



C3 Fixed Gear Rockfish Retention

February 2019 Council Meeting

Action Memo

Staff: Jon McCracken

Action Required: 1. Public Review Draft – review
2. Recommend a ‘preliminary final determination’ regarding the proposed action

BACKGROUND

At this meeting, the Council is scheduled to review the public review draft of an analysis to require full retention of rockfish species by fixed gear catcher vessels, and recommend a preliminary final determination on this action (see below for more details on ‘preliminary final determination’). During the June 2018 meeting, the Council completed an initial review draft of the document and released it for public review, selecting Alternative 2 and Options 1 and 2 as the preliminary preferred alternative. The preliminary preferred alternative would require full retention of rockfish species by all fixed gear catcher vessels (hook-and-line, pot, and jig) in the Bering Sea and Aleutian Islands and Gulf of Alaska. The preliminary preferred alternative also includes two options. The first option would require full retention of rockfish even if the rockfish species is on prohibited species status but prohibit these retained rockfish from entering commerce. The second option would establish a maximum commerce allowance of 10% or 15%. The purpose of the maximum commerce allowance is to limit increasing rockfish incidental catch under a full retention regulation while allowing vessel operators to sell most of the true incidental catch of rockfish.

The purpose of this proposed action is to achieve benefits of full retention of rockfish by fixed gear catcher vessels. Requiring full retention of rockfish would improve identification of species catch composition when catcher vessels are subject to electronic monitoring, improve data collection by providing more accurate estimates of total catch, reduce incentives to discard rockfish, may reduce waste, reduce overall enforcement burden, and provide more consistency in regulations.

Due to the partial government shutdown, the Council meeting agenda was not published in the Federal Register in advance of the meeting. According to NMFS requirements, the Council may not take final action on any agenda items unless the meeting has been announced in the Federal Register at least 14 days before the Council takes a final action. As a result, the Council may instead make a ‘preliminary final determination’ on this agenda item during the February 2019 meeting. Final action will be scheduled for a subsequent Council meeting, once the Federal Register notice requirements have been met.