

Bering Sea Snow Crab PSC: DRAFT Action Plan

Updated 7/25/18

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1 What is the action?

In 2016 the Council passed a motion requesting an analysis to review Bering Sea snow crab PSC management measures to determine whether recent information and changes to fishery management suggest that changes are needed.

Council alternatives

As adopted by the Council on February 6, 2016:

1. No action
2. Revise *C. opilio* PSC limits to be based on the stock assessment model estimate. Remove the minimum and maximum *C. opilio* PSC limit for trawl vessels in the COBLZ, and reduce the *C. opilio* PSC limit to (Option 1: 0.10%, Option 2: 0.075%, Option 3: 0.05%) of the total abundance of *C. opilio*.
3. Revise *C. opilio* PSC limits to be based on the stock assessment model estimate. Reduce the maximum and/or minimum *C. opilio* PSC limit for trawl vessels in the COBLZ by (option 1: 10%, Option 2: 15%, or Option 3: 50%).

2 Why are we doing it?

- Management measures have not been reviewed since specified in 1997;
- Models of snow crab population dynamics and estimates of incidental catch in groundfish fisheries has improved;
- Groundfish trawl fishery management has changed – no longer a race for fish for some sectors subject to snow crab PSC limits.

Council purpose and need statement

As articulated in February 2016:

Management measures in the Bering Sea-Aleutian Island groundfish FMP intended to protect Bering Sea snow crab (*C. opilio*) and their habitat have not been reviewed since they were specified in 1997. Since that time, our ability to model snow crab population dynamics and estimate incidental catch in the groundfish fisheries has improved. Management of the groundfish trawl fisheries has also changed; there is no longer a race-for-fish for some of the sectors that are subject to snow crab PSC limits. Therefore, it is appropriate due to these changes to review and analyze the limits in place and if changes are needed.

Note that the Council may wish to modify this purpose and need statement.

3 Analysis

3.1 Type of analysis required

RIR – Likely economic impacts for any trawl fisheries that may become constrained by new PSC limits. Analysis of frequency of constraint, anticipated response of fleet to closures, etc.

IRFA – Changes to regulations may affect small businesses and other small entities.

EA – potential for impacts to fish and protected resources from response of trawl fleet to closures, impacts to EFH and other important habitat. May consider categorical exclusion to EA.

3.2 Substantive issues

Some fleets may be constrained by new PSC limits and may move outside of COBLZ to complete their fishing seasons. This may have economic impacts to the fleets, depending on how often, when, and where they are forced to move.

There are unlikely to be environmental impacts that necessitate preparation of an Environmental Assessment. The action team may wish to consider a categorical exclusion for the NEPA document.

3.3 Data / methods to be used

Data range for analysis: 2008 - Present

- Justification: Amendment 80 in effect starting 2008

3.4 Legal issues and controversy

Some confidentiality issues with data

4 Implementation issues

No issues anticipated.

5 Project planning

5.1 Action plan team

NPFMC	Steve MacLean	project lead
AKFIN	Michael Fey	data support
NMFS SF	Scott Miller	RIR author

NMFS SF	Mary Furuness	
NMFS SF	Josh Keaton	
NMFS OP	Jason Gasper	
NOAA GC	Joshua Fortenberry	
NOAA AFSC	Cody Szuwalski	stock assessment author
ADFG	Jocelyn Runnebaum	

5.2 Milestones and deadlines

Council meeting	Action initiated February 2016
7/23/18	First action plan meeting, identify writing team
8/18	Second action plan meeting after 8/13/18, Date TBD
10/19/18	writing assignments due
10/26/18	put document together/send out for internal review
11/2/18	release initial review draft
10/18 Council meeting	Initial review of EA/RIR/IRFA

5.3 Writing assignments

Alternatives

Chapters 1, 2, EA	Steve MacLean
RIR	Scott Miller
IRFA	If necessary

Specific needs:

mapping	TBD – Steve Lewis (?)
e.g., stock author review	Cody Szuwalski