



March 31, 2023

Agenda B-2: NMFS Management Report

Status of Actions Report Online

Updated daily at: <https://www.fisheries.noaa.gov/sites/default/files/akro/amendments.pdf>

Progress on Rulemaking

Highlights on progress since the February 2023 meeting include:

- Effective **February 27, 2023**, NMFS issued regulations to implement Amendments 124 and Amendment 112 to the BSAI and GOA FMPs, IFQ Omnibus Amendments.
- Effective **March 8, 2023**, NMFS issued regulations to implement Amendment 52 to the Crab FMP, Economic Data Reporting Revisions.
- On **March 8, 2023**, NMFS approved Amendment 123 to the BSAI FMP, Halibut Abundance-Based Management. A final rule to implement Amendment 123 is expected to be published in 2023.
- Effective **March 10, 2023** and **March 2, 2023**, NMFS issued the final BSAI and GOA harvest specifications. The comment period on the proposed BSAI and GOA harvest specifications ended on **January 13, 2023** and **January 3, 2023** respectively.
- Effective **February 28, 2023**, NMFS, on behalf of the International Pacific Halibut Commission (IPHC), published as regulations the 2023 annual management measures governing the Pacific halibut fishery.
- On **March 24, 2023**, NMFS approved Amendment 122 to the BSAI FMP to implement the Pacific Cod Trawl Cooperative Program. A final rule to implement Amendment 122 is expected to be published mid 2023.
- **Attachment 1** provides additional detail.

Inseason Management Report

Attachment 2 provides additional detail.

RQE Legislation

On January 3, 2023 legislation was signed that, among other things, authorizes NMFS to develop regulations necessary for the collection of fees from halibut charter vessel operators. The purpose of the fees is to fund the Recreational Quota Entity (RQE).

NMFS anticipates there will be much work in developing the means to collect the fees and make the fees available to the RQE. As recommended by the Council in April 2023, NMFS intends to work closely with the RQE and charter vessel operators in these efforts.

MRIP Implementation Plan

The MRIP (Marine Recreational Information Program) is a nationwide NOAA Fisheries program dedicated to improving recreational fisheries data collections. In addition to implementing and



overseeing Federal data collection programs, part of MRIP's mission is to form partnerships with the States to offer technical expertise and funding resources for improving recreational fisheries' surveys and other data collections, where needed. The Alaska MRIP Implementation Plan was drafted by the Alaska Department of Fish and Game with assistance from NMFS Alaska Region and the Alaska Fisheries Science Center. The Alaska Plan was recently reviewed and adopted by the MRIP Management and Executive teams. In the near future, the agencies will use the Plan as a basis to work collaboratively on data collection improvements.

NOAA's National Seafood Strategy

NOAA Fisheries' Senior Advisor for Seafood Strategy, Michael Rubino, and National Seafood Strategy Coordinator, Sarah Shoffler, will present an overview of NOAA's [draft National Seafood Strategy](#), which was recently released. This strategy underscores NOAA's strong commitment to seafood sector resilience. It aligns with the Biden-Harris Administration's goals for economic recovery, environmental sustainability, and climate resilience. Further, the White House Conference on Hunger, Nutrition, and Health points to the need for increased seafood consumption in the United States, which this strategy aims to address.

The strategy also responds to the unprecedented challenges facing the U.S. seafood industry, including climate change, the coronavirus pandemic, new technologies and other ocean uses, and significant labor shortages and aging infrastructure. The National Seafood Strategy outlines our direction for supporting a thriving domestic U.S. seafood economy. It describes our approach to enhancing the resilience of the seafood sector in the face of climate change and other stressors, based on years' of feedback from the seafood sector.

Our vision is to ensure that:

- U.S. seafood continues to be produced sustainably
- The U.S. seafood sector contributes to the nation's climate-ready food production and to meeting critical domestic nutritional needs
- U.S. seafood production increases to support jobs, the economy, and the competitiveness of the U.S. seafood sector
- Supply chains and infrastructure are modernized with more value-added activity in the United States
- Opportunities are expanded for a diverse and growing seafood workforce

We will implement the strategy by focusing on four goals:

1. Sustain or increase sustainable U.S. wild capture production
2. Increase sustainable U.S. aquaculture production
3. Foster access to domestic and global markets for the U.S. seafood industry
4. Strengthen the entire U.S. seafood sector

Roundtable: Alaġum Kanuuġ Nomination & the National Marine Sanctuary Designation Process

On April 6, NOAA will host a roundtable to share information about the processes for nominating and designating national marine sanctuaries and for attendees to share their perspectives and ask questions regarding the processes and NOAA's inventory of successful nominations. The roundtable will be from 5:30 to 7:30 pm in the Aleutian Room at the Hilton Hotel.

The following NOAA personnel will host the roundtable:

- Kristina Kekuewa; NOAA Office of National Marine Sanctuaries, Pacific Islands Regional Director
- Hoku Ka'aekuahiwi Pousima; NOAA Office of National Marine Sanctuaries, Pacific Islands Regional Policy Analyst
- Erik Federman, NOAA Office of General Counsel, Ocean and Coasts Section, Attorney-Advisor
- Zachary Penney; NOAA, Office of the Under Secretary of Commerce for Oceans and Atmosphere, Senior Advisor

Tribal Engagement Update

Engagement: NMFS will be hosting a tribal engagement session on April 3rd, 2023 as part of the April Council meeting. The purpose of this session is to have Alaska Federally-recognized Tribes and Tribal Organizations that represent Tribal Governments engage with NMFS on developing overarching tribal consultation protocols, review and provide feedback on a draft tribal consultation outline, learn about the differing responsibilities of NMFS AKRO, AFSC and the NPFMC, and more. This will also be an excellent opportunity to meet with AKRO's new Tribal liaison, [Amilee Wilson](#) and to provide input on how tribal consultations should operate moving forward. This is an informal event and all are welcome.

Consultations: NMFS has recently participated in three formal Tribal Consultations. The first Consultation on February 3rd focused on the effects of the groundfish harvest specifications on salmon bycatch, while the second Consultation on February 15th focused on how NMFS and tribal partners can engage in meaningful tribal consultation and the third on March 17th focused on the Cook Inlet salmon action which is at final action for the April Council meeting. Summaries of these consultations are in progress and will be sent out to participants and posted on the [NMFS webpage](#). NMFS also presented the analysis for the Cook Inlet salmon fishery management plan at the Cook Inlet Tribal Fisheries Group meeting on March 30, 2023,

For further information on NMFS Sustainable Fisheries tribal engagement activities please contact Kelly Cates at kelly.cates@noaa.gov.

ESA Section 7 Update

In December 2022, NMFS AKR presented a plan for upcoming ESA Section 7 consultations to evaluate the effects of the GOA and BSAI groundfish fisheries on ESA-listed species and critical habitats. Since the December Council meeting, NMFS has created an internal working group and begun compiling information necessary to complete the analyses needed for the consultations.

As a reminder, the proposed scope of the consultations will include all groundfish fisheries managed under the GOA and BSAI groundfish FMPs, including State of Alaska parallel groundfish fisheries, and ESA-listed species, including the Sunflower sea star should it be listed.

The consultations will focus on the effects of the current fishery management regime (i.e. status quo) and NMFS will use the best scientific information available in the analyses. NMFS will keep stakeholders informed throughout the consultation process.

NMFS has determined that allowing the groundfish fisheries to continue to operate during this reinitiation period will not violate ESA section 7(a)(2) or 7(d). These consultations will be a significant undertaking and will require considerable NMFS AKR staff time and resources.

Proposed Rule to List the Sunflower Sea Star as Threatened under the ESA

On March 16, 2023, NMFS announced that, in response to a 2021 petition from the Center for Biological Diversity, it has completed a status review of the sunflower sea star (*Pycnopodia helianthoides*) and is [proposing to list the species as threatened](#) throughout its range under the Endangered Species Act (ESA). The main threat to the species is an unknown lethal pathogen that results in Sea Star Wasting Syndrome (SSWS), which appears to be exacerbated by stressors such as warming ocean temperatures. Since the most recent outbreak, which began in 2013, this syndrome has resulted in mortality of billions of sunflower sea stars across their range, which extends from Adak, AK to Baja California.

Species listed as threatened under the ESA do not automatically receive the same protections afforded to species listed as endangered, but protective regulations may be established for threatened species under section 4(d) of the ESA. NMFS is not proposing any take prohibitions or protective regulations under ESA section 4(d) at this time, but may consider doing so in a future rulemaking. Nevertheless, actions authorized, funded, or carried out by the federal government that may affect the sunflower sea star will require consultation to determine if they are likely to adversely affect or jeopardize the continued existence of the species.

We are also not proposing critical habitat at this time because data are currently insufficient to determine specific habitat areas and features that are essential to the conservation of this species. The sunflower sea star is a generalist, using a wide range of substrate types and depths, and occurring both in areas with and without vegetation like kelp or eelgrass.

If listed, we do not expect the listing to significantly affect federal fisheries since bycatch in fisheries has been identified as a relatively low threat to the species. We will encourage safe/gentle handling of sunflower sea stars encountered as bycatch. Additionally, having a better understanding of the number of sunflower sea stars taken as bycatch in fisheries is needed. NMFS will complete ESA section 7 consultations on fisheries with a federal nexus that may incidentally affect sunflower sea stars to ensure that fisheries activities do not jeopardize the survival of the species.

- [Link to the petition and NMFS's positive 90-day finding](#)
- [Webstory](#)

Personnel Changes

New Staff--

Deputy Regional Administrator - Dr. Jamal Moss will be the Alaska Region's next Deputy Regional Administrator. Jamal is a highly regarded scientist and leader who currently serves as deputy director of the Alaska Fisheries Science Center's Auke Bay Laboratories, where he oversees teams of scientists and administrative professionals responsible for fisheries stock assessment, genetics, information technology, facilities management, and other functions. He served a stint in NMFS headquarters as Chief of Staff to the Director of Scientific Programs, coordinating initiatives across all NMFS Science Centers and headquarters offices, and served on the Board of Investigators for the North Pacific Research Board's Gulf of Alaska Integrated Ecosystem Assessment Program. He worked for 19 years as a research fisheries biologist at AFSC where he successfully led many multidisciplinary teams, including as lead scientist for the Gulf of Alaska Integrated Ecosystem Assessment, Jamal helped found and chaired AFSC's Team for Inclusion Diversity and Equity and led the AFSC Board of Directors to develop associated policy and programmatic changes, and he founded the NOAA West Diversity Equity Belonging and Inclusion initiative.

LANTERN Detail - SF is excited to welcome another new face through [NOAA's LANTERN program](#). This program promotes employee growth, networking, and collaboration through in-person and remote detail opportunities for employees to work in a different part of NOAA for a period of time (positions range from 30 days to 1 year). **Britni LaVine** begins a full-time detail assignment with us on April 3 and will continue through the end of July. Britni is a Fish Biologist in the Southeast Regional Office Sustainable Fisheries Division. She is the lead for the limited access privilege programs in the Southeast (Gulf of Mexico Red Snapper and Grouper-Tilefish Individual Fishing (IFQ) Programs, as well as the South Atlantic Wreckfish Individual Transferable Quota (ITQ) Program) in Saint Petersburg, Florida. Britni will be assisting with the implementation of the Pacific cod Trawl Program (PCTC). Britni has a Masters degree in Environmental Science and Policy and a Bachelor degree in Environmental Science and Policy from the University of South Florida.

LANTERN Detail - In April, SF Economist, Scott Miller, will begin a one year detail as the Arctic Policy Advisor to the Deputy Assistant Secretary for International Fisheries at NOAA. Scott will provide direct policy staff support to the advancement of the Arctic agenda in NOAA in alignment with the NOAA Strategic Plan, through the Arctic Executive Committee and Arctic Action Teams, and to connect with NOAA's Policy team and NOAA Budget Office to promote the integration of Arctic priorities into broader agency initiatives. This work will support the Interagency Bering Task Force co-chairs and Task Force at large in their implementation of Executive Order 13754, advancing climate resilience; the rights, needs, and knowledge of Alaska Native tribes; the delicate and unique ecosystem; and the protection of marine mammals and other wildlife within the Northern Bering Sea Climate Resilience Area, and will also include working with the Bering Intergovernmental Tribal Advisory Council and supporting organizations to build a Federal-Tribal working relationship on topics relating to food security, disaster preparedness, and communications.

Open Job Announcements --

We are excited to share a job announcement for up to 3 positions with the NMFS Alaska Regional office of Sustainable Fisheries. The Sustainable Fisheries Division authorizes federal fisheries in Alaska waters annually, and implements fishery management programs developed by the North Pacific Fishery Management Council, consistent with the Magnuson-Stevens Act and associated laws. We oversee and administer Federal fisheries, collect and manage catch data, and implement monitoring and fishery management measures. We also coordinate with the State of Alaska on fishery management and data collection programs, and with the International Pacific Halibut Commission on regulations governing the recreational, commercial, and subsistence Pacific halibut fisheries off Alaska.

This is an excellent career opportunity to help manage more than half the fish caught in commercial fisheries off the coast of the United States, contribute to their sustainability, and help develop and implement fisheries management regulations and actions such as:

- Implementation of Alaska Region's catch share programs and other fishery management actions, including Electronic Monitoring (EM).
- Ecosystem-based fishery management initiatives, bycatch reduction, and climate change issues.
- Fishery impacts on marine mammals, seabirds, and habitat.

Three Fishery Management Specialist positions in the Sustainable Fisheries Division (ZP-0401-02/03) open March 29 - April 11, 2023. This position is to be located in Juneau, AK.

NMFS AKRO-23-11893393-DHA: <https://www.usajobs.gov/job/715917400>

NMFS AKRO-23-11893366-DE: <https://www.usajobs.gov/job/715918100>

NMFS AKRO-23-11893367-ST: <https://www.usajobs.gov/job/715917700>

Recent Job Announcements --

Assistant Regional Administrator for Habitat Conservation Division (ZP-0480-05) open March 9 - March 23, 2023. This position is to be located in either Juneau or Anchorage, Alaska.

NMFS AKRO-23-11866810-DE -

<https://www.usajobs.gov/GetJob/ViewDetails/711445300>

NMFS AKRO-23-11866811-ST -

<https://www.usajobs.gov/GetJob/ViewDetails/711446100>

Program Manager for Restricted Access Management (ZA-0340-05) open March 17 - March 30, 2023. This position is to be located in Juneau, AK.

NMFS AKRO-23-11882932-DE: <https://www.usajobs.gov/job/713429300>

NMFS AKRO-23-11882933-ST: <https://www.usajobs.gov/job/713428900>