



NORTH PACIFIC FISHERY MANAGEMENT COUNCIL

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Action Memo

File Number:BYC 15-017

Agenda Date10/5/2015

Agenda Number:C8

Dan Hull, Chairman
Chris Oliver, Executive Director

SUBJECT:

GOA Trawl Bycatch Management - Discussion Paper

ACTION REQUIRED:

- (1) Receive staff reports on the discussion paper, and on public comment letters submitted in response to the NMFS Notice of Intent to prepare and EIS.
- (2) Task staff with development of a draft EIS, with potential refinements to the range of alternatives, or task staff to develop further information on new alternatives. Evaluate the Council's existing statement of goals and objectives in light of any new alternatives that are recommended for analysis.

BACKGROUND:

Since 2012, the Council has been engaged in the development of a revised management structure for the Gulf of Alaska groundfish trawl fisheries. The Council first established a purpose and need statement and a list of program goals and objectives in October 2012; the purpose and need statement was most recently revised in February 2013 to include the Western GOA area in addition to the Central GOA and the West Yakutat district. The motivation for this action is to provide the fleet with a structure under which it can minimize prohibited species catch and, in some cases, better utilize the allowed amount of PSC to harvest more groundfish.

The Council most recently reviewed a discussion paper on this issue in October 2014. At that meeting, the Council provided a motion that outlines two action alternatives. The first action alternative includes 14 elements that would define a program wherein groundfish and PSC access privileges are allocated to voluntary cooperatives based upon the fishing history associated with the Federal licenses that are enrolled in each cooperative. Those elements include measures that are intended to promote stability in trawl-dependent fishing communities (consolidation limits, quota regionalization, and active participation requirements). The second action alternative, however, includes management structures that could provide additional community protections through either a Community Fisheries Association (CFA) - modeled on the definition of "Fishing Communities" provided in the Magnuson-Stevens Act (Section 303A) - or an Adaptive Management Program.

The discussion paper provided for this meeting addresses the following topics, with respect to the Council's October 2014 motion: how PSC would be allocated to cooperatives, the allocation of cooperative PSC quota to processors, the contents of annual cooperative reports, maximum retainable amounts (MRAs), the manner in which the proposed program structure would fit with the Central GOA Rockfish Program, additional sideboards and existing sideboard limitations that could be eliminated, gear modification, issues pertaining to co-management of trawl fisheries in State of Alaska waters, and progress on the definition of CFA and Adaptive Management programs.

The Council will also receive a NMFS staff report that summarizes the public comment letters submitted in response to the agency's Notice of Intent to prepare an Environmental Impact Statement (EIS). When an EIS is planned, NMFS receives and summarizes comments as part of the NEPA scoping process.

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One supplementary document is provided on the Council's electronic agenda. Staff has provided a Microsoft Excel file that contains data on catch of primary and secondary species, as well as prohibited species catch. The file is titled "GOA TBM Catch Tables". Stakeholders had requested that staff provide updated non-confidential data on catch and bycatch history that pertains to quota allocations the Council might recommend under the existing range of alternatives. The Excel file was updated on September 29, 2015.