ADVISORY PANEL
Motions and Rationale
December 3-7, 2019 - Anchorage, AK

C1 BSAI Groundfish Specs

AP Motion 1

The AP has reviewed the BSAI Ecosystem Status and BSAI SAFE reports and recommends the Council approve these reports.
Motion passed 19-0

AP Motion 2

The AP recommends the Council approve the TAC specifications presented by the Industry Groundfish Coalition in the attached Table 1**, except with no increase for the 2020 TAC for the BSAI sablefish stock and to hold the TAC at 1489 MT for the Bering Sea and 2008 MT for the Aleutian Islands.**
Amendment passed 12-7
Motion as amended passed 12-7

Rationale in support:

- *The SAFE chapter explains how large year-classes of sablefish have failed to materialize in the past and most recently the 2014-year class size estimate has been downgraded by more than half since the 2017 stock assessment.*
- *The lack of large fish apparent in the directed fishery and survey data indicate that the sablefish stock is heavily dependent on a young stock of fish, and it was discussed in the SSC that the sablefish stock can be carried by a handful of large recruitment events as we are now seeing. Ensuring that these year classes reach spawning maturity is paramount to the future health of the stock.*
- *There is an economic benefit for all user groups of sablefish in allowing the young stock to grow to a more marketable size.*
- *Spawning biomass of sablefish is still at B33% which is below the target goal of B40% as evidenced by the stock assessment author.*
- *Directed fishery CPUE for sablefish is very low and the model did not adequately capture this as there was a large lack of fit to fishery CPUE and trawl survey data.*
- *Public comments supported no increase in sablefish TAC from 2019 levels.*

Rationale in opposition:

- *Biological/stock concerns (including all sources of mortality) for sablefish are incorporated into and addressed under the species stock assessment and therefore reflected in the ABC level established by the SSC for 2020. Recognizing that there are some biological/stock uncertainties that are not incorporated into the stock assessment, the SSC established a buffer on the maximum permissible ABC as a precaution against those uncertainties. The established*

2020 ABC represents the best available biological science for the sablefish stock. TAC amounts are not established to address biological/stock concerns. TAC amounts are meant to reflect any economic/social considerations of the directed and/or bycatch fisheries (this approach was reiterated by the Council at their October 2018 meeting) while achieving OY.

- *Establishing an artificially low TAC amount for sablefish is not the appropriate vehicle for addressing concerns stemming from the recent increase in sablefish bycatch. Bycatch concerns are more appropriately addressed via other management tools. An artificially low TAC amount will not eliminate sablefish catches by the trawl sector, but it will force an unnecessary increase in discards, which negatively impacts the economic benefits to that sector thereby negatively affecting the overall OY available to be achieved from the stock.*
- *Advocating for a lower sablefish TAC based on conservation (stock) concerns while also requesting to be able to discard small (high grade) sablefish, focusing effort on the larger fish of the population (both the PT and SSC noted the hollowing out older age classes as a concern), under a separate agenda item is contradictory. Additionally, advocating for a lower sablefish TAC in order to keep fish in the water (to benefit future population) while also stating concerns with the directed fishery not being able to achieve their total available catch (thereby leaving larger fish in the water) is also contradictory. Artificially lower TACs in AK will not help sablefish prices to increase because the stock is caught all along the coast.*
- *The amended TAC sheet is not reflective of the collaborative work and consensus achieved from the various groundfish sectors whose goal is to achieve the greatest optimum yield (under the constraint of the 2 million mt cap) for the fisheries they represent. The change to the sablefish TAC doesn't total the 2 million mt cap, so OY for the BSAI groundfish fisheries is not achieved.*

Table 1 AP recommended total allowable catch amounts for Groundfish in the Bering Sea/Aleutian Islands (metric tons) for 2020-2021.

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Species	Area	2019 OFL	2019 ABC	2019 TAC	Catch as of 11/2/2019	2020 OFL	2020 ABC	2020 TAC	2021 OFL	2021 ABC	2021 TAC
Pollock	EBS	3,914,000	2,163,000	1,397,000	1,406,063	4,085,000	2,043,000	1,425,000	3,385,000	1,767,000	1,450,000
	AI	64,240	52,887	19,000	1,592	66,973	55,120	19,000	70,970	58,384	19,000
	Bogoslof	183,080	137,310	75	8	183,080	137,310	75	183,080	137,310	75
Pacific cod	BS	216,000	181,000	166,475	148,142	191,386	155,873	141,799	125,734	102,975	92,633
	AI	27,400	20,600	14,214	12,954	27,400	20,600	13,796	27,400	20,600	13,796
Sablefish	AK-Wide					50,481			64,765		
	BS	3,221	1,489	1,489	3,202	n/a	2,174	**1,489**	n/a	2,865	2,865
	AI	4,350	2,008	2,008	662	n/a	2,952	**2,008**	n/a	3,891	2,500
Yellowfin sole	BSAI	290,000	263,200	154,000	122,309	287,307	260,918	151,000	287,943	261,497	168,900
Greenland turbot	BSAI	11,362	9,658	5,294	2,855	11,319	9,625	5,300	10,006	8,510	5,376
	BS	n/a	8,431	5,125	2,681	n/a	8,403	5,125	n/a	7,429	5,125
	AI	n/a	1,227	169	174	n/a	1,222	175	n/a	1,080	251
Arrowtooth flounder	BSAI	82,939	70,673	8,000	9,591	84,057	71,618	10,000	86,647	73,804	10,000
Kamchatka flounder	BSAI	10,965	9,260	5,000	4,494	11,495	9,708	6,800	11,472	9,688	7,000
Northern rock sole	BSAI	122,000	118,900	47,100	25,497	157,300	153,300	47,100	236,800	230,700	49,000
Flathead sole	BSAI	80,918	66,625	14,500	15,062	82,810	68,134	19,500	86,432	71,079	24,000
Alaska plaice	BSAI	39,880	33,600	18,000	15,812	37,600	31,600	17,000	36,500	30,700	20,000
Other flatfish	BSAI	21,824	16,368	6,500	3,756	21,824	16,368	4,000	21,824	16,368	5,000
Pacific Ocean perch	BSAI	61,067	50,594	44,069	41,653	58,956	48,846	42,875	56,589	46,885	42,036
	BS	n/a	14,675	14,675	13,178	n/a	14,168	14,168	n/a	13,600	13,600
	EAI	n/a	11,459	11,009	10,324	n/a	11,063	10,613	n/a	10,619	10,619
	CAI	n/a	8,435	8,385	8,263	n/a	8,144	8,094	n/a	7,817	7,817
	WAI	n/a	16,025	10,000	9,888	n/a	15,471	10,000	n/a	14,849	10,000
Northern rockfish	BSAI	15,507	12,664	6,500	9,057	19,751	16,243	10,000	19,070	15,683	10,000
Blackspotted/Rougheye Rockfish	BSAI	676	555	279	387	861	708	349	1,090	899	424
	EBS/EAI	n/a	351	75	82	n/a	444	85	n/a	560	85
	CAI/WAI	n/a	204	204	305	n/a	264	264	n/a	339	339
Shortraker rockfish	BSAI	722	541	358	355	722	541	375	722	541	375
Other rockfish	BSAI	1,793	1,344	663	1,254	1,793	1,344	1,088	1,793	1,344	1,088
	BS	n/a	956	275	685	n/a	956	700	n/a	956	700
	AI	n/a	388	388	569	n/a	388	388	n/a	388	388
Atka mackerel	BSAI	79,200	68,500	57,951	56,563	81,200	70,100	59,305	74,800	64,400	54,482
	EAI/BS	n/a	23,970	23,970	22,802	n/a	24,535	24,535	n/a	22,540	22,540
	CAI	n/a	14,390	14,390	14,320	n/a	14,721	14,721	n/a	13,524	13,524
	WAI	n/a	30,140	19,591	19,441	n/a	30,844	20,049	n/a	28,336	18,418
Skates	BSAI	51,152	42,714	26,000	17,873	49,792	41,543	16,000	48,289	40,248	16,000
Sculpins	BSAI	53,201	39,995	5,000	5,300	67,817	50,863	5,000	67,817	50,863	5,000
Sharks	BSAI	689	517	125	141	689	517	150	689	517	150
Octopuses	BSAI	4,769	3,576	400	244	4,769	3,576	275	4,769	3,576	300
Total	BSAI	5,340,955	3,367,578	2,000,000	1,904,826	5,584,382	3,272,581	1,999,284	4,910,201	3,020,326	2,000,000

Sources: 2019 OFLs, ABCs, and TACs are from harvest specifications adopted by the Council in December 2018; 2019 catches through October 2, 2019 from AKR

AP Motion 3

The AP recommends the Council set flatfish flexibility reserves in Table 7 (provided in the Action Memo for Agenda item C1) to maximize the ABC reserves and recommends the approval of Tables 8 through 13 as provided in the Action Memo for Agenda item C1.
Motion passed 19-0

Rationale:

- *The ABSC comment letter submitted under agenda item E1 Staff Tasking was referenced during deliberations, noting the crabbers concerns regarding the perceived disparity between PSC limits and the directed fisheries.*

TABLE 7–PROPOSED 2020 AND 2021 ABC SURPLUS, ABC RESERVES, COMMUNITY DEVELOPMENT QUOTA (CDQ) ABC RESERVES, AND AMENDMENT 80 ABC RESERVES IN THE BSAI FOR FLATHEAD SOLE, ROCK SOLE, AND YELLOWFIN SOLE IN METRIC TONS

Sector	Flathead sole	Rock sole	Yellowfin sole
ABC	68,448	143,700	257,800
TAC	14,500	57,100	166,425
ABC surplus	53,948	86,600	91,375
ABC reserve	53,948	86,600	91,375
CDQ ABC reserve	5,772	9,266	9,777
Amendment 80 ABC reserve	48,176	77,334	81,598

TABLE 8–PROPOSED 2020 AND 2021 APPORTIONMENT OF PROHIBITED SPECIES CATCH ALLOWANCES TO NON-TRAWL GEAR, THE CDQ PROGRAM, AMENDMENT 80, AND THE BSAI TRAWL LIMITED ACCESS SECTORS

PSC species and area[1]	Total PSC	Non-trawl PSC	CDQ PSQ reserve[2]	Trawl PSC remaining after CDQ PSQ	Amendment 80 sector[3]	BSAI trawl limited access sector
Halibut mortality (mt) BSAI	3,515	710	315	n/a	1,745	745
Herring (mt) BSAI	2,532	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a
Red king crab (animals) Zone 1	97,000	n/a	10,379	86,621	43,293	26,489
C. opilio (animals) COBLZ	8,580,898	n/a	918,156	7,662,742	3,766,238	2,462,805
C. bairdi crab (animals) Zone 1	980,000	n/a	104,860	875,140	368,521	411,228
C. bairdi crab (animals) Zone 2	2,970,000	n/a	317,790	2,652,210	627,778	1,241,500

[1] Refer to § 679.2 for definitions of zones.
[2] The PSQ reserve for crab species is 10.7 percent of each crab PSC limit.
[3] The Amendment 80 program reduced apportionment of the trawl PSC limits for crab below the total PSC limit. These reductions are not apportioned to other gear types or sectors.

TABLE 9-PROPOSED 2020 AND 2021 HERRING AND RED KING CRAB SAVINGS SUBAREA PROHIBITED SPECIES CATCH ALLOWANCES FOR ALL TRAWL SECTORS

Fishery categories	Herring (mt) BSAI	Red king crab (animals) Zone 1
Yellowfin sole	110	n/a
Rock sole/flathead sole/other flatfish [1]	54	n/a
Greenland turbot/arrowtooth flounder/Kamchatka flounder/sablefish	7	n/a
Rockfish	7	n/a
Pacific cod	13	n/a
Midwater trawl pollock	2,299	n/a
Pollock/Atka mackerel/other species[2,3]	42	n/a
Red king crab savings subarea non-pelagic trawl gear[4]	n/a	24,250
Total trawl PSC	2,532	97,000

[1]"Other flatfish" for PSC monitoring includes all flatfish species, except for halibut (a prohibited species), Alaska plaice, arrowtooth flounder, flathead sole, Greenland turbot, Kamchatka flounder, rock sole, and yellowfin sole.
[2]Pollock other than midwater trawl pollock, Atka mackerel, and "other species" fishery category.
[3]"Other species" for PSC monitoring includes skates, sculpins, sharks, and octopuses.
[4]In October 2019, the Council recommended that the red king crab bycatch limit for non-pelagic trawl fisheries within the RKCSS be limited to 25 percent of the red king crab PSC allowance (see § 679.21(e)(3)(ii)(B)(*2*)).
Note: Species apportionments may not total precisely due to rounding.

TABLE 10–PROPOSED 2020 AND 2021 PROHIBITED SPECIES BYCATCH ALLOWANCES FOR THE BSAI TRAWL LIMITED ACCESS SECTOR

BSAI trawl limited access sector fisheries	Prohibited species and area[1]				
	Halibut mortality (mt) BSAI	Red king crab (animals) Zone 1	*C. opilio* (animals) COBLZ	*C. bairdi* (animals)	
				Zone 1	Zone 2
Yellowfin sole	150	23,338	2,321,656	346,228	1,185,500
Rock sole/flathead sole/other flatfish[2]	-	-	-	-	-
Greenland turbot/arrowtooth flounder/Kamchatka flounder/sablefish	-	-	-	-	-
Rockfish April 15-December 31	4	-	3,835	-	1,000
Pacific cod	391	2,954	98,959	60,000	49,999
Pollock/Atka mackerel/other species[3]	200	197	38,356	5,000	5,000
Total BSAI trawl limited access sector PSC	745	26,489	2,462,805	411,228	1,241,500

[1] Refer to § 679.2 for definitions of areas.

[2] "Other flatfish" for PSC monitoring includes all flatfish species, except for halibut (a prohibited species), Alaska plaice, arrowtooth flounder, flathead sole, Greenland turbot, Kamchatka flounder, rock sole, and yellowfin sole.

[3] "Other species" for PSC monitoring includes skates, sculpins, sharks, and octopuses.

Note: Species apportionments may not total precisely due to rounding.

TABLE 11–PROPOSED 2020 AND 2021 HALIBUT PROHIBITED SPECIES BYCATCH ALLOWANCES FOR NON-TRAWL FISHERIES

Halibut mortality (mt) BSAI				
Non-trawl fisheries	Seasons	Catcher/processor	Catcher vessel	All Non-Trawl
Pacific cod	Annual Pacific cod	648	13	n/a
	January 1-June 10	388	9	n/a
	June 10-August 15	162	2	n/a
	August 15-December 31	98	2	n/a
Non-Pacific cod non-trawl-Total	May 1-December 31	n/a	n/a	49
Groundfish pot and jig	n/a	n/a	n/a	Exempt
Sablefish hook-and-line	n/a	n/a	n/a	Exempt
Total for all non-trawl PSC	n/a	n/a	n/a	710

TABLE 12–PROPOSED 2020 AND 2021 PACIFIC HALIBUT DISCARD MORTALITY RATES (DMR) FOR THE BSAI

Gear	Sector	Halibut discard mortality rate (percent)
Pelagic trawl	All	100
Non-pelagic trawl	Mothership and catcher/processor	75
Non-pelagic trawl	Catcher vessel	58
Hook-and-line	Catcher vessel	9
Hook-and-line	Catcher/processor	9
Pot	All	27

TABLE 13–BERING SEA AND ALEUTIAN ISLANDS PACIFIC COD ABC, GHL, AND MAXIMUM TAC FOR 2020 AND 2021

	Aleutian Islands	**Bering Sea**
2020		
ABC	20,600	155,873
GHL[1]	6,804[2]	14,074
MaxTAC	13,796[3]	141,799
2021		
ABC	20,600	102,975
GHL	6,804*	10,343
MaxTAC	13,796[3]	92,633

[1]GHL in the Bering Sea includes 9% for the pot gear fishery and an addition 45 tons for the jig gear fishery. GHL in the Aleutian Islands is 35% of ABC in 2020, expected to increase to 39% of ABC in 2021.
[2]GHL in the Aleutian Islands is capped at 6,804 t, (15,000,000 pounds). Without the cap the GHL would be 7,210 t in 2020 and 8,034 in 2021
[3]MaxTAC in the Aleutian Islands is ABC – 6,804 t (GHL cap)

AP Motion 4

The AP Recommends that given potential spatial management concerns raised at the SSC with regards to sablefish conservation, that the Council initiates step 2 (below) of the spatial management policy for review and discussion prior to the 2020 specifications process.

> "With input from the agency, the public, and its advisory bodies, the Council (and NMFS) should identify the economic, social, and management implications and potential options for management response to these findings and identify the suite of tools that could be used to achieve conservation and management goals."

Motion passed 13-6

Rationale in support:

- *In October 2013, the Council adopted a policy that established a framework for determining spatial management (i.e., subarea allocations of annual harvest specifications (OFL, ABC, and/or TAC) of stocks and stock assemblages for groundfish, crabs and scallops.*
- *The SSC expected management measures to hold catch to ABC, and that regional OFL was not intended to serve as a directed fishery or bycatch management tool. However, surpassing these limits has potential implications for stock conservation, particularly given the uncertainty surrounding year class strength, differential maturity curves, and climate change impacts.*
- *Identifying potential management tools to respond to mortality levels above the ABC is necessary and staff indicated the spatial management policy may be used to evaluate management tools.*

Rationale in opposition:

- *Sub-area ABCs for the coastwide sablefish stock are a management tool that fall under the Council's Spatial Management Policy. Additionally, NMFS, industry, its advisory bodies, and the Council are all actively communicating and working to address the issue of increased sablefish bycatch by the trawl sector under a changing ecosystem. Concerns were first raised at the Council's October 2019 meeting. At that time, the Council requested the trawl sector come to this meeting and provide them with their plans to minimize sablefish bycatch in 2020. These plans represent another tool that the Council is actively employing as a first step in understanding the implications of increased numbers of young sablefish on the trawl sector as they relate to sub-area ABCs for the stock. Achieving this first step will assist NMFS, industry, its advisory bodies, and the Council with developing appropriate long-term management tools in the future, if deemed warranted. This important first step should not be eclipsed or sidetracked by separate steps initiated under the Council's Spatial Management Policy.*