

# North Pacific Fishery Management Council

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## NEWSLETTER

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or you can find us linked to the NMFS Alaska Region's home page!

### December Council Meeting in Anchorage - 125th Plenary Session

The Council's December meeting focused on setting the 1997 Total Allowable Catches (TACs) and Prohibited Species Catch (PSC) limits for groundfish fisheries in both the Bering Sea/Aleutian Islands and the Gulf of Alaska. The Council also reviewed recent action by the Alaska Board of Fisheries to establish State water Pacific cod fisheries in the Gulf and reviewed the provisions of the recent Magnuson-Stevens Act reauthorization.

### 20th Anniversary - A Momentous Occasion

A real highlight of the week was the Council's 20th Anniversary Celebration featuring Chairman Rick Lauber as Master of Ceremonies and Senator Ted Stevens as the keynote speaker. Senator Stevens was lauded for his many years of contributions to conservation and management of the nation's fisheries and in particular those of the North Pacific. Also lauded was Trevor McCabe, the hard working principal Senate staffer on recent revisions of the Magnuson-Stevens Act. Alaska Lt. Governor Fran Ulmer provided a warm welcome to the celebration, and three ex-Chairmen of the Council, Elmer Rasmuson, Clem Tillion, and Jim Campbell, reflected on their experiences. All-in-all, it was a wonderful evening, and we're looking forward to the 30th anniversary celebration in 2006.



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### Scientific and Statistical Committee Appointments

One new appointment to the SSC was confirmed at the December meeting. Appointed to his first term on the SSC is *Dr. Steve Klosiewski* with the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service in Anchorage, which brings the total SSC membership to thirteen. In addition, Seth Macinko will assume a full time position on the SSC while Phil Rigby will serve as an alternate to Dr. Doug Eggers. The following eleven members of the SSC were reappointed for 1997:



Jim Balsiger—Alaska Fisheries Science Center, NMFS  
 Keith Criddle—UAF, Dept of Economics  
 Douglas Eggers—ADF&G, Juneau  
 Susan Hills—UAF, School of Fisheries & Science  
 Douglas Larson—UC Davis, Dept Agricultural Economics  
 Richard Marasco—Alaska Fisheries Science Center, NMFS  
 Marc Miller—UW, School of Marine Affairs  
 Terrence Quinn II—UA, Juneau Center for Ocean Sciences  
 Jack Tagart—DFW, Fish Mgmt., Marine Resources Div.  
 Albert Tyler—UAF, School of Fisheries & Ocean Sciences  
 Hal Weeks—Oregon , Dept of Fish & Wildlife

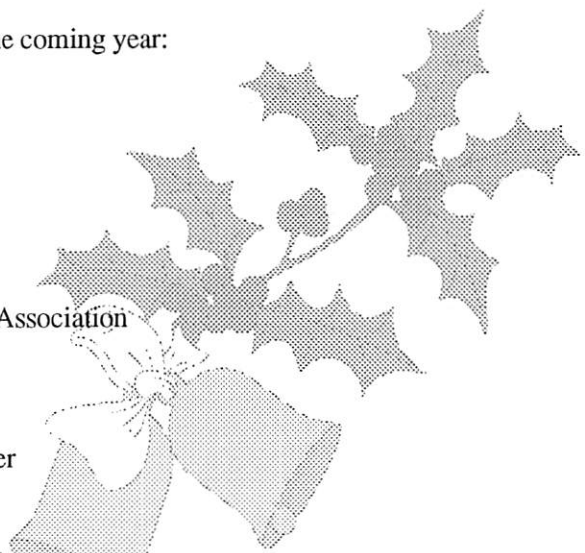
**1997 Advisory Panel Appointments Announced**

Three new members have been appointed to the Council's Advisory Panel for 1997, which brings the total membership to 23:

<i>Steve Ganey</i>	Alaska Marine Conservation Council
<i>Jeff Stephan</i>	United Fishermen's Marketing Association
<i>Teresa Turk</i>	Association of Professional Observers

The following twenty Advisory Panel members were reappointed for the coming year:

Ragnar Alstrom	Commercial Fisherman
Dave Benson	Tyson Seafoods Group
John Bruce	Deep Sea Fishermen's Union
Al Burch	Alaska Dragger's Association
Bruce Cotton	Long John Silvers, Inc.
Craig Cross	Commercial Fisherman
Dan Falvey	Alaska Longline Fishermen's Association
Kris Fanning	Commercial Crab Fisherman
David Fraser	Commercial Fisherman
Arne Fuglvog	Commercial Fisherman
Justine Gundersen	Commercial/Subsistence Fisher
Spike Jones	Commercial Fisherman
John Lewis	Sportfishing Representative
Stephanie Madsen	Aleutian Seafood Processors Assn
Hazel Nelson	Bristol Bay Economic Development Corp.
Dean Paddock	Bristol Bay Driftnetter's Association
John Roos	Pacific Seafood Processors Association
Robert Wurm	Kodiak Vessel Owners Association
Lyle Yeck	Commercial Fisherman
Grant Yutzenka	UNISEA



**Halibut and Sablefish IFQs**

The Council approved a regulatory amendment to create standard deductions for ice and slime for halibut and sablefish to improve accurate accounting of harvests. The Council's recommended standard deduction for halibut and sablefish is based on industry standards of 0% (washed) or 2% (for ice and slime). The IFQ regulations currently require that the initial accurate scale weight at the time of landing should be reported.

Numerous reports from the fishing industry had pointed to widespread violations of this provision, primarily under the guise of deductions for ice and slime. The amendment will likely be in effect shortly after the start of the 1997 IFQ season.

The Council also approved development of four new IFQ program changes. The Council has requested that staff provide a discussion paper of requiring weighmasters to monitor IFQ offloadings to enhance accountability. The Council has requested a discussion of projected costs and enforcement needs for the program. Under the proposal, weighmasters would be paid by the buyers. Class A frozen deliveries would be exempt. After reviewing the report, the Council may initiate an analysis for a program change for 1998. The Council requested that staff provide analysis of the effects of three management actions for initial review in April 1997: (1) amending the regulatory language that allows emergency transfers of QS to "surviving spouses" to "heirs" to include immediate family members; (2) defining the corporate ownership of a vessel at 1%, 20%, or 51% for the purpose of hiring a skipper to fish QS owned by the corporation; and (3) instituting rolling closures for trawl and longline vessels during the sablefish longline survey to minimize the impacts of fishing on the survey's biomass estimates.

Three past actions by the Council are working their way through the system for implementation for the 1997 IFQ season. Amendment 42/42 became effective on August 16, 1996 and allows the use of larger vessel QS on smaller vessels. The Secretary approved Amendment 43/43 on December 10, 1996 to increase the "sweep-up" levels for small blocked QS from 1,000 to 3,000 lb for halibut and from 3,000 to 5,000 lb for sablefish (in QS equivalents). Also, a regulatory amendment to increase the halibut "use caps" in the Bering Sea from ½ percent to 1½ percent was submitted to the Secretary on November 18, 1996. The latter two amendments will be effective for the 1997 IFQ season. Staff contact is Jane DiCosimo.

### Halibut Subsistence

The Council appointed a Halibut Subsistence Committee to meet in 1997 to discuss potential regulatory changes affecting halibut subsistence. The Council received requests from a number of native Alaska groups in western and southeast Alaska to address the current inconsistency between federal regulations for commercial and personal use harvests of halibut and current halibut subsistence harvests in coastal communities. Council member Robin Samuelsen will chair the committee. Other committee members include Jude Henzler (Bering Sea Fishermen's Association), Robert Sundown (Association of Village Council Presidents), Harold Martin and Matt Kookesh (Southeast Native Subsistence Commission), Flore Lekanoff (Aleutian Pribilof Islands Association), Theodore Borbridge (Sitka Tribe of Alaska), and David Bill (Coastal Villages Fishing Cooperative). NPFMC, ADF&G, IPHC, NMFS, and NOAA staff will also be participating in the meetings. The first meeting is scheduled for mid-January 1997 in Anchorage. Contact Jane DiCosimo for more information.

### Electronic Reporting

The Council approved a regulatory amendment to require groundfish processors in the Bering Sea, Aleutian Islands, and Gulf of Alaska to utilize an electronic record keeping and reporting system for NMFS-required documents. The proposed changes would replace conventional logbooks and associated NMFS reports with electronic versions. At-sea processors would be required to transmit in-season NMFS reports using Inmarsat satellite equipment and shore-based processors would be required to use modems and phone systems. The electronic reporting system would be implemented in two stages. Phase 1 would consist of electronic versions of the daily production, weekly production, and check-in/check-out reports and would be distributed to the groundfish processing industry for voluntary use in early 1997. Legal implementation of Phase 1 would take place in 1998. Phase 2 would consist of electronic logbooks, vessel activity reports, and product transfer reports. These will be developed in 1997 and 1998 with full legal implementation in 1999.

The Council appointed a committee composed of industry representatives and agency staff to work out the remaining software and hardware requirements of the program. That committee will meet in early February 1997 at the Alaska Fisheries Science Center in Seattle. Contact Nick Hindman at the NMFS Regional Office (907-586-7228) for more information.

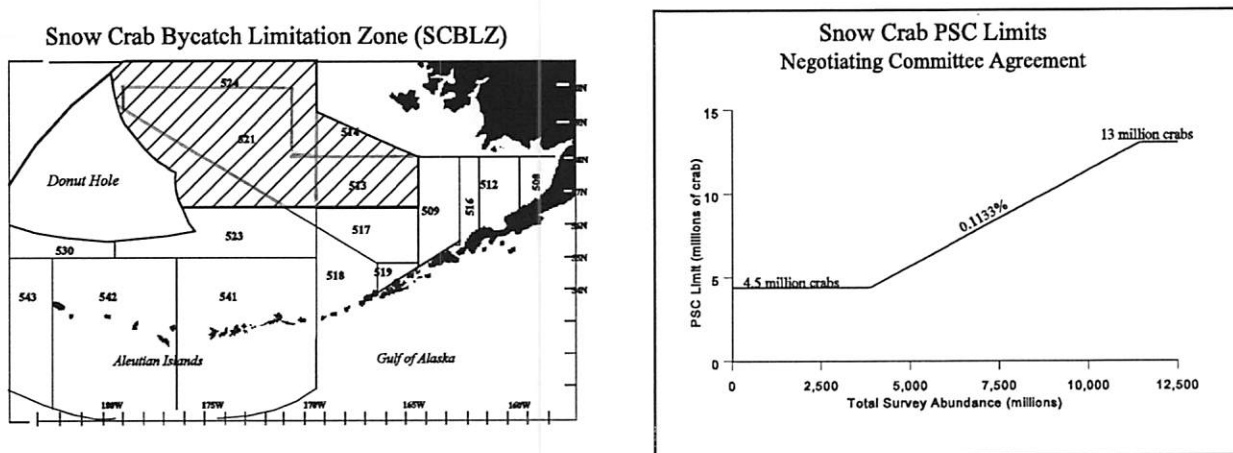
### Scallop Management

In June 1995, the Council approved an amendment package that established management measures to replace an interim closure of Federal waters off Alaska to scallop fishing. Amendment 1 allowed scallop fishing to resume in most registration areas on August 1, 1996, and about 750,000 pounds have been landed to date by nine vessels. Amendment 2 proposes a 3-year vessel moratorium on additional vessels entering the scallop fishery. To qualify, vessels had to have made at least one landing in any year from 1991 through 1993, or during any four years from 1980 through 1990. A notice of availability for the moratorium (Amendment 2) was recently published in the Federal Register; comment deadline is February 3, 1997.

Under the Magnuson-Stevens Act, the State of Alaska may now regulate vessels not registered with the State if they are operating in the EEZ. As such, one option the Council may consider is to delegate management authority of the scallop fishery to the State. At its December meeting, the Council recommended analysis of a proposal by NMFS to examine impacts of this option. The Council also initiated analysis of a proposal for a license limitation system for the scallop fishery. The Council is tentatively scheduled to review progress on the analyses in September. Staff contact is Dave Witherell.

### Snow Crab Bycatch Limits

The Council approved the agreement negotiated by affected industry groups regarding PSC limits for *C. opilio* snow crab taken in BSAI trawl fisheries. Under proposed Amendment 40, PSC limits for snow crab will be based on total abundance of *opilio* crab as indicated by the NMFS standard trawl survey. For 1998 and thereafter, the snow crab PSC cap will be set at 0.1133% of the Bering Sea snow crab abundance index, with a minimum PSC of 4.5 million snow crab and a maximum of 13 million snow crab. Snow crab taken within the "Snow Crab Bycatch Limitation Zone" (SCBLZ) would accrue towards the PSC limits established for individual trawl fisheries. Upon attainment of a snow crab PSC limit apportioned to a particular trawl target fishery, that fishery would be prohibited from fishing within the SCBLZ.



For 1997 only, all snow crab bycatch in areas 513, 514, 521, 523, and 524 will accrue to the PSC limit, and the PSC limit will be increased by 10%. Based on 1996 survey abundance (5,425 million crabs), the 1997 snow crab

PSC limit will be 6,760,000 crabs. Snow crab bycatch accrued from January 1 until publication of the final rule (expected by July) will apply to all fisheries that take snow crab in 1997. Staff contact is David Witherell.

### Forage Fish

The Council reviewed an analysis that examined potential impacts of prohibiting a directed fishery on forage fish. Forage fish identified in this analysis include Osmeridae (capelin, smelt), Myctophidae (lanternfish), Bathylagidae (deep-sea smelts), Amodytes (sandlance), Gonostomatidae (bristlemouths), Stichaedae (pricklebacks), and Pholidae (gunnels), Pacific sandfish, and euphausiids. Forage fish are an important ecosystem component, and are prey for marine mammals, seabirds, and commercially important fish species. Recent changes in predator abundance have raised concerns that forage fish may require additional protection. Under current regulations, catch of forage fish could be retained under either the "other species" category TAC or as a "non-specified species." Under the proposed amendment, several options are examined to provide additional measures to control catch of these species within the EEZ. Regulations would not affect state managed fisheries for capelin within state waters. The Council recommended releasing the document for public review and scheduled final action for the April meeting. Copies of the revised analysis should be ready in March, and will be available by contacting the Council office. Staff contact is Dave Witherell.

### Seabird Protection

At their December meeting, the Council responded to an industry request for regulations requiring various avoidance measures by the longline fleet to avoid the capture of seabirds. The Council approved gear modifications, seabird avoidance devices, or changes in fishing methods designed to reduce the incidental mortality of seabirds in the directed groundfish and halibut fisheries of the Gulf of Alaska and Bering Sea/Aleutian Islands. Short-tailed albatross are on the endangered species list, and their incidental take in groundfish fisheries is strictly limited. The allowable take is set at two albatrosses. NMFS confirmed that two short-tailed albatross were taken in the 1995 IFQ sablefish fishery. One was taken in 1996.



The proposed rule for the groundfish hook-and-line fisheries will be published in early January 1997. The final rule is expected to be published in mid-March. Halibut regulations will be implemented separately by NMFS, after review by the IPHC at their January 1997 meeting. Approved measures to reduce seabird bycatch in hook-and-line fisheries include the following:

- Baited hooks must sink as soon as possible after they are put in the water. This could be accomplished by the use of weighted groundlines or thawed bait.
- The dumping of offal shall be avoided to the extent practicable while gear is being set or hauled; if discharge of offal is unavoidable, the discharge must take place aft of the hauling station or on the opposite side of the vessel to that where gear is set or hauled.
- Every effort shall be made to ensure that birds brought aboard alive are released alive and that wherever possible, hooks are removed without jeopardizing the life of the bird.

One or more of the following measures shall be employed at all times when baited hooks are being set:

- A buoy, board, stick, broom, or other like device shall be towed behind the vessel at a distance appropriate to prevent birds from taking baited hooks. Multiple devices may be employed, or;
- A streamer line designed to effectively discourage birds from settling on baits during deployment of gear, shall be towed, or;

- Gear shall be set only at night (between the times of nautical twilight), and only the minimum vessel's lights necessary for safety shall be used; or
- Baited hooks shall be deployed under water using a lining tube designed and manufactured for such a purpose, or;
- With the approval of the Regional Administrator, other experimental seabird avoidance devices may be substituted for those listed above.

Small skiffs used on inside waters may be exempted from these provisions. Staff contact is Jane DiCosimo.

### Gulf of Alaska Final Groundfish Specifications

The Council approved final 1997 Gulf of Alaska groundfish quota specifications, including Acceptable Biological Catches (ABCs), Total Allowable Catches (TACs) (Table 1), and Prohibited Species Catch (PSC) limits. The specifications are based on the current stock assessments contained in the final 1997 Gulf of Alaska Groundfish Stock Assessment and Fishery Evaluation (SAFE), as well as recommendations by the Gulf of Alaska Groundfish Plan Team, Advisory Panel, and Scientific and Statistical Committee (SSC). The final specifications will replace the interim 1997 TACs upon publication in the *Federal Register*.

The results of the 1996 NMFS trawl survey were incorporated into all stock assessments, except for sablefish and demersal shelf rockfish (DSR) which are assessed from longline surveys. The 1996 assessments indicated significant increases in ABCs since last year for walleye pollock, Pacific cod, and Pacific ocean perch (POP). The 1996 assessment indicated slight to moderate declines for all species of flatfish and other rockfish species.

The Council increased the ABC and TAC for walleye pollock from 54,810 mt to 79,980 mt for 1997 though the distribution between GOA subareas is changed from 1996. Length frequency data from the 1990 through 1996 hydroacoustic surveys and the 1996 bottom trawl survey showed the progression of the strong 1988 year class through the population. Age composition data from the 1993 bottom trawl survey and the 1995 fishery also revealed strong 1988 and 1989 year classes. The 1989 year class in the Bering Sea has also been shown to be strong. The 1995 and 1996 hydroacoustic surveys also revealed a strong 1994 GOA year class.

The 1996 survey suggesting an increase in biomass over the 1993 estimate, led to an increase in the Pacific cod ABC from 65,000 mt to 81,500 mt. Preliminary indications are that the 1995 year class may be above average. The Council also reviewed the October 1996 Alaska Board of Fisheries (BOF) action that initiated a state water fishery for Pacific cod. The Council recommended that Pacific cod harvests from the state managed fisheries in coastal and internal Prince William Sound waters should be counted against the federal TACs since cod is a single stock in the GOA. Accordingly, they reduced the TAC by 15% of the ABC for the Western and Central areas and 25%, for the Eastern area. The total Gulf TAC was set at 69,115 mt for the federal fishery, still a 6% increase from the 1996 TAC. The Council expressed concern over the lack of coordinated management between the state and federal agencies on Pacific cod. The Council and BOF met briefly via telephone during the Council meeting and agreed to appoint a joint committee to discuss the recent BOF action. Council members Robin Samuelsen, Kevin O'Leary, and Morris Barker, and Board members Larry Engel, John White, and Dan Coffey will meet in mid-January in Anchorage. Contact Jane DiCosimo for more information on this meeting.

The 1997 sablefish ABC and TAC declined to 14,625 mt from 17,080 mt, reflecting the continued decline in the stock. Revisions to the stock assessment model resulted in an increase in the final ABC from the preliminary ABC of 11,620 mt announced in September. Area apportionments are 1,860 mt for the Western area, 6,410 mt for the Central area, 2,410 mt for West Yakutat, and 3,840 mt for East Yakutat/Southeast Outside. The Council requested that staff analyze the effects of rolling closures for trawl and longline vessels to avoid sablefish longline survey areas during sampling. Industry has raised repeated concerns that the decline in sablefish abundance may be related to impacts of fishing on survey stations prior to sampling, despite repeated requests for voluntary avoidance of survey areas.

Arrowtooth flounder, shallow water flatfish, and flathead sole ABCs were rolled over from 1996, except for the flathead Eastern area TAC which dropped by 700 mt. The rex sole ABC dropped by 540 mt, while the deep water flatfish TAC dropped from 11,080 mt to 7,170 mt.

The POP stock appears to be rebuilt according to the Council's rebuilding plan, but the Council set a TAC equal to 80% of the Western and Central Gulf ABC and rolled over the 1996 Eastern Gulf TAC for a total TAC of 9,190 mt. The Council's conservative approach was to ensure that the stock is fully recovered. Remaining rockfish ABCs did not vary greatly from 1996. Other slope rockfish was set for bycatch only.

For 1997, black and blue rockfishes were separated into a nearshore component and dusky, widow, and yellowtail rockfishes were separated into an offshore component of pelagic shelf rockfish for the Central Gulf only. The PSR assemblage remained intact for the Western and Eastern areas, awaiting better information upon which to calculate nearshore ABCs for those areas. Final action on a plan amendment to revise management authority of black and blue rockfishes is scheduled for the February 1997 Council meeting.

Demersal shelf rockfish were unassessed in 1996, and ABC and TAC were rolled over. In addition, Atka mackerel biomass estimates from the survey were determined to be unreliable, so ABC and TAC were set equal to bycatch needs.

The Prohibited Species Catch (PSC) limits for halibut in the GOA are set by gear type and may be apportioned seasonally over the fishing year. For 1997, the Council recommended PSC apportionments shown below for the GOA groundfish fisheries and are unchanged from 1996. Pot gear and the sablefish fixed gear IFQ fishery continue to be exempt from the halibut PSC limits.

Trawl gear		Hook and Line	
1st quarter	600 mt (30%)	1st trimester	250 mt (86%)
2nd quarter	400 mt (20%)	2nd trimester	15 mt (5%)
3rd quarter	600 mt (30%)	3rd trimester	25 mt (9%)
4th quarter	400 mt (20%)	DSR	10 mt
2,000 mt		300 mt	

The trawl gear PSC cap is further apportioned between "shallow" and "deep" water species complexes as follows:

Quarter	Shallow water Complex	Deep water Complex	Total
1	500 mt	100 mt	600 mt
2	100 mt	300 mt	400 mt
3	200 mt	400 mt	600 mt
4	No apportionment		400 mt

Species in the shallow water complex are pollock, Pacific cod, shallow water flatfish, Atka mackerel, and other species, while the deep water complex includes deep water flatfish, rockfish, flathead sole, sablefish and arrowtooth flounder. Halibut discard mortalities recommended by International Pacific Halibut Commission staff were also approved (Table 5). The Council modified the recommendation for the BSAI Pacific cod longline fishery to 11.5% for the first trimester of 1997. The rate for the remainder of the year will be revised in 1997 based on observer rates in 1996.



## Bering Sea and Aleutian Islands Groundfish Specifications

The Council adopted final groundfish specifications for the 1997 Bering Sea and Aleutian Islands groundfish fisheries, including Acceptable Biological Catch (ABC), Total Allowable Catch (TAC), and Prohibited Species Catch (PSC) limits and apportionments. The Council recommendations for ABCs, TACs, and apportionments are listed in Table 2. Groundfish abundance in the Bering Sea and Aleutian Islands area remains relatively stable for most species. Abundance of Pacific ocean perch in the Aleutian Islands has increased, whereas pollock and Atka mackerel have declined.

The Council, Advisory Panel, and the Scientific and Statistical Committee spent considerable time reviewing the status of pollock in the Eastern Bering Sea. Projected 1997 biomass of pollock in the Eastern Bering Sea stock was estimated at 6.1 million mt, and is effectively at the level that produces MSY. The stock was estimated to have been 6.2 million mt in 1996. The current fishery is dependent on the strong 1989 year-class (which is expected to become insignificant by 1998), and to a lesser extent, the 1992 year-class. As a result, but not unexpectedly, the future fishery will be increasingly dependent on incoming year-classes. Recruitment has been difficult to predict, however.

A special report on hydroacoustic and bottom trawl surveys conducted in the western Bering Sea was provided by Dr. Mikhail Stepanenko, TINRO Centre, Russia. Russian data indicate the presence of a large 1992 year-class and a strong 1995 year-class, which appears similar in magnitude to the exceptional 1989 year-class. The 1994 year class appears to be below average according to Russian data.

Although two environmental groups proposed harvest reductions of 25-40% to promote improved future recruitment, the SSC noted that because pollock suffer a high natural mortality rate, a large fraction of any foregone catch would die before it could contribute to the next spawning cycle. The SSC also noted that recruitment is highly variable at all levels of spawning stock size, so the addition of small increments in spawning biomass may have no discernible impact.

The Council remains concerned about the status of the Eastern Bering Sea pollock stock. If pollock biomass continues to decline, allowable catches may be much reduced. The harvest policy adopted under Amendment 44 will increasingly adjust fishing mortality downward in the spirit of conservative management. Fortunately, the combined hydroacoustic trawl survey that will take place in 1997 will strengthen next year's stock assessment and provide a critical watch point in the status of this population.

For 1997, the Council recommended a 1,130,000 mt TAC for Eastern Bering Sea pollock, a decrease of 5% (60,000 mt) from 1996. Of the TAC, 45% is allocated to the roe season ("A") and 55% to the non-roe season ("B"). As with last year, the "A" season will begin on January 20 for the inshore fleet and January 26 for the offshore fleet. The "B" season will begin on September 1 for both onshore and offshore sectors, with a 7-day stand down provision for vessels fishing other groundfish seven days prior to September 1. The pollock TAC for the Aleutian Islands area was set at 28,000 mt, and 1,000 mt for the Bogoslof district (Area 518). The Council continues to recommend no directed fishing for pollock in the Bogoslof district. Based on a 7.5% allocation, the 1997 Community Development Quotas will be 84,750 mt for the Eastern Bering Sea and 2,100 mt for the Aleutian Islands areas.

The Council recommended a 270,000 mt TAC for Pacific cod, the same as last year. Under the allocations of Amendment 46, 2% of the TAC will be reserved for jig gear, 51% for fixed gear (longline and pot gear), and 47% for trawl gear. The trawl apportionment will be split between catcher vessels and catcher-processors 50/50. For the fixed gear seasonal apportionment of Pacific cod, the Council recommends that 85,000 mt be released the first trimester (January 1 - April 30), 26,500 mt for the second trimester (May 1 - August 31), and 5,545 mt for the third trimester. Reserves of 20,655 mt will be apportioned with 77% to the first and third trimester, and 23% to the second trimester.



Recommended apportionments of prohibited species catch limits for 1997 are listed in Table 3 (trawl fisheries) and Table 4 (non-trawl fisheries). The total PSC limit for herring (1,579 mt) is 1% of the estimated herring biomass in the eastern Bering Sea. Total PSC limits for other species are specified in regulations, but are seasonally apportioned among fisheries during the annual specification process (Table 3). Bycatch limits for red king crab and Tanner crab were reduced this year under Amendments 37 and 41. PSC limits for red king crab were reduced to 100,000 crab, and PSC limits for Tanner crab were reduced to 750,000 crab in Zone 1 and 2,100,000 crab in Zone 2. The Council again recommended that no PSC be apportioned to directed trawl fisheries for turbot, sablefish, or arrowtooth flounder. This recommendation essentially prohibits directed fishing for these species with trawl gear. For the non-trawl halibut PSC apportionment, the Council recommended allocating more halibut to the Pacific cod fishery, particularly in the first trimester (Table 4). The Council again recommended that pot gear, jig gear, and sablefish hook-and-line fisheries be exempt from the non-trawl PSC program for 1997. Staff contact is David Witherell.

### Improved Retention and Utilization (IR/IU)

At this meeting, the Council received a report from their industry IR/IU Committee and approved the Committee's recommendations for further work on this initiative. More specifically, the Council approved a Problem Statement for work on the Gulf of Alaska IR/IU program, as well as parameters for a GOA program. Basically, the GOA program will mirror the BSAI program with pollock and Pacific cod targeted for immediate (1998) implementation and the shallow-water flatfish species complex targeted for a delayed implementation (5 years after pollock and Pacific cod). They adopted Problem Statement is contained below:

*The objective of the Council in undertaking improved retention and utilization regulations for Gulf of Alaska groundfish fisheries centers on the same basic concern that motivated an IR/IU program in the BSAI groundfish fisheries - that is, economic discards of groundfish catch at unacceptably high levels. An IR/IU program for the GOA would be expected to "provide incentives for fishermen to avoid unwanted catch, increase utilization of fish that are taken, and reduce overall discards of whole fish," consistent with current Magnuson-Stevens Act provisions.*

*In addition, the Council recognizes the potential risk of preemption of certain existing GOA groundfish fisheries which could occur in response to economic incentives displacing capacity and effort from BSAI IR/IU fisheries. This risk can be minimized if substantially equivalent IR/IU regulations are simultaneously implemented for the GOA.*

In a related agenda item, the Council reviewed a discussion paper on the issue of allowing limited processing for catcher vessels. Under the Council's license limitation program, catcher vessels will not be allowed to operate as processors unless they receive a catcher/processor designation based on activity in the year prior to June 17, 1995. At the June 1995 meeting, the Council requested staff to examine a potential, limited allowance for processing by those vessels within the IR/IU initiative. After reviewing the discussion paper, and taking into account other staffing priorities, the Council postponed any further analyses of this proposal until the September 1997 meeting, at which time they will review this issue again and provide direction to staff. Staff contact is Chris Oliver.

### Observer Program

The Council received a brief staff report on this issue and acknowledged that NMFS is working to resolve several issues surrounding further development of the groundfish observer program. While the Council's latest focus was on a modified pay-as-you-go program (third party contractor alternative), the information being developed by staff will not restrict the Council to that particular program structure. A fee-based program will be examined as well. A full report and further Council direction are scheduled for the April 1997 meeting, and

the Observer Advisory Committee will meet in March. The crab observer program also will be discussed at the joint Council/Board of Fish meeting in February 1997. Staff contact is Chris Oliver.

### Staff Tasking

The Council devoted several hours of their meeting to a review of current, ongoing management measures, a review and discussion of recent Magnuson-Stevens Act requirements, and review and discussion of groundfish and IFQ program amendments proposed in the 1996 annual cycle. Due to existing Council projects and to immediate actions required by the Magnuson-Stevens Act, the Council initiated few new amendment analyses at this time, but did schedule further discussions of several issues as described below:

- \* Vessel Bycatch Accounts (VBAs) - the Council has scheduled this issue for discussion at the February 1997 meeting in Anchorage.
- \* Bycatch reduction measures - though no specific actions were initiated at this meeting, the Council will schedule this issue for the June 1997 meeting, at which time they will discuss the need for additional bycatch measures, in response to either Magnuson-Stevens Act requirements or Council initiative.
- \* Inshore/Offshore and pollock CDQ programs - with these programs to expire at the end of 1998, the Council has scheduled discussions of potential follow-up amendments for the April 1997 meeting.
- \* Skipper Licensing program - the Council did not task staff to proceed with an analysis of a skipper licensing program at this time, noting that a proposed skipper reporting system would provide much of the information which is currently lacking or inaccessible. NMFS, ADF&G, and Council staff will be coordinating to develop a reporting system which would provide necessary information for future consideration of this proposal. A progress report is scheduled for April 1997.
- \* BSAI pollock B season - the Council indicated their intent to re-examine the pollock B season opening date, and have scheduled that issue for discussion at the December 1997 meeting. Any change in the opening date would be in 1998 - the 1997 opening date is still set for September 1.
- \* Gear conflict issues - no specific proposals were forwarded by the Council, but they did request that the general issue be scheduled for further discussions at the June 1997 meeting. NMFS and ADF&G will be developing a discussion paper which documents existing gear storage areas and known instances of gear conflict or gear losses, and assesses whether further Council actions are necessary.
- \* GOA pollock and Pacific cod fisheries - though the Council took no specific actions, they did discuss proposals for gear restrictions and trip limits for western GOA pollock, and also discussed proposals for seasonal and gear allocations of GOA Pacific cod. In February staff will provide the Council with additional information on numbers and sizes of vessels, and average deliveries for the western GOA pollock fisheries. The Council refrained from any actions on GOA Pacific cod allocations, pending a joint meeting with the Board of Fisheries which is scheduled for February.
- \* Directed fishing standards - proposals for generic changes in directed fishing standards were not forwarded, but the Council has scheduled further discussion of this issue for the September 1997 meeting.

- \* Vessel buyback programs - the new Magnuson-Stevens Act allows the Council to establish capacity reduction (vessel buyback) programs. Before the Council initiates any action on such a program, they are requesting the groundfish and crab industry to work out the fundamentals for such a program, and report back to the Council, hopefully at the April 1997 meeting.
- \* Crab bycatch in pot cod fisheries - no formal analysis was initiated, with the understanding that more information is necessary to determine whether to pursue specific management restrictions.
- \* Observer coverage requirements - proposed changes will be evaluated in the future when the Council takes a broader look at the overall groundfish Observer Program.

One specific proposal which was approved for analysis by the Council was to look at an allocation of 2% of the Atka mackerel quota for use by jig gear in the BSAI. Analysis of this proposal is tentatively scheduled for Council review in April. Proposals were also forwarded to allow NMFS to require pre-registration for vessels to participate in certain fisheries, and to allow for adjustments in maximum retainable bycatch amounts (MRBs). These proposals will be developed as staff time allows.

Though the Magnuson-Stevens Act specifies several requirements of the Council, one major item which will require immediate development is the fee program for IFQ/CDQ fisheries, and the attendant North Pacific Loan Program. These are scheduled for Council review in June of 1997, with staff work starting in early 1997. An update and further Council discussion of this issue are scheduled for the February 1997 meeting in Anchorage. Development of this fee program will be a major item for the Council and industry over the next 6 months. Also scheduled for February is a discussion of how the Council will fit into the overall National Academy of Science's study of the IFQ and CDQ programs.

### Upcoming Meetings

Halibut Subsistence Committee	January 15-17, 1997 (tentative)	Anchorage
Joint BOF/NPFMC Groundfish Committee	January 9-11, 1997 (tentative)	Anchorage
Central Lien Registry	January 1997	Juneau
Electronic Reporting Committee	February 1997	AFSC/ Seattle
PNCIAC	January 6, 1997	Seattle
Ecosystems Committee	January 23-24, 1997	AFSC/Seattle
IPHC Annual Meeting	January 27-30, 1997	Victoria, B.C.
Observer Advisory Committee	March 1997	Seattle

**North Pacific Fishery Management Council**  
**Tentative Meeting Schedules - 1997-99\***

	<b>February</b> Week of/ Location	<b>April</b> Week of/ Location	<b>June</b> Week of/ Location	<b>September</b> Week of/ Location	<b>December</b> Week of/ Location
<b>1997</b>	3/Anchorage	14/Anchorage	16/Kodiak	22/Seattle	8/Anchorage
<b>1998</b>	2/Anchorage	20/Anchorage	15/TBA	21/Seattle	7/Anchorage
<b>1999</b>	1/Anchorage	19/Anchorage	14/Kodiak	20/Seattle	6/Anchorage

\* Meeting dates are subject to change depending on availability of meeting space. Any changes will be published in the Council's newsletter.

Visit our home page on the Internet at  
<http://wwwfak.afsc.noaa.gov/npfmc/npfmc.htm>  
 or you can find us linked to the NMFS Alaska Region's home page!



*Warmest wishes for a Happy Holiday season  
 and a healthy and happy New Year!*

*North Pacific Fishery Management Council Staff*

*Gene*                      *Ma*   *Utley*                      *Jane*                      *Helen*

*Diane*                      *DD*                      *Sara*

*Danell*                      *Chry*                      *Linda*

**NPFMC: Four-Meeting Outlook\***

ATTACHMENT I

Feb '97 3/Anchorage	Apr '97 14/Anchorage	June '97 16/Kodiak	September '97 22/Seattle
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Halibut Area 4 Catch Sharing: Direction</li> <li>• Halibut Subsistence: Direction</li> <li>• IFQ/CDQ Fee Program: Discussion</li> <li>• Central Lien Registry: Report/Review</li> <li>• Halibut Spt Chart Mgmt: <i>Initial Review</i></li>   <li>• Crab and State waters groundfish mgmt: Discuss with BOF</li> <li>• Ecosystem Committee: Report</li> <li>• Fish Habitat Guidelines: Comment</li> <li>• Marine Mammal/Sea Life Ctr Report</li>   <li>• VBAs: Council Discussion</li>   <li>• GOA Pel Shelf Rockfish: <i>Final Action</i></li> <li>• Groundfish/Crab License Limitation Program: Review Proposed Rule</li>   <li>• Research Priorities: <i>Final Action</i></li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• IFQ Amendments: <i>Initial Review</i></li>   <li>• Halibut Spt Chart Mgmt: <i>Final Action</i></li> <li>• Observer Program: <i>Initial Review</i></li>   <li>• 2% Atka mack jig alloc: <i>Initial Review</i></li> <li>• GOA IR/IU: <i>Initial Review</i></li>   <li>• DFS for GOA rockfish: <i>Initial Review</i></li> <li>• Forage Fish Amendment: <i>Final Action</i></li>   <li>• DSR License Limitation: <i>Initial Review</i></li>   <li>• Buyback Program: Industry Report</li> <li>• Inshore/Offshore: Develop Alternatives</li> <li>• Skipper License Rptg: Progress report</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• IFQ Amendments: <i>Final Action</i></li>   <li>• IFQ/CDQ Fee Program: <i>Initial Review</i></li>   <li>• Observer Program: <i>Final Action</i></li>   <li>• Review Gear Storage/Conflict Issues</li> <li>• 2% Atka mack jig alloc: <i>Final Action</i></li> <li>• GOA IR/IU: <i>Final Action</i></li>   <li>• DFS for GOA rockfish: <i>Final Action</i></li>   <li>• DSR License Limitation: <i>Final Action</i></li>   <li>• EGOA Boundary Changes: Discussion</li> <li>• Review Bycatch Reduction Measures</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• IFQ/CDQ Fee Program: <i>Final Action</i></li>   <li>• Ltd Proc for Catcher vessels: Discussion</li> <li>• Scallop Limited Entry &amp; Amendment 3: <i>Initial Review</i></li>   <li>• Streamline Groundfish TAC Specification &amp; GOA/BSAI Groundfish &amp; Crab FMP Updates: <i>Initial Review</i></li> <li>• DFS: Council review/discussion</li>   <li>• Initial Groundfish Specs for GOA/BSAI</li> <li>• Pollock "B" Season Adjusts: Discuss</li> </ul>
<b>Joint Meeting w/BOF on Groundfish/Crab Issues</b>	<b>IPHC/Council Joint Meeting</b>		

\* Note: This tentative timeline will be updated periodically, particularly after each Council meeting, as the Council works through its decision process.

Table 1

GULF OF ALASKA GROUND FISH ABCs and TACs Final 1997 North Pacific Fishery Management Council Specifications (mt)						
Species	Area	1996			1997	1997
		ABC	TAC	Catch*	ABC	TAC
Pollock	W (61)	25,480	25,480	24,191	18,600	18,600
	C (62)	12,840	12,840	12,283	31,250	31,250
	C (63)	13,680	13,680	13,262	24,550	24,550
	E	2,810	2,810	613	5,580	5,580
	Total	54,810	54,810	50,349	79,980	79,980
Pacific Cod**	W	18,850	18,850	19,801	28,500	24,225
	C	42,900	42,900	47,469	51,400	43,690
	E	3,250	3,250	943	1,600	1,200
	Total	65,000	65,000	68,213	81,500	69,115
Flatfish, Deep Water	W	670	460	19	340	340
	C	8,150	7,500	1,960	3,690	3,690
	E	5,770	3,120	220	3,140	3,140
	Total	14,590	11,080	2,199	7,170	7,170
Rex Sole	W	1,350	800	504	1,190	1,190
	C	7,050	7,050	5,153	5,490	5,490
	E	2,810	1,840	190	2,470	2,470
	Total	11,210	9,690	5,847	9,150	9,150
Flathead Sole	W	8,880	2,000	840	8,440	2,000
	C	17,170	5,000	2,129	15,630	5,000
	E	2,740	2,740	103	2,040	2,040
	Total	28,790	9,740	3,072	26,110	9,040
Flatfish, Shallow Water	W	26,280	4,500	443	22,570	4,500
	C	23,140	12,950	8,861	19,260	12,950
	E	2,850	1,180	31	1,320	1,180
	Total	52,270	18,630	9,335	43,150	18,630
Arrowtooth	W	28,400	5,000	2,020	31,340	5,000
	C	141,290	25,000	19,724	142,100	25,000
	E	28,440	5,000	795	24,400	5,000
	Total	198,130	35,000	22,539	197,840	35,000
Sablefish	W	2,200	2,200	1,647	1,860	1,860
	C	6,900	6,900	6,792	6,410	6,410
	W. Yakutat	3,040	3,040	2,890	2,410	2,410
	E. Yak./SEO	4,940	4,940	4,656	3,840	3,840
	Total	17,080	17,080	15,985	14,520	14,520
Rockfish, Other Slope	W	180	100	19	20	20
	C	1,170	1,170	619	650	650
	E	5,760	750	243	4,590	1,500
	Total	7,110	2,020	881	5,260	2,170
Rockfish, Northern	W	640	640	170	840	840
	C	4,610	4,610	3,193	4,150	4,150
	E	20	20	24	10	10
	Total	5,270	5,270	3,387	5,000	5,000
Pacific Ocean Perch	W	1,460	1,260	987	1,840	1,472
	C	3,860	3,333	5,136	6,690	5,352
	E	2,740	2,366	2,246	4,460	2,366
	Total	8,060	6,959	8,369	12,990	9,190
Shortraker/Rougheye	W	170	170	126	160	160
	C	1,210	1,210	958	970	970
	E	530	530	587	460	460
	Total	1,910	1,910	1,671	1,590	1,590
Rockfish, Pelagic Shelf***	W combined	910	910	183	570	570
	C offshore	3,200	3,200	1,872	3,320	3,320
	C nearshore				260	260
	E combined	1,080	1,080	258	990	990
	Total	5,190	5,190	2,313	5,140	5,140
Rockfish, Demersal Shelf	SEO	950	950	415	950	950
Atka Mackerel	W		2,310	1,577		
	C		925	8		
	E		5	0		
	Total	3,240	3,240	1,585	1,000	1,000
Thornyhead	Gulfwide	1,560	1,248	1,127	1,700	1,700
Other Species	Gulfwide	NA	12,390	4,448	-	13,470
<b>GULF OF ALASKA</b>	<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>475,170</b>	<b>260,207</b>	<b>201,735</b>	<b>493,050</b>	<b>282,815</b>

\*catch through December 6, 1996

\*\*\*interim nearshore TAC until AM 46 approved

\*\* reduced by BOF state fishery apportionment

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Table 2

**Bering Sea and Aleutian Islands  
Recommended 1997 Catch Specifications (mt)**

Species	Area	1997 Biomass	1997 OFL	1997 ABC	1997 TAC
Pollock	EBS	6,120,000	1,980,000	1,130,000	1,130,000
	"A" season				45%
	"B" season				55%
	AI	100,000	38,000	28,000	28,000
	Bogoslof	558,000	43,800	32,100	1,000
Pacific cod	BS/AI	1,580,000	418,000	306,000	270,000
Yellowfin sole	BS/AI	2,530,000	339,000	233,000	230,000
Greenland turbot	BS/AI	118,000	22,600	12,350	9,000
	BS				67%
	AI				33%
Arrowtooth	BS/AI	587,000	167,000	108,000	20,760
Rock sole	BS/AI	2,380,000	427,000	296,000	97,185
Flathead sole	BS/AI	632,000	145,000	101,000	43,500
Other flatfish	BS/AI	616,000	150,000	97,500	50,750
Sablefish	EBS	17,800	2,750	1,308	1,100
	AI	18,600	2,860	1,367	1,200
<b>POP complex</b>					
True POP	EBS	72,500	5,400	2,800	2,800
Other POP	EBS	29,700	1,400	1,050	1,050
True POP	AI	324,000	25,300	12,800	12,800
	Eastern			3,240	3,240
	Central			3,170	3,170
	Western			6,390	6,390
Sharp/Northern	AI	96,800	5,810	4,360	4,360
Short/Rougheye	AI	45,600	1,250	938	938
Other rockfish	EBS	7,100	497	373	373
	AI	13,600	952	714	714
Atka mackerel	AI	450,000	81,600	66,700	66,700
	Eastern			15,000	15,000
	Central			19,500	19,500
	Western			32,200	32,200
Squid	BS/AI	n/a	2,620	1,970	1,970
Other species	BS/AI	688,000	138,000	25,800	25,800
<b>BS/AI TOTAL</b>		<b>17,004,800</b>	<b>3,998,839</b>	<b>2,464,130</b>	<b>2,000,000</b>

**1996 Specifications**

1996 ABC	1996 TAC	1996 Catch*
1,190,000	1,180,000	1,098,510
	45%	45%
	55%	55%
35,600	35,600	26,286
121,000	1,000	390
305,000	270,000	235,022
278,000	200,000	130,008
10,300	7,000	6,332
67%	67%	4,679
33%	33%	1,653
129,000	9,000	13,803
361,000	70,000	46,970
116,000	30,000	16,795
102,000	35,000	18,543
1,200	1,100	622
1,300	1,200	695
1,800	1,800	2,633
1,400	1,260	195
12,100	12,100	12,785
3,025	3,025	3,192
3,025	3,025	3,034
6,050	6,050	6,559
5,810	5,229	6,696
1,250	1,125	946
497	447	164
952	857	273
116,000	106,157	103,378
26,700	26,700	27,693
33,600	33,600	33,505
55,700	45,857	42,180
3,000	1,000	1,166
27,600	20,125	20,935
<b>2,820,809</b>	<b>2,000,000</b>	<b>1,743,148</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 10/26/96.  
(pollock CDQ catch not included)



**Table 3 Recommended 1997 BSAI Trawl Fisheries PSC Apportionments and Seasonal Allowances**

Fishery Group	Halibut Mortality Cap (mt)	Herring (mt)	Red King Crab (animals) Zone 1	C. bairdi Zone 1	C. bairdi Zone 2
<b>Yellowfin sole</b>	930	267	10,000	276,316	1,071,000
January 20 - March 31	210				
April 1 - May 10	210				
May 11 - August 14	100				
August 15 - Dec 31	410				
<b>Rocksole/other flatfish</b>	795		75,000*	296,052	357,000
January 20-March 29	485				
March 30 - June 28	130				
June 29-December 31	180				
<b>Turbot/sablefish/ Arrowtooth</b>	0				0
<b>Rockfish</b>	100	7			7,000
Jan. 1 - Mar. 31	30				
May 1 - June 30	45				
July 1 - Dec. 31	25				
<b>Pacific cod</b>	1,600	20	7,500	133,224	195,000
<b>Pollockmackerel/o.species</b>	350	143	7,500	44,408	470,000
January 20-April 15	300				
April 16- December 31	50				
<b>Pelagic Trawl Pollock</b>		1,142			
<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>3,775</b>	<b>1,579</b>	<b>100,000</b>	<b>750,000</b>	<b>2,100,000</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 the 56 - 56°10' slice, and 48,750 outside.

**Table 4 Recommended 1997 BSAI Non-Trawl Fisheries PSC Bycatch Allowances and fixed gear Pacific cod seasonal apportionments**

Fishery Group	Halibut Mortality (mt)	Seasonal Apportion of cod ITAC (mt)
<b>Pacific Cod</b>	840	
Jan 1 - April 30	495	85,000
May 1 - September 15	40	26,500
Sept. 15 - Dec. 31	305	5,545
<b>Other Non-Trawl*</b>	60	
<b>Groundfish Pot</b>	Exempt	
<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>900 mt</b>	<b>117,045</b>

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

Any unused cod TAC from first trimester will go into third trimester.

Reserves of 20,655 mt to be apportioned as above, 77% to first and third trimester, 23% to second.

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

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

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

**Table 5. Summary of halibut discard mortality rates (DMRs) during 1990-1995 and approved rates for Preseason Assumed DMRs for use in monitoring halibut bycatch mortality in 1997.**

<b>Region/Target</b>	<b>1990</b>	<b>1991</b>	<b>1992</b>	<b>1993</b>	<b>1994</b>	<b>1995</b>	<b>1994-95 Average</b>	<b>Used in 1996</b>	<b>Approved for 1997</b>
<b><i>BSAI Trawl</i></b>									
Atka mackerel	66	77	71	69	73	73	73	63	73
Bottom pollock	68	74	78	78	80	73	76	78	76
Pacific cod	68	64	69	67	64	71	68	63	68
Other flatfish	80	75	76	69	61	68	65	73	65
Rockfish	65	67	69	69	75	68	72	75	72
Flathead sole	-	-	-	-	67	62	65	73	65
Other species	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	82	68
Midwater pollock	85	82	85	85	80	79	80	88	79
Rockfish	64	79	78	76	76	73	75	73	73
Sablefish	46	66	-	26	20	-	23	49	23
Greenland turbot	69	55	-	-	58	75	66	49	66
Yellowfin sole	83	88	83	80	81	77	79	73	79
<b><i>BSAI Pot</i></b>									
Pacific cod	12	4	12	4	10	10	10	7	10
Other species	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	7	10
Midwater pollock	-	-	-	-	-	19	19	7	19
Sablefish	-	-	65	-	-	-	-	-	10
<b><i>BSAI Longline</i></b>									
Pacific cod	19	23	21	17	15	14	15	11.5	11.5*
Rockfish	17	55	-	6	23	-	15	24	15
Other species	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	14	14
Sablefish	14	32	14	13	38	19	29	17	29
Greenland turbot	15	30	11	10	14	9	11	22	11
<b><i>GOA Trawl</i></b>									
Atka mackerel	67	89	81	67	53	-	60	48	53
Bottom pollock	51	62	66	57	48	66	57	54	57
Pacific cod	60	62	66	59	53	64	59	56	59
Deep water flatfish	61	58	70	59	60	56	58	60/52	58
Shallow water flatfish	66	71	69	65	62	70	66	67	66
Rockfish	65	75	79	75	58	71	65	57	65
Flathead sole	-	-	-	-	54	64	59	67	59
Other species	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	47	66
Midwater pollock	71	82	72	63	61	51	56	72	51
Sablefish	70	60	68	59	67	58	62	57	62
Rex sole	-	-	-	-	56	76	66	60/52	66
<b><i>GOA Pot</i></b>									
Bottom pollock	-	-	-	-	-	100	100	17	100
Pacific cod	12	7	16	24	17	21	19	17	19
Other species	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	17	19
<b><i>GOA Longline</i></b>									
Pacific cod	15	18	13	7	11	13	12	12	12
Rockfish	6	-	-	7	-	4	6	18	6
Other species	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	12	12
Sablefish	17	27	28	30	22	31	27	23	27

\*subject to change pending analysis of 1996 data by IPHC