 21,000            | 2,230            | 1,380            | 1,380            | 1,200            | 780              |
| POP complex        |                   |                   |                  |                  |                  |                  |                  |
| True POP           | EBS               | 41,300            | 3,300            | 1,400            | 1,400            | 2,800            | 827              |
| Other POP          | EBS               | 11,600            | 356              | 267              | 267              | 1,050            | 233              |
| True POP           | AI                | 258,000           | 20,700           | 12,100           | 12,100           | 12,800           | 12,648           |
|                    | <i>Eastern</i>    |                   |                  | 3,070            | 3,070            | 3,240            | 2,987            |
|                    | <i>Central</i>    |                   |                  | 3,450            | 3,450            | 3,170            | 2,795            |
|                    | <i>Western</i>    |                   |                  | 5,580            | 5,580            | 6,390            | 6,866            |
| Sharp/Northern     | AI                | 94,000            | 5,640            | 4,230            | 4,230            | 4,360            | 1,997            |
| Short/Rougheye     | AI                | 46,500            | 1,290            | 965              | 965              | 938              | 1,045            |
| Other rockfish     | EBS               | 7,030             | 492              | 369              | 369              | 373              | 161              |
|                    | AI                | 13,000            | 913              | 685              | 685              | 714              | 306              |
| Atka mackerel      | AI                | 536,000           | 134,000          | 64,300           | 64,300           | 66,700           | 65,840           |
|                    | <i>Eastern</i>    |                   |                  | 14,900           | 14,900           | 15,000           | 16,310           |
|                    | <i>Central</i>    |                   |                  | 22,400           | 22,400           | 19,500           | 19,990           |
|                    | <i>Western</i>    |                   |                  | 27,000           | 27,000           | 32,200           | 29,540           |
| Squid              | BS/AI             | n/a               | 2,620            | 1,970            | 1,970            | 1,970            | 1,769            |
| Other species      | BS/AI             | 669,000           | 134,000          | 25,800           | 25,800           | 25,800           | 22,553           |
| <b>BS/AI TOTAL</b> |                   | <b>17,277,630</b> | <b>4,202,451</b> | <b>2,454,976</b> | <b>2,000,000</b> | <b>2,000,000</b> | <b>1,695,626</b> |

EBS - eastern Bering Sea  
BS/AI - Bering Sea & Aleutian Islands  
BS - Bering Sea  
AI - Aleutian Islands

OFL - overfishing level  
ABC - acceptable biological catch  
TAC - total allowable catch

\* catch as of 11/1/97

Table 2

## 1998 BSAI Trawl Fisheries PSC

## Apportionments and Seasonal Allowances -- Council Recommendations

| Fishery Group                           | Halibut Mortality Cap (mt) | Herring (mt) | Red King Crab (animals) Zone 1 | C. bairdi Zone 1 | C. bairdi Zone 2 | C. opilio COBLZ  |
|---|----------------------------|--------------|--------------------------------|------------------|------------------|------------------|
| <b>Yellowfin sole</b>                   | 1,005                      | 268          | 10,000                         | 276,316          | 1,071,000        |                  |
| January 20 - March 31                   | 285                        |              |                                |                  |                  |                  |
| April 1 - May 10                        | 210                        |              |                                |                  |                  |                  |
| May 11 - August 14                      | 100                        |              |                                |                  |                  |                  |
| August 15 - Dec 31                      | 410                        |              |                                |                  |                  |                  |
| <b>Rocksole/other flatfish</b>          | 795                        | 22           | 75,000*                        | 296,052          | 357,000          |                  |
| January 20 - March 29                   | 485                        |              |                                |                  |                  |                  |
| March 30 - June 30                      | 130                        |              |                                |                  |                  |                  |
| July 1 - December 31                    | 180                        |              |                                |                  |                  |                  |
| <b>Turbot/sablefish/<br/>Arrowtooth</b> | 0                          |              |                                |                  | 0                |                  |
| <b>Rockfish</b>                         | 75                         | 8            |                                |                  | 7,000            |                  |
| July 1 - Dec 31                         | 75                         |              |                                |                  |                  |                  |
| <b>Pacific cod</b>                      | 1,550                      | 22           | 7,500                          | 148,224          | 195,000          |                  |
| <b>Pollock/mackerel/o.species</b>       | 350                        | 155          | 7,500                          | 29,408           | 470,000          |                  |
| January 20 - April 15                   | 300                        |              |                                |                  |                  |                  |
| April 16 - December 31                  | 50                         |              |                                |                  |                  |                  |
| <b>Pelagic Trawl Pollock</b>            |                            | 1,239        |                                |                  |                  |                  |
| <b>TOTAL</b>                            | <b>3,775</b>               | <b>1,714</b> | <b>100,000</b>                 | <b>750,000</b>   | <b>2,100,000</b> | <b>4,654,000</b> |

Note: unused PSC allowances may be rolled into the following seasonal apportionment.

\* Red king crab PSC for the rock sole fishery is apportioned 26,250 inside 56 - 56°10' (available Feb 1), and 48,750 outside.

The Council recommends that the opilio cap not be apportioned among fisheries until fishery specific bycatch data from the opilio savings area are available.

Table 3

## 1998 BSAI Non-Trawl Fisheries PSC Bycatch Allowances and fixed gear Pacific cod seasonal apportionments

| Fishery Group           | Halibut Mortality (mt) | Seasonal Apportion of cod TAC (mt) |
|-------------------------|------------------------|------------------------------------|
| <b>Pacific Cod</b>      | 810                    |                                    |
| Jan 1 - April 30        | 495                    | 70,735                             |
| May 1 - September 14    | 40                     | 15,000                             |
| Sept. 15 - Dec. 31      | 275                    | 13,332                             |
| <b>Other Non-Trawl*</b> | 90                     |                                    |
| <b>Groundfish Pot</b>   | Exempt                 |                                    |
| <b>TOTAL</b>            | <b>900 mt</b>          | <b>99,068</b>                      |

Note: unused PSC halibut from first trimester will be rolled into the third trimester.

Any halibut PSC removed from the CDQ fisheries will be replaced from PSC apportioned from the third trimester.

\* Includes hook & line fisheries for rockfish and Greenland turbot.

Sablefish hook & line fisheries will be exempted from the halibut mortality cap.

Jig gear will also be exempted from the halibut mortality cap.



FM AK REGION

UNITED STATES DEPARTMENT OF COMMERCE  
National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration  
National Marine Fisheries Service  
P.O. Box 21668  
Juneau, Alaska 99802-1668

AGENDA D-2(c)(1)  
OCTOBER 1998

September 29, 1998

Mr. Richard B. Lauber  
Chairman, North Pacific Fishery  
Management Council  
605 W. 4<sup>th</sup> Avenue, Suite 306  
Anchorage, Alaska 99501-2252

Dear Rick,

Bycatch rate standards for trawl fisheries under the Pacific halibut and red king crab vessel incentive program during the first half of 1999 are scheduled to be published in the Federal Register by January 1, 1999. A summary of 1994 - 1998 observer data on fishery bycatch rates is listed in the attached table for review by the Council. Although halibut bycatch rates in the BSAI bottom pollock and yellowfin sole fisheries appear higher in 1998 relative to past years, these rates likely do not warrant a change in the bycatch rate standards recommended by the Council during the past several years. Unless the Council recommends a change in these standards, we will use for the first half of 1999 the halibut and red king crab bycatch rate standards listed in the attached table for the first and second calendar quarters of the year.

Sincerely,

*James W. Balsiger*  
For James W. Balsiger  
Acting Regional Administrator

Attachment



1994 - 1998 (through Sept 19, 1998) observed bycatch rates, by quarter, of halibut and red king crab in the fishery categories included in the vessel incentive program. Also listed are the bycatch rate standards established since 1995.

**Halibut Bycatch (Kilograms Halibut/metric ton Allocated Groundfish Catch)**

| <u>Fishery and quarter</u>        | <u>Bycatch Rate Standards</u> | <u>1994</u> | <u>1995</u> | <u>1996</u> | <u>1997</u> | <u>1998</u> |
|-----------------------------------|-------------------------------|-------------|-------------|-------------|-------------|-------------|
| <b>BSAI Midwater Pollock</b>      |                               |             |             |             |             |             |
| QT 1                              | 1                             | 0.17        | 0.05        | 0.1         | 0.1         | 0.02        |
| QT 2                              | 1                             | 0.01        | 0.07        | 0.02        | 0.4         | 0.00        |
| QT 3                              | 1                             | 0.3         | 0.12        | 0.09        | 0.1         | 0.35        |
| QT 4                              | 1                             | 0.06        | 0.19        | 0.21        | 0.1         |             |
| Year to date                      | 1                             | 0.22        | 0.09        | 0.12        | 0.1         |             |
| <b>BSAI Bottom Pollock</b>        |                               |             |             |             |             |             |
| QT 1                              | 7.5                           | 2.71        | 1.93        | 2.22        | 1.4         | 7.87        |
| QT 2                              | 5                             | 29.67       | 5.5         | 12.84       | 0.0         | -           |
| QT 3                              | 5                             | 2.61        | 1.98        | 0.41        | 1.4         | 13.41       |
| QT 4                              | 5                             | 0.38        | 0.14        | 0.64        | 0.4         |             |
| Year to date                      |                               | 2.66        | 1.92        | 1.4         | 1.3         |             |
| <b>BSAI Yellowfin sole</b>        |                               |             |             |             |             |             |
| QT 1                              | 5                             | 2.7         | 3.67        | 2.89        | 6.5         | 9.65        |
| QT 2                              | 5                             | 5.93        | 4.54        | 4.19        | 5.1         | 6.57        |
| QT 3                              | 5                             | 1.15        | 2.93        | 6.86        | 2.6         | 7.28        |
| QT 4                              | 5                             | 4.57        | 4.49        | 12.41       | 4.1         |             |
| Year to date                      |                               | 3.92        | 3.67        | 5.25        | 4.1         |             |
| <b>BSAI Other Trawl Fisheries</b> |                               |             |             |             |             |             |
| QT 1                              | 30                            | 9.02        | 11.27       | 10.66       | 8.9         | 12.07       |
| QT 2                              | 30                            | 19.94       | 16.93       | 12.71       | 10.3        | 13.78       |
| QT 3                              | 30                            | 3.3         | 10.33       | 6.37        | 21.2        | 11.74       |
| QT 4                              | 30                            | 4           | 21.23       | 34.24       | 3.1         |             |
| Year to date                      |                               | 12.04       | 12.96       | 11.18       | 10.33       |             |
| <b>GOA Midwater Pollock</b>       |                               |             |             |             |             |             |
| QT 1                              | 1                             | 0.06        | 0.34        | 0.26        | 0.0         | 0.18        |
| QT 2                              | 1                             | 0.07        | 0.05        | 0.04        | 0.1         | 0.14        |
| QT 3                              | 1                             | 0.55        | 0.54        | 0.03        | 0.1         | 0.02        |
| QT 4                              | 1                             | 0.04        | 0.13        | 0.47        |             |             |
| Year to date                      |                               | 0.17        | 0.24        | 0.12        | 0.1         |             |
| <b>GOA Other Trawl Fisheries</b>  |                               |             |             |             |             |             |
| QT 1                              | 40                            | 19.97       | 16.55       | 14.65       | 20.4        | 26.23       |
| QT 2                              | 40                            | 42.78       | 63.93       | 49.01       | 62.4        | 57.15       |
| QT 3                              | 40                            | 26.49       | 18.48       | 24.71       | 26.0        | 37.97       |
| QT 4                              | 40                            | 43.76       | 48.33       | 46.9        | 47.9        |             |
| Year to date                      |                               | 29.91       | 28.45       | 27.36       | 31.2        |             |

**Zone 1 Red King Crab Bycatch Rates**  
(number of crab/mt of allocated groundfish)

|                                   |     |      |      |      |     |      |
|-----------------------------------|-----|------|------|------|-----|------|
| <b>BSAI Yellowfin sole</b>        |     |      |      |      |     |      |
| QT 1                              | 2.5 | 0.68 | 0.28 | 0    | 0.1 | 0.01 |
| QT 2                              | 2.5 | 0.23 | 0.02 | 0.01 | 0.1 | 0.03 |
| QT 3                              | 2.5 | 0    | 0    | 0    |     | 0.12 |
| QT 4                              | 2.5 | 0    | **** | 0    |     |      |
| Year to date                      |     | 0.33 | 0.18 | 0    | 0.1 |      |
| <b>BSAI Other Trawl Fisheries</b> |     |      |      |      |     |      |
| QT 1                              | 2.5 | 1.78 | 0.31 | 0.14 | 0.1 | 0.12 |
| QT 2                              | 2.5 | 0.02 | 0    | 0    | 0.0 | 0.01 |
| QT 3                              | 2.5 | 0    | 0    | 0.08 | 0.0 | 0.03 |
| QT 4                              | 2.5 | 0    | 0    | 0    | 0.0 |      |
| Year to date                      |     | 1.18 | 0.3  | 0.1  | 0.1 |      |