

# North Pacific Fishery Management Council

Eric A. Olson, Chairman  
Chris Oliver, Executive Director



605 W. 4th Avenue, Suite 306  
Anchorage, AK 99501-2252

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Visit our website: <http://www.alaskafisheries.noaa.gov/npfmc>

June 1, 2012

**DRAFT AGENDA**  
**209th Plenary Session**  
**North Pacific Fishery Management Council**  
**June 6-12, 2012**  
**Kodiak Harbor Convention Center**

The North Pacific Fishery Management Council will meet at the Kodiak Harbor Convention Center, Kodiak, AK. Other meetings to be held during the week are:

**Committee/Panel**

Advisory Panel  
Scientific and Statistical Committee  
Enforcement Committee

**Beginning**

June 4 - 8, 2012 – Elks Club, 102 Marine Way  
June 4 - 6, 2012 – Kodiak Inn, Harbor Room  
June 5, 2012 – 1pm – 5pm – Katurwik Room  
at Convention Center

All meetings are open to the public, except executive sessions of the Council. Other committee and workgroup meetings may be scheduled on short notice during the week, and will be posted at the hotel.

## **INFORMATION FOR PERSONS WISHING TO PROVIDE PUBLIC COMMENTS**

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**Submission of Written Comments.** Written comments and materials to be included in Council meeting notebooks must be received at the Council office by 5:00 pm (Alaska Time) on **TUESDAY May 29, 2012**. Written and oral comments should include a statement of the source and date of information provided as well as a brief description of the background and interests of the person(s) submitting the statement. Comments can be sent by mail, fax or email. **It is the submitter's responsibility to provide an adequate number of copies of comments after the deadline.** Materials provided **during** the meeting for distribution to Council members should be provided to the Council secretary. A minimum of **25** copies is needed to ensure that Council members, the executive director, NOAA General Counsel, appropriate staff, and the official meeting record each receive a copy. If copies are to be made available for the Advisory Panel (**28**), Scientific and Statistical Committee (**18**), or the public after the pre-meeting deadline, they must also be provided by the submitter.

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#### FOR THOSE WISHING TO TESTIFY BEFORE THE ADVISORY PANEL

The Advisory Panel has revised its operating guidelines to incorporate a strict time management approach to its meetings. Rules for testimony before the Advisory Panel have been developed which are similar to those used by the Council. Members of the public wishing to testify before the AP **must** sign up on the list for each topic listed on the agenda. Sign-up sheets are provided in a special notebook located at the back of the room. The deadline for registering to testify is when the agenda topic comes before the AP. The time available for individual and group testimony will be based on the number registered and determined by the AP Chairman. **The AP may not take public testimony on items for which they will not be making recommendations to the Council.**

#### FOR THOSE WISHING TO TESTIFY BEFORE THE SCIENTIFIC AND STATISTICAL COMMITTEE

The usual practice is for the SSC to call for public comment immediately following the staff presentation on each agenda item. The Committee will discourage testimony that does not directly address the technical issues of concern to the SSC. **Presentations lasting more than five minutes will require prior approval from the Chair.**

#### Commonly used Acronyms

AI - Aleutian Islands	GKC - Golden King Crab
AFA - American Fisheries Act	GHL - Guideline Harvest Level
BBRKC - Bristol Bay Red King Crab	HAPC - Habitat Areas of Particular Concern
BiOp - Biological Opinion	IBA - Individual Bycatch Accounting
BKC - Blue King Crab	IBQ - Individual Bycatch Quota
BSAI - Bering Sea and Aleutian Islands	ICA - Inter-cooperative Agreements
BSFRF - Bering Sea Fisheries Research Foundation	IFQ - Individual Fishing Quota
BSIERP - Bering Sea Integrated Ecosystem Research Program	IPQ - Individual Processor Quotas
AK BOF - Alaska Board of Fisheries	IPA - Incentive Program Agreements
CDQ - Community Development Quota	MPA - Marine Protected Area
CIE - Center for Independent Experts	NOI - Notice of Intent
CGOA - Central Gulf of Alaska	PSEIS - Programmatic Supplemental Impact Statement
CQE - Community Quota Entity	PSC - Prohibited Species Catch
EDR - Economic Data Reporting	RKC - Red King Crab
EFP - Exempted Fishing Permit	ROFR - Right of First Refusal
EIS - Environmental Impact Statement	SAFE - Stock Assessment and Fishery Evaluation
EFH - Essential Fish Habitat	SSL - Steller Sea Lion
FLL - Freezer longliners	TAC - Total Allowable Catch
GOA - Gulf of Alaska	VMS - Vessel Monitoring System

NOTE: Council may take action as necessary on all matters listed on the Agenda

June 1, 2012

**DRAFT AGENDA  
209<sup>th</sup> Plenary Session  
North Pacific Fishery Management Council  
June 6-12, 2012**

**Estimated Time**

- A. CALL MEETING TO ORDER**
- (a) Approval of Agenda
  - (b) Approval of Minutes
- B. REPORTS** (6 hrs)
- B-1 Executive Director's Report
  - B-2 NMFS Management Report (including observer program update and Amendment 80 vessel replacement)
  - B-3 ADF&G Report
  - B-4 NOAA Enforcement Report (take up right after B-1 report)
  - B-5 USCG Report
  - B-6 USFWS Report
  - B-7 Protected Species Report
  - B-8 AOOS Report on STAMP Project
  - B-9 IPHC Report
- C. MAJOR ISSUES/FINAL ACTION ITEMS**
- C-1 Halibut Bycatch (20 hrs)
    - (a) Review Halibut Workshop Report.
    - (b) Final Action on GOA Halibut PSC.
    - (c) Discussion paper on GOA comprehensive halibut bycatch amendments.
    - (d) Discussion paper on BSAI halibut PSC limit.
  - C-2 Essential Fish Habitat (4 hrs)
    - Initial Review of Bering Sea HAPC skate egg sites.
  - C-3 BSAI Crab Rebuilding (6 hrs)
    - (a) Crab Plan Team Report: Set Catch Specifications for 4 stocks.
    - (b) Final Action on Pribilof BKC Rebuilding Plan.
    - (c) ~~Revised alternatives for BSAI Tanner Crab rebuilding plan.~~ (delayed to October)
  - ~~C-4 BSAI Crab Management (4 hrs)~~
    - ~~(a) Workgroup report on BSAI Crab Binding Arbitration - GKC.~~
    - ~~(b) Discussion paper on Binding Arbitration Issues (lengthy season, publishing decisions, IPQ Initiation).~~
    - ~~(c) Initial review of Crab ROFR. (T) (Delayed to October)~~
  - C-5 Freezer Longline Issues (4 hrs)
    - (a) Discussion paper on revising FLL GOA cod sideboards.
    - (b) Initial Review of FLL Vessel Replacement (MLOA adjustment).

- D-1 Groundfish Issues (8 hrs)
- (a) Discussion paper on limiting other Gear on Jig Vessels.
  - (b) Discussion paper on BSAI Greenland turbot allocation.
  - (c) Discussion paper on BSAI Flatfish specification flexibility.
  - (d) Discussion paper on Grenadiers.
  - (e) Review and approve a 5-Year Research Priorities.
  - (f) Review comments & reports on PSEIS; action as necessary.
  - (g) Review Pacific cod assessment models. (SSC only)
  - (h) Receive report of the Recruitment Workshop. (SSC only)

- D-2 Staff Tasking (4 hrs)
- Review Committees and tasking.

- D-3 Other Business

(T) = tentative

Total Hours: (52 hrs)

**Draft Agenda and Schedule**

**JUNE 2012**

	SSC Harbor Room	AP Elks Lodge	Council Kodiak Harbor Convention Center
<b>Monday Jun 4</b>	8:00 am C-2 EFH D-1(g, h) Poed model/ Recruitment Workshop	8:00 am C-1 Halibut Bycatch	
	1:00 pm D-1(g, h) continued C-3 BSAI Crab Rebuilding	1:00 pm C-1 continued	
<b>Tuesday Jun 5</b> AK Jig Association meeting – 5:30 – AP room -Elks Lodge	8:00 am C-3 continued C-5(b) FFL Vessel Replacement	8:00 am C-1 continued	Enforcement Committee – 1-5 pm Convention Center/Katurwik Room
	1:00 pm C-5 continued ANPR for NS I Guidelines	1:00 pm C-3 BSAI Crab Rebuilding	
<b>Wednesday Jun 6</b> City/Borough Reception – 6pm – Kodiak Fisheries Research Center	8:00 am D-1(e) 5-year Research Priorities	8:00 am C-2 EFH	8:00 am B report
	1:00 pm continue if necessary	1:00 pm C-5 FFL Issues	1:00 pm B reports continued C-1 Halibut Bycatch
<b>Thursday Jun 7</b> Observer Deployment presentation – 5:30 Council room		8:00 am D-1 Groundfish Issues	8:00 am C-1 continued
		1:00 pm D-1 continued D-2 Staff Tasking	12:00pm Executive Session (T) 1:00 pm C-1 continued
<b>Friday Jun 8</b>	KACO, Kodiak Association of Charter Boat Operators, Barbeque at the Buskin River Pavilion, Friday June 8, 6-8pm		8:00 am C-1 continued
			1:00 pm C-1 continued
<b>Saturday Jun 9</b>			8:00 am C-2 EFH
			1:00 pm C-3 BSAI Crab Rebuilding
<b>Sunday Jun 10</b>			8:00 am D-1 (c, f) Research, PSEIS C-5 FLL Issues
			1:00 pm C-5 continued C-4 BSAI Crab Management
<b>Monday Jun 11</b> Ouzinkie Community Reception – 7:30			8:00 am C-4 continued D-1 Groundfish Issues
	1:00 pm D-1 continued		
<b>Tuesday Jun 12</b>	8:00 am D-2 Staff Tasking		
	1:00 pm continue if necessary		

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# JUNE 2012

Sunday	Monday	Tuesday	Wednesday	Thursday	Friday	Saturday
					1	2
3	4 AP/SSC - Kodiak	5 AP/SSC	6 AP/SSC/ Council	7 AP/Council	8 AP/Council	9 Council
10 Council	11 Council	12 Council	13	14 SSL Mitigation Committee thru 14 - Juneau	15	16
17	18	19	20	21	22	23
24	25	26	27	28 Crab GKC Price Formula Committee thru 29 - Sea	29	30

# JULY 2012

Sunday	Monday	Tuesday	Wednesday	Thursday	Friday	Saturday
1	2	3	4 HOLIDAY	5	6	7
8	9	10 SSL Mitigation Committee thru 11 - Sea	11	12	13	14
15	16	17	18	19	20	21
22	23	24	25	26	27	28
29	30	31				

<b>AUGUST 2012</b>						
Sunday	Monday	Tuesday	Wednesday	Thursday	Friday	Saturday
			<b>1</b>	<b>2</b>	<b>3</b>	<b>4</b>
<b>5</b>	<b>6</b>	<b>7</b> SSL Mitigation Committee thru 8 <sup>th</sup> (T)	<b>8</b>	<b>9</b>	<b>10</b>	<b>11</b>
<b>12</b>	<b>13</b>	<b>14</b>	<b>15</b>	<b>16</b>	<b>17</b>	<b>18</b>
<b>19</b> AFS thru 23 – Minneapolis	<b>20</b>	<b>21</b>	<b>22</b>	<b>23</b>	<b>24</b>	<b>25</b>
<b>26</b>	<b>27</b> NPO Intersession thru 30 – Juneau	<b>28</b>	<b>29</b>	<b>30</b>	<b>31</b>	

<b>SEPTEMBER 2012</b>						
Sunday	Monday	Tuesday	Wednesday	Thursday	Friday	Saturday
						<b>1</b>
<b>2</b>	<b>3</b> HOLIDAY	<b>4</b>	<b>5</b> ICC meeting thru 7 – St. Petersburg, Russia	<b>6</b>	<b>7</b>	<b>8</b>
<b>9</b>	<b>10</b>	<b>11</b> GF PT thru 14 – AFSC  SSL Mitigation Committee thru 12	<b>12</b>	<b>13</b>	<b>14</b>	<b>15</b>
<b>16</b>	<b>17</b>	<b>18</b> Crab PT thru 21 – Seattle	<b>19</b>	<b>20</b>	<b>21</b>	<b>22</b>
<b>23/30</b>	<b>24</b>	<b>25</b>	<b>26</b>	<b>27</b>	<b>28</b>	<b>29</b>

# OCTOBER 2012

Sunday	Monday	Tuesday	Wednesday	Thursday	Friday	Saturday
	<b>1</b> SSC/AP - Hilton	<b>2</b> SSC/AP	<b>3</b> SSC/AP/Council	<b>4</b> AP/Council	<b>5</b> AP/Council	<b>6</b> Council
<b>7</b> Council	<b>8</b> Council HOLIDAY	<b>9</b> Council	<b>10</b>	<b>11</b>	<b>12</b>	<b>13</b>
<b>14</b>	<b>15</b>	<b>16</b>	<b>17</b> SSL Mitigation Committee thru 18	<b>18</b>	<b>19</b>	<b>20</b>
<b>21</b>	<b>22</b>	<b>23</b>	<b>24</b>	<b>25</b>	<b>26</b>	<b>27</b>
<b>28</b>	<b>29</b>	<b>30</b>	<b>31</b>			

# NOVEMBER 2012

Sunday	Monday	Tuesday	Wednesday	Thursday	Friday	Saturday
				<b>1</b>	<b>2</b>	<b>3</b>
<b>4</b>	<b>5</b>	<b>6</b>	<b>7</b>	<b>8</b>	<b>9</b>	<b>10</b>
<b>11</b>	<b>12</b> HOLIDAY	<b>13</b> Groundfish PT thru 16 - AFSC	<b>14</b> SSL Mitigation Committee thru 15	<b>15</b>	<b>16</b>	<b>17</b>
<b>18</b>	<b>19</b>	<b>20</b>	<b>21</b>	<b>22</b> HOLIDAY	<b>23</b>	<b>24</b>
<b>25</b>	<b>26</b>	<b>27</b>	<b>28</b>	<b>29</b>	<b>30</b>	

# DECEMBER 2012

Sunday	Monday	Tuesday	Wednesday	Thursday	Friday	Saturday
						1
2	3 SSC/AP - Hilton	4 SSC/AP	5 SSC/AP/Council	6 AP/Council	7 AP/Council	8 Council
9 Council	10 Council	11 Council	12	13	14	15
16	17	18	19	20	21	22
23/30	24/31	25 HOLIDAY	26	27	28	29

# JANUARY 2013

Sunday	Monday	Tuesday	Wednesday	Thursday	Friday	Saturday
		1 HOLIDAY	2	3	4	5
6	7	8	9	10	11	12
13	14	15	16	17	18	19
20	21 HOLIDAY	22	23	24	25	26
27	28	29	30	31		

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Certified: New Bendys  
Date: 5/10/12

**REPORT  
of the  
SCIENTIFIC AND STATISTICAL COMMITTEE  
to the  
NORTH PACIFIC FISHERY MANAGEMENT COUNCIL  
March 26<sup>th</sup> – March 28<sup>th</sup>, 2012**

The SSC met from March 26<sup>th</sup> through March 28<sup>th</sup>, 2012 at the Hilton Hotel, Anchorage AK.

Members present were:

Pat Livingston, Chair  
*NOAA Fisheries—AFSC*

Farron Wallace, Vice Chair  
*NOAA Fisheries—AFSC*

Jennifer Burns  
*University of Alaska Anchorage*

Henry Cheng  
*Wash. Dept. of Fish and Wildlife*

Robert Clark  
*Alaska Department of Fish and Game*

Alison Dauble  
*Oregon Dept. of Fish and Wildlife*

Sherri Dressel  
*Alaska Department of Fish and Game*

Anne Hollowed  
*NOAA Fisheries—AFSC*

George Hunt  
*University of Washington*

Gordon Kruse  
*University of Alaska Fairbanks*

Franz Mueter  
*University of Alaska Fairbanks*

Jim Murphy  
*University of Alaska Anchorage*

Lew Queirolo  
*NOAA Fisheries—Alaska Region*

Terry Quinn  
*University of Alaska Fairbanks*

Ray Webster  
*International Pacific Halibut Commission*

Members absent were:

Seth Macinko  
*University of Rhode Island*

Kate Reedy-Maschner  
*Idaho State University*

Kathy Kuletz  
*US Fish and Wildlife Service*

## **B-1 Plan Team Nominations and SSC elections**

The SSC reviewed the Plan Team nominations of Craig Faunce to the Gulf of Alaska Groundfish Plan Team, and Quinn Smith and Brad Harris to the Scallop Plan Team. The SSC finds all three individuals to be well qualified, with appropriate expertise that will assist each of the Plan Teams. The SSC recommends that the Council approve these nominations.

The SSC revisited its leadership, given the current vice-chair's move from Washington Department of Fish and Wildlife to the Alaska Fisheries Science Center and the need for organizational balance in the leadership. The SSC elected Bob Clark as the new vice-chair of the SSC for the coming year and thanked Farron Wallace for his excellent service to the SSC over the last few years in this position.

### **C-2 (a) Update on salmon genetics**

Jeff Guyon (NMFS-AFSC) gave an overview of genetic stock composition analyses of Chinook and chum salmon sampled from the pollock fishery PSC in the Bering Sea. In 2010, genetic samples were taken from the PSC as part of the species composition analysis of the Observer Program. Although this sampling design differed somewhat from that during 2005-2009, stock composition estimates in 2010 were similar to those estimated from samples taken in 2005-2009. There was general agreement between the timing of samples taken and the timing of chum salmon PSC during 2010, but some areas were overrepresented in the samples relative to the PSC. Analysts continue to caution that stock composition estimates derived from these samples may not accurately represent the stock composition of the PSC. Dr. Guyon also noted that sampling in 2011 followed the recommendations of the Pella-Geiger report which stipulates systematic sampling for a representative sample of the PSC. There was no public testimony.

The SSC looks forward to seeing results of the 2011 sample collections. We also have the following recommendations for the collection and analysis of genetic stock composition data:

- It remains unclear how much bias there is in stock composition estimates from 2005-2010. The potential for bias due to oversampling of one or more statistical areas or time periods should be examined in an analysis that attempts to weight estimates from samples so they represent the spatial/temporal occurrence of the PSC. Dr. Guyon is working on an analysis that apportions the chum salmon stock composition data to the actual PSC. We would like to see the results of this work once it is available.
- In the future, genetic sampling designs need to put more importance on obtaining location data of individual hauls for samples taken from offloads from catcher vessels, or should modify sampling so that greater effort is directed at obtaining samples onboard vessels so that accurate location data are available.
- Efforts should be made to update the current genetic baseline for chum salmon so that it includes populations in Cook Inlet. These populations are not in the baseline used to estimate stock composition for 2005-2010 and are potentially important to ESA considerations for Cook Inlet beluga whale.
- We support efforts to utilize the time series of stock composition data to map the spatial and temporal extent of PSC of important stock groupings such as coastal western Alaska to better inform avoidance measures by the pollock fleet.
- We caution that estimated proportional stock compositions that are less than 20% are most likely biased. We recommend consideration of methods to reduce such bias when this situation is encountered.
- We support the provision of sufficient funding for the analysis of all necessary genetics samples.

### **C-2(b) Initial review Bering Sea Non-Chinook salmon PSC management measures**

The SSC received presentations on the EA, RIR, IRFA, as well as a pollock fleet performance model from Diana Stram (NPFMC), Jim Ianelli (NMFS-AFSC), Alan Haynie (NMFS-AFSC), and Scott Miller (NMFS-AKR). Public testimony was provided by Tim Smith (Norton Sound Bering Strait Regional Aquaculture), Roy Ashenfelter (Kawerak), Tim Andrew (Association of Village Council Presidents), and Donna Parker (Arctic Storm).

### **EA**

The SSC first wishes to express its appreciation to the analysts for the presentations and their help in understanding the changes made to the documents. The SSC reviewed an earlier version of the EA and RIR during the June 2011 meeting and recommended that a series of changes be made before the document is released for public review. Relative to the EA, the analysts have improved the document from the version that the SSC reviewed in June, 2011:

- A summary of alternative hypotheses for the declines of chum salmon stocks in western Alaska was included. In particular, the analysts expanded a section in Chapter 5 that discusses the



hypothesized effects on marine survival of chum in the Bering Sea and a possible mechanism for high PSC in particular years. A section was added that discusses ocean carrying capacity and an overview of run size of chum salmon in Alaska. A statewide summary of chum salmon stock status was moved forward and expanded in Chapter 5.

- The analysts also included a discussion of the rationale for using a pooled age-length key for estimating age composition of chum salmon requested by the SSC in June 2011.
- We also noted that the cumulative impacts section of the EA was incomplete in the June 2011 version and this was rectified in this version. A new section on the policy implications of this action was also added to the document.
- This draft of the EA also more completely describes and discusses the impacts of each alternative on chum salmon runs, particularly in western Alaska.

There were also several new developments in the EA that the SSC noted and commented on:

- We appreciate that stock status data for chum salmon was updated through 2011.
- Alternatives 2 and 3 were revised and restructured so that options of each alternative are similar to each other in effect (i.e., June-July measures versus entire B-season measures). This restructuring helps to clarify and increase understanding of each of the options in the analysis.
- The analysts applied a regression approach to estimate adult equivalents (AEQs) from annual PSC numbers for each of the alternatives. The SSC approves of this method, but recommends that the analysts provide a plot of the fit to the data and residual plots of the analysis so the reader can assess the utility of this approach. The coefficient of determination ( $R^2$ ) of the analysis is misleading and should not be reported because no intercept was estimated in the regression model.
- The analysts made use of a variable ( $\lambda$ ) to express how the pollock fleet would respond to area closures in June and July by either waiting to fish until later in the season ( $\lambda = 0$ ) or seeking to fish for pollock in other areas ( $\lambda$  ranging from greater than 0 to 1). While this seems a reasonable approach, the SSC recommends that, in addition to scenarios with a  $\lambda$  of zero, scenarios with  $\lambda$  of 1 be presented in the summary tables that compare outcomes of the alternatives to represent a range of possible reactions of the pollock fleet to the alternatives.

Although the EA correctly documents the potential for bias in the estimates of stock composition from the genetic analysis, in some places (e.g., Section 5.3.2), the text states or implies that such biases are corrected in the EA analysis. The EA analysis attempts to account for the non-random nature of the genetic sampling in the estimation of variance, but it does not directly address biases that may result from such sampling. Any biases in stock composition estimates from the genetic analysis carry through to the estimated impacts on chum salmon in the EA, and the SSC requests changing the text of the EA where necessary to avoid giving the impression that such biases are accounted for.

We also recommend that the analysts confer with pollock industry stakeholders on their potential responses in fishing behavior relative to the alternatives and provide this information in the EA.

#### **RIR/IRFA**

The present draft document is a revision of an earlier analysis that the SSC concluded needed substantial work prior to public distribution. While the authors responded to many of our concerns and recommendations, some improvements should still be made before release of this document. The treatment of the predicted impacts of the alternatives provides only superficial treatment of any affected user group other than commercial pollock fisheries. While the ability to comprehensively quantify economic impacts may be data limited, it does not exempt the analysis from assessing these effects to the fullest extent practicable.

Although the RIR contains substantial information documenting the importance of chum salmon to subsistence communities in western Alaska, the SSC expresses concern that the RIR contains minimal information about the likely impacts of the proposed actions on these communities of users. This is particularly problematic since, under both federal and state law, subsistence is the highest priority use. The SSC recognizes that data limitations can create challenges for developing reliable quantitative estimates of these impacts. Section 3.4 does enumerate some of the vulnerabilities that subsistence-dependent populations face, but there is no meaningful attempt to link these vulnerabilities to whether or how the proposed alternatives may affect them. The RIR would benefit from a more focused discussion on this issue. Examples include:

- Asking whether the Amount Necessary for Subsistence (ANS) estimates, provided by the Alaska Board of Fisheries, are reasonably current (data in Table 3-1 are about 15 years old and populations in these communities have grown substantially).
- Table 3-14 relates estimated subsistence harvests in the Yukon River area to the ANS findings. The document should contain similar comparisons for other regions for which data are available, such as the Kuskokwim.
- Extrapolation should be made of data-supported impact estimates, referenced above, to other areas for which data are not available, carefully identifying the assumptions, limitations, and relative confidence in those.
- The impact assessment should try to link the genetic analysis of chum salmon PSC more directly to impacts on terminal area chum users (e.g., subsistence, commercial, and joint-production harvests) to the extent practicable.
- ADF&G has reasonably good subsistence data based on household surveys. While ADF&G does not have the capacity to analyze these data to inform the RIR, it is reasonable to investigate whether these data could be made available to develop a subsistence model that could be incorporated into the RIR.
- There is a paper by Bob Wolfe et al. (June 2011) that developed a model of subsistence demands in the AYK region. At a minimum, this paper should be cited, and some of the reported analysis might be incorporated into the RIR.
- The SSC received public testimony stating that the timing of salmon runs can be as important as the aggregate subsistence harvest or total run size. In particular, should subsistence fishing be delayed until later in the summer, there is an increased likelihood of weather events adversely affecting the ability to dry fish. This should be incorporated into the RIR, particularly whether some alternatives are more likely to exacerbate this problem.

The deficiencies that were identified in the scope, quality, and reliability of subsistence harvest estimates of chum and Chinook in the AYK (and presumably in other regions) impose another significant barrier to a full understanding of the relative regional dependence of subsistence communities on salmon resources. It would be valuable to actively solicit the assistance of regional resident experts among the impacted subsistence groups and users to improve the quality and breadth of information in this subject area. While formal outreach has been done, perhaps release of the document for public review will yield additional information and local knowledge.

The SSC has similar concerns about the lack of impact analyses on the commercial chum salmon industry throughout the North American range of these stocks. In this case, however, there is less of a problem with data availability. The RIR documents chum harvests and market value over time in several, but not all, relevant regions, but there is no analysis of the potential impacts of the alternatives on these commercial chum salmon fisheries. While this would require making some simplifying assumptions, doing so would be no different than the types of assumptions already used in the pollock commercial sector impact analysis. This analysis is important because public testimony highlighted links between commercial and subsistence use of this resource, with commercial activities often subsidizing subsistence use.

The SSC reiterates its long-standing concerns about the lack of pollock industry cost data that are critical to estimating impacts on industry net performance. The RIR acknowledges that estimates of potentially foregone gross revenues may have no meaningful relationship to the economic performance, viability, or profitability of these commercial fisheries. In addition, the retrospective analysis of pollock industry revenue at risk implicitly assumes that there would be no changes in industry behavior in response to the proposed alternatives. While this approach yields some insights into a worst-case outcome, and recognizing that it would be difficult to quantify how behavioral changes induced by each alternative would affect revenue at risk estimates, the RIR would benefit from a qualitative discussion of the likely ways in which behavior could change, and how this might affect these estimates.

Additional effort must be made to ensure that the RIR complies with the procedural requirements of EO12866 and other applicable laws. Given that the PSC of chum in the BSAI pollock fisheries accrues widely to many areas, uses, and users, some supplemental treatment of the broader community of users affected by PSC removals is necessary. This observation was made by the SSC in previous review comments. Need for this extension persists in the current draft and is a serious deficiency in the scope of the RIR. There is a disproportionate emphasis on the potential adverse impacts on the Western Alaska Region, literally to the exclusion of the other impacted regions. While there is ample reason to assess the relationship, if any, between chum PSC in the BSAI pollock trawl fisheries and diminished runs of chums in the western Alaska region, it is not the sole dimension of this management action. The available stock-of-origin data identify losses of non-Chinook salmon PSC accruing to most of the Pacific coast of North America, extending to southern Oregon, yet western Alaska seems to be the only region of interest and concern. As the SSC previously urged, effort must be made to improve the balance of the regional impact analysis; if not before release for public review, certainly in the next iteration.

**The SSC was asked by the analysts for our opinion concerning retaining a stand-alone Environmental Justice chapter in the document. The SSC observes that there are important procedural reasons to retain the Environmental Justice analysis as a unique element of the integrated document.**

Authors should delete estimated replacement costs for subsistence foods from the discussion of food budgets on page 52. These estimates (\$3 and \$5 per pound) were taken from a study by Wolfe (2000), and are pure conjectures for a "what if" analysis and have no empirical justification.

The SSC was informed by the analysts that subsequent versions of the RIR will be updated to reflect 2010 census data. We look forward to the incorporation of those new data.

**The SSC recommends release of the draft document for public review after addressing the principal concerns identified by the SSC and resolving editorial problems.**

#### **C-3(a) Initial review HAPC skate sites**

Sarah Melton (NPFMC) and Gerald Hoff (NMFS-AFSC) provided an overview of an initial review draft EA and RIR that describes action alternatives to identify or identify and protect six HAPC sites of skate egg concentrations in the Bering Sea. Public comment was provided by Kenny Down (Freezer Longline Association), John Gauvin (Alaska Seafood Cooperative), Merrick Burden (Marine Conservation Alliance), Donna Parker (Arctic Storm), and Jackie Dragon (Greenpeace).

The SSC reviewed an earlier version of the initial review draft of this document in February 2012 and recommended at that time that the document should be returned to staff for additional work. The SSC recognizes the considerable work and resulting improvement in the document since we last reviewed it. In response to our February 2012 comments, the authors provided clarification on the importance of these sites to the overall abundance of skates, the potential for additional egg concentration sites in the Bering

Sea, and provided more information on the history of fishing activities in these areas. Descriptions of the alternatives were also updated and clarified, including changes to the option to suggest that additional research and monitoring be prioritized for these HAPC sites. However, there remain areas of the document that require additional clarification to increase the focus on what is known and not known concerning the effects of these actions on skates and on the potentially affected fisheries. Specific changes suggested for the EA are:

- Discussion regarding the potential for fishing activities to physically disrupt adult skate spawning at the areas of skate egg concentration during the spawning season (summer) and for fishing activities to affect the benthic habitat of the egg concentration sites.
- Additional information on the methodology used to estimate the potential total number of areas of skate egg concentration, including a discussion of the limitations of the method, and how the young-of-the-year information from the trawl survey versus the stock assessment may change the estimate of potential number of sites.
- Additional information on the persistence of the areas and sizes of egg concentration areas over longer times and the evidence for this persistence.
- Update the descriptions of gear and its effects on bottom habitat, particularly the description for bottom trawling, which needs to include the current use of modified trawl sweeps.
- Clarify the distinction between information derived from research trawl surveys and information from commercial bottom trawling.

There are specific deficiencies in several elements of the RIR. Suggested improvements are:

- Clarification of the language regarding the areas utilized for the economic impacts analysis, following the determination of the size of the areas themselves.
- Re-structuring the RIR to separate impacts by alternative might improve the flow and clarify the information presented.
- Expanded information on how the fleet may recover potentially foregone catch. Language should describe the difficulties the fleet may experience should these areas be closed.
- Economic impacts need additional clarity. While the total catch and gross value may represent the outcome of a complete, uncompensated loss to the respective impacted vessel/fleet/sector, these estimates constitute extremes. Given the expected size and shape of HAPC closures, and potential differential constraints (e.g., gear-type, temporal), more explicit accounting of the likelihood of recovering catch/earnings in remaining open areas is necessary.
- Editing the reported economic revenues to more appropriately reflect the precision of the underlying data sets (e.g., round to nearest \$1,000).
- Greater detail on the inter-annual use of the respective HAPCs by sector, gear-type, and operating mode should be included across a longer time-series. Assertions of the economic and operational importance of each HAPC to the various fishing sectors, as described in public testimony, could be better evaluated with a longer time series mapping historical fishing activity.
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- The specified size of each proposed HAPC management area, the associated closures or constraints, differential temporal application by gear-type, etc., combine to define the terms-of-reference for the economic and socioeconomic impact assessment. This necessarily results in a strong sequential relationship between these physical and regulatory attributes of each HAPC and estimated economic and operational implications. The ability to evaluate the economic impacts of competing HAPC alternatives, to a sufficient degree, is dependent upon greater clarity in the physical and regulatory attributes of each.
- The document contains a significant number of editorial issues that were identified by the SSC and will be provided to the authors.

The SSC believes that, while many improvements have been made in the analytical package, it remains premature for release for public review. We look forward to reviewing the next iteration of this document, with an expectation that the revisions will result in a fully compliant draft.

#### **C-5 Scallop SAFE**

A report on the 2012 Scallop SAFE and Scallop Plan Team minutes was presented by Diana Stram (NPFMC). There was no public testimony.

The Scallop Plan Team recommended setting the 2012/13 scallop ACL equal to an ABC of 1.161 million pounds of shucked meats. This ACL is estimated using the maxABC control rule of 90% of the OFL, which includes discards. **The SSC supports the Plan Team's recommended ACL/ABC of 1.161 million pounds of shucked meats, which includes all catch including discards for which a 20% discard mortality rate will be applied.** In the future, it would be good to include the ACL/ABC recommendations directly into the SAFE in section 2.1.2.1, so that the SAFE documents can serve as archives of scallop fishery management over time.

The SSC appreciates the Scallop Plan Team's responses to SSC comments on last year's SAFE. Several responses were deferred to next year's SAFE. The SSC continues to have interest in these items and looks forward to Plan Team responses to those comments next year. The SSC offers the following comments on this year's SAFE:

1. In reviewing this year's SAFE report, the SSC notes some potential conservation concerns. **Two areas of some concern are the Kayak Island west bed and the Alaska Peninsula area.** However, as both areas have been closed to fishing in the last 2 and 3 years, respectively, no further conservation action is warranted at this time. **It would be useful if future SAFE documents could describe the criteria by which these areas would be reopened to fishing.** For the Kayak Island west bed, presumably a biomass-based threshold could be established using the biennial dredge survey. For the Alaska Peninsula, presumably a "test" fishery would be undertaken, barring implementation of a new survey in the area. However, given poor fishery performance in 2000/01 and extremely poor fishery performance in 2006/07 and 2008/09, an extended fishery closure would seem to be warranted. Moreover, 18,302 Tanner crabs were taken as bycatch in the 2008/09 fishery that yielded a mere 2,460 pounds of shucked meats, indicating a potential bycatch issue for any future fisheries in this area.
2. The SSC wishes to highlight two other fishing areas for additional consideration in next year's SAFE. **Recent declines in fishery CPUE for District 16 and the Kayak Island east bed seem to parallel those for the Kayak Island west bed, which has been closed to fishing since 2010/11.** The GHF for District 16 was increased from 21,000 to 25,000 lbs shucked meats in 2009/10. However, fishery CPUE for District 16 has generally declined since peaking at 65 lbs/hr in 2000/01 (see Figure 3-3) including the lowest CPUE on record of 27 lbs/hr in 2010/11. For comparison, CPUE at the west bed at Kayak Island (PWS area) declined from 120 lbs/hr in 2005/06 to 44 lbs/hr in 2009/2010 prior to fishery closures in the past two years (Table 3-6). Dredge surveys on the Kayak Island west bed indicated that low scallop densities (20 lbs/nm) are associated with the decline in CPUE. It is not clear whether fishery CPUE can be distinguished among the east and west beds of Kayak Island (see Tables 3-4, 3-5, and 3-6), however dredge surveys perhaps indicate more stable scallop densities on the east bed than on the west bed (Table 3-3). If CPUE can be estimated separately for the east and west Kayak Island beds, they should be reported separately in Tables 3-5 and 3-6.
3. **Declines in scallop densities indicated by fishery CPUE (above) suggest that it may be prudent for the Scallop Plan Team to undertake a fresh review of weathervane scallop fishery management.** Such a review could include a re-evaluation of the natural mortality rate used to prescribe OFL, target harvest rates, and the potential for some sort of rotational harvest

scheme. A review of scallop fishery management, including spatial harvest strategies and/or exploitation rates, in other parts of the world may yield some fresh insights.

4. The SSC appreciates the presentation of estimated discard mortality (assuming 20% discard mortality rate) in Table 2-2 to allow easy evaluation of the total fishing mortality (catch plus discards) relative to the statewide ACL. Table 2-2 may be sufficient in this regard, but the Plan Team could consider taking a similar approach in Tables for individual fishing areas (e.g., Table 3-1 for Yakutat). At a minimum, footnotes for tables for individual fishing areas should indicate that a 20% discard mortality rate and meat recovery rates are applied to estimates of whole scallop discards for purposes of catch accounting.
5. The SSC looks forward to the Plan Team response to last year's SSC request that the team consider exploring other methods for estimating biological reference points, such as Productivity Susceptibility Analysis or Depletion-Corrected Average Catch. Given the use of inseason fishery CPUE in fishery management decisions in several management areas, the SSC appreciates additional explanations of this process, such as the minimum performance standard reported in Appendix 1. **The team should consider formally describing the use of such inseason data in the management process in the body of the SAFE document.**
6. The team is encouraged to consider whether the utility of fishery CPUE as an index of relative changes in scallop abundance can be evaluated in PWS and Cook Inlet, where dredge abundance surveys are conducted.
7. Table 2-4 (p. 23) on crab bycatch limits is very useful. However, for areas in which the crab bycatch limit is 0.5% or 1.0% of estimated crab abundance, the actual number of crabs equating to these limits is not specified. The SSC recommends adding a column in Table 2-5 that provides area-specific crab bycatch limits (in numbers of crabs) to facilitate comparison to the estimated number of crabs taken as bycatch.
8. Figure 3-4 indicates a shift to significantly higher discard rates for scallops >110 mm SH in District 16 in 2009/10 and 2010/11. **Please explain the cause of these high discard rates in District 16.**
9. Figure 3-5 does not have axis labels and CPUE is not correctly plotted.
10. The sections on PWS and Cook Inlet could clarify whether the same catchability ( $q$ ) and 5% harvest rate is used to estimate the annual GHL. For Cook Inlet, it is stated on p. 50 that ADF&G applies a 5% exploitation rate to the biomass data to set the GHL. However, p. 54 indicates that state regulations set a GHL range of 10,000-20,000 lbs. This seems inconsistent with information in Table 3-8, which indicates that the GHL calculation can result in GHLs less than 10,000 lb (2005 and 2006) and more than 20,000 lbs (1996). Please clarify the role, if any, of the 10,000-20,000 lb GHL range. Is natural mortality from the time of the survey to the time of the fishery used to discount abundance estimates, as is done with BSAI crabs? If not, the actual harvest rate would be higher than 5% under the current procedure.
11. On p. 49 it is stated that "Much of Cook Inlet is closed to scallop dredging" with a reference to Figure 2-1. However, Fig. 2-1 is a map of the scallop management areas and does not show closed areas in Cook Inlet. Figure 2-4 shows the two main scallop beds in Kamishak Bay. Are all other areas closed other than the two "main beds"?
12. The SSC appreciates new research with the sledge-dredge in the Central Region and looks forward to new estimates of survey catchability and improved estimates of stock biomass. Also,

now that aging issues seem to have been largely resolved and biometric support has been arranged, the SSC looks forward to the age-structured model for Central Region stocks.

13. For the Kodiak Shelikof District, there is a comment (p. 61) that reduced CPUE of 58 lbs/hr in 2007/08 may be due to the participation of a small vessel with a single 10-ft dredge. However, CPUE continued to decline to 49-52 lbs/hr in subsequent years. Did this small vessel continue to participate or is this a real decline in CPUE? The Team should consider separately reporting CPUE data from vessels towing a single, small dredge to maintain some consistency in "core fleet" CPUE estimates for evaluation of fishery trends.
14. The SAFE indicates that the Kodiak SW District opened to fishing in 2009/10 after closure since 1969 due to crab bycatch concerns. Please report the CPUE for this new fishery. This could have been an excellent opportunity to examine scallop densities in an unfished (43 years) bed and its response to fishing. It would have been ideal if a CamSled survey was conducted in this area to obtain valuable baseline data. **The SSC recommends conducting CamSled surveys in previously unfished scallop beds, or in areas that have been closed for extended periods, prior to future new fishery openings, if and when possible.**
15. In the Dutch Harbor Area, scallop size distributions are shown in Fig. 3-22 for 2010/11. It would be useful to also report size distributions for prior years to evaluate whether changes in size composition support the current GHs.
16. The SSC appreciates the improvements in the Ecosystem Considerations section, and the SSC appreciates the Team's intent to continue improving the section. In particular, the SSC looks forward to additional information on ocean acidification and dredging effects next year.
17. Section 4.2 indicates that data before the current observer program (1993) are scarce. However, there are old observer data (late 1960s – early 1970s) available for Yakutat and Kodiak, as well as time series of CPUE for vessels with standard New Bedford dredges. Can any comparisons be made? Declines in CPUE and truncation of age structure in the early 1970s contributed to management restrictions at that time. For a review of those data from the 1960s and 1970s, see: Hennick, D.P. 1973. Sea scallop, *Patinopecten caurinus*, investigations in Alaska. Alaska Department of Fish and Game, Division of Commercial Fisheries, Completion Report 5-23-R, Juneau.
18. The section on the fishery effects on the ecosystem can be expanded. There have been many studies on the effects of scallop dredges (and other mobile bottom contact gear) on seafloor habitats by bottom habitat type and several reviews, including a somewhat dated section of the state FMP report (Kruse 1994) and a National Academy of Sciences report, among others.
19. There is opportunity to expand the treatment of scallop predators. Consider exploring the groundfish stomach database for evidence of predation on scallops. Are skates predators of scallops? There are reports of crab predation on scallops, as well.
20. The SSC appreciates the economic overview of the fishery. Potential additional information to include is port of landings, updated price of scallop per lb with size, crew size, and crew wages. Some of these are described in historical reports, such as:
  - a. Kruse, G.H., and S.M. Shirley. 1994a. The Alaskan scallop fishery and its management. In: N.F. Bourne, B.L. Bunting, and L.D. Townsend (eds.), Proceedings of the 9th International Pectinid Workshop, vol. 2. Can. Tech. Rep. Fish. Aquat. Sci. 1994:170-177.
  - b. Shirley, S.M., and G.H. Kruse. 1995. Development of the fishery for weathervane scallops, *Patinopecten caurinus* (Gould, 1850), in Alaska. J. Shell. Res. 14:71-78.

c. Miller, S.A. 2006. Economic factors in the scallop fishery off Alaska.

21. The SSC noted a number of typos and other errors; a list will be provided to the Plan Team separately.

**D-1(a) BSIERP MSE Management Strategy Evaluation Workshop**

The SSC received a report from Jim Ianelli (NMFS-AFSC) about a recent workshop on a Management Strategy Evaluation (MSE) project that is part of the NPRB-funded Bering Sea Integrated Ecosystem Research Program (BSIERP). The SSC previously requested periodic progress reports about this project and appreciates this update. The operating model for the MSE is a highly complex, vertically-integrated model (climate to lower trophic levels to fish to fisheries) that is still under development.

Single-species and multi-species models, including a multi-species statistical age-structured model (MSMt) and a food-web ECOSIM model, will be used as assessment models in the MSE. Correspondingly, both traditional single-species and new multi-species harvest control rules will be evaluated within the same framework. The MSE and multi-species harvest control rules will be further refined at the BEST/BSIERP PI meeting in Anchorage, March 28-30, 2012. The SSC would appreciate a presentation on the multi-species control rules that are being considered and their implementation at an upcoming meeting. In addition, the MSE is a potential topic for the annual SSC workshop in February, 2013.

The number of simulations that can be run with this complex operating model is very limited (a 35-year simulation takes approximately 7 days). Thus, the number of scenarios that can be examined is very limited. Perhaps the analysts could reuse parts of the operating model to conduct further explorations of the harvest control rules. These explorations could include contrasting economic scenarios (e.g., changes in world markets or oil prices) using the existing climate scenarios.

**D-1(c) Programmatic Groundfish SEIS**

Diana Evans (NPFMC) provided information about progress toward current PSEIS objectives and changes in ecosystem conditions that have occurred since the PSEIS was completed in 2004. The Council requested input from the SSC to inform their decision regarding whether there is a need for an update or revision of the PSEIS. Diana Evans reported that there is no statutory time frame for updating a PSEIS, although review of case law suggests that a time frame of 5-10 years is appropriate. The Council is two years shy of the 10-year time frame and is considering whether the time is right to revise the 2004 Groundfish PSEIS.

The SSC agrees that it is a useful exercise to consider the impacts of Council action in a comprehensive manner and to periodically review the progress toward implementing the stated goals of the PSEIS. The SSC noted that there are at least 3 reasons to update the PSEIS:

1. To ensure that the environmental impact assessment reflects our current understanding of the implications of federal actions regarding groundfish fishing, thus enabling NMFS and the Council to tier off the findings of the PSEIS when conducting Environmental Assessments,
2. To review NPFMC performance relative to the stated goals of the adopted PSEIS alternative, and
3. To assess whether there is a better or more effective way to manage Alaskan groundfish resources and to update the PSEIS objectives to reflect any new priorities.

The SSC considers the first two reasons for updating to be high short-term priorities. Review of the briefing materials shows that the NPFMC has made considerable progress towards achieving the goals and objectives of the preferred alternative. The SSC recommends that, if the NPFMC elects to update the PSEIS, they may wish to request a review of what issues and concerns would require Council action. This proved to be an effective approach for the EFH 5 year review.



The SSC discussed the questions posed by the NPFMC and provides the following responses:

1. **How has fisheries management changed since the objectives and analysis were originally prepared?** As documented in the briefing materials, the NPFMC management has approved several amendments that are consistent with the goals and objectives identified by the PSEIS (see the list prepared by NPFMC staff in D-1(c)(5)).
2. **How have environmental conditions affecting the fisheries changed?**
  - a. Since passage of the PSEIS, environmental conditions have varied. In the EBS, 2000-2005 were characterized as warm years while 2006-present were cold years; similar environmental variations were observed in the GOA. In the EBS, shifts in ocean temperature coincided with shifts in lower trophic level production, which impacted the productivity and distribution of some groundfish stocks. Similar to the period in the early 1970s, the recent patterns of sea ice retreat (2000-2005) and advance (2006-2011) in the EBS shows more year to year coherence than was observed in the 1980s and 1990s. The range of these variations in the EBS falls largely within the range observed in historical time series (see excerpts from the ecosystem SAFE chapter, page 9). While future climate conditions are expected to be affected by climate change, it appears that interannual and decadal climate variability continue to be the dominant climate pattern in the region.
  - b. Changes in fishery impacts can also be considered a change in the environment. The spatial and temporal distribution of groundfish fisheries has changed in response to NPFMC management actions. These changes together with technical innovations (such as the halibut excluder) may have altered the environmental impact of fishing and, in some cases, the efficiency of some fisheries.
3. **Has the status of the fish stocks and other marine life changed?**
  - a. The status of groundfish stocks has not changed substantially (no new stocks are overfished or subject to overfishing).
  - b. The decline in the eastern portion of the western DPS of SSLs appears to have stabilized. However, the western portion of the western DPS of SSLs continues to decline.
  - c. Northern fur seal populations on the Pribilof Islands have exhibited a declining trend of approximately 5% per annum, while increases at Bogoslof have slowed and do not compensate for the larger declines at the Pribilofs. Conservation measures may come into play in the future.
  - d. In the last decade, many whale populations (e.g. gray, humpback and fin) have increased dramatically after being depleted by whaling. These increases in abundance have the potential to alter lower trophic level energy pathways in the region.
  - e. Short-tailed albatross appear to be recovering slowly and, as this population recovers, existing incidental take standards may require modification to sustain fisheries without impeding the rebuilding of the albatross population.
  - f. Tanner crab was recently listed as overfished and Pribilof blue king crab remains in an overfished status. Council action to rebuild these stocks may impact groundfish fisheries.
  - g. Arrowtooth flounder and Pacific halibut populations in the Gulf of Alaska and Bering Sea have increased in the last decade. The size at age of Pacific halibut is declining. These changes suggest that the carrying capacity for Pacific halibut in the GOA may be limiting, resulting in shifts in the population dynamics of this population.

4. **Has new information become available which may indicate the necessity for revised analyses?**
- a. The NSF/NPRB BEST/BSIERP and NPRB GOAIERP programs are providing new information regarding mechanisms underlying species interactions within the GOA and BSAI ecosystems. Models are beginning to emerge that synthesize current knowledge of processes influencing the distribution and abundance of marine life in the Bering Sea. Extensions of these models will inform the Council with respect to the expected performance of management actions under changing environmental conditions. In the near term, results could be used to inform estimates of growth, mortality, and survey/fishery catchability and selectivity. These improvements to stock assessments fall within those anticipated in the PSEIS. It is too early to determine whether the modeling tools developed will reveal a need for re-evaluation of the overall management strategy for these stocks.
  - b. Changes in ice extent and season in the northern Bering Sea and Arctic Ocean are having impacts on the distribution and behavior of cetaceans and pinnipeds (especially benthic foraging and ice-dependent species), as well as lower trophic levels and patterns of productivity. The progression of these changes and the resultant direct and indirect impact of fishing activity are not well understood. Changes may not be linear or incremental.
  - c. As noted above, improvements in the status of listed seabird populations may require a re-evaluation of the incidental take standards under Section 7. Likewise, if northern fur seals continue to decline, or if ice seal conservation status changes (ringed and some DPSs of bearded seals are proposed as threatened) the Council may need to re-assess the fisheries interactions with these species. Finally, NMFS is evaluating critical habitat designations for northern right whales, which may impact groundfish fisheries in the region.
  - d. Substantial changes to the Observer Program are expected to take place within the next two years. These changes are expected to improve the quality of catch estimates in the future. These changes will not necessitate a change in management strategy.
5. **Does the Council want to change the objectives, policy statements, or overall management approach for the groundfish fisheries?**
- a. The SSC notes that:
    - i. The AFSC will be exploring the implications of incorporating stock-specific uncertainty buffers through an ACL analysis.
    - ii. The NPFMC and AFSC will be developing an EIS for Steller Sea Lion protection measures.
    - iii. The NSF/NPRB BEST/BSIERP program will provide an evaluation of the performance of various harvest control rules using assessment models with different levels of complexity, including multispecies models.
    - iv. In the last decade, fisheries scientists have endeavored to assess the status of global marine fish stocks. Recent studies have used these global assessments to evaluate the performance of different management strategies. These papers may reveal useful information to the NPFMC if it elects to expand the scope of the PSEIS to include alternative management scenarios.

The SSC also considered the NPFMC's overarching question "Do we understand the environmental impacts of our groundfish management program today?"

- The NPFMC posed two sub-questions relative to this overarching issue. Question 1 focused on changes to the environment. Our responses to the questions listed above addressed this issue. Question 2: *Have the cumulative impacts of the groundfish fishery management program on the BSAI or GOA environment changed significantly since the baseline analyzed in the PSEIS, in ways beyond what has been described in subsequent analyses?* The SSC does not know of a significant change in the cumulative effects of fishing that has not been described in subsequent analyses. In the previous PSEIS, the NPFMC acknowledged that it was not possible to fully understand cumulative environmental impacts of groundfish management. The previous PSEIS identified several key sources of uncertainty and data gaps that impeded the ability to comprehensively understand the cumulative effects of groundfish fishing on the marine ecosystem. Many of these sources of uncertainty and data gaps still exist. The SSC recognizes that the current state of knowledge has improved since the last PSEIS and the Council has taken actions to address several of the environmental impacts identified in the 2004 assessment. While the knowledge base for decision making has improved, unknowns will continue to exist and conclusions will continue to be uncertain. Thus, the Council should expect that the existing knowledge will provide a better, but still incomplete, basis for evaluating the cumulative effects of fishing in a similar manner to the previous PSEIS.

The SSC requests in preparation for the June 2012 meeting, that a list of pending actions likely to occur in the near future be added to the existing summary of Council-approved actions. This would help inform the discussion of the purpose and need for a PSEIS review and update.

#### **D-1(e) Tanner crab model review**

The SSC received a presentation of recent Tanner crab model revisions from Lou Rugolo (NMFS-AFSC) and Jack Turnock (NMFS-AFSC). Jim Ianelli (NMFS-AFSC) gave a brief overview of Tanner crab model recommendations made during the January, 2012 crab modeling workshop. Public testimony was provided by Edward Poulsen (Alaska Bering Sea Crabbers).

Following advice from the workshop, CPT, and SSC, the authors made numerous revisions to both model code and model assumptions, including new sample size weights, selectivity function, accounting for discards before 1992, a penalty on fishing mortality, and a new parameterization of natural mortality (see next paragraph). The work was not an exhaustive exploration of model fit to the data but was intended to inform the SSC that model development was continuing, as requested at the last SSC meeting. **It is apparent that the authors have made significant improvements to the Tanner crab model.**

Recent analyses of the length composition information indicate a simultaneous loss to all Tanner crab size classes during the early to mid-1980s. This suggests that a mortality event may be responsible for the apparent population decline. The authors incorporated a model change to estimate a separate natural mortality parameter between 1980 and 1984, instead of just the single year 1983, similar to that employed in the Bristol Bay red king crab model. Although model fit was much improved with the increased natural mortality estimate over the 5 years, there remains considerable uncertainty about the mechanism that drove the decline in Tanner crab stock status during this time period. The SSC encourages the authors to examine other ancillary information, such as Pacific cod diet data or other potential mechanisms as discussed in the Bristol Bay red king crab assessment that may help to explain mechanisms driving population dynamics during this time period. In addition, there are still some strong residual patterns in the fits to the size composition data, including the average size composition across years that need to be further examined.

Continuation of model development is extremely important to ensure that the population dynamics model is appropriately applied to this stock. **The SSC recommends that the authors review and address other SSC and workshop recommendations prior to the CPT meeting in May, 2012 to the extent practicable.** In particular, Dr. Ianelli suggested that it might be useful to explore simpler models. This

can be accomplished by fixing some parameters that are currently estimated in the model; candidates include the maturity schedule, growth, and natural mortality. This will allow the authors to evaluate model sensitivity to these parameters. **If the model is approved by the CPT in May 2012 and SSC in June 2012, it will apply to OFL-setting and stock status determination in the 2012/13 assessment cycle and to the development of the rebuilding plan.**

# North Pacific Fishery Management Council

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## ADVISORY PANEL MINUTES North Pacific Fishery Management Council March 26-30, 2012 Anchorage, Alaska

The following (21) members were present for all or part of the meetings:

Kurt Cochran	Jeff Favour	Matt Moir
Craig Cross	Becca Robbins Gisclair	Theresa Peterson
John Crowley	Jan Jacobs	Ed Poulsen
Julianne Curry	Alexus Kwachka	Neil Rodriguez
Jerry Downing	Craig Lowenberg	Lori Swanson
Tom Enlow	Chuck McCallum	Anne Vanderhoeven
Tim Evers	Andy Mezirow	Ernie Weiss

The Panel welcomed new AP members Craig Lowenberg and Andy Mezirow. Minutes of the February 2012 meeting were approved.

### C-1(c) AFA Pollock Cooperative and IPA Reports

The AP received the AFA Report on the Non-Chinook Salmon Rolling Hot Spot Program.

### C-2(a) Update on BSAI Salmon Genetics

The AP received a report from Dr. Jeff Guyon of NOAA Auke Bay Laboratory. No action was taken.

### C-2(b) Chum Salmon Bycatch Measures

The AP recommends that the Council request the following changes to the EA/RIR/IRFA and bring the document back for review before final action.

1. Make component 1 Alternative 3 a separate alternative: Fleet PSC management with non-participant triggered closure.
2. Create a new Alternative 4 which includes Components 1 - 6: Fleet PSC management with non-participant triggered closure AND trigger closure area and timing for RHS participants.

Option: General objectives and goals for rolling hot spot program would be in regulation; specific parameters of the hot spot program would **not** be in regulation.

3. Include analysis of specific modifications to the RHS program:
  - Modification of RHS to operate at a vessel level, platform level for mothership coop;
  - Prioritize RHS closures to best protect Western Alaska origin chum and Chinook salmon using best information available. Use identification tools, for example:

- Non-genetic identifiers like length and weight;
  - Genetic identification of bycatch on an as close to real time analysis as possible;
  - Use information being developed (i.e. Dr. Guyon's ongoing research to identify areas and times more likely to have higher proportions of Western Alaska chum salmon);
  - Floor on base rate;
  - Speed up shoreside data flow by obtaining trip chum counts as soon as it becomes available;
  - Increase chum salmon protection measures during June/July. For example:
    - Weekly threshold amounts that would trigger additional protection measures when bycatch is abnormally high;
    - Initiate "Western Alaska chum core closure areas." These areas would trigger during abnormally high encounters of chums believed to be returning to Western Alaska river systems;
  - Limit weekly base rate increases to 20% of the current base rate;
  - Stop RHS closures in a region (east and west of 168° West Longitude) as Chinook salmon bycatch levels start to increase in the later part of the B season;
  - Adjustments to the tier system – consider a range of incentives that would lead to different levels of bycatch reduction.
4. Make the following revisions to the Draft EA/RIR:
- The analysis should also provide information on the necessary provisions or objectives of the RHS that would need to be in regulation under new Alternatives 3 and 4.
  - Include worst case impact rates as if entire bycatch is from one stock (i.e. Norton Sound, Kuskokwim, lower Yukon, etc.) in addition to impact rates calculated against an aggregated Western Alaska run size.
  - Include information from Wolfe et. al. about projections for future subsistence demand for chum salmon in the AYK region.

*Motion passed 21-0.*

### **C-3(a) Initial Review of HAPC Skate Sites**

The AP recommends that the Council request staff to revise the analysis as follows:

The skate egg sites boundaries for Alternatives 2 and 3 would be set to the original HAPC recommendations as in current Alternative 2.

1. Add a sub-option to Alt. 2 that would have NMFS monitor the HAPC skate sites for changes in egg density or other potential effects of fishing.
2. Gear description and potential fishery impacts to skate egg sites should be redrafted to reflect current science and technology and to differentiate between survey trawl gear and current commercial trawl gear.
3. The analysis should focus on the use of updated VMS technology such as increased pulling rates and geo-fencing to monitor activity in and around skate egg sites.
4. The analysis should return to the Council before going out for public review.
5. Remove options c and d from Alternative 3.
6. The analysis should include a description of the methodology used in determining target catch rates in these areas.
7. The analysis should include other fishery closures that may overlap with these areas.

*Motion passed 21-0.*

### **C-3(b) GOA Flatfish Trawl Sweep Modification**

The AP recommends that the Council take final action to adopt trawl sweep modifications in the Central Gulf of Alaska flatfish fishery (Alternative 2). The AP further recommends that the Council amend the proposed action to extend slightly the exempted area on the net bridles and door bridles from 180' to 185' to accommodate hammerlocks attached to net and door bridles (as shown on page 16 of the analysis). This change would apply to both the Bering Sea and the Central GOA. *Motion passed 21-0.*

### **C-3(c) Review BS Habitat Conservation Area Boundary**

The AP recommends that the Council postpone this agenda item until no sooner than October to allow the interested parties to continue to negotiate. *Motion passed 19-0.*

### **C-3(d) EFH consultation criteria: Ecosystem Committee Report**

The AP recommends that the Council adopt the Ecosystem Committee's recommendations for EFH consultation criteria. *Motion passed 19-0.*

### **C-4(a) Final Action 4b Fish Up**

The AP recommends the Council take final action to allow IFQ derived from Category D QS to be fished on Category C vessels in Area 4B. *Motion passed 10-9, with 1 abstention.*

*Minority report: A minority of the AP did not support the motion. The Halibut/Sablefish fish season is nearly 8 months long which allows vessels adequate time for weather windows to fish safely in. 4B D class Halibut quota is less than 3% of the total halibut quota share in 4B and 4B now has two processors that buy halibut.*

*D class halibut quota was earned on D class vessels, is typically less expensive than higher class quota and is often a way for those who wish to enter the halibut fishery to get started. Allowing D class halibut quota to be fished up will basically eliminate the D class fishery, which may drive up the price of D class quota, create further barriers to entering the halibut fishery and compromise the integrity of the Halibut/Sablefish IFQ program.*

*Signed by: Andy Mezirow, Julianne Curry, Anne Vanderhoeven, Chuck McCallum, Becca Robbins Gisclair, Theresa Peterson, Tim Evers, Jeff Farvour, Alexis Kwachka*

*A motion to recommend final action to allow fish-up in Area 4A failed 5-14 with 1 abstention.*

### **C-4(b) Review Halibut CSP**

The AP recommends that the Council adopt (1) the unanimous recommendation made to the Council in the March 27, 2012 minutes of the Halibut Charter Management Implementation Committee and replace the management matrix in the CSP preferred alternative with the "2012 Model" for charter halibut management; and (2) the committee's unanimous recommendation to adopt the ADF&G logbooks as the primary data collection method for estimating charter halibut harvests under the CSP, with an appropriate adjustment factor applied to the allocations. The AP recommends that the Council work with ADF&G to develop a fair correction factor for switching from the SWHS to the logbook.

The AP further recommends that the Council adopt revisions to the GAF program as follows:

- Convert GAF average weight calculated annually by managers and the new average weight used as the conversion factor of IFQ pounds to GAF issued as numbers of fish.
- In the first year of the GAF program, GAF weight to number to number of fish conversion factor based on previous year's data or most recent year without maximum size limit in effect.
- Define the leasing limitation from one IFQ shareholder from 10% or 1500 pounds, whichever is greater, to 10% or 1500 pounds in Area 2C and 15% or 1500 pounds, whichever is greater, in Area 3A.
- Include a requirement for anglers to mark GAF by removing the tips of the upper and lower lobes of the tail and report the length of retained GAF halibut to NMFS through the NMFS approved electronic reporting system.
- A complete review within three years of the start of the GAF program, taking into account the economic effects on both sectors.

The AP further recommends the Council initiate a separate analysis on the ability to purchase IFQ/GAF as soon as possible without delaying implementation of the CSP.

*Motion passed 20-0.*

#### **C-5 Scallop SAFE**

The AP recommends the Council approve the Scallop SAFE report. *Motion passed 18-0.*

#### **C-6(a) GOA Pacific Cod Jig Management (Reverse Parallel) discussion paper**

The AP recommends the Council take no further action at this time on the reverse parallel concept. Given the legal concerns by NOAA GC, the complexity of multiple state areas, and the uncertainty with recently implemented sectors splits, the AP believes it is appropriate to continue with the current management structure at this time. *Motion passed 19-0.*

#### **C-6(b) Limiting Other Gear on Jig Vessels in GOA Pacific cod fishery**

The AP recommends the Council request expanding the discussion paper on limiting other gear on board vessels while jigging Pacific cod in the Gulf of Alaska. The AP further recommends the Council consider:

- Limiting other groundfish gear types on board while jigging
- Limiting to other deployable groundfish gear onboard
- Limiting the ability to fish two gear types concurrently
- Limiting the number of hooks allowed on board.
- Comparing State regulations with Federal regulations being considered.

*Motion passed 20-0 with 1 abstention.*

#### **D-1(b) VMS Use and Requirements**

The AP recommends the Council request the discussion paper be expanded to include better technology for more precise vessel tracking, including increased VMS polling rates and associated costs. Improved vessel tracking could minimize the need for buffers around closed areas and could help corroborate voluntary attempts at area avoidance. *Motion passed 20-0 with 1 abstention.*



#### **D-1(d) Report from the BSAI Crab ROFR Workgroup**

The AP recommends the Council accept the BSAI Crab ROFR workgroup's report as the final product, which has attempted to provide the full range of alternatives available to address each action item, and that this report be moved forward for analysis and initial review. *Motion passed 17-0.*

#### **D-2 Staff Tasking**

The AP recommends the Council request the AFSC update the 2007 paper on Bering Sea canyons incorporating new information available since that time. Following, Council staff should prepare a discussion paper including fishery activity in the area, past actions for protection in the area and process for any potential future actions. *Motion passed 17-0.*

The AP recommends the Council initiate a discussion paper on sablefish release survival rates. *Motion passed 17-0.*

The AP requests that we receive a report on the status of the restructured observer program. *Motion passed 17-0.*

The AP recommends the Council continue to strongly support development of a discussion paper on halibut CSP leasing prohibition by NMFS that is currently scheduled for review in June. *Motion passed 17-0.*

The AP recommends the Council request staff expand the C-4(b) CSP supplemental analysis to include a more detailed text description of the differences in allocations when comparing GHLL actual harvest and CSP allocation in such a way to clarify it for industry. *Motion passed 17-0.*

The AP recommends the Council either completely include Military Welfare and Recreation charter halibut limited entry permit holders under the CSP and have their harvests count against the charter sector allocation, or exclude them from the charter sector allocation by taking the military harvests off the CEY, similar to the process for accounting for unguided removals. *Motion passed 15-2.*

The AP recommends the Council work with NMFS to revise the definition of "charter guide" to include outfitters, consistent with the State definition. *Motion passed 17-0.*

The AP supports the IFQ Implementation Committee priority recommendations from the March 26, 2012 meeting with the Committee's suggested language change for Proposal #4. The AP further recommends that IFQ proposals do not delay other halibut items on the Council agenda such as charter halibut and bycatch. *Motion passed 17-0.*

The AP recommends the Council request NOAA provide an update on the status of providing closure areas on disk that are certified by NMFS that can be integrated into navigational software (ECC Globe and Olex). *Motion passed 17-0.*