



C1 Snow Crab Rebuilding

February 2023

Action Memo

Council Staff: Jon McCracken and Sarah Rheinsmith

Action Required:

1. Final Action review of the rebuilding plan analysis
2. Selection of a preferred alternative for rebuilding snow crab
3. Approval of housekeeping update to Crab FMP

Background

At this meeting, the Council will review the final action analysis of a draft environmental assessment for an amendment to the BSAI Crab Fishery Management Plan, to rebuild the Eastern Bering Sea snow crab stock in compliance with section 304(e)(3) of the Magnuson-Stevens Fishery Conservation and Management Act and select a preferred alternative. The final action analysis is not scheduled for review by the SSC at this meeting since the SSC in October 2022 selected their preferred EBS snow crab rebuilding parameters, and in December 2022 approved the initial review analysis for final action.

The Council was notified that Eastern Bering Sea Snow Crab was overfished on October 19, 2021. Upon notification that a stock or stock complex is overfished, the Council must prepare and implement a fishery management plan amendment or proposed regulations within two years of notification. The plan must specify a time to rebuild, which should not exceed 10 years unless this cannot be accomplished in the absence of all fishing mortality. The Council in June 2022 approved a purpose and need statement and proposed alternatives for the rebuilding plan. During the October 2022 Council meeting, the SSC reviewed the EBS snow crab rebuilding projections and selected a preferred projection scenario that draws on recruitment and mortality from 1982-2017. At the December 2022 meeting, the Council reviewed the initial review analysis to rebuild the EBS snow crab stock and selected Alternative 2, option 2 as their preliminary preferred alternative, which would allow for a directed fishery to open based on the state harvest strategy while the stock is rebuilding. The final action analysis has been updated based on SSC and Council comments at the December meeting.

As part of final action on the amendment, the Council will also review a housekeeping change to language in the crab FMP, to remove reference to three outdated/inapplicable crab rebuilding plans (see section 3.8 of the rebuilding plan analysis). These outdated/inapplicable rebuilding plans include the BS Tanner crab that was declared overfished on March 3, 1999, BS snow crab that was declared overfished on September 24, 1999, and St. Matthew blue king crab that was declared overfished on September 24, 1999. All these crab rebuilding plans are no longer needed in the crab FMP since these species are either rebuilt (i.e., BS Tanner crab), being replaced with a new rebuilding plan (i.e., EBS snow crab) or have been replaced with a new rebuilding plan (i.e., St. Matthew blue king crab).