APPROVED:_____

DATE: 10/8/2013

MINUTES

214th Plenary Session
North Pacific Fishery Management Council
Anchorage Hilton Hotel, Alaska

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MINUTES
NPFMC MEETING
June 2013

The North Pacific Fishery Management Council met in June in Juneau's Centennial Hall. The following Council, SSC and AP members, and NPFMC staff attended the meetings.

Council Members

Eric Olson, Chair
John Henderschedt, Vice Chair
Jim Balsiger
Cora Campbell/Nicole Kimball
Sam Cotten
Craig Cross
Ed Dersham
Duncan Fields
Dave Hanson
Roy Hyder
Dan Hull
Doug McBride
Bill Tweit
RADM Tom Ostebo/LT Tony Kenne

NPFMC Staff

Gail Bendixen
Sam Cunningham
Jane DiCosimo
Peggy Kircher
Steve MacLean
Jon McCracken
Chris Oliver
Maria Shawback
Diana Stram
David Witherell

Scientific and Statistical Committee

The SSC met from June 3-5 in Centennial Hall in Juneau, AK.

Members present were:

Robert Clark, Vice Chair
Alaska Department of Fish and Game

Jennifer Burns
University of Alaska Anchorage

Alison Dauble
Oregon Dept. of Fish and Wildlife

Sherri Dressel
Alaska Department of Fish and Game

Anne Hollowed
NOAA Fisheries—AFSC

George Hunt
University of Washington

Gordon Kruse
University of Alaska Fairbanks

Seth Macinko
University of Rhode Island

Steve Martell
Intl. Pacific Halibut Commission

Franz Mueter
University of Alaska Fairbanks

Lew Queirolo
NOAA Fisheries—Alaska Region

Terry Quinn
University of Alaska Fairbanks

Kate Reedy-Maschner
Idaho State University Pocatello

Farron Wallace
NOAA Fisheries—AFSC

Members absent were:

Pat Livingston
NOAA Fisheries—AFSC

Advisory Panel

The AP met from June 4-8 in Centennial Hall in Juneau, AK.

The following members were present for all or part of the meetings (absent ~~stricken~~):

Ruth Christiansen	Becca Robbins Gisclair	~~Andy Mezirow~~
Kurt Cochran	John Gruver	Joel Peterson
John Crowley	Mitch Kilborn	Theresa Peterson
Jerry Downing	Alexus Kwachka	Neil Rodriguez
Tom Enlow	Craig Lowenberg	Lori Swanson
Tim Evers	Brian Lynch	Anne Vanderhoeven
Jeff Farvour	Chuck McCallum	Ernie Weiss

Appendix I contains the public sign in register and a time log of Council proceedings, including those providing reports and public comment during the meeting.

A. CALL TO ORDER

Chairman Eric Olson called the meeting to order at approximately 8:03 am on Wednesday, June 5, 2013.

Mr. Bill Tweit participated in the entire meeting in place of Phil Anderson, WDF Director.

The agenda was approved as written.

B. REPORTS

The Council received the following reports: Executive Director's Report (B-1); NMFS Management Report (B-2); NOAA Enforcement Report (B-3); ADF&G Report, (B-4); USCG Report (B-5); USFWS report (B-6); and Protected Species Report (B-7).

Executive Director's Report:

Chris Oliver reviewed his written report. He updated the Council on various items, including the Managing Our Nation's Fisheries conference and the Council Coordination Committee meeting that was held in Washington DC in May. Mr. Oliver briefly reviewed upcoming meetings and discussed staff changes, as well as logistics for the current meeting. He introduced Tyson Fick from the Alaska Seafood Marketing Institute who gave an overview of its operations and answered questions from the Council.

NMFS Management Report

Glenn Merrill gave the NMFS management report and reviewed the status of actions on many FMP amendments. Mary Furuness gave the in-season management report, and Alan Kingsolving reviewed a flow scale discussion paper and answered questions from the Council. Glenn Merrill also updated the Council on halibut/sablefish leasing prohibitions.

Jeanne Hansen updated the Council on issues which have required EFH/HAPC consultation, and actions the Council has taken to date which may have effects on EFH. She provided a written report and answered questions from the Council members.

NOAA Enforcement Report

Susan Auer and Matt Brown gave a report on NOAA Enforcement's actions to date including major cases, community outreach and education, and observer program activities. Ms. Auer briefly discussed staffing and budget issues and answered questions from the Council. Mr. Brown, along with Nathan Lagerwey, discussed efforts and trends associated with Amendment 91 salmon monitoring, compliance, and enforcement.

ADF&G Report

Karla Bush provided the Council with a review of the State fisheries of interest to the Council and answered general questions from the Council Members. Ms. Bush also noted that ADF&G access to VMS data through NOAA's vTrack software has been resolved, and provided a letter outlining the timeline and background of the issue.

USCG Report

Captain Phil Thorne briefly updated the Council, and LT. Tony Kenne gave the USCG report for April and May 2013 covering enforcement issues in the different fisheries and areas. LT Kenne also highlighted specific search and rescue cases and gave a summary of the Coast Guard resources.

USF&W Report

A written report was provided by Doug McBride which outlined federal subsistence management of Chinook salmon in specific rivers. The report also briefly covered Endangered Species Act issues of relevance to the Council.

Protected Species Report

Steve MacLean provided a report on protected species issues. Brandee Gerke and Jon Kurland reported on the draft EIS/RIR/IRFA on the Steller Sea Lion Protection Measures. They highlighted areas in the EIS where the PPA appears to be less protective for Steller sea lions than the regime analyzed in 2010, and noted elements the Council may wish to modify at final action for analysis in a new Biological Opinion.

Public comment was taken on all B items.

COUNCIL DISCUSSION/ACTION

It was generally agreed to postpone discussion and action on SSL issues until the staff tasking agenda item. Mr. Henderschedt noted the efforts NMFS has made on the performance standards and constructing the PPA. Mr. Fields requested as regulations develop relative to the flowscale discussion paper that the Council be consulted.NMFS confirmed the Council would be notified as alternatives are developed.

C-1 BSAI Crab Management

BACKGROUND
The Crab Plan Team met in Anchorage from April 30-May 3rd to review stock assessment issues and approaches and to provide recommendations for OFL and ABC specifications for 4 of the 10 crab stocks covered by the BSAI Crab FMP. Recommendations and discussions on issues and model formulations for other stocks and additional Crab Plan Team agenda topics are included in the CPT Report. There are 10 crab stocks in the BSAI Crab FMP and all 10 must have annually established OFLs. Six of the ten stocks will have OFLs and ABCs established in the fall following the summer survey information availability. Two of the ten stocks (Norton Sound red king crab and AI golden king crab) have OFL and ABC recommendations put forward at this time in order to have approved OFLs and ABCs prior to the summer fisheries for these stocks. The remaining two stocks (Adak red king crab and Pribilof Islands golden king crab) have OFLs recommended based on Tier 5 formulation (average catch) and OFLs and ABCs are recommended in the spring. The draft sections of the SAFE report introduction contain the OFL and ABC recommendations for these stocks.

Diana Stram gave the staff report on this agenda item. The SSC and AP gave reports. Public comment was taken.

COUNCIL DISCUSSION/ACTION

Ms. Campbell moved the Council approve the BSAI Crab SAFE, the SSC's recommended OFLs and ABC's for Norton Sound Red King Crab, Aleutian Islands Golden King Crab, Pribilof Island Golden King Crab, and Adak Red King Crab. The motion was seconded by Mr. Hull. Ms. Campbell spoke to her motion, stating the SSC and Plan Teams were in agreement with the recommendations, and she expressed her appreciation for the continued work by the plan teams and the stock assessment authors to further refine the stock assessment models. She supports shifting the stock assessment for Norton Sound Red King Crab to an October-September cycle to accommodate the requests from the public and industry as well as biological patterns, and to better accommodate pre-season planning. There was brief discussion regarding Adak Red King Crab, and Ms. Campbell noted that there is limited data to set a harvestable amount and manage a fishery**. The motion passed unanimously by roll call vote.**

Mr. Cotten moved the Council develop a discussion paper that would review a proposal to separate out the eastern portion of the Adak red king crab stock from the Crab FMP. The discussion paper should include the bullet points on page 11 of the Crab Plan Team report.

Mr. Cotten spoke to the motion and noted a main concern is the area was not included in rationalization and should be if there are sufficient stocks and management. He noted that the discussion paper would inform the Council and they could be better informed should other approaches not be successful.

Mr. Henderschedt noted he can't support motion and that there is no pressing need to examine removal of species from the FMP, and that the action has the potential of avoiding recommendations from Council's plan teams and SSC.

Motion failed 5/6, with Olson, CottonOlsen, Cotten, Campbell, Hull and Fields in favor.

C-2 Freezer Longline Issues

BACKGROUND
At the June 2012 meeting, the Council reviewed a discussion paper of the impacts of removing GOA Pacific cod sideboard limits applicable to freezer longliners that were created under the crab rationalization program. An initial review analysis was prepared and presented at the February 2013 Council meeting. At that meeting, the Council added a new option and suboption under Alternative 2. The new option would permanently remove non-AFA crab hook-and-line catcher processor limits for Pacific cod in both western and central GOA for the affected freezer longline (FLL) vessels and LLPs when all GOA FLL endorsed LLP holders reach an agreement to remove these sideboard limits and notify NMFS of this agreement. The notification of the agreement must be completed within 3 years of implementation of the rule. The suboption would suspend the sideboard limits rather than permanently remove these limits. If, in the future, not all GOA FLL endorsed LLP license holders agree on the removal of the non-AFA crab hook-and-line catcher processor limit for Pacific cod in both western and central GOA, these sideboard limits would be reinstated.

Jon McCracken gave the staff report on this agenda item and answered questions from the Council. The SSC did not address this issue, and Lori Swanson gave the AP report. Public comment was taken.

COUNCIL DISCUSSION/ACTION

Mr. Cross moved, which was seconded, that the Council adopt Alternative 2: to remove freezer longline non-AFA crab GOA Pacific cod hook and line sideboards with the option to permanently remove GOA Pacific cod hook-and-line sideboards lmits for affected FLL vessels/Federal Fisheries Permits (FPP) and LLP licenses when all GOA (*Pacific cod*) FLL endorsed LLP holders notify NMFS of an agreement to remove the sideboards. Under the option, the LLP holders would have 18 months from the publishing date of the final rule to provide notification to NMFS. The CGOA and WGOA may be taken up separately so that cooperative formation and sideboard removal can occur independently in each area.

Mr. Cross spoke to his motion, stating the original action's intent was about removing sideboards from 6 original vessels. Alternative 2 removes the sideboards, and allows for formation of a cooperative agreement. The vessels have significant and undisputed catch history and should be fishing. The suboption is not included because negotiations can be resolved within cooperatives. Mr. Cross answered questions of clarification from the Council, specifically regarding cooperative formation and sideboard removal.

Ms. Smoker (NOAA GC) clarified that the motion would relieve the sideboard for the 6 vessels, but does not relieve those sideboards unless there is agreement by all parties involved. An agreement by all parties replaces the need and protection of sideboards. If no agreement is reached, then the sideboards remain in place.

Mr. Henderschedt noted his main concern is historical participation, and the best way to encourage discussion and ability to participate, is to lift the sideboards by encouraging development of a cooperative, which will then enable historical participation in the fishery.

Mr. Olson noted that after 18 months, the motion provides protection to non-cooperative participants. Ms. Campbell stated that the Council is balancing multiple objectives. There are merits of removing sideboards to allow participation by the sideboarded vessels in GOA, and protecting participation of GOA only vessels by agreement. The way the motion is structured allows for achievement of multiple objectives.

Mr. Fields moved to amend to add "Pacific cod" in the end of the first sentence. His motion was seconded. He noted that he is speaking to a specific group of fishers. There was discussion regarding where "Pacific cod" should be inserted. **Mr. Fields withdrew his motion, with the concurrence of his second, and Dr. Balsiger moved to amend to insert "Pacific cod" in the second line after GOA, so it reads "… or affected FLL vessels/Federal Fisheries Permits (FPP) and LLP licenses when all GOA (*Pacific cod*) FLL endorsed LLP holders…" The motion passed without objection.**

Mr. Fields moved to have the timeframe after the publishing date of the final rule moved from 18 months to 6 months. The motion was seconded. He anticipated that it is unlikely for the final rule to be published for a year and a half, and the extra year is not necessary. Testimony has been heard that negotiations are ongoing, and a two year timeframe is adequate. Discussion ensued on the logistics of the timeframe. Mr. Hyder noted that 6 months may seem compressed should the final rule not be exactly what the Council had intended, and Mr. Fields stated that while that may happen, the action is relatively simple and should not require further scrutiny. Mr. Henderschedt noted that most of the people who testified were owner/operators, were busy fishing, and that 6 months may be a too short of deadline. Mr. Tweit noted that while he does support adding pressure to make agreements, 6 months may be too soon.

Mr. Dersham proposed a substitute motion which would make the timeframe 1 year (rather than 6 months, or 18 months). His motion was seconded. Mr. Dersham spoke to the amendment, stating that pressure is needed on the fleet, and 1 year is a compromise. **There was brief discussion, and the motion passed 8/3, with Cross, Hyder, and Henderschedt in opposition.**

Discussion continued on the main motion, stating that the intent is that the fleet will reach an agreement, notify NMFS, and NMFS will remove sideboards.

Mr. Fields stated that this is final action, and it balances issues of equity, working within National Standard 1, optimum yield, and supports the motion feeling confident it falls in line with national guidelines. Mr. Tweit expressed hope that participants will conclude negotiations in a timely manner, and all participants will benefit and become more efficient.

Ms. Campbell encouraged participants to reach an agreement, and requested future meetings should include the Council receiving updates on how negotiations are progressing, how resources are being allocated between a diverse group, and how objectives are being met.

Mr. Tweit moved that the Council deems proposed regulations that clearly and directly flow from the provisions of this motion to be necessary and appropriate in accordance with section 303(c). The Council authorizes the Executive Director and the Chairman to review the draft proposed regulations when provided by NMFS to ensure that the proposed regulations to be submitted to the Secretary under section 303(c) are consistent with these instructions. The amendment was seconded by Mr. Hull. Mr. Tweit noted that under this option, any draft proposed regulations that are not 303(c) regulations would be proposed by NMFS under it authority at section 305(d). Also, the Executive Director and the Chairman would retain their ability to withhold submission of the FMP amendment and/or proposed regulations and take action back to the Council if the E.D. and Chairman determine that the section 305(d) draft proposed regulations are not in keeping with Council intent for the action. Mr. Tweit noted that many comments during discussion indicated the action is understood and straightforward. **The amendment passed without objection. The main motion passed unanimously by roll call vote.**

C-3 Observer Issues

BACKGROUND

(a) Review EM strategic plan and first year performance report

In April the Council reviewed a draft Electronic Monitoring (EM) strategic plan and developed additional requests for NMFS to include in the strategic plan for review at this meeting. In April the Council also noticed its intent to appoint an EM working group (likely a subset of the OAC membership) to work with NMFS and the OAC to help design processes to facilitate the implementation of EM with a priority on the small boat fixed gear and Pacific cod fleet. That workgroup will be formed following this meeting and the Council's review of the EM strategic plan.

(b) Develop criteria and priorities for consideration of regulatory proposals

During the course of the last two OAC meetings, a number of regulatory changes to the restructured program have been suggested by various segments of the fishing industry. Neither the OAC nor the Council have acted upon any of these proposals, pending a more formalized process for consideration of such proposals. Additional proposals are likely to be generated, either at this meeting or subsequently. The Council needs to identify a process and/or criteria for considering and prioritizing such proposals. An 'omnibus' regulatory package could then be initiated for formal analysis (recognizing that such an omnibus package will likely represent a significant staff tasking workload for Council and agency staff, recognizing that we have only 6 months of the newly restructured program under our belts and we should be cautious about initiating a 'restructuring' of the restructured program, and recognizing the priority already in place for expedited EM implementation). The OAC will be discussing this issue also and provide its recommendations to the Council.

(c) Review third party discussion paper

In earlier discussions of the restructured program, including discussions of the costs per observer day under the restructured program, the Council requested a discussion paper on the concept of using a 'third party' entity to run the program, primarily in the interests of cost savings and/or other operational efficiencies. In order to provide a meaningful discussion of the current potential for a 3rd party arrangement, staff would have to explore once again the legal and contractual aspects, staff would need to work with NMFS, observer providers, and a potential 3rd party entity to explore the potential cost (or cost savings) implications of such an arrangement, and the Council would need to more specifically identify what role is envisioned for such a 3rd party entity.

Additionally, from 2003-2010, EM technology was used, through an EFP process, to deploy video cameras in the west coast hake fishery, though as previously explained that was in a zero discard scenario. The Council needs to provide further specificity regarding the objectives and role of a potential 3rd party entity, prior to devoting additional staff time (Council and NMFS resources) to this effort.

(d) Review OAC report and provide direction

Chris Oliver introduced the agenda items, and outlined the order of presentations. Craig Faunce and Martin Loefflad gave the staff report on the first year performance report and answered questions from the Council. Farron Wallace and Martin Loefflad provided the OAC with the EM Strategic Plan. Chris Oliver and Dan Hull gave the report from the Observer Advisory Committee, and answered questions from the Council. A copy of the Observer Report is attached as Attachment 6. The AP gave its report on this agenda item, the SSC did not address this issue, and public comment was taken.

COUNCIL DISCUSSION/ACTION

Dan Hull moved, which was seconded, the following recommendations and requests in development of the 2014 Annual Deployment Plan:

1. **The 2014 ADP should continue to reflect a priority for monitoring vessels managed under PSC limits in the trip selection pool. The Council recognizes that this necessarily modifies an equal probability sampling design such that higher observer coverage rates are provided in the trip selection pool, and lower rates in the vessel selection pool, consistent with the 2013 ADP.**
2. **Maintain the policy that observers should not displace crew members or IFQ holders, nor should vessel modifications be required to accommodate an observer.**

3. **Request NMFS provide information that would help inform a decision as to whether to create a new criterion for receiving a conditional release from observer coverage in 2014 based on a *de minimus* amount of halibut or sablefish IFQ in an IFQ holder's account.**
4. **Request NMFS assess whether the 2014 ADP can address the observer effect associated with tender deliveries (disproportionately high numbers of deliveries to tenders when vessels unobserved, or longer trips when unobserved and delivering to tenders), or whether a regulatory change is necessary.**
5. **Include available information that shows, within the vessel selection pool in 2013: 1) the average number of trips taken within each 2 month deployment period; and 2) the average length of trips within the 2 month period.**
6. **Include information as to the tradeoffs and considerations that should be taken into account in evaluating whether the 2 month deployment period for those in the vessel selection pool should remain, or be reduced (e.g., one month). Include consideration of a provision that if a vessel is selected for a coverage period and chooses not to fish during that period, the vessel is automatically selected for the next coverage period**

The Council also requests NMFS provide additional information for review in October, separate from the ADP:

1. **Provide more detailed information on program costs, recommendations for ways to modify deployment to achieve cost savings, and fishery data resulting from the 2013 deployment.**
2. **Revisions to the heat maps and other descriptive or graphical approaches that provide the ability for the Council and public to better understand coverage changes by fisheries from 2012 to 2013 with the most recent information available to NMFS. One example: include a comparison (in the partial coverage category) of trawl coverage in 2012 vs 2013 and fixed gear coverage in 2012 vs 2013.**

The Council makes the following recommendations for the annual performance review (June 2014):

1. **Include information on the volume of catch observed in both vessel and trip selection pools.**
2. **Include information on achieved coverage rates by gear type.(trawl vs fixed gear)**
3. **Include information on trip length by observed and unobserved vessels in both the trip and vessel selection pools. Within the vessel selection pool, break out the IFQ fleet.**
4. **A review of the trip selected and vessel selected pools in consideration of whether vessels should have an option to choose either one, or whether the deployment plan should place every vessel in the partial coverage category in the trip selection pool. (Dec. 2012 request)**
5. **An evaluation of the difference between observer coverage in the vessel and trip selection pools (a review of the sampling method). (Dec. 2012 request).**
6. **An evaluation of ways to insert cost effective measures into the deployment plan. (Dec. 2012 request).**
7. **An evaluation of detailed programmatic costs. (Dec. 2012 request).**

The Council makes the following recommendations on the EM strategic plan:

1. **The Council adopts the EM strategic plan as a guidance document for incorporating EM into the Observer Program.**
2. **The Council recommends use of a catch estimation approach to develop EM for the halibut and sablefish fisheries.**

The Council adds the following tasks to the EM Workgroup:

1. **The Workgroup should identify performance standards, operational procedures, and sampling and deployment plans appropriate for IFQ vessels and also look at implementation vehicles and potential phase-in approaches.**
2. **The Workgroup should use the following sections of the strategic plan to focus its efforts: page 14 (Goal II, Objective 1, Strategy C) and page 16 (Goal III, Objective 1, Strategy A).**
3. **The Workgroup should focus on developing a catch estimation based program for the IFQ fisheries rather than a logbook audit approach.**
4. **The Workgroup should consider incentives other than release from observer coverage requirements to increase industry participation in pilot projects for 2014.**

Regulatory Amendments

The Council tasks staff to develop a single discussion paper that identifies the main issues associated with the three proposed regulatory amendments forwarded by the OAC, in order for the Council to consider initiating an amendment package or packages for revisions to the Observer Program at a future date. The three proposals are described briefly as follows:

- **Evaluate moving the BSAI pacific cod trawl CV fleet into the full coverage category for the purpose of cooperative management.**
- **For vessels that previously operated as CVs and CPs within a year, consider options to allow an annual election; revisions to the control date for making the election; and production tonnage criteria.**
- **Change the method of observer fee collection for the IFQ fleet to use standardized current year ex-vessel prices.**

Mr. Hull spoke to his motion. He stated the motion is largely based on the OAC recommendations, and the observer program has met current objectives as stated in the four month review. In the motion, number 3 addresses the 2014 Annual Deployment Program requirement that an IFQ holder with a residual amount of IFQ would still be required to carry an observer, and the language in the motion is included as primarily a cost savings measure. He noted main information requests that could inform Council recommendations on the 2014 ADP.

Mr. Hull also noted that there will be a broad range of tasks that an EM workgroup will address and report through the OAC. He gave recommendations on composition and timing of a workgroup, specifically noting that OAC members, along with industry members with technical connections and broad outreach connections, as well as agency participants should be included. Mr. Hull noted that the strategic plan should address where EM testing and pilot programs will occur to develop an EM program. The primary objective of the EM workgroup is to get discard information from the small boat IFQ fleet. Mr. Hull continued, answering questions of clarification from the Council.

There was clarification on what kinds of vessel modifications needed to be accomplished, and how that information needs to be distributed to the public.

Mr. Henderschedt moved to amend on page 2, under "EM workgroup." Number 4, replacing the word 'incentives' with 'additional strategies.' His motion was seconded. He spoke to his motion, and noted that there is ample incentive in place to move the program along and does not want to see language that emphasizes a quid pro quo in order to proceed. **Motion passed unanimously.**

Mr. Henderschedt moved to amend by adding, "or crediting the fleet for cost of observer coverage that would be provided through trip selection process." under regulatory amendments, at the end of the first bullet point. The motion was seconded. Mr. Henderschedt noted this issue had been

brought up during public comment, and that it is appropriate to examine benefits and needs of where coverage falls, financial impacts both on the fleet and the observer program over all. This alternative would be an attempt at balancing need, and not asking payment twice for the same service. There was brief discussion regarding consequences of loss of observer days under this motion. **The amendment passed without objection.**

Mr. Fields moved to amend on Page 1 under "additional information to review in October," and a #3 would state: "assess current observer coverage to provide an evaluation of the reliability indices of current genetic stock identification information, given the current observer rates of GOA pollock trawl and GOA rockfish trawl fishery. Mr. Fields spoke to his motion, noting that the Council had an extensive discussion of this topic along with the impacts of the Council's expectations and there were still unanswered questions. Additional information is necessary. He noted it is strictly a Chinook issue relative to reliable Chinook data and the motion does not address total coverage rates. **The amendment passed without objection.**

Mr. Fields moved to amend, on page 2, under EM strategic plan: to strike the word "adopts" and replace with with "acknowledges receipt of" the EM strategic plan as a guidance document for incorporating into the observer program, and add, "and anticipates further refinements to the document through the OAC process." The amendment was seconded. Mr. Fields spoke to his motion, stating that much of what has been done in the Observer Program has been done through the industry. Changes and refinements should be done through the OAC process. Discussion ensued regarding review and use of the EM strategic plan. Mr. Henderschedt noted that the document is a strategy, rather than a record of operational decisions. Mr. Tweit noted that the Council should be ready to adopt the goals and objectives so NMFS can move forward with implementing the strategies of EM. Mr. Hull emphasized although revisions will happen over time, adopting the strategic plan is necessary at this point. **Motion failed 1/11 with Mr. Fields voting in favor.**

Mr. Henderschedt spoke to the amended main motion, and thanked Mr. Hull for his leadership in the OAC and with drafting the motion. He encouraged the Council, and NMFS, to ensure that the best use of time and resources are being made in progress of the EM program. Mr. Hyder thanked those that contributed to the motion, the OAC, and all the public who have commented, and he stated he will be voting to adopt the document that moves the Council forward.

Ms. Campbell noted that although there will be additional data and changes the Council will make in the future, initial success has already been recognized in a brand new system which will provide more accurate and bycatch efforts. **The amended main motion passed without objection.**

C-4 GOA Chinook Salmon Bycatch

The analysis evaluates an alternative to create a prohibited species catch limit which, once reached, would close the affected fisheries. The package also evaluates an amendment requiring full retention of all salmon species. The Council has not identified a preliminary preferred alternative for this action.

Four potential PSC limits are considered, ranging from a maximum of 5,000 to 12,500 Chinook salmon per year. The Council may choose to apply a Chinook salmon PSC limit to the Western and Central GOA as a whole, or to apportion the selected PSC limit either by regulatory area, by operational type (catcher vessels and catcher/processor), or by operational type within each regulatory area. The selected PSC limit for the GOA non-pollock fisheries could be apportioned according to either historical Chinook

salmon PSC usage or non-pollock groundfish harvest; apportionment could be based on either a 10-year or a 5-year historical period.

The Council may choose to limit the percentage of the annual Chinook PSC limit that can be taken before June 1st; the document analyzes pre-June PSC caps of 50% and 66% of the annual cap. If such a seasonal limit is selected and the pre-June cap is not met, the unused portion of the pre-June cap would remain available for the rest of the year.

Finally, the Council may choose to set aside a portion of the annual Chinook PSC limit for use in the Central GOA Rockfish Program. The document analyzes setting aside between 1,500 and 3,500 Chinook PSC for this purpose, with an option to further apportion Rockfish Program PSC by operational type. The Council could choose to make a portion of the unused Rockfish Program PSC available to other GOA non-pollock trawl fisheries on October 1.

Sam Cunningham gave the staff report on this agenda item and answered questions from the Council. Jennifer Mondragon reviewed the monitoring and enforcement aspects of the alternatives. The AP gave its report, and public comment was taken.

COUNCIL DISCUSSION/ACTION

Commissioner Campbell moved the following as its final preferred alternative for the Gulf of Alaska Chinook salmon bycatch cap in the non-pollock trawl fisheries:

Alternative 2: 7,500 Chinook salmon PSC limit (hard cap).

In any year following a year when a sector's PSC usage is below its proportional share of 6,500 Chinook, the sector shall be allowed to access its share of an uncertainty pool of 1,000 fish (in addition to its share of the 7,500 cap). The sector's share of the uncertainty pool (including any seasonal or fishery specific cap) shall be apportioned in the same manner as the 7,500 cap.

Option 2: Apportion limit by directed fishery operational type (CV and CP).

a) Apportion proportional to historic average bycatch of Chinook salmon (5-year average):
CP cap = 3,600
CV cap = 3,900

Option 3: For the CP sector, no more than 66% of the annual hard cap limit can be taken before June 1.

Option 4: Separate Chinook salmon PSC limit (hard cap) to the CGOA CV Rockfish Program sector
a) 1,200 from the CV sector's apportionment

Alternative 3: Full retention of salmon
Vessels will retain all salmon bycatch until the number of salmon has been determined by the vessel or plant observer and the observer's collection of any scientific data or biological samples from the salmon has been completed.

The motion was seconded.

Ms. Campbell spoke to her motion, stating that Chinook salmon is a highly valued species for many uses and the species has experienced a significant downward trend that has created hardships across many communities in Alaska. Many actions have been taken to be responsive to that situation, and this motion is another action to lessen the hardships. She noted the 7,500 cap level has taken into account both the impact of a cap on the fisheries, the communities, and the fish resource itself and takes a responsible precautionary approach.

She continued, stating that the cap level doesn't reflect the lowest level which would have a significant impact on coastal communities and the coastal economy. This action, combined with previous actions the Council has taken, will reduce potential risks to Chinook salmon stocks and provide a limit on the only remaining trawl fishery without restrictions.

When speaking on the uncertainty pool concept that had been heard in public comment, Ms. Campbell noted it was quite creative, providing incentives to the fleet to reduce bycatch below the cap level. The pool allows for variability in bycatch, but only if savings have been achieved in the past. The uncertainty pool provides an incentive for salmon to be saved in any scenario.

The cap is applied by operational type, CP and CV. Ms. Campbell also highlighted her choice in the motion to apportion and manage PSC cooperatively and to not compete with each other in terms of caps. She continued, discussing the 5 year period for distribution compared to 10 year, stating the 5 year may be more constraining, but the fleet consists almost entirely of AM80 cooperatives which already have structure in place. This will result in more equitable distribution between sectors.

She noted alternative 3 was included which is full retention, and at this time there is insufficient data for genetic stock identification. Full retention would help build toward stock identification in the future. Full retention is a reasonable requirement in every sector, and will result in better information about the makeup of the bycatch.

The Commissioner answered questions of clarification. NMFS staff also assisted with clarifications.

Mr. Hyder made the following substitute motion, which was seconded:

Alternative 2 – 10,000 Chinook salmon PSC limit (hard cap).

Option 2: Apportion limit by operational type (CV vs. CP).

(a) Apportion proportional to historic average bycatch of Chinook salmon (5-year average)

Option 3: For the CP sector, no more than 66% of the annual hard cap limit can be taken before June 1.

Option 4: Separate Chinook salmon PSC limit hard cap to the CGOA CV rockfish program sector:

(a) 1,500 from the CV sector's apportionment

Suboption 2: Any time after September 1, the CV rockfish Intercooperative can communicate with the agency to roll over all but 100 remaining CV Rockfish Program Chinook salmon to support other fall non-pollock trawl fisheries

Alternative 3: Full retention of salmon.

Vessels will retain all salmon bycatch until the number of salmon has been determined by the vessel or plant observer and the observer's collection of any scientific data or biological samples from the salmon has been completed.

Mr. Hyder spoke to the motion, noting it is not just changing numbers, but the decision reflects the stakeholders, scientific community, staff, and the Council's judgment. The AP's motion, which he is using as the substitute motion, reflects collaborative effort. He noted that 10,000 may seem high, but as the cap moves lower, people will lose paychecks.

He spoke to the PSC limit for the GOA rockfish program, and stated if bycatch is not used by that program, it should be available in the fall to support other fisheries. Full retention of salmon has value, but it will not provide a census of the fish.

Mr. Tweit commented on the substitute motion noting that the hard cap itself is most important action the Council can take. He agreed with Mr. Hyder's number, and remarked that the analysis points out the difference between 7500 and 10,000, and even the 10,000 will be constraining during high PSC years. If the cap is set lower, it will increase the race for fish. He stated the fishery needs to move to full retention of salmon.

Ms. Campbell spoke against the amendment, stating that many of Alaska's residents have borne economic hardships resulting from measures taken to protect Chinook salmon, and that increasing the number to 10,000 is irresponsible. She reminded the Council that salmon personal use, subsistence as well as commercial users of the resource in Alaska have suffered a major loss and should be considered when discussing 'balancing' of the numbers. She stated that setting the hard cap at 10,000 would place the entire burden of conservation on the terminal users of Chinook salmon, and very little burden on trawl users.

Mr. Henderschedt thanked the Commissioner for her comments, and noted that all Council members are at the table to take an important conservation step. He stated more important than the number is implementing a successful management system. In the original motion the extent of the constraint that may be put on the non-pollock fisheries within such a dynamic environment is unknown and he will support the substitute motion.

Mr. Fields will not support the substitute motion, noting that it is not precautionary, and stated that there is no incentive within the motion in any year for any user group to conserve salmon.

Mr. Hyder noted that he does not expect the Council to pass a hard cap and to not continue with other measures. The Council needs to establish an individual accountability system that allows the industry aggressively pursue reduction of bycatch over the long term. He stated that a hard cap alone will not do that, but the collaborative effort of the substitute motion is a first step.

Chairman Olson noted he would be voting against the substitute motion saying it is not precautionary and puts the health of one sector of the industry above others.

The substitute motion failed 5/6, with Cross, Henderschedt, Hyder, Tweit, and Merrill voting in favor.

Mr. Fields moved to amend to add at the end of Alternative 3, delete the period, add a comma, and add… "if there is no plant observer available, the plant would record the number of salmon bycatch, by species, on the fish ticket." Mr. Fields noted that it clarifies current practices. Mr. Henderschedt stated the Council has expressed concern the data will not be used as a census. Mr. Merrill noted the analysis describes the use of the salmon for genetic identification sampling. **The motion passed without objection.**

Mr. Tweit moved to amend by adding Option 4: suboption 2 from the AP motion.
Suboption 2: Any time after September 1, the CV rockfish Intercooperative can communicate with the agency to roll over all but 100 remaining CV Rockfish Program Chinook salmon to support other fall non-pollock trawl fisheries. Mr. Hyder seconded the motion. Mr. Tweit spoke to his motion stating with a lower number, the likelihood of a rollover is smaller. It is important to retain the 100 salmon, not for incentive purposes, but to maintain flexibility within a year to adjust to different circumstances. This allows the sector, processors, and indirectly, the community, to have different options if the Rockfish CV sector uses less than 1,200 from the hard cap. Discussion continued on the intent of the pool. Mr. Hyder noted that inclusion of a rollover is important, and leads to the stability of the program. He looked to the rockfish program, which is rationalized and able to wisely and conservatively use their PSC. Discussion continued on mechanics and accounting, and **Mr. Tweit withdrew the proposed amendment with the concurrence of the second,** but signaled interest in revisiting the idea as a "friendly amendment" utility in the main motion, or a trailing amendment in future.

Discussion continued on retention, and it was clarified that it was included in the analysis that the fish were going to be used for genetic sampling, and while not used for census data or catch estimation, the numbers would be available.

Mr. Fields spoke to the amended main motion, noting with gravity that he has assessed the balancing the Council has attempted, and possible impacts on the groundfish fishery. There has been extensive public comment, both written and in person, and he thanked the public for the extensive record that has been developed. He cited the 10 national standards in balancing allocation of fisheries, and noted that National Standard 9 – to minimize bycatch to the extent practicable– is the major focus on the motion. National Standard 8 - minimizing impact on communities - is covered in this motion and the Council is looking at a variety of Alaska communities to minimize hardship, and not just the ones directly involved in the fishery. The Commissioner's motion balances recreational, subsistence, and commercial fishery users' interests, and making sure the OY is healthy will provide the greatest overall benefit to the nation. Mr. Fields thanked everyone for their input to the motion.

Mr. Hyder noted his disappointment to have to vote for a hard cap that isn't appropriate. The new rollover is confusing, and stakeholders haven't had a chance to preview the program. He is looking forward to moving toward a new accountability system.

Mr. Henderschedt noted that he will be supporting the motion, and although he notes this is an important step in the conservation of Chinook salmon, he does not believe the Council has accurately weighed the balance of conservation benefits against the potential impacts on coastal communities. He noted his concern that the Council is not using a valuable incentive at the expense of the fleet that is best equipped to respond to the incentive. He noted his support of the hard cap, but remains troubled by many elements of the action.

Mr. Cross agreed with Mr. Henderschedt, but stated he will not support the motion. He agreed with hard caps, but did not feel the one in the motion is justified in the analysis.

Mr. Tweit stated he will vote in favor of the motion. He noted the range of things to take in to account, and the Commissioner's motion falls into balance and meets many needs. He appreciates the motion was not a lower number, and at 7,500 the costs of savings as you go lower gets higher. He reiterated his intent to redouble efforts to give fishers tools that can provide conservation efforts in the long run. He also noted his commitment to a rollover tool for the fishery.

Mr. Hull will support the motion and thanked the Commissioner for a balanced motion and including the uncertainty pool. He noted the Council is not setting a cap only to prevent bycatch, but for all the other real concerns, and the Council must balance the impacts and conservation. PSC limits are not allocations, but allowances. He thanked the public for all their comments and is looking to more thorough work in establishing tools to improve their ability to decrease bycatch and increase harvest of groundfish resources.

Mr. Merrill noted that the uncertainty pool concept is covered in analysis and, when considering how to use Chinook PSC, the numbers fall within range in the analysis. He stated that all measures are likely to have economic impacts, but by providing sector specific splits, one sector will not necessarily impact another. The uncertainty pool will be able to provide incentive, coordinate activities, and provide adequate PSC to prosecute the fishery.

Mr. Dersham echoed Mr. Hull's comments, and reiterated the urgency to develop a rollover tool for the fleet. He stated that this has been the most difficult issue in all his years on the Council, and the motion that has been crafted is the best possible solution.

Mr. Cotten stated his pleasure to vote on a salmon limit and have it in place. He thanked all the stakeholders who have commented, and noted that he thinks the motion is fair and equitable, and he feels like the can explain to other people why the Council took the actions they've taken.

Mr. Tweit moved to amend, which was seconded:

The Council deems proposed regulations that clearly and directly flow from the provisions of this motion to be necessary and appropriate in accordance with section 303(c)."

"The Council authorizes the Executive Director and the Chairman to review the draft proposed regulations when provided by NMFS to ensure that the proposed regulations to be submitted to the Secretary under section 303(c) are consistent with these instructions."

He spoke to his motion noting that this will take action so the Executive director and Chairman can be delegated to review regulations on Council's behalf. He is confident that the regulations will be reviewed accurately, and the Council has an idea of what they will be. **The amendment passed unanimously.**

Vote on the amended main motion passed 10/1, with Cross in objection.

Mr. Henderschedt requested under the staff tasking agenda item to discuss what additional analysis would be required for a rollover for rockfish and to examine whether there is opportunity to move actions along.

C-5 GOA Trawl Bycatch

BACKGROUND

(a) Trawl Bycatch Management

During its February, meeting the Council requested that staff draft a discussion paper and a roadmap to aid the development of GOA Trawl Bycatch Management program. The elements of the discussion paper include a roadmap of Council decision points. Data describing participation in the Central and Western GOA groundfish fisheries is presented as well as information on LLPs and their endorsements. The third

section of the paper is an expanded discussion of state waters management, including options for addressing expansion into state waters which may result from a catch share program that applies to federal waters. The fourth section provides an expanded discussion of community protections to include the mechanics and applicability of Community Fisheries Associations and other alternative measures (e.g, port of landing requirements, regionalization) to the GOA trawl fisheries. Finally, the fifth section provides a discussion of potential benefits and detriments of limited duration quota and a discussion of types of non-monetary auctions.

The Council may identify additional information that is needed to more fully develop these concepts, or develop more specific management alternatives for further analysis.

(b) Initial review of GOA Trawl Data Collection

Because the Council is considering developing a catch share plan for the Central and Western Gulf of Alaska trawl fishery (posted on web May 21, 2013), it has also expressed an interest in developing a fast-tracked data collection program that can be implemented before fishing begins under a potential new catch share program. Implementation of data collection before a catch share program implemented would provide the Council, analysts, and the public better historical information to assess the impacts of the proposed amendment. At this meeting, the Council may determine whether the document is adequate for Public review. If it is ready to be released, the Council may select a preliminary preferred alternative.

It is assumed that the data collection program would apply to harvesters and processors that catch or process groundfish harvested with trawl gear from the Central or Western GOA. The analysis identifies the data elements that are proposed to be collected from catcher vessels, catcher processors, and processors.

(c) Tendering report

The Council requested that staff prepare a report on the use of tender vessels in the GOA pollock and Pacific cod trawl fisheries. That paper provides historic participation data from 2010 through April 2013, information on tendering regulations in the GOA, and management and enforcement issues. The only Council action necessary is to review the report and provide direction to staff regarding any additional information needs.

C-5 (a) Trawl Bycatch Management

Darrell Brannan reviewed the discussion paper/roadmap on GOA Trawl Bycatch Management and answered questions from the Council. The AP gave its report, and public comment was taken. The SSC did not address this agenda item.

Mr. Tweit moved, which was seconded, the following:
The Council appreciates stakeholder efforts to respond to its request for proposed prohibited species catch (PSC) management measures in the Gulf of Alaska trawl fisheries. The breadth of preliminary proposals provides the Council with a variety of program structures to consider in development of a program. Recognizing that these proposals have been recently received and are preliminary in nature, the Council requests that staff provide a discussion paper reviewing the proposals. This review should first briefly summarize each proposal and describe the program structure being proposed using the Tier 1 and 2 decision framework provided in the June 2013 'roadmap' document. Each proposal should then be examined in light of the Council's purpose and

need statement. The paper should review each of the objectives identified in the Council's purpose and need statement and whether and how the elements of each proposal address those objectives.

This review is not intended to be an analysis of the proposals or their elements and options. Instead, the review is intended to provide a basis for the Council and stakeholders to develop program designs for more comprehensive analysis in the future with the necessary components and focus to address the Council's purpose and need statement. Additionally, the discussion paper should point out whether any of the proposals include elements that may not be authorized under Magnuson-Stevens Act. The result is intended to further the Council's objective of advancing bycatch reduction and management, providing industry with the necessary tools to adapt to present and future management needs, and meet other stated objectives of mitigating inequities between program participants that new management provisions might impose.

In addition, the discussion paper should expand on the state waters section and explicitly discuss the effects on a federal program in a situation in which a substantial portion of the harvest has been historically harvested in state waters.

Mr. Tweit spoke to his motion, noting that the Council should use the efforts and comments received at this meeting as a starting point for moving forward. The discussion paper should be a brief evaluation of the overall design contemplated under each proposal and how well it meets previously stated objectives, particularly with regard to halibut and Chinook salmon bycatch management. Mr. Tweit indicated his intent would be to have the discussion paper available before the Council takes up this issue again. He noted there is a need to highlight issues in the proposals that may not meet the requirements of the current MSA.

Discussion continued, and Mr. Tweit briefly reviewed the list of proposals which it was noted that the Council would benefit from a standard format for all proposals and would provide a way for everyone to evaluate and identify possible missing elements. Mr. Dersham pointed out the Joint Protocol Committee would benefit from a discussion paper which would facilitate its ability to comment on issues facing the Board of Fisheries.

Mr. Henderschedt stated it is important to spend time discussing what we expect from stakeholders who participate in the process. 1. What next steps are needed? 2. How can the Council relate new steps to leverage work already done by industry? 3. What are the missing elements?

Mr. Fields moved to amend the motion by adding, in the middle of the second paragraph after the words "Magnuson-Stevens Act," "or may encounter other legal restraints…" The amendment was seconded. He noted there may be other issues outside of MSA, and would like to be alerted to them if discovered. **The motion passed without objection.**

Mr. Hull moved to amend the motion to add "Assess what is required by the Council to develop Community Fishing Associations (CFAs)." The motion was seconded. He spoke to his motion noting that until we know what criteria is required, we cannot move forward, and stated that it may be as simple as a phone call to NOAA HQ. **The motion passed without objection.**

Mr. Tweit spoke to the main motion, and thanked everyone for the breadth of responses, noting that because the significant amount of work and that many groups worked together, much of the initial work is done. He hopes that the Council can determine the next steps under the staff tasking agenda item.

Mr. Fields also thanked the public for the comments received, and noted that the Council would welcome additional comments. He also noted he would like to see a discussion on current studies of catch share programs generally.

The amended main motion passed without objection.

C-5 (b) Initial review of GOA Trawl Data Collection

Darrell Brannan gave the staff report on this agenda item and answered questions from the Council. The AP gave its report, and the SSC had given its report earlier. Public comment was taken.

COUNCIL DISCUSSION/ACTION

Mr. Henderschedt moved to adopt Alternative 2 as the PPA, with the exception of the bycatch avoidance and gear use check boxes, and to send out the RIR/IRFA for public review. The motion was seconded by Mr. Tweit.

Mr. Henderschedt spoke to his motion, stating that this is an opportunity to move forward with a very simple EDR in expectation of future implementation of a new bycatch management structure in the GOA. He discussed the data the Council has chosen, and that the data included is the proper data to collect and the analysis provides clear impacts and methodologies in its collection. He noted he did not wish to see the action bogged down by potential requirements and will exclude the issue of vessels <60 submitting logbooks. Further, he indicated that there is adequate confidentiality in the program. Mr. Henderschedt went on to answer questions of clarification from the Council members. There was a discussion regarding check boxes as a means of getting information.

Mr. Cotten moved to amend the motion by retaining the checkboxes. The motion was seconded by Mr. Fields. He spoke to his motion noting that there is minimal burden to the fleet and there is no reason to remove them as it provides additional data. Discussion continued about logbook data, the vessels that are required to keep them, and the differences in the fleet. Mr. Cross remarked the data the Council would receive from the check boxes will not give the expected information the Council is seeking, and contends that the tool is a crude instrument. Mr. Hull noted that while it is good information to know who is using excluders, the best information will be from the fishermen themselves, from their coop activities, and from the practices. **The vote on the amendment failed 4/7, with Cotten, Fields, Campbell, and Olson voting in favor. The main motion passed without objection.**

C-5 (c) GOA Tendering Activity

Jon McCracken gave the staff report on this agenda item and answered questions from the Council. The AP had given its report earlier, and public comment was taken.

COUNCIL DISCUSSION/ACTION

Mr. Fields moved, which was seconded to task staff to update the discussion paper for review at a later date with the following additional information:

- **Data from the remainder of the 2013 fishing year**
- **Proportion of AFA vessels operating as tender vessels in the GOA pollock and Pacific cod fishery**

- **Information on impacts of tendering GOA pollock and Pacific cod concerning timely catch accounting**
- **Information concerning possible impacts of genetic sampling protocol of tendered GOA pollock**

Mr. Fields spoke to the motion stating that the Council may be apprehensive spending time and/or resources on a possible trend, but this discussion paper will outline impacts should trends continue and accelerate. The discussion paper will give the Council a broader perspective and assess if there is a problem.

Chairman Olson noted that the Council will view the first part of the motion as a statement of intent. There was discussion regarding timing and the dynamics of the year in relation to tendering. Mr. Hull noted that the Observer program review will look generally at this issue, and the information will be available for the discussion paper.

Mr. Merrill noted this information can be contained in a NMFS in-season report.

The motion passed 6/5, with Fields, Hull, Hyder, Cotten, Dersham, and Olson voting in favor.

Mr. Tweit noted that there has been a dramatic change on one sector during a time of contemplating restructuring the fishery, and the Council would normally set a control date to prevent a behaviour,. This kind of behavior will continue as restructuring takes place, and the tool to mitigate this specific behaviour in the future is a control date.

C-6 Cost Recovery for LAPP and CDQ Programs

BACKGROUND

NOAA Fisheries has developed an initial review draft RIR/IRFA to implement cost recovery regulations for the Amendment 80, AFA/AI pollock, CDQ Groundfish and Halibut, and BSAI Pacific Cod Freezer Longline Coalition programs. The Council is requested to review the RIR/IRFA and provide comments on the regulations being proposed. Input from the Council and stakeholders on the fee collection program's structure, including due dates and development of standardized prices are being sought. Because this action is being implemented under Secretarial authority, the Council is not required to develop a preliminary preferred alternative at this meeting. However, the Council may wish to provide guidance on whether it wishes to review future iterations of the RIR/IRFA.

Glenn Merrill and Darrell Brannan gave the staff report on this agenda item and answered questions from the Council. The AP had given its report earlier and the SSC did not address this agenda item. Public comment was taken.

COUNCIL DISCUSSION/ACTION

Mr. Henderschedt stated that no action is necessary, assuming that the Council will see analysis again and get a report as part of NMFS B reports. He noted it is important to understand the details of the LAPPs, how costs will be determined, and what they might be. He urged the Council to be transparent as it goes forward.

John Lepore, NOAA GC, stated that it is important for the Council to manage expectations and many definitions (LAPP, person, etc.) have already been defined in the MSA. Discussion continued about how NMFS will respond to public comment. Mr. Merrill noted that the public will have ample opportunity to comment, and the Council will be updated as to revisions in the analysis.

Mr. Olson stated the Council will look forward to reviewing this item at a later date.

C-7 Bering Sea Canyons

BACKGROUND
In April 2012, the Council initiated two discussion papers in response to numerous proposals and public testimony regarding consideration of management measures to preserve representative portions of the highly productive shelf break zone in the Bering Sea, specifically the Pribilof and Zemchug canyons as candidates to provide EFH protection to deep-sea corals, sponge, and benthic habitat for fish and crab species. The discussion papers were structured to better understand the importance of these canyons as unique coral and sponge habitats for FMP-managed species, as well as to understand the current fishing activities in the canyons and the process for and future management actions.

The first discussion paper (C-7a) was compiled by the AFSC and reviews and summarizes existing and new information on the canyons, their habitat, and fish associations in those areas. The second paper (C-7b) provides an overview of fishing activity within the canyons, past actions for protection in the area, management measures influencing the spatial aspects of relative fishing activity in the Bering Sea, and the process for any potential future actions.

Diana Stram and Mark Sigler gave the staff report on this agenda item and answered questions from the Council. The AP had given its report, the SSC had given its report earlier, and Steve MacLean, along with Bill Tweit, gave the Ecosystem Committee report on this agenda item. Public comment was taken.

COUNCIL DISCUSSION/ACTION

Mr. Henderschedt moved, which was seconded, to identify and validate where necessary areas of coral concentrations for possible management measures for the conservation and management of deep sea corals in Pribilof and Zhemchug canyons.

- **Request AFSC expand upon the initial analysis to include an overlay of model results with existing data such as: visual survey data, observer data, longline survey data, multibeam sonar data and to incorporate a biodiversity index and rare species analysis.**

- **Task staff to initiate a discussion paper that addresses management measures to be considered for conserving areas of coral concentrations and associated fish productivity. Staff should meet with AFSC and stakeholders to discuss possibilities for collaboration in order to survey areas of coral abundance as well as to identify and develop tools for coral impact reduction and to bring a report of that meeting back to the council at the October or December meeting.**

- **Draft a letter to the Deep Sea Coral Research and Technology Program (DSCRTP) requesting that further research be done to identify and characterize areas of relatively high coral abundance in the Pribilof canyon using camera drops or similar techniques**

capable of gathering empirical data. Request that this research be used to inform longer term research priorities including: refining predictions of coral presence, acquiring information on the characteristics of coral in this area such as height and density, the role of these coral as habitat for fish, and documenting presence and degree of fishing gear effects.

Mr. Henderschedt thanked everyone for their comments and spoke to the motion, stating that the paper would provide discussion points and could include options, including status quo. He thanked the Ecosystem committee for their input regarding timing, more science, or more management measures.

He affirmed the need to continue to collect scientific data, respond to scientific issues, and acknowledge the known where it exists. He noted that closures that serve as marine reserves, as the Council heard in testimony, will continue to be a consideration of management tools. Mr. Henderschedt answered questions of clarification from the Council, and specified that feedback is necessary along with input from stakeholders and science center personnel, promoting discussion and recommendations from all interests.

Mr. Fields noted he appreciated the motion and the comments from the public and will be supporting it. Ms. Kimball commented that she is looking forward to further discussion under the staff tasking agenda item, as the impacts to staff are significant.

Mr. Tweit moved to amend, in bullet 3, to strike "Pribilof canyon,' and insert, "in the Bering sea slope canyon areas and to support the process of improving AFSC et al. model predictions and vunerability index." Mr. Tweit noted he is clarifying wording using recommendations from the Ecosystem Committee. **The amendment passed without objection.**

Mr. Fields noted he will be supporting the motion noting he is not just focusing on coral, but this motion, along with future Council action, is a positive, proactive step forward realizing there is much more to do.

Amended main motion passed unanimously.

Mr. Henderschedt moved, which was seconded by Mr. Fields, to task staff with development of discussion paper regarding development of a Bering Sea fishery ecosystem plan. Mr. Fields seconded.

Mr. Henderschedt spoke to the motion. He noted the Council has been, and remains, a leader in ecosystem-based management and with the development of a Bering Sea Ecosystem plan can continue to stay in a leadership position particularly in the face of challenges ahead, such as potential impacts of climate change.

He continued, saying the Council should proceed broadly, at a Bering sea level FEP. Although the Council's practical interests are in the Bering Sea slope, it remains a very challenging project, and the Council should take care temper its ambitions. The Council should establish scientific reference points to assess change in fishing activity, oceanographic changes, and acidification, and these interests are of particular concern relative to the slope which has high productivity in the Bering Sea.

Mr. Tweit stated he remains interested in the role the Ecosystem Committee will have in input for this paper, and hopes to use the discussion paper to address the scope of project.

Ms. Kimball noted that this may be a monumental task but could be used as a great resource to readily inform decisions on a regular basis. Mr. Fields stated that this action is a progressive step to protect an important species and to further develop scientific understanding relative to the canyons.

Dr. Balsiger noted that a project of this scale can take tremendous effort, and it would be good to see a broad use. He thanked all the stakeholders for their input.

The motion passed unanimously.

D-1 (a) Initial Review of Charter Halibut Definition RIR

BACKGROUND

The Council is considering whether to amend the definition of "sport fishing guide services" in Federal regulations that govern the charter halibut fishery in Southeast and Southcentral Alaska to be more consistent with State of Alaska regulations. The Council adopted a problem statement and a suite of alternatives and options in February 2013 for analysis, based on a discussion paper it reviewed at that meeting. A few businesses have developed a guide-assisted model that allows them to provide indirect assistance to anglers to harvest halibut for compensation from shore or adjacent vessels. This practice is not considered to be "sport fishing guide services" in Federal regulations because the guide is not on board the vessel. As a result, anglers on these vessels are allowed to fish under more liberal regulations in effect for unguided anglers.

In addition to the no action alternative (Alternative 1), Alternative 2, Option 1 would not require a guide to be onboard the same vessel as the guided angler. The Council also adopted placeholders for possible definitions of "compensation" and "assistance" in the Federal definition for sport fishing guide services; this resulted in Alternative 2, Option 2 and Alternative 2, Option 3. The analysis contains one suboption that would adopt State regulatory text for the Federal definition; a second suboption would revise one word in the State text. The Council may consider State regulatory text as the basis for Option 3 for analysis. The Council may proceed with final action on Option 1 alone, or Options 1 and 2, even if a preferred alternative under Option 3 cannot be identified at the time of final action on the proposed action. Final action may be scheduled for October 2013.

Jane DiCosimo gave the staff report on this agenda item and answered questions from the Council. Matt Brown and Susan Auer (NMFS Office of Law Enforcement) discussed enforcement concerns. Neither the AP nor the SSC had this item on their agendas. Public comment was taken.

COUNCIL DISCUSSION/ACTION

Ed Dersham provided the following motion from the analysis of the alternatives and options, which was seconded by Mr. Hull.

Problem Statement

The Council has received information highlighting halibut fishing practices in Area 2C that allow anglers to circumvent the Council's intent for daily bag and size limits for the Pacific halibut charter fishery. It may be necessary to revise and clarify Federal regulations to meet the Council's intent to define guided halibut fishing. The current discrepancy between Federal and State regulations in the definition of sport fishing guide services not only affects the Charter Halibut Permit program but, as long as differential bag and size limits exist in Area 2C, and if they expand to Area 3A in the future, have the potential for some guided sport removals to be accounted against the non-guided sport sector.

A few companies have developed a guide-assisted business model that allows them to provide "sport fishing guide services" to anglers to catch halibut for compensation from shore or adjacent vessels.

This practice is not considered to be "sport fishing guide services" in Federal regulations because the guide is not on board the vessel. As a result, these businesses are not required to have a Charter Halibut Limited Access Permit. Additionally, the clients (anglers) using guide-assisted services are allowed to fish under the more liberal regulations for unguided anglers.

Alternatives for Analysis

The Council adopted the following alternatives and options for analysis to improve clarity and to reflect recent action by the Board of Fisheries to define compensation. The revised options are not intended to convey any intention by Federal or State agencies for selection of a preferred alternative.

Alternative 1. No action

Alternative 2. Revise and clarify Federal definitions.

Option 1. Revise the definition of sport fishing guide services to remove the language "by being onboard a vessel with such person".

Option 2. Define 'compensation.' within the context of sport fishing guide services.

<u>Suboption 1</u>. The definition of 'compensation' would be aligned with the State of Alaska definition.

"Compensation" (1) means direct or indirect payment, remuneration, and other benefits received in return for services, regardless of the source; in this paragraph, "benefits" includes (A) wages or other employment benefits given directly or indirectly to an individual or organization, and (B) dues, payments, fees, and other remuneration given directly or indirectly to a fishing club, business, organization, or individual who provides sport fishing guide services; (2) does not include reimbursement for the *actual* daily expenses for fuel, food, or bait;

<u>Suboption 2</u>. The definition of 'compensation' would be aligned with the State of Alaska definition, with one word substitution.

"Compensation" means direct or indirect payment, remuneration, or other benefits received in return for services, regardless of the source; in this paragraph, "benefits" includes wages or other employment benefits given directly or indirectly to an individual or organization, and any dues, payments, fees, or other remuneration given directly or indirectly to a fishing club, business, organization, or individual who provides sport fishing guide services; and does not include reimbursement for the *reasonable* daily expenses for fuel, food, or bait;

Option 3. Define 'assistance' within the context of sport fishing guide services.

"Assistance" means accompanying or physically directing the sport fisherman in sport fishing activities during any part of a sport fishing trip.

Mr. Dersham spoke to his motion, noting that the analysis has done a good job in interpreting the Council's intent, and balancing challenges with the stated goals. He answered questions of clarification from the Council members. He clarified that the analysis was to be released for public review, and the next meeting be scheduled for final action. There was brief discussion regarding the definition of "assistance" as in Option 3, and it was decided to alert the Joint Protocol Committee for discussion.

Mr. Hull requested to flag areas in regulation of those things that are charter activities, what activities are allowed, and what is not allowed. This will better inform the public. **The motion passed without objection.**

D-1 (b) Review IFQ discussion papers and take action as needed

BACKGROUND

The North Pacific Council called for proposals to amend the commercial halibut/sablefish Individual Fishing Quota (IFQ) Program during summer 2009. The Council has addressed all but two IFQ proposals that were originally tasked by the Council in 2010. Proposed actions include: 1) allow the use of pot gear for sablefish IFQs in the Gulf of Alaska and amend the sablefish Category A (freezer longliner) use cap.

Jane DiCosimo gave the staff report on this agenda item. The AP had given its report, and public comment was heard.

COUNCIL DISCUSSION/ACTION

Use of pots in the sablefish IFQ fishery
Mr. Hull moved, which was seconded by Mr. Cotten, to expand the discussion paper on allowing the use of pot and longline gear for sablefish IFQs in the Gulf of Alaska.

Additional items to address:

- **Update on whale depredation and interactions**
- **Update on whale deterrent work in progress**
- **Update on Canadian sablefish gear usage and pricing by gear type**
- **Discussion of pre-emption of fishing grounds due to lost gear**
- **Gear conflicts between all gear types**
- **Discussion of shift in predation to halibut**
- **Review of current literature on whale predation**

Additionally, the Council will form a gear workgroup representative of all gear types to explore issues surrounding gear conflicts, areas affected, time and area restrictions and usage between pot and longline gear.

Mr. Hull spoke to his motion, noting that this issue will benefit from further exploration, but before that can happen, a gear group needs to be formed to discuss how different gear groups and vessels can work together. He noted that hopefully prior to the Council meeting in October the proposed gear group can meet and make recommendations. There was discussion regarding timing and membership of a working group and a proposed date.

Mr. Henderschedt moved to amend the last paragraph to strike "and usage between pot and longline gear," and replace it with "to address the potential use of pot gear for sablefish IFQ in the Gulf of Alaska." The motion was seconded by Ms. Kimball. He noted there is a diverse group of users who may have interest in this fishery, and the discussion should be limited to this issue. Impacts should be about pot gear for use in the IFQ sablefish fishery **The amendment passed without objection**, **and the main motion passed without objection.**

Bering Sea A share caps

Mr. Hull moved to take no action at this time. His motion was seconded. He spoke to his motion noting that the paper identifies issues the IFQ committee didn't discuss, and the IFQ committee will be meeting in December. The issue can be on the agenda then. **The motion passed without objection.**

D-1 (c) Research Priorities

BACKGROUND

The Magnuson-Stevens Act requires the Council to adopt a five-year research plan each year. The Council adopted its most recent five-year research plan in June 2012 based on recommendations from its four Plan Teams, the Scientific and Statistical Committee, and the Advisory Panel. At this meeting, the Council will update its five-year research plan for 2014-2018.

In conjunction with their review of research priorities in June 2012, the SSC determined that a more orderly process for submitting and prioritizing proposals for research priorities was needed. The SSC preferred to have the Plan Teams be the initial filter for research priorities that come before the SSC, and recommended that the Council consider adopting a process of evaluating and organizing the list of proposed research priorities using an excel file or relational database system.

Staff has been working on transitioning the Council and SSC's 2012 research priority list to a spreadsheet-type system. Proposed revisions to the process for the SSC's review of research priorities, and progress to date with developing the spreadsheet, are included in the books.

In developing the new spreadsheet and process, a revised organization and template for the lists by category was developed and provided to the Plan Teams in their subsequent reviews in 2013. As with the original 2012 list, the report format includes the description of the research priority, organized by whether it is an immediate or ongoing concern, and by category heading. The report also lists the status of research related to that priority, based on what the SSC identified in the 2012 list, and then identifies which Plan Team staff asked to review each priority. All Council plan teams have now met and reviewed their priorities and revised them in the new format.

Diana Stram gave the report on this agenda item. The AP and SSC had given reports on this agenda item earlier, and public comment was heard.

COUNCIL DISCUSSION/ACTION

Mr. Tweit moved the following, which was seconded by Mr. Henderschedt .

Approve the research priorities recommended by the SSC in Appendix A of their minutes for this meeting, with the following modifications.

Categorize research priorities that maintain core stock assessment surveys at current levels as Critical Priorities; this category includes numbers 115, 138, and 146.

Designate several categories as High Priority for Current Council Initiatives:

1) Build Integrated Ecosystem Management capabilities, priority numbers 110, 125, 142, 194, 198, 200, 203, 204, 205, 216, and 217.

2) Facilitate Council efforts to reduce impacts to Chinook salmon, priority numbers 119, 120, 184 and 188.

3) Increase knowledge of SSL fishery interactions and population dynamics, priority numbers 126, 127, 128, 129, 130, 182 and 310.

Add a new research priority as High Priority, titled 'Verify AFSC model projections of coral and sponge distribution throughout the Bering Sea slope and canyons'.

Mr. Tweit spoke to the motion, noting the priorities are designed to facilitate use by Fisheries Science Centers and other agencies, and should be convenient and transparent. It is a helpful tool to track overall success of prioritizations and how the overall priorities are being funded and used in research.

He noted the SSC has suggested prioritization of high, medium, and low, and there should be an elevated status of "critical priority." He also suggested that it is time to revisit the groundfish workplan. There was brief discussion, and **the motion passed without objection.**

D-2 Staff Tasking

Chris Oliver reviewed the information in the action memo, the three meeting outlook, and the items that have been flagged for discussion throughout the meeting. Council members noted additional items for discussion, and public comment was heard. The AP had given its report earlier.

COUNCIL DISCUSSION/ACTION

The Council unanimously approved minutes from the April 2013 meeting.

Observer Program/OAC/EM

Mr. Hull moved to recommend the Council send a letter to fishing organizations in the fixed gear sector to request and encourage their members to provide volunteer vessels to participate in the EM pilot project that is underway this year. The letter could also include a brief description of action in this meeting relative to the EM strategic plan. Accompanying the letter would be a 1-2 page description of EM project participation requirements written by NMFS so it is clear to the fixed gear vessel owners what the Agency needs from volunteer vessels. This would include such parameters such as number of trips required, specific vessel needed, logistics, etc. Second, recommend the OAC meet in September to review the draft 2014 annual deployment plan and other information requested by the Council at this meeting relative to the ADP, and provide comments and recommendations to the Council for our October meeting. And third, recommend the EM workgroup be formed this summer, based on the composition suggested by the OAC and the EM strategic plan that was in the Observer Program motion, and recommend the EM workgroup meet following October Council meeting. The tasking of the group would include: relevant items the Council identified in the Observer Program motion at this meeting, NMFS recommendations in Appendix G in the EM strategic plan, and the four bulleted tasks based on the OAC's recommendations.

Mr. Hull spoke to his motion, and noted that there are items that are not relevant to discuss, such as EM alternative third party implementation vehicles. Collaboration between industry and Agency will be discussed. He stated that the letter he requested is a good outreach effort. Mr. Hull briefly discussed the OAC tasking, and his rationale for staggering the tasking for the OAC and the workgroup. **The motion passed without objection.**

IFQ Committee

Mr. Hull stated that there is no motion required. A proposal was received which should go to the IFQ Committee for discussion. There is an expectation of an IFQ Committee meeting in December, and he requested that the Council provide input or direction at the October meeting to focus the efforts of the committee.

Gear Committee

Mr. Hull moved to form a gear workgroup to discuss issues identified in AP motion and to provide recommendation to Council at its October meeting on how to move forward in developing use of pots in the Gulf of Alaska. The workgroup would meet prior to the October council meeting. The motion was seconded. Mr. Hull sated he would like the group to discuss conflicts of gear groups, and how groups could work out solutions that would lead to a discussion paper in order to be able to fish pots. It was generally agreed that the Council would solicit applicants in the Council's newsletter. **The motion passed without objection.**

SSL EIS

Mr. Tweit made the following motion, which was seconded:

The Draft Environmental Impact Statement on Steller Sea Lion Protection Measures for Groundfish Fisheries in the Bering Sea and Aleutian Islands Management Area, consisting of two volumes and over 1,000 pages, was released to the public and the Council on May 10, 2013. At this meeting the Council received presentations from NMFS Alaska Region on the Draft EIS, as well as some preliminary information about the analytical approach that will be used in the future biological opinion on Steller sea lion mitigation measures (See memo Demaster to Kurland dated May 24, 2013; memo Balsiger to Olson May 28, 2013 and supporting documents). The Council again acknowledges the hard work of NMFS staff in putting together the DEIS as well as the analyses prepared in response to previous comments by the Council. We appreciate that these issues continue to be controversial, and express our appreciation for the professionalism brought to the task.

The Council's preliminary review of the Draft Environmental Impact Statement on Steller Sea Lion Protection Measures for Groundfish Fisheries in the Bering Sea and Aleutian Islands Management Area (DEIS) confirms that the Council and the public are still left without the key information needed to make fully informed public comment and a final decision on Steller sea lion mitigation measures. Many of the relevant supporting analyses are incomplete and pending, and there remains continued reliance on draft unpublished studies in critical sections of the document, particularly chapter 5. The Council reiterates its earlier comments about the need to have all of the relevant information and a complete analysis available for review and comment by the public before the Council makes a decision on a preferred alternative. Failure to provide this information jeopardizes the NEPA process in that the Council and the public will not have the necessary information to make informed comments or decisions on a final preferred alternative.

Although improved from the Preliminary Draft EIS presented in April, the DEIS is written with the implicit assumption that the findings of the 2010 Biological Opinion will not change, even though the agency has stated that new information available since the completion of the 2010 Biological Opinion is significant, will be objectively reviewed, and may result different metrics for evaluating fisheries mitigation measures. And, while the DEIS very generally acknowledges the two independent scientific reviews of the 2010 Biological Opinion, and addresses a few aspects of the

criticisms of those reviews, it does not present the agency's responses to the heart of those critical reviews: namely, that there is no scientific support for the conclusion of the 2010 Biological Opinion that fisheries jeopardize Steller sea lions through competition for prey, which results in chronic nutritional stress and reduced natality. Whether such a significant negative impact on Steller sea lions from the groundfish fisheries exists is as relevant under NEPA as it is under the ESA. Accurate scientific analysis, expert agency comments, and public scrutiny are essential to implementing NEPA. NEPA documents must concentrate on the issues that are "truly significant to the action in question, rather than amassing needless detail" 40 CFR § 1500.1(b).

The truly significant issue is the potential for negative interactions between fisheries removals and Steller sea lions. The DEIS assumes that more fishing and more areas open to fishing results in greater negative effects on Steller sea lions, and evaluates the alternatives accordingly, without explaining how or why this assumption is merited in light of the existing criticism of the independent reviewers. NEPA requires that all major points of view on the environmental impacts of the alternatives must be discussed and disclosed in the draft EIS (40 CFR § 1502.9(a)). The EIS should include an analysis of the potential impacts of fishing on sea lions, their prey, and critical habitat, and incorporate the agency's responses to the findings and recommendations of the independent reviews into this analysis, and then apply it across all alternatives. This information must be included in order for the EIS to meet the requirement to "take a hard look at the environmental effects" of each of the alternatives. Without these analyses, the EIS will not be based on the best scientific information, nor will the resulting decisions that depend on the EIS analysis.

The Council has previously identified this as a critical shortcoming in the overall approach to the EIS, and the way the process is unfolding for public comment and Council participation. This problem was also raised once again by the chairman of the Council's Steller Sea Lion Mitigation Committee, noting that the DEIS remains deficient, and without this analysis the committee cannot provide informed advice to the Council or the agency.

In our April motion, the Council stated that, "At minimum, the DEIS should contain a stand-alone section identifying the findings of the 2010 BiOp, the findings and recommendations of the Independent Reviews, and NMFS' response to each controversial issue identified by the Independent Reviews." We repeat this recommendation here. NEPA requires that the document include all of the analyses and information discussed above in order to be complete.

The Council also requests the agency reconsider its policy choice regarding its treatment of recovery plan criteria in the EIS and as the basis for jeopardy and adverse modification (JAM) determinations in the upcoming BiOp.

Mr. Tweit spoke to the motion, noting that it has most of the background and rationale within the motion. He stated that the agency's calendar should not be the sole factor impeding the NEPA analysis. The reader needs to be able to make an informed decision from all factors. Mr. Henderschedt cautioned not to put the Council in a position where they are interpreting the law to the point where it impedes policy decision.

Ms. Kimball moved to amend to request NMFS reconsider its policy choice regarding its treatment of recovery plan criteria in the EIS and as the basis for JAM determination in the upcoming biop. The amendment was seconded by Mr. Cotten. Ms. Kimball noted that recovery criteria specified for DPEIS will be used to evaluate the recovery status for sea lions. She questioned whether it's possible to use a different recovery plan criteria. It was generally agreed that the Council will draft a letter to NMFS supporting the amendment. There was brief discussion, and the **amendment passed without objection.**

Mr. Merrill stated he cannot support the motion but thanked the Council for expressing appreciation of hard work as the process continues. He noted that NMFS will be considering the comments provided.

The motion passed with Merrill objecting.

Rockfish in GOA

Request that staff prepare a trailing amendment to address the Council's inability to combine both an uncertainty buffer and a rollover of Chinook from the Rockfish CV fleet in its Preferred Alternative for the GOA Non-Pollock Trawl Chinook bycatch cap.

The analysis should examine three alternatives:

1. **The addition of the rollover provision as described in the EA/RIR to the CV rockfish Chinook cap and uncertainty buffer.**
2. **The addition of a provision allowing the rollover of all but 160 Chinook and a rockfish CV uncertainty buffer.**
3. **The rollover of all Chinook remaining in the rockfish CV Chinook cap when all rockfish cooperatives have checked-out of the fishery, but no later than November 15 and no uncertainty buffer.**

It is the intent of the Council that it take final action in December and request the agency to incorporate the outcome of that decision into the final rule for GOA Chinook bycatch in the non-pollock trawl fishery.

Mr. Henderschedt spoke to the motion noting his concern with the previous Council final action earlier in the meeting. He stated a key element of the alternatives and options was left behind because it was incompatible with the uncertainty buffer and the analysis could not capture the relationship between two management strategies. He proposed the three alternatives that represent a reasonable range in response to the uncertainty buffer. None of the scenarios should result in a higher bycatch of Chinook cap in any year than the provisions under final action, (including the uncertainty buffer). Questions of clarification were answered.

Discussion continued regarding a purpose and need statement, stating that overall none of the alternatives should result in exceeding the 7500 cap. The Council recognizes that identifying the exact amount that is best allocated to the rockfish fishery is challenging, therefore it is looking to establish flexibility in the program that will allow for best utilization of non-rockfish species and maintaining conservation objectives.

Mr. Hull noted he will support the motion, and that it should not slow down the main package. Both actions can meet up in rulemaking. There was brief discussion regarding timing, with tentative initial review scheduled for October, and final action in December.

Ms. Kimball noted she will be supporting the motion and that it provides a mechanism for the rollover that could not be accommodated in the analysis. Mr. Merrill noted that rulemaking will be combined if possible for the two actions.

The motion passed without objection.

Right of First Refusal

Mr. Cotten discussed the community workgroup discussion paper that would clarify regulations regarding ROFRs along with a list of required contract terms and conditions**. He moved that the Council prepare a discussion paper that addresses questions about the "contract terms for right of first refusal based on public law 108-109." The motion was seconded.** Mr. Cotten spoke to his motion noting that the nature of the ROFRs are complicated and changes could be explored in consultation with NOAA GC. Ms. Kimball stated that NOAA GC could answer questions without having staff prepare a discussion paper. There was discussion, and Ms. Smoker of NOAA GC stated that the question of contracts did not have a simple answer, and a discussion paper would have more information than just a NOAA GC opinion. Mr. Oliver noted the Council staff and NMFS staff will work together to provide more information on the issue. **The motion passed with Ms. Kimball objecting.**

Octopus

Mr. Cotten stated there has been some interest in an octopus directed fishery in the Gulf of Alaska and **moved to draft a discussion paper regarding the potential for a directed octopus fishery in the GOA. The discussion paper should include information which would allow the Council to consider recommending a directed octopus fishery, possibly GOA subarea, during the proposed specifications process in October, including: relevant stock assessment information, recent incidental catch information, information from Existing State water octopus fisheries, and in-season management/catch accounting considerations. As part of this motion, the Council is requesting stock assessment authors and the GOA groundfish Plan Team to provide, to the extent possible, area-specific (western, central, and eastern GOA) OFL and ABC estimates in this year's SAFE document that would include information to allow the Council to consider allowing a directed fishery for octopus.**

Mr. Cotten spoke to the motion that the plan team could establish OFL/ABC recommendations for octopus. Chris Oliver noted that a majority of the work has already been done. There was brief discussion regarding timing, and discussion regarding area-specific OFLs for octopus. Dr. Stram stated that area-specific OFLs do not exist for octopus at this point as that would indicate multiple stocks. GOA octopus are currently managed under Gulf-wide OFL and ABC**. Mr. Tweit moved to amend by striking "OFL" so that the plan team would be requested to provide only area-specific ABCs.** Mr. Tweit noted that there may be a concern regarding low area specific OFLs constraining existing fisheries, and ABCs are a better number to work from. **The amendment passed without objection.**

Mr. Henderschedt noted his discomfort with starting a directed fishery so soon because of the unknowns of what an octopus fishery would look like, and what the implications are. Mr. Merrill noted that this type of action would benefit from consideration of stock-structure criteria. **The main amended motion passed without objection.**

Enforcement Committee

Mr. Hyder noted the Enforcement Committee is seeking direction on a report on advanced VMS features, and reviewed the timeline involved. There was general discussion regarding the agenda, and it was agreed that it the report could be brought back in October. Mr. Hyder also requested that any other enforcement issues that needed to be discussed be put on the agenda as well. Mr. Tweit stated that the discussion the Enforcement Committee will have may make enforcement resources more efficient.

Research priorities:

Mr. Tweit moved the Council draft a letter to encourage collaborative focus on multi-beam mapping priority areas in the Bering Sea Groundfish FMP area. The motion was seconded. Mr. Tweit spoke to his motion, noting that it would be able to verify models and gain additional information on canyons as well as corals and sponges. The motion would leverage existing work and use multi-beam mappting tools. **The motion passed without objection.**

Mr. Tweit discussed tasking of the Ecosystem Committee and how it could contribute to the development of the Bering Sea Federal Ecosystem Plan. A workshop was proposed for review and discussion of ecosystem management tools that could affect Council decisions and develop strategies for moving forward on actions. Council members voiced their support, and it was agreed a workshop for the Ecosystem Committee could be planned.

GOA Trawl Bycatch Management Proposals

There was discussion regarding a timeline and composition of the variety of proposals that have been brought to the Council during the Council meeting. It was generally agreed that the proposals that have been brought forward during the Council to be consolidated and reviewed by the staff.

Fisheries Finance Program

Mr. Cross moved, which was seconded, that the Council draft a letter to NOAA requesting the prohibition on the fisheries finance program loans for new vessel construction be modified to allow new boat builders' access to program. Mr. Hyder seconded the motion. Mr. Cross noted that there has been public comment requesting this action and that the original program was implemented in 1996, and since that time the overcapacity of fleet has been taken care of from other programs. This action will take advantage of these programs and will be helping the fleet. Mr. Hull reminded the Council of the action the Council took on the scallop fishery and limited entry program. Mr. Merrill noted there are no other conflicts with other loan programs and authorities. **The motion passed without objection.**

Mr. Olson thanked Mr. Cotten for his 5 years of service on the Council.

Mr. Olson briefly discussed timing and scheduling for the October meeting, and announced appointments for Plan Teams and stated that the Council will be soliciting for an SSC position in the newsletter with expertise in economics.

The Chairman thanked those in attendance and for their work during the meeting. The meeting adjourned at 5:01pm on June 11, 2013.

MEETING ATTENDEE SIGN-IN SHEET

June, 2013 N.P.F.M.C. MEETING

PLEASE REGISTER ATTENDANCE FOR MEETING RECORDS

PLEASE PRINT - THANK YOU!

NAME	AFFILIATION
Paul MacGregor	At-Sea Processors Assn
BRENT PAINE	United Catcher Boats
Frank Kelty	City of Unalaska
Molly Dischner	AJOC
[illegible] Hubbard	
MICHAEL LAKE	Alaskan Observers, Inc.
~~Chad See~~	Freezer
Todd Loomis	Ocean Peace, Inc.
JOE PLESHA	TRIDENT
KRIS NOROSZ	Icicle Seafoods Inc
HENRY MITCHELL	CVRF
Joe Childers	Bristol Bay gillnet
VINCE O'Shea	PSPA
Kathy Hansen	SE AK Fishermen's Alliance
Linda Behnken	ALFA
Oystein Lone	F/V PACIFIC SOUNDER
SINCLAIR WILT	WESTWARD SEAFOODS
GLENN REED	PSPA

MEETING ATTENDEE SIGN-IN SHEET

JUNE, 2013 N.P.F.M.C. MEETING

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NAME	AFFILIATION
MARCUS ALDEN	WESTWARD FISHING CO
MARK FINA	US SEAFOODS
Jonathan Kreiss-Tomkins	AK House of Reps (District 34)
TERRY HAINES	AMCC
Joe Orsi	AFSC - NOAA
Heather Mann	Midwater Trawlers Cooperative
Matt Upton	US Seafoods
Adrian Celewycz	NOAA
Michelle Ridgeway	AK Dept of Fish & Game
Jerome Selby	Kodiak Island Borough
Neil Rodriguez	Coastal Villages Region Fund
Brian Lynch	Petersburg Vessel Owners Assoc.
Susan Robinson	Fishermen's Finest.
Elaine Gramoff	The Aleut Corp
HEATHER MITCHELL	CVRF
Heather McCarty	McCarty & Associates, Juneau
Hurley Ethelbah	Self - Blackcod Pots
ELIZABETH WILEY	WESTWARD FISHING Co

MEETING ATTENDEE SIGN-IN SHEET

June, 2013 N.P.F.M.C. MEETING

PLEASE REGISTER ATTENDANCE FOR MEETING RECORDS

PLEASE PRINT - THANK YOU!

NAME	AFFILIATION
Judy Brakel	—
HENRY MITCHELL	CVRF
John Zeller	R.D.V.
KELLY BRAUMAN	AC SELDOVIA
Tom Payton	MT. Yenlo AC
Israel Payton	Mat-Su AC
BRUCE MORGAN	Anchorage, AC.
JIM Stubbs	ANCHORAGE AC
Jeff Steele	Homer
Pat PAINE	UCB
Tony Boggenbickler	WRANGELL AC
Henry Mitchell	CVRF
PAUL MACGREGOR	AT-SEA PROCESSORS ASP
John Martin Jr	Juneau tribe
VINCE O'Shea	PSPA

Time Log
North Pacific Fishery Management Council
Meetings held in Juneau, Alaska at Centennial Hall
June 5-11, 2013

June 5, 2013		
Time on Tape	**Time of Day**	**Subject**
0:21:40	8:05:46	Call to order
0:34:21	8:18:25	Chris Oliver, B-1 ED report
0:34:27	8:18:41	Tyson Fick, ASMI Overview
0:59:35	8:43:31	Glenn Merrill, NMFS report
1:16:01	8:59:52	Mary Furuness, Inseason Management Report
1:41:39	9:25:13	Alan Kingsolving
1:53:34	9:37:01	B-2 NMFS Management Report (flow scale discussion paper)
2:02:20	9:45:56	Jeane Hansen, Overview of consultations
2:35:33	10:18:43	B-3 NOAA Enforcement Report
2:36:47	10:20:00	Susan Auer, Matt Brown
2:59:40	10:42:43	Nathan Lagerway
3:13:15	10:56:11	Karla Bush
3:13:32	10:56:27	B-6 USFWS Report
3:18:50	11:01:42	B-5 USCG Report
3:18:53	11:01:49	Capt. Thorne, Lt. Kenne
3:26:02	11:08:59	Steve Maclean
3:26:13	11:09:02	B-6 USFWS Report
3:33:01	11:15:56	Brandee Gerkee, John Kurland
4:27:02	13:17:19	Reconvene, B-7
4:41:04	13:31:15	Bob Clark, SSC report
4:51:08	13:41:13	Public Comment
4:51:18	13:41:28	Rhonda Hubbard
5:00:06	13:50:04	Larry Cotter
5:09:26	13:59:28	Todd Loomis
5:11:06	14:01:01	Dave Fraser
5:21:10	14:11:01	John Gauvin
5:26:37	14:16:25	Chad See
5:35:41	14:25:28	Discussion
5:51:46	14:41:25	C-1 Crab
5:54:20	14:43:56	Diana Stram
6:14:40	15:04:16	Governor Parnell address Council
6:49:26	15:38:43	SSC report, Bob Clark
7:03:40	15:52:51	AP report, Lori Swanson
7:06:56	15:56:05	Public comment
7:07:01	15:56:12	Dave Fraser
7:19:48	16:08:51	Clem Tillion
7:52:41	16:41:44	Jon McCracken, FLL Issues
8:18:00	17:06:37	Recess

June 6, 2013

Time on Tape	Time of Day	Subject
0:00:39	8:03:46	Call to Order
0:00:43	8:04:06	Jon McCracken, C-2 FLL Issues
0:21:38	8:24:35	AP report
0:26:09	8:29:06	Public Comment
0:26:13	8:29:12	George Hutchings
0:29:13	8:32:11	Julie Miller and Greg Elwood
0:41:33	8:44:22	Kenny Down
0:53:20	8:56:05	Joe Childers
1:07:29	9:10:08	Scott Hansen
1:10:33	9:13:10	Chad See
1:16:37	9:40:00	Cross Motion C-2
2:19:10	10:48:39	C-3 Overview, Chris Oliver
2:32:27	11:01:40	Craig Fauntz Martin Loefflad
4:15:47	13:48:34	Farron Wallace
4:15:54	13:48:42	EM Strategic Plan
5:59:44	15:31:57	Public Comment out of order, Megan Pasernack
6:00:23	15:32:33	Oysten Loehn
6:12:03	15:44:03	Chris Oliver
6:41:47	16:13:37	Lori Swanson, AP report
6:44:52	16:16:39	Public Comment
6:45:08	16:17:06	Kate File
6:49:22	16:21:19	George Hutchings
6:53:06	16:24:51	Lenny Hertzog
6:57:31	16:29:20	Sylvia Ettefagh
7:03:55	16:35:39	Rhonda Hubbard
7:17:32	16:49:08	Todd Hoppe
7:20:00	16:53:00	Recess

June 7, 2013

Time on Tape	Time of Day	Subject
0:00:00	8:37:06	Call to order
0:03:45	8:37:14	Public Comment, C-3
0:03:52	8:37:18	Brent Paine
0:14:36	8:47:57	Nancy Hilstrand
0:18:05	8:51:30	Jonathan Kreiss-Tomkins
0:21:43	8:55:01	Linda Behnken
0:39:10	9:12:20	Kathy Hansen
0:59:06	9:32:08	Terry Haines
1:04:02	9:37:08	Jeff Farvour
1:25:20	9:58:13	Hull Motion C-3
3:16:30	13:23:29	Sam Cunningham, C-4
3:16:44	13:23:48	GOA Chinook salmon bycatch
5:34:08	15:40:16	Jennifer Mondragon - sampling protocol C-4
5:57:13	16:03:14	AP report, Lori Swanson

6:06:34	16:12:24	Public Comment, C-4
6:07:22	16:12:31	Mark Begich addresses Council
6:33:58	16:38:31	Dave Wood, Bill Hayes
6:34:07	16:39:40	Public Testimony
6:46:03	16:39:46	Recess

June 8, 2013

Time on Tape	Time of Day	Subject
0:00:00	8:02:33	Call to order
0:01:19	8:02:44	C-4 Public Testimony
0:01:29	8:02:48	John Gauvin
0:11:04	8:12:21	Rob Sanderson
0:18:19	8:19:33	Vince O'Shea
0:28:02	8:29:11	George Hutchings
0:39:55	8:41:01	Susan Robinson
0:49:01	8:50:07	Jonathan Kreiss Tomkins
0:52:41	8:53:42	Lori Swanson, Todd Loomis
1:18:19	9:19:07	Bill McGill
1:24:49	9:25:36	Beth Stewart
1:36:04	9:36:48	Jon Warrenchuck
1:43:16	9:43:55	Bob Krueger
1:54:42	9:55:16	Paul Olson
1:58:02	9:58:36	Tim Evers
2:05:00	10:25:15	Theresa Peterson and Mark Fina
2:34:27	10:54:31	Jerome Selby and Denby Lloyd
2:47:09	11:07:04	Erik Forrer
2:50:38	11:10:31	Heather Mann
3:00:16	11:20:05	Julie Bonney
3:23:03	11:42:44	Nancy Hillstrand
3:26:29	11:46:08	Don Ashley
3:29:32	11:49:12	George Pletnikoff
3:38:53	13:08:45	Cora Campbell C-4 motion
5:56:56	15:25:45	Recess

June 9, 2013

Time on Tape	Time of Day	Subject
0:00:02	8:02:16	Call to order
0:00:59	8:03:22	Darrell Brannan C-5 GOA Trawl bycatch management
2:57:03	10:58:07	AP report, C-5 a
2:57:09	10:58:14	Becca Robbins-Gisclair
3:03:15	11:04:21	Public Comment, Brian Lynch
3:12:21	11:13:17	George Hutchings
3:26:05	11:26:55	Julie Bonney
3:51:02	11:51:47	Bob Kruger
4:13:45	13:35:29	Glenn Reed
4:23:30	13:45:13	Susan Robinson, Matt Upton
4:31:13	13:53:02	Beth Stewart and Tom Erich

4:46:20	14:30:43	Chuck Mccallum, Becca Robbins Gisclair
5:09:31	14:30:53	Terry Haines
5:19:58	14:41:17	Theresa Peterson, AMCC
5:30:39	14:52:11	Denby Lloyd
5:47:34	15:08:43	Brent Paine
6:29:33	15:50:26	Paul Grondholdt
6:39:03	15:59:51	Joe Plesha
6:45:18	16:06:16	Heather McCarty, Mike Okoniawski
7:04:24	16:25:00	Heather Mann
7:07:45	16:28:25	John Hocevar
7:12:24	16:32:56	Paul Olsen
7:18:33	16:39:05	AP minutes
7:18:39	16:39:10	Becca Robbins Gisclair
7:34:18	16:54:46	Tweit motion C-5
8:03:22	17:23:47	Recess

June 10, 2013

Time on Tape	Time of Day	Subject
0:00:00	8:01:27	call to order
0:00:03	8:01:35	Darrell Brannan, C-5 a
0:46:29	8:47:41	Public Comment
0:46:35	8:47:58	Terry Haines
0:51:58	8:53:13	Bob Kruger
0:56:13	8:58:53	Beth Stewart
1:36:38	9:37:29	Jon McCracken
1:36:42	9:37:37	C-5 C GOA Tendering Report
2:19:21	10:19:58	Public Testimony on C-5 C
2:19:27	10:20:00	Terry Haines
2:21:26	10:22:00	George Hutchings
2:27:28	10:27:58	Beth Stewart
2:29:38	10:30:08	Paul Grondholdt
2:32:24	10:32:54	Bob Krueger
2:41:50	10:42:28	Sinclair Wilt
2:44:22	10:44:45	Denby Lloyd
3:04:48	11:05:13	C-6 Cost Recovery
3:05:01	11:05:20	Glenn Merrill, Darrell Brannan
3:23:00	11:23:11	Public Comment
3:23:31	11:23:38	Stephanie Madsen
3:29:32	11:29:36	Brent paine
3:34:49	11:34:57	Aggie Blandford and Paul Peyton
3:37:29	11:37:33	Chad See
3:42:48	11:42:48	Donna Parker
3:47:00	11:47:03	Public comment out of order, D-1 b
3:49:52	11:49:53	Harley Ethelbah
3:57:54	11:57:51	Council action on Cost Recovery
4:09:40	13:21:19	C-7 Bering Sea Canyons
4:09:45	13:21:23	Mike Sigler, Diana Stram
5:09:56	14:21:20	Steve MacLean, Ecosystem Committee

5:18:00	14:29:18	Bill Tweit, Ecosystem committee report
5:53:35	15:04:37	Public comment C-7 Bering Sea Canyons
5:53:46	15:04:41	George Hutchings
5:56:13	15:07:24	Margaret Williams - World Wildlife Fund
6:03:01	15:13:59	Merrick Burden, Marine Conservation Alliance
6:09:57	15:20:49	Donna Parker, Arctic Storm
6:14:14	15:25:05	George Pletnikoff - Alaska Inter-tribal Council
6:18:21	15:30:11	Stephanie Madsen - APA
6:22:48	15:33:32	John Gauvin - Alaska Seafood Cooperative
6:29:07	15:39:54	Chad See - Freezer Longline Coalition
6:31:48	15:42:34	John Warrenchuk - Oceana
6:39:33	15:50:14	Rose Fosdick - Kawarek
6:43:01	15:53:36	Michelle Ridgway - Alaska Deep Sea Science Institute
6:55:08	16:07:15	John Hocevar - Jackie Dragon, Greenpeace
7:06:59	16:17:40	Tim Andrew - Association of Village Council Presidents
7:10:30	16:21:31	Jack Fagerstrom - Golovin
7:12:03	16:22:41	Art Ivanoff - Stebbins, St. Michael, Unalakleet, SNSAC
7:16:38	16:27:40	Richard Yamata Out of Order
7:19:00	16:30:00	Motion - D-1 a
8:18:21	17:28:15	Recess

June 11, 2013

Time on Tape	Time of Day	Subject
0:00:03	8:33:10	Call to order
0:03:26	8:36:42	Brian Lynch, public testimony out of order, D-2
0:08:14	8:41:21	D-1 a Jane Dicosimo
0:09:57	8:43:10	Charter halibut definition
1:21:08	9:53:44	Matt Brown, Susan Auer
1:21:14	9:53:52	Public comment, Judy Brakel
1:26:48	9:59:19	Dersham
1:26:51	9:59:21	motion
1:47:06	10:20:03	Jane DiCosimo, D-1(b) Sablefish FLL use cap
2:37:31	11:09:40	Public Comment, Chad See
2:41:18	11:13:38	Jon Warrenchuck
2:59:30	11:31:30	D-1 (c) research Priorities
2:59:37	11:31:32	Diana Stram
3:10:37	11:42:31	Public Comment
3:10:43	11:42:35	Michelle Ridgway
3:19:22	11:51:17	Bob Kruger, testimony out of order D2
3:34:01	12:05:45	Tweit motion on D-1c
3:37:21	12:08:59	Stop Recording [0:08:59 PM]
3:37:21	13:17:31	Start Recording [1:17:31 PM]
3:52:08	13:32:16	Public Comment D-1
3:52:12	13:32:22	Denby Lloyd
3:54:40	13:35:06	Chad See
4:01:05	13:41:18	George Hutchings
4:06:02	13:46:03	Beth Stewart
4:10:22	13:50:22	Jackie Dragon

4:13:06	13:53:05	Henry Mitchell
4:17:11	13:57:35	Dr. Katherine Sullivan addresses Council
4:49:08	14:28:57	Heather McCarty, Frank Kelty
5:02:13	14:42:02	George Pletnikoff, Tim Andrew, Art Ivanoff
5:13:01	14:52:41	Jon Warrenchuck
5:16:12	14:55:46	Matt Upton
5:17:49	14:57:22	Linda Kozak
5:22:21	15:01:52	Julie Bonney
5:31:02	15:10:30	Michelle Ridgway
7:02:52	16:41:52	Diana Stram, Octopus motion.
7:03:07	16:41:58	D-2 Staff Tasking
7:26:59	17:05:44	List of items for additional timing/tasking
7:29:12	17:07:51	Adjourn

DRAFT
ADVISORY PANEL MINUTES
June 4-8, 2013
Juneau, Alaska

The following members were present for all or part of the meetings (absent ~~stricken~~):

Ruth Christiansen	Becca Robbins Gisclair	~~Andy Mezirow~~
Kurt Cochran	John Gruver	Joel Peterson
John Crowley	Mitch Kilborn	Theresa Peterson
Jerry Downing	Alexus Kwachka	Neil Rodriguez
Tom Enlow	Craig Lowenberg	Lori Swanson
Tim Evers	Brian Lynch	Anne Vanderhoeven
Jeff Farvour	Chuck McCallum	Ernie Weiss

C-1 (b) BSAI Crab - Final OFL/ABC Specifications for 4 stocks

The AP recommends the Council adopt the Crab Plan Team and SSC recommended OFLs and ABCs for the four crab stocks (Norton Sound red king crab, Adak red king crab, Pribilof Islands golden king crab, Aleutian Islands golden king crab). *Motion passed 20/0.*

The AP recommends the Council request a discussion paper to move forward the ACDC proposal to separate out the eastern portion of the Adak red king crab stock from the Crab FMP. Further, the discussion paper should include the bullet points on page 11 of the Crab Plan Team report provided in agenda item C-1(a) . *Motion passed 16/4.*

Rationale:

- The fishery is in state waters only.
- It would be for the small boat fleet, 60 feet and under with a 10-pot limit.
- It is an area not covered by rationalization.
- The area is adjacent to the state water crab fishery in the GOA; it is just moving the line from 170 degrees to 179 degrees.

Minority Report on ACDC proposal: The minority felt that initiation of a discussion paper regarding the proposal from ACDC to remove the eastern portion of the Adak red king crab stock from the federal Crab FMP is not warranted at this time. While we do not disagree with the ultimate goal of ACDC's proposal, we do not support it for the following reasons:

1. *Scientific and stock assessment data to support a directed fishery is significantly lacking for this stock;*
2. *There has been a lack of interest from industry participants to support a cooperative ADF&G survey for this area;*
3. *Establishment of an Adak RKC fishery within state waters (when deemed viable) can be achieved within the existing management framework created under the federal crab FMP;*
4. *The current federal crab FMP affords PSC protections for RKC in federal groundfish fisheries; and*
5. *Limited staff time and resources given other Council priorities.*

Signed by: Ruth Christiansen, Craig Lowenberg, Joel Peterson, Anne Vanderhoeven

C-2 GOA Freezer Longline Pacific cod sideboards

The AP recommends that the Council adopt for final action Alternative 2 with the revised option (in **bold/underline**) as noted below:

> Alternative 2 – Remove freezer longline non-AFA crab GOA Pacific cod sideboards
>
> Option: Permanently remove sideboard limits on the affected License Limitation Program (LLP) permits and vessel/Federal Fisheries Permits (FFP) when all GOA FLL endorsed LLP holders notify the NMFS of an agreement to remove the sideboards. The LLP holders would have 3 years from the effective date of the rule to provide notification to NMFS. **The Central and Western Gulf may be considered separately so that cooperative formation and sideboard removal can occur independently in each area.**

Motion passed 14-6.

Rationale*:*

- The vessel owners in the group have more than twenty five year of continuous history operating HAL C/P's in the GOA Central and Western management areas. The GOA represents a very large percentage of history for side boarded vessels. The GOA HAL C/P Side boarded Vessels have significant and undisputed recent catch history.
- Non-AFA crab side boards are no longer necessary for protection of vessels in the GOA P-Cod fishery following the A-83 sector Splits and the creation of a GOA COOP.
- The removal of the GOA HAL C/P vessels from the GOA was an unintended consequence of 2005 Crab Rationalization and A-83 Sector Splits.
- Sideboard removal and allocative considerations are not related.
- Allocative considerations are outside the scope of this analysis and should be addressed through a COOP and based on historic participation.
- As a condition for sideboard removal all GOA FLL must notify the NMFS.
- Bifurcation of WGOA and CGOA allows for sideboard removal and COOP formation independently without the requirement of an agreement in the other region.

Minority Report on C-2: The minority supported a substitute motion to select Alternative 2 with the suboption. We will not have meaningful negotiations without each party having incentives to bring this issue to a timely conclusion. The suboption provides cooperative participants a fluid process and mechanism for GOA participants to negotiate. The suboption also provides leverage for all participants to cooperate with each other, and provides long term benefits for GOA dependent fishing operations. The minority felt that the permanent language in the option left the non-nons vulnerable if a co-op dissolves. Signed by: Alexus Kwachka, Tim Evers, Theresa Peterson, Ernie Weiss, Becca Robbins Gisclair, John Crowley, Jeff Farvour

C-3 (a) Observer Program Annual Performance Review

The AP recommends the Council approve the recommendations of the Observer Advisory Committee, highlighting the bolded sentence on page 3 which reads, "The OAC believes catch estimation should be the EM priority at least for sablefish and halibut fisheries, noting that the Canadian (logbook) model might be more appropriate for fixed gear cod fisheries and other (more PSC driven) fisheries." The AP also emphasizes the last paragraph of page 3 regarding the EM workgroup. *Motion passed 20/0.*

Rationale:

- The AP recognizes the importance of good data to fisheries management and the need to develop a cost effective integrated data collection system that is not disruptive to our fishing operations.
- 55% of the vessels in the "vessel selection" pool picked for observer coverage were issued releases due to the impracticality of placing human observers on small vessels.
- EM provides a cost effective strategy for gathering good data from these small boats. The Council EM priority fisheries and monitoring objectives are absent from the EM Strategic Plan.
- For a successful Agency EM Pilot Project, the Agency needs to involve industry in the planning process, and provide a vehicle to advance EM implementation.
- Collection of at sea data should not make small boat operations less economically viable. These operations are important to coastal communities.

Minority Report: The minority supported an amendment to recommend the Council ask NMFS to prioritize observer coverage for the GOA trawl fleet in the 2014 Annual Deployment Plan. In the GOA, there is a high degree of uncertainty regarding PSC estimates which creates problems for PSC management. Better data will assist all parties in accurately managing PSC. With recent PSC caps and new PSC management in GOA trawl fisheries, it is important to increase coverage in these fisheries because of their high interaction with PSC and the need for timely data and management precision. Signed by: Alexus Kwachka, Joel Peterson, Becca Robbins Gisclair, Ernie Weiss, Theresa Peterson, John Crowley, Tim Evers.

C-4 GOA Chinook Salmon Bycatch in non-pollock trawl fisheries

The AP recommends that the Council adopt the following alternative and options as revised (in **bold/underline**) for final action:

Alternative 2 – **10,000** Chinook salmon PSC limit (hard cap). *[Motion passed 13-7]*

Option 2: Apportion limit by operational type (CV vs. CP).

(a) Apportion proportional to historic average bycatch of Chinook salmon (5-year average)

Option 3: **For the CP sector**, no more than 66% of the annual hard cap limit can be taken before June 1.

Option 4: Separate Chinook salmon PSC limit hard cap to the CGOA **CV** rockfish program **sector**:

(a) 1,500 **from the CV sector's apportionment**

Suboption 2: Any time after September 1, the CV rockfish Intercooperative can communicate with the agency to roll over all but 100 remaining CV Rockfish Program Chinook salmon to support other fall non-pollock trawl fisheries

Alternative 3: Full retention of salmon.
Vessels will retain all salmon bycatch until the number of salmon has been determined by the vessel or plant observer and the observer's collection of any scientific data or biological samples from the salmon has been completed.

Motion as amended passed 13/7.

Rationale:

- A 10,000 Chinook hard cap strikes an appropriate balance between preserving Chinook salmon and preserving the value of the groundfish trawl fisheries.
- Apportioning to sectors by historic PSC addresses the difference between fisheries and is consistent with previous Council actions.
- Divisions within each sector are responsive to requests from those sectors.
- Full retention of bycaught salmon will facilitate the collection of genetic data to help understand the stocks of origin.

Minority Report: A minority of the AP did not support the motion, and supported an amendment to set the total cap at 6,500. Chinook salmon stocks throughout Alaska are at disastrously low levels and commercial, sport and subsistence fishers are facing drastic reductions in catch—or even complete fisheries closures—at great economic cost. We have little information about the stock of origin of the salmon caught as bycatch. Given the lack of data we should proceed with a precautionary approach and set bycatch limits which will protect struggling Chinook salmon stocks. National Standard 9 requires that we reduce bycatch: setting a bycatch limit at a level that's only been exceeded once in the past 10 years does not reduce bycatch and is not responsive to the Chinook salmon crisis we're currently facing in Alaska. Signed by: Tim Evers, Becca Robbins Gisclair, Theresa Peterson, Jeff Farvour, Alexus Kwachka, Chuck McCallum

C-5 (a) Discussion paper on GOA Trawl Bycatch management/roadmap

The AP recommends that the Council request an expanded discussion paper which reviews the following seven proposals to compare and contrast, discuss how the proposals interact, and review how each proposal meets goals and objectives of the proposed action.

1. GOA Sector Allocation and Catch Share Program submitted by Bonney, Krueger and Reed with the following modifications:
    - On page 3 under I. Sector definitions, change the CP sector to read: **"Catcher processor sector: Those A80 vessels and LLPs and their replacement vessels, defined by Column A of Table 31 CFR part 679."**
    - On page 3 under II. Sector allocations, add a third bullet to section a. current allocations, to read: Option: A80 PSC sideboards (per table 29 of the GOA harvest Specifications) are maintained.
2. Proposal for a Gulf of Alaska Trawl Bycatch Management program submitted by the community workgroup (AMCC, GOAC3, Weiss, Kwachka, Kubiak).
3. Peninsula Fishermen's Coalition proposal submitted by Beth Stewart in February 2013.
4. Western GOA Over 60' Trawl Catcher Vessel Bycatch Management Proposal submitted by United Catcher Boats.
5. A one-pie program that allocates harvest shares to both harvesters and processors.
6. IBQ/MRA program proposal submitted by George Hutchings
7. Groundfish Forum proposal submitted by Susan Robinson.

Motion passed 19/0.

Rationale:

- It is appropriate to consider a wide array of proposals at this point in the process
- Understanding the differences between these proposals and how they might interact will help inform future decisions.
- A staff analysis will help identify potential issues with these proposals and inform development of alternatives and options.
- It will be helpful to get staff input regarding whether and how the proposals address the stated goals of the program, and whether they are in line with Council authority and MSA requirements.

C-5 (b) Initial review on GOA Trawl Data Collection

The AP recommends that the Council release the document for public review.

Further, the AP recommends that:

- Data collection be handled by a third party.
- The EDRs not include new terms (e.g., excluder) that will require new definitions through regulatory action.
- The data collection program include the one catcher-processor not already included in the Amendment 80 EDR program.

Motion passed 18/0.

C-5 (c) Tendering report

The AP recommends that the Council initiate an analysis of prohibiting tendering of trawl-caught fish harvested in one management area to be landed outside that management area.

Option 1 by species
a) cod
b) pollock

Option 2 by area
a) 610
b) 620
c) 630

Option 3 by catcher vessel length
a) Greater than 58 feet

The AP further recommends that the tendering issue in GOA be added to agenda of the Joint Council/Board of Fisheries Protocol Committee meeting on June 12, 2013 and recommends that this issue be fast-tracked.

Motion passed 19/0.

Rationale:

- Recent changes in tendering patterns and shifts in historical deliveries have raised concerns in Kodiak.
- Additional information on historic and recent patterns will help inform future action.
- All areas are included in the motion to get a broad picture of tendering activity.
- The motion is not intended to foreshadow any prohibition on tendering within Area 610.
- There is concern that tendering by vessels involved in rationalized fisheries may be a spillover effect of rationalization.

Minority Report on C-5(c): The minority supported an amendment to remove Area 610 from the analysis. The Western GOA has a demonstrated dependence on tendering in the pollock and cod fisheries and any action to address recent changes in the Central GOA should not impact that historical activity. Signed by: Anne Vanderhoeven, Chuck McCallum, Joel Peterson

C-6 LAPP Cost Recovery

The AP recommends the Council offer the following comments to NMFS on the draft Cost Recovery RIR/RFA Analysis:

- Request NOAA GC seek an opinion from Headquarters that would provide an explanation and reconcile the inconsistent advice given to the different Regional Councils on classification and criteria for LAPP determination.
- Provide clarity in the standard used to calculate incremental costs in each of the programs included in the analysis (e.g., costs related to implement program vs. costs related to concurrent actions including an analysis of the cost savings of LAPP management).

- Review described methods for calculating ex-vessel values to streamline and simplify the collection of necessary information
- Consider a more transparent method for determining costs on an annual basis.
- Consider holding another industry workshop after the revised analysis is prepared, and prior to the October Council meeting.

Motion passed 17/0 with 1 abstention.

Rationale:

- Need to have some clarity regarding what the criteria are for a fishery to be considered a LAPP or not, both for this action and for information for other fisheries.
- More information about how costs are calculated and what the cost differences are between managing pre and post rationalization will be helpful.
- Need clear standards and a transparent method to provide accountability and buy-in for annual costs.
- Holding another industry workgroup prior to the October Council meeting will provide industry another opportunity to provide input based on new information.

C-7 Bering Sea Canyons

The AP recommends that the Council:

1. Draft a letter to NMFS requesting that some of the Deep Sea Coral Research and Technology funds allocated to the region be reprogrammed to include camera drops and analysis of coral in the Bering Sea slope region. This would help verify predictions of localized high coral abundance and characteristics.
2. Ask the AFSC to use analytical tools and data to verify to the extent possible the characteristics (including size and density) and areas of highest coral abundance.
3. Support the Ecosystem Committee recommendation that the AFSC paper increase focus on areas of highest coral abundance on the slope.

Motion passed 18/2.

Rationale:

- The Deep Sea Coral Research and Technology Program was created by Congress to fund research on deep-sea corals.
- There are discrepancies between where the model predicts coral should be found and where they have been found. Further research, including camera drops, will help validate the model for use in any future management actions.
- Camera drops will also provide information on the characteristics of corals beyond the current 'presence/absence' provided by the model.

Minority Report C-7: The minority supported a substitute motion (which failed 4-16) that recommended the Council request that staff develop an expanded discussion paper that identifies alternatives for implementing area closures on the Bering Sea slope and shelf-break, including Pribilof and Zhemchug canyons, that could serve as both long-term habitat protection areas and scientific controls. The minority's rationale for the substitute motion was:

1. *The Bering Sea slope and shelf-break are the only major ocean habitat types in the North Pacific that support Federal ground fish fisheries, yet contain no habitat protection measures.*
2. *Some areas of the slope and shelf-break are more vulnerable to fishing impacts than others.*
3. *The Council has received thousands of letters requesting proposals to consider protective measures for these two canyons.*
4. *It is difficult, if not impossible to assess whether this habitat is as productive and diverse as it can or should be since no areas appear to be untouched by fishing and no areas can serve as a scientific control.*

Signed by: Jeff Farvour, Theresa Peterson, Becca Robbins Gisclair, Tim Evers

D-1 (b) Halibut/Sablefish IFQ discussion papers

BSAI sablefish A-share caps

The AP recommends that the Council take no further action at this time, but ask for more information on unintended consequences to other quota share holders (GOA A shares and all-area B and C shares) from breaking out only BSAI A shares for an increased use cap, to be presented at a future meeting. The intent is to hold other quota share holders harmless. *Motion passed 18/0.*

GOA sablefish pots

The AP recommends that the Council expand the discussion paper on allowing the use of pot gear for sablefish IFQs in the Gulf of Alaska.

Additional items to address:

- Update on whale depredation and interactions
- Update on whale deterrent work in progress
- Update on Canadian sablefish gear usage and pricing by gear type
- Discussion of pre-emption of fishing grounds due to lost gear
- Gear conflicts between all gear types
- Discussion of shift in predation to halibut
- Review of current literature on whale predation

The AP also recommends that the Council form a gear workgroup representative of all gear types to explore issues surrounding gear conflicts, areas affected, time and area restrictions and usage between pot and longline gear.

Motion passed 17/0.

Rationale: The effects of whale depredation and interactions with IFQ sablefish fisheries continues to be a problem and the use of alternative gear types needs further analysis

D-1 (c) Research Priorities

The AP recommends the Council adopt and move forward the SSC's list and prioritization of Research Priorities. *Motion passed 16/0.*

D-2 Staff Tasking

The AP recommends the Council forward the PVOA proposal under D-2 to change the time period for calculating MRAs for a discussion paper. *Motion passed 16/0.*

Rationale:

- Changing the time period for calculating MRAs would result in less waste in the fisheries.
- This concept is worth looking at for sablefish and halibut IFQ fisheries.

The AP approved the minutes from the April 2013 meeting. *Motion passed 16/0.*

North Pacific Fishery Management Council

Eric A. Olson, Chairman
Chris Oliver, Executive Director

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Certified:_____
Date:_____

SCIENTIFIC AND STATISTICAL COMMITTEE
to the
NORTH PACIFIC FISHERY MANAGEMENT COUNCIL
June 3rd –5th, 2013

The SSC met from June 3rd through 5th at Centennial Hall, Juneau, AK.

Members present were:

Robert Clark, Vice Chair *Alaska Department of Fish and Game*	Jennifer Burns *University of Alaska Anchorage*	Alison Dauble *Oregon Dept. of Fish and Wildlife*
Sherri Dressel *Alaska Department of Fish and Game*	Anne Hollowed *NOAA Fisheries—AFSC*	George Hunt *University of Washington*
Gordon Kruse *University of Alaska Fairbanks*	Seth Macinko *University of Rhode Island*	Steve Martell *Intl. Pacific Halibut Commission*
Franz Mueter *University of Alaska Fairbanks*	Lew Queirolo *NOAA Fisheries—Alaska Region*	Terry Quinn *University of Alaska Fairbanks*
Kate Reedy-Maschner *Idaho State University Pocatello*	Farron Wallace *NOAA Fisheries—AFSC*	

Members absent were:

Pat Livingston
NOAA Fisheries—AFSC

B-1(b, c) Plan Team nominations

The SSC reviewed the Plan Team nominations of Jan Rumble to the Gulf of Alaska Groundfish Plan Team and Elizabeth Chilton to the Bering Sea and Aleutian Islands Groundfish Plan Team. The SSC finds both of these individuals to be well qualified, with appropriate expertise that will assist each of the Plan Teams. The SSC recommends that the Council approve these nominations.

B-7 SSL BiOp analytical methods

Doug DeMaster (NMFS AFSC) presented an update on the SSL BiOp methods, Brandee Gerke (NMFS AKR) presented a review of the preliminary analyses of the PPA and alternatives in the SSL EIS, and Melanie Brown (NMFS AKR) commented on how the process will move forward. Public testimony was received from John Gauvin (Alaska Seafood Cooperative).

At the April 2013 meeting, the SSC requested additional details on several methods that will be used in the 2014 BiOp. Documents on the methods were provided for our review and staff gave an overview at this meeting. In addition, staff presented an evaluation of the PPA identified by the Council at the April meeting, status quo (Alternative 1), and the protections in place prior to 2011 (Alternative 4). Staff also

addressed SSC concerns raised at the April 2013 meeting. The SSC greatly appreciates staff time taken to outline the methods and analyses at this meeting. The presentations were very clear, and helped the SSC to understand the new methods that will inform the BiOp and the Council as it moves to select an alternative that will not cause a JAM finding. The SSC acknowledged that the lack of clear guidelines and metrics, against which to judge the likelihood of a JAM finding, remains problematic. The time already invested in addressing prior comments by the SSC, Council, and external reviewers of the PDEIS and the 2010 BiOp is appreciated. The presentations and preliminary analyses have already improved the process relative to previous versions that have come before the Council.

BiOp Methods Update

Dr. DeMaster's presentation on the BiOp methods included a presentation of the agTrends (Johnson and Fritz, in press) method being used to estimate population trends and to inform PVAs and projections of future population size and extinction risk. This method allows for an analysis of trends over space and time, accounts for survey methodology changes, allows for post-hoc aggregations of different regions of interest, and facilitates forecasting population size and extinction risk. The methods and data are available as an online R package. The SSC had questions relative to the extent (temporal and spatial) of missing data, what changes in survey methodology occurred, why count variance was fixed at a very low value in the observation model when no estimate was available, and which environmental parameters were included in the model as covariates.

Relative to observed/reported trends in SSL populations in the various wDPS subregions, the SSC encourages the analysts to consider underlying ecosystem differences east and west of Samalga Pass, and whether there was a change in population trajectories in association with the environmental shift that occurred around 2005/2006 in the Bering Sea. The SSC also recommends consideration of killer whale predation, and of declines in other marine mammals and seabirds (e.g., harbor seals and cormorants), which may shed light on whether population trends are more closely associated with fisheries or ecosystem effects. **The SSC appreciates the difficulty of separating environmental and potential ecosystem effects from effects of recent management actions, but encourages a continued effort, particularly to the extent that these efforts inform projections of future SSL population abundance.**

More broadly, the SSC is interested in acquiring data needed for adequate testing of the null hypothesis, that fishing is not impacting the SSL population, and hearing what conditions would be required for authors to reach such a conclusion. To date, research results have failed to show significant correlations between regional fish biomass, fish catch, and SSL abundance and productivity, but power analyses of these results have not yet been conducted. The SSC is encouraged by the analysts' plans to use simulated data with a realistic correlation structure to evaluate the ability to detect an effect with current monitoring protocols, and looks forward to seeing such analyses in the BiOp.

The presentation on changes in frequency of occurrence (FO) of selected prey items (Sinclair et al. 2013) was also appreciated. The SSC agrees with the analysts that FO provides the most appropriate measure for the EIS and BiOp, due to its wider temporal and spatial coverage. The caveats pertaining to these data are clearly and concisely stated. Results from the planned comparison between scat and trawl FO data, in combination with reported changes in diet as judged from the scats, will be relevant to the BiOp's conclusions about overlap between SSL and fisheries. Updated information on the overlap between size classes in SSL diet and trawl catches is encouraged; such comparisons might provide insight into any expected lags between changes in fish biomass, SSL prey availability and trends, and harvest rates. **This effort would be strengthened if groundfish surveys were conducted within and outside of critical habitat at a spatial resolution that would provide sufficiently precise biomass estimates in both regions. The SSC notes that multiple requests for seasonal prey surveys within critical habitat have been made. We strongly encourage such surveys in the future.**

The new method for analyzing SSL movement patterns by interpolating position data and accounting for proportion of time hauled out will certainly improve habitat use models; however, the underlying dataset is based on only a few individuals and remains heavily biased towards nursing/dependent juveniles, with limited representation of the movement patterns of adult females. No data are available for adult males, subadult males and females, or newly independent juveniles. **Thus, extrapolating habitat use patterns for the overall population will remain problematic, and the limitations of the extant data must be clearly identified in the BiOp.**

Questions about the extent and impact of movement of individual sea lions between rookeries and haulouts within wDPS regions, and between the wDPS and the eastern DPS and Russian populations were raised in SSC discussions and in public testimony. These movements, as detected by brand resightings, appear to be undertaken mostly by juvenile animals, and the impact of such movements on stock structure and/or population trends was not clear in the presentation or in the documentation provided. **The SSC recommends that the discussion of such movements in the BiOp carefully consider the impact of whether such movements represent permanent emigration and/or temporary wanderings by juveniles.**

Initial evaluation of the Alternatives

Since April 2013, the Council has identified its PPA (now Alternative 5), and the EIS has been released for public comment. Due to the fast timeline, with the Council scheduled to take final action on the PPA at the October 2013 meeting, the Protected Resource Division (PRD) took this opportunity to discuss with the SSC their assessment of the potential impacts of the alternatives and the performance standards that will be used to assess JAM. Some of the identified performance standards have been modified in response to public comments and external reviews of the 2010 BiOp. These analyses are ongoing, and final impact assessments will be included in the 2014 BiOp.

The review of potential impacts of the alternatives focused on the differences in protections offered to SSLs in regions 541, 542, and 543 under Alternative 1 (status quo, protective measures put in place under the 2011 interim rule), Alternative 4 (roll back of protections to the pre-2011 status), and Alternative 5 (the PPA). The focus of the analysis was on the impact of the indirect effects of fisheries removal, which was qualitatively assessed as a relative increase/decrease in fish taken under different scenarios. The impact of the planned changes in harvest amounts, timing, and location was assessed for Atka mackerel, Pacific cod (trawl- and non-trawl) and pollock, separately. The BiOp will consider the cumulative effects of the combined changes in fishing policy, and will include a more qualitative assessment of whether policy changes are 'more' or 'less' protective relative to status quo. These analyses are not yet available for review. **The SSC looks forward to seeing the evaluation of the combined effects of all planned fishing changes under the PPA.**

Under alternatives that open currently closed areas to fishing, the PRD is assessing impacts by evaluating the proportion of the historical catch that came from the area, and assuming that a similar proportion of the future TAC would be similarly distributed. **The SSC notes that this metric may be less than optimal for species that have highly variable distributions in space and time, and catch may not reflect local exploitation rates, for species such as Atka mackerel. The SSC encourages the analysts to consider other data sources (such as fish tag data) that may be used to estimate stock biomass.** This is another area where appropriately designed surveys of fish abundance, inside and outside critical habitat, would assist management.

C-1 BSAI Crab

At this meeting, the SSC is providing the OFL/ABC recommendations for four crab stocks (Tables 1 and 2). We also provide modeling advice on EBS snow and Tanner crab, and Bristol Bay red king crab, and recommendations on a variety of other issues. Diana Stram (NPFMC) and Jack Turnock (NMFS AFSC) presented Crab Plan Team (CPT) recommendations for these four stocks, model reviews, and CPT

discussions on a variety of other issues. Public testimony was provided by Dave Fraser (Adak Community Development Corp.).

Handling Mortality

The CPT provided a summary of reflex action mortality predictor (RAMP) studies to estimate short-term handling mortality of snow, Tanner, and king crab in the eastern Bering Sea. The issue of handling mortality is of particular concern for the snow crab fishery, in which one crab is discarded for every three retained. The RAMP predicted that mean short-term handling mortalities for the 2010/11 and 2011/12 fisheries were 4.6% and 4.5%, respectively. Vessel-specific handling mortality was found to be negatively correlated with back-deck temperatures; for example, short-term mortality rates increase to 35% at -14 degrees C. Using St. Paul airport temperature as a proxy for back-deck conditions, the estimated mean mortality rate for the 1990/91 through 2010/11 fishing seasons was 4.0%; the highest seasonal estimate was 8.0% during one season in the early 1990s. However, these mortality rates do not address additional long-term mortality, so total handling mortality is unknown.

Based on these results and subsequent discussions, the CPT recommended reducing the current value used in calculations involving total handling mortality from 0.5 to 0.3, derived by adding the highest annual short-term estimate (0.08) to the highest injury rate (0.12), and multiplying this sum by 1.5 under the assumption that long-term mortality contributes an additional mortality equal to 50% of the short-term mortality rate. The CPT did not recommend any changes to the handling mortality estimates used for Tanner and king crabs because no new information was provided on Tanner crab and the RAMP approach does not appear to be useful for golden and red king crab.

When conducting the next snow crab assessment, **the SSC requests that the stock assessment authors present fits of the base model using (1) total handling mortality estimates of 0.5 (status quo), (2) 0.3 (Team recommendation), and (3) a "best" estimate of total handling mortality derived by adding the average annual short-term estimate (0.04) to the average injury rate, and multiplying this sum by a factor corresponding to the best guess of additional long-term mortality.** The SSC also requests inclusion of an appendix on recent RAMP studies in the snow crab SAFE chapter. The appendix should include a brief review of previous studies on handling mortality, including work by Carls and O'Clair, Warrenchuk and Shirley, and modeling by van Tamelen. Laboratory studies on red king crab and Tanner crab by Carls and O'Clair indicated that delayed mortality was experienced at relatively high rates during the molt following cold air exposure for one of these two species. Such delayed effects should be considered and discussed when judging the relative contribution of long-term vs. short-term handling mortality rates.

Finally, we encourage further research on long-term mortality of bycatch and a better evaluation of inter-vessel differences in mortality rates, including the potential use of vessel characteristics as covariates to explain these differences.

Norton Sound Mining

Upon request by the Council, the CPT considered potential effects of current and potential future mining activities on essential fish habitat for crab in Norton Sound. Owing to concerns that mining activity occurs in areas occupied by juvenile and adult red king crab, the CPT encouraged the Council to undertake immediate consultation on this issue with the Corps of Engineers and to provide information and express concerns to the Alaska Department of Environmental Conservation for consideration in the State permitting process. **The SSC supports the CPT's recommendation for these Council actions.**

Table 1. SSC OFL and ABC recommendations for four crab stocks on June 3rd, 2013. **The SSC recommendations agree with the Crab Plan Team recommendations.** (Note diagonal fill indicated parameters not applicable for that tier level while shaded sections are to be filled out for the final SAFE in September 2013).

Chapter	Stock	Tier	Status (a,b,c)	F_{OFL}	B_{MSY} or $B_{MSYproxy}$ (kt)	Years[1] (biomass or catch)	2013[2] [3] MMB (kt)	2013 MMB / MMB_{MSY}	γ	Mortality (M)	2013/14 OFL (kt)	2013/14 ABC (kt)
1	EBS snow crab	3										
2	BB red king crab	3										
3	EBS Tanner crab	4										
4	Pribilof Islands red king crab	4										
5	Pribilof Islands blue king crab	4										
6	St. Matthew Island blue king crab	4										
7	Norton Sound red king crab	4	a	0.18	1.86	1980-current [model estimate]	2.27	1.22	1.0	0.18 0.68 (>123 mm)	0.26	0.24
8	AI golden king crab	5				See intro chapter					5.69	5.12
9	Pribilof Island golden king crab	5				See intro chapter					0.09	0.08
10	Adak red king crab	5				1995/96–2007/08					0.05	0.03

[1] For Tiers 3 and 4 where B_{MSY} or $B_{MSYproxy}$ is estimable, the years refer to the time period over which the estimate is made. For Tier 5 stocks, it is the years upon which the average catch for OFL is obtained.
[2] MMB as projected for 2/15/2014 at time of mating.
[3] Model mature biomass on 7/1/2013

Table 2. Maximum permissible ABCs for 2013/14 and SSC recommended ABCs for those stocks where the SSC recommendation is below the maximum permissible ABC, as defined by Amendment 38 to the Crab FMP. Note that the rationale is provided in the individual introduction chapters for recommending an ABC less than the maximum permissible for these stocks. Values are in thousand metric tons.

Stock	Tier	2013/14 *Max*ABC	2013/14 ABC
Norton Sound red king crab	4a	0.26	0.24
Adak red king crab	5	0.05	0.03

Snow Crab

We received presentations on CPT discussions related to snow crab and on recent snow crab model explorations that focused on alternative ways for modeling growth of snow crab. In the 2012 base model, mean width after molting was estimated as a linear function of pre-molt width with priors based on limited growth data. In addition to the base model, a second model was explored that implemented a quadratic relationship between pre-molt and post-molt size. Priors for the parameters of the relationship were estimated by Dave Somerton, based on molting experiments. The CPT and SSC requested that the authors try to more fully and directly integrate results from recent growth-increment studies into the assessment.

In response to this request, the authors used growth increment data for a total of 35 crabs from four different studies that were suitable for informing growth in the assessment, and presented two additional model scenarios. Both scenarios fit a two-piece linear regression to model post-molt width as a function of pre-molt width, with separate slopes and intercepts for small and large crab. The break point at 36.1 mm was estimated by Somerton et al. (2013) and presumably corresponds to the point where pre-molt, immature crab develop their gonads and transition to adolescents. Parameter estimates were constrained using a prior with means and standard errors from Somerton et al. (2013). A separate prior was used to penalize differences in the estimated post-molt width at the break point between the two linear pieces. In Scenario 1, a single model was fitted to males and females, while Scenario 2 estimated separate parameters for males and females.

The SSC believes that the data identified as "consistent" by Somerton et al. (2013) constitute the best available data to inform growth of snow crab in the EBS and we offer the following recommendations regarding its use in the assessment:

- Although the number of animals with growth information is very limited, evidence from a number of assessment model fits suggest that growth differs between males and females, hence **the SSC concurs with the CPT to exclude females from the Somerton data set.**
- **The SSC also agrees with the CPT that the approach of penalizing the difference in size at the breakpoint is unnecessary and undesirable.** There is no biological or statistical reason why the two regression lines should not be forced to have the same post-molt size at the breakpoint.
- Although the analysis by Somerton et al. (2013) suggests a breakpoint, and there is some rationale for it, there is uncertainty about the existence of a breakpoint and at what pre-molt size it occurs. Much of this uncertainty relates to the fact that most of the datasets fall entirely on one side of the breakpoint, thus the breakpoint could be an artifact of mixing different datasets. **Therefore, the SSC recommends bringing forward two models in September that fit both a two-piece model and a simple linear model for growth, each with separate parameters for males and females (except initial intercept).**
- The SSC concurs with the CPT that the actual data should be incorporated in the assessment model instead of using priors to constrain parameters.

EBS Tanner Crab

The stock assessment author has been very responsive to SSC comments and requests that were provided in the October 2012 SSC report. The SSC appreciates the thoroughness of the recruitment analysis. For instance, the analyst addressed the SSC request to consider an appropriate time period of reasonably estimated recruitments and to conduct additional break-point analyses. One area that was not specifically addressed was the provision of new evidence for shifts in Tanner crab life history or ecology that support the choice of recruitment periods.

The analysis appears to provide justification for the SSC's previous interim advice to only use recruitment data subsequent to fertilization year 1977 (corresponding to recruitment in 1982). Also, an updated break-point analysis appears to continue to support a break point in fertilization year 1985 (recruitment in 1990). Jon Richar, a Ph.D. student of Dr. Gordon Kruse, has conducted research into Tanner crab recruitment using a ROMS model. That study suggested that the breakpoint may be due to a decline in larval retention in Bristol Bay in 1990.

The SSC supports future research plans identified by the stock assessment author. With respect to stock-recruit research, the SSC cautions the analyst that, when environmental conditions cause autocorrelated recruitment with a periodicity that is double the mean generation time, plots of stock-recruit data can suggest apparent strong density dependence (ln R/S vs. S) when none exists (see publications by Carl Walters and others). Research by Jon Richar suggests that this may be the case for Bering Sea Tanner crab. Moreover, mature male biomass is an uncertain measure of reproductive potential. The CPT may be interested to see a presentation by Jon Richar on his recruitment studies at their Fall 2013 meeting. The SSC looks forward to additional research on Tanner crab recruitment and its consequences for stock status determinations.

Norton Sound Red King Crab

The assessment of this stock has been greatly improved this year. It is a Tier 4 stock with an improved stock assessment model, but there has been concern about the data used in the model and the model configuration. Thus, it was one of two stock assessments reviewed at the February 2013 Crab Modeling Workshop, and the stock assessment authors, led by Toshihide Hamazaki, have incorporated results and implemented recommendations from the workshop. Data improvements include CPUE standardization and re-analysis of NMFS trawl survey using original data sources. The latter are not used in the current assessment pending further investigation (to be presented to the SSC in October 2013). The authors were very responsive to previous CPT and SSC comments.

Seven model scenarios in addition to the base scenario were considered, involving eliminating a couple of survey or CPUE series, investigating Q's for the NMFS and ADF&G surveys, and examining alternatives to the current value of M = 0.18. These models are summarized in an Appendix. The authors narrowed the choice of models to three (3-1, 3-6, and 3-7). These three models are evaluated in the main stock assessment document. The main differences between model 3-1 and the base model are elimination of the summer pot data, estimation of Q for the NMFS survey (with the ADF&G Q set to 1), and setting effective sample size to 20. The CPT discovered that there are convergence problems with models 3-6 and 3-7. The CPT also found that model 3-1 treated survey Qs in a more defensible manner than the base model. The SSC concurs with CPT that model 3-1 is the best choice. The SSC also agrees with CPT that further investigation of the NMFS trawl survey data is needed. **The SSC reviewed the CPT's recommendations for improving the SAFE chapter and the proposed model explorations, and agrees with these recommendations (see page 8 of the CPT report).**

The SSC agrees with the CPT recommendation to set the 2013/14 OFL at 260 t. Given the uncertainty with this model noted above, the SSC agrees with the CPT recommendation of a 10% buffer for the ABC, which results in a recommendation of 240 t. The stock is above the MSST and

thus, the stock is not overfished. The total catch in 2012/2013 did not exceed the OFL and thus, overfishing has not occurred.

Another topic discussed was the timing of the assessment year. **It was recommended that the assessment cycle be changed from July-June to October-September.** This change will provide harvest specifications well in advance of the summer fishery. **The SSC endorses this change.**

Bristol Bay Red King Crab

Seven model scenarios are evaluated in the draft SAFE report. These models explored the implications of different assumptions regarding effective sample sizes for surveys, truncating start years, elimination of new shell and old shell designation, and two levels of molting probabilities. The SSC appreciates the authors' effort to present constant M model options (Scenarios 2 and 3). **The SSC agrees with the CPT that Models 1 and 4 should be included for the final 2013/14 SAFE.**

The CPT made several recommendations for revisions to the model and the SAFE chapter. The SSC reviewed these recommendations and agrees that these requests are a high priority for the 2013/14 SAFE. In addition, **the SSC reiterates its concern that the authors have not specifically addressed why natural mortality was higher during the specific years selected for time blocks of additional mortality.** We recognize that improved model fit is a useful diagnostic; however, it would be helpful to know whether there was any corroborating data that would explain the temporary increase in mortality (such as groundfish or Pacific cod abundance).

The SSC notes that the arbitrary time blocking to fix poor fits to the data is conditional on the initial model set up. **Therefore the SSC requests that the authors explore a model that allows for interannual variations in M.** This could be accomplished with a random walk model for natural mortality or a model that allows independent deviations around the base M with the additional constraint that these deviations sum to 0. Results from this run could be used to explore objectively whether the time blocks selected for additional mortality were correctly specified. We recognize that there are tradeoffs with modeling M, survey Q, and survey selectivity; thus, we ask the authors to carefully consider which parameters should be fixed for this run to enable the desired temporal exploration of time varying M.

The SSC supports the idea of comparing the generic crab model (described in the 2013 Crab Workshop Report) with the authors' model for the 2014 CPT modeling workshop.

Aleutian Islands Golden King Crab

Trends in commercial CPUE have been relatively stable since the rationalization of this fishery and increased from 23.2 crabs per pot lift in 2010/11 to 29.0 in 2011/12. Work to standardize the commercial CPUE continues and this stock may be a candidate for a new Generic Crab Model being developed at the University of Washington. **The recommended OFL for 2013/14 is 5.69 kt. The CPT recommended, and the SSC agreed that the ABC should be set at 90% of the OFL, as is standard for Tier 5 crab stocks. The SSC accepts the CPT recommendation of setting the ABC at 5.12 kt for the 2013/14 Aleutian Island golden king crab fishery.**

Pribilof Islands Golden King Crab

The Pribilof Islands golden king crab fishery has supported a small and sporadic fishery that is concentrated in the Pribilof Canyon region. There was no fishing effort between 2006 and 2009 and only one or two vessels fished in 2010 through 2012, with 100% observer coverage. There is no state harvest strategy in regulation for this fishery and the GHL has been established at 150,000 pounds (68 t) since 2000.

This stock is currently managed at Tier 5, with a retained catch OFL based on average catches during the 1993 through 1998 time period, an estimate of bycatch rates in the directed fishery during 2001 through

2010, and average bycatch mortalities in the non-target crab fisheries and PSC in the groundfish fishery during 1994 through 1998 and 1992/93 through 1998/99, respectively. The short time series for computing average catches was chosen because it encompasses the longest continuous time period during which vessels participated in the fishery, and during which retained catch data are available and not constrained by a GHL. As in last year's assessment, and following the advice of the assessment author and CPT, **the SSC recommends a total catch OFL of 0.09 kt (91 t) and ABC (using the 10% buffer for Tier 5 stocks) of 0.08 kt (82 t) for the 2013/2014 fishery season.**

In previous meetings, the SSC recommended using data from the NMFS EBS biennial slope trawl survey with the goal of moving the stock to a Tier 4 assessment. The SSC received a report on a proposed approach to a Tier 4 assessment for Pribilof Islands golden king crab. The report presented area-swept estimates of biomass for the area of the fishery (Pribilof Canyon) and for the whole EBS slope survey region (200 m to1,200 m depth), as well as the size composition of male and female crab from the 2008, 2010 and 2012 surveys. The author listed a number of concerns with a Tier 4 approach, most notably the short length of the available time series and uncertainty about stock structure.

A true Tier 4 approach for PIGKC is precluded by the lack of a suitable proxy for B_{MSY}; hence, **the SSC concurs with the CPT to bring forward a modified Tier 5 calculation for this stock in September 2013.** This approach would use the average mature male biomass for 2008, 2010 and 2012 as an estimate of current biomass, with F=M applied to estimate an OFL and a suitable buffer applied to set ABC.

Because the stock structure is unknown, the SSC recommends that the authors examine maps of catch-per-unit-effort by survey year to identify natural breaks in the spatial distribution of golden king crab along the slope. If no obvious breaks exist, the SSC recommends that the authors bring forward biomass estimates for the Pribilof canyon region and for the slope as a whole. However, we note that the Pribilof Canyon stations do not encompass the historical catches, which occurred inside and to the north of Pribilof Canyon. Therefore, the authors should consider a biomass estimate for an area that encompasses the majority of historical catches.

Adak Red King Crab

The SSC reviewed the 2013 SAFE chapter for Adak red king crab (RKC). There is no assessment model for this stock. The fishery has had limited openings since 1995/96 and was closed for the 2013/14 season. **The CPT recommended, and the SSC agrees that this stock should be managed as a Tier 5 stock.** The SSC agrees that the OFL should be estimated as average total catch, using the same base period recommended last year (1995/96 through 2007/08). **Based on this designation, the SSC recommends that the OFL for 2013/14 be set at 54 t.**

The SSC considered options for setting the ABC. The maximum permissible ABC is 49 t, based on the 10% Tier 5 buffer. The minimal data available suggest that the Adak RKC stock continues to be at a very low stock size. The SSC agrees with the CPT recommendation that the directed fishery for Adak RKC should remain closed and that the ABC should be based on an amount sufficient to address bycatch in other crab fisheries and PSC in groundfish fisheries. The SSC considered the amount of Adak RKC needed to prosecute a test fishery, and to allow for groundfish PSC and bycatch in non-target crab fisheries. In previous years, the CPT reported that industry has expressed an interest in conducting a test fishery around the Adak area. ADF&G estimated that 20 t would be needed to prosecute this test fishery. The SSC continues to be concerned about the paucity of data for Adak RKC and places a high priority on the collection of survey data for this stock. **Therefore, the SSC recommends an ABC of 34 t for 2013/14.** This amount should be sufficient to cover PSC, bycatch in non-target crab fisheries and the proposed test fishery catch.

The SSC received public testimony regarding a petition from the Adak Community Development Corporation to break the Adak Red King Crab stock into east and west components and return

management of the eastern component to the State of Alaska. **The SSC agrees with the concerns raised by the CPT, and if the NPMFC elects to formally explore this option, we request that the amendment package provide a thorough discussion (e.g., white paper) of those issues.**

C-5(b) Initial review on GOA Trawl Data Collection

The SSC received a presentation of the initial draft RIR/IRFA from Darrell Brannan (NPFMC Consultant). Public comment was offered by Denby Lloyd (Advisor for the City of Kodiak).

The SSC recommends that the draft document not be released for public review at this time. The SSC expresses its appreciation to Mr. Brannan for the professional way in which he approached this analysis and the thoroughness of the presentation. The Council tasked staff with preparing a "fast-track", streamlined data collection program that would minimize the burden on industry and assure use of all the existing sources of economic data. As a result of this broad request, the analysis appears to wander, posing questions that can only be finally addressed by further Council guidance. The SSC encourages the Council to more clearly articulate its purpose and objectives for the proposed data collection action. Specifically, successful development of the data collection program pivots on the questions that these data would be expected to help answer.

The current draft document notes that the Council intends for this data collection program to facilitate "before and after" assessments of a catch share program presumed to be in the immediate offing. Additionally, the presentation before the SSC included mention of a draft discussion paper focused on several aspects of a trawl PSC avoidance program that, in turn, is related to the anticipated future catch share program. However, the SSC was not asked to review that discussion paper at this time, even though our brief perusal identified numerous social issues, economic issues, and baseline assumptions, each of which would benefit from a thorough scientific review. Incorporation of previous research findings on catch share programs should also be critically evaluated. **The SSC encourages the Council to consider the interdependency of these anticipated events (data collection, PSC avoidance management, catch share programs) to present the analysts with more clearly defined objectives.** Other specific concerns the SSC has with the current draft document are discussed below.

Community impacts are identified as important concerns, motivating the Council's proposed action, but there is no apparent plan to collect information that would permit assessment of likely impacts on communities. The document is silent on this gap. Mr. Brannan reported that he has consulted with social scientists at the AFSC and they have agreed to develop and administer a 'voluntary' community survey, if the Council expresses supports for this idea; however, the document itself does not even mention this potentiality. It is unclear whether the timing of this effort would capture temporally equivalent community data to those pre- and post-catch shares program data compiled from the proposed harvester and processor submissions.

On another issue, the SSC is previously on record expressing its strong concern about inclusion of data identity masking aspects of Council data collection programs; the SSC reiterates these concerns in the present proposal. These requirements impose complexity, delays, and cost to data use by Council staff and agency analysts, with no evidence that such provisions are needed, useful, or effective (either in enhancing data security or program cost effectiveness). Imposing an unnecessary and burdensome barrier to full and effective use of these data calls into question whether the full cost of such a data masked program can be justified on the basis of the analytical benefits these restricted data may support.

The SSC also questions the value of collecting highly aggregated economic data. The degree of data aggregation is contextually specific to the questions being analyzed, and is best determined by the analysts employing these data. The greater the aggregation of the raw data collected, the less value it represents for local impact analyses, and the greater the constraints it imposes on the Council's and the public's ability to describe, understand and evaluate fisheries management performance.

The SSC also wishes to call the Council's attention to the treatment of crew compensation within the context of the proposed data collection action. Specifically, we recall that the question of how crew are treated under Federal labor law (i.e., employees or co-venturers) may have significant implications for how crew compensation questions under the proposed data collection program are phrased and subsequently interpreted. As this action moves forward, the SSC suggests that all concerned take this matter into consideration.

C-7 Bering Sea Canyons

Michael Sigler (NMFS-AFSC) provided a presentation on the uniqueness of the Bering Sea canyons, accompanied by Christopher Rooper (NMFS-AFSC) and Robert Stone (NMFS-AFSC). Diana Stram (NPFMC) presented the discussion paper on fishing effects on canyon habitats. Public testimony was provided by: Merrick Burden (Marine Conservation Council), Jon Warrenchuk (Oceana), Donna Parker (Arctic Storm), John Hocevar (Greenpeace), Vernor Wilson III (World Wildlife Fund), Chad See (Freezer Longline Coalition), and John Gauvin (Alaska Seafood Cooperative). The SSC thanks the authors, Council staff, and those who provided public testimony on this issue.

The SSC found these presentations to be careful and thorough attempts to answer the Council's questions regarding the Bering Sea canyons, including the two focal canyons, Pribilof and Zhemchug canyons. The presentation by Dr. Sigler provided much new information on the physical and biological characteristics of the Bering Sea canyons and surrounding habitats. The focal question was whether the Bering Sea canyons are unique habitats within the Eastern Bering Sea (EBS) shelf and slope. The authors used multivariate analyses with physical habitat characteristics and fish and invertebrate distributions to determine whether Pribilof and Zhemchug canyons differed from each other or from adjacent slope and shelf habitats. The paper assessed the potential for fishing to damage corals and sponges. The evaluation was conducted through spatial modeling and an index of vulnerability to physical damage from fishing. The analyses to identify differences among the canyons and slope habitats, and to predict coral and sponge habitats, were well-executed. The assignment of susceptibility to each of the coral taxa appeared to be relatively subjective and additional detail on the methodology utilized to assign susceptibility is needed.

The results suggest that while Pribilof and Zhemchug canyons can be distinguished physically from surrounding habitats; their fish and invertebrate communities (to the extent they were included in the analysis) do not differ significantly from other areas of the shelf-slope between the canyons. It was concluded that these two canyons are not biologically unique and that the primary factors structuring the shelf-slope fish and invertebrate communities are depth and latitude. Regions of relatively high coral and sponge vulnerability were predicted to occur both inside and outside canyons. There was substantial spatial overlap between fishing effort and predicted coral and sponge habitats. The authors were careful to state that the overlap does not explain the relative impact of fishing effects, and only that these effects were likely to be greater in overlapped areas compared to other areas.

While the paper does an excellent job of showing the physical differences among the habitat areas, the SSC feels that the analyses of biological attributes could be improved. Use of the top 20 species from each of the EBS slope, shelf, and the AFSC longline surveys, while providing information on the most common species, was less likely to detect differences in the uniqueness of the biota in these areas. The SSC notes that the inclusion of more rarely encountered species could be useful in identifying whether the canyon habitats support a unique mix of unusual species. Inclusion of biodiversity indices would also help to demonstrate whether these canyons were biologically differentiated from the rest of the shelf-slope.

This paper did not respond to the Council's need to understand the dependence of managed species on the habitat features of the canyons (April 2012 Council action regarding Bering Sea canyons).

The analysis focused on more specific questions, such as uniqueness and heterogeneity, which may contribute indirectly to dependence. The SSC does not believe that the data currently exist to quantify the importance of the canyons to the population dynamics of managed species.

The SSC questioned whether the comparison between coral densities in the focal canyons and those in the Aleutian Islands was appropriate because of the substantial differences in the physical habitats of the two regions. The SSC suggested that comparisons between the canyons and adjacent slope habitats or the Gulf of Alaska might be more meaningful. The SSC recognized the need for visual surveys outside Pribilof and Zhemchug canyons that would allow for direct comparisons to data collected inside the canyons. The SSC supports additional visual surveys to validate model results.

Incorporation of information on the population dynamics of corals and the role of corals (and other structure-forming invertebrates) in fish populations would strengthen the description of ecological connections among biota present in these habitats. This should include information on generation time and longevity of these structure-forming invertebrates to provide insights into the persistence of fishing effects, the time frame for future recovery, and the level of mortality these species can withstand. At present, the analysis only considers vulnerability scores that do not consider recovery rates. The SSC suggests that in future studies the analysts consider defining vulnerability as a function of exposure, susceptibility and adaptability. Additionally, the SSC notes a need for information on the potential for damage of corals and sponges by the various types of fishing gear that have bottom contact. Additional detail on the methodology utilized to assign susceptibility is also needed.

In general, this paper is informative and should help guide Council decisions on whether and how to move forward with future research and management measures specific to the two focal canyons and in slope habitats, in general. The SSC recognizes the wide range of potential options for the Council to take on this issue. Clear statements of purpose by the Council would guide the alternatives, if the Council does decide to take action to protect these areas as Essential Fish Habitat or as Habitats of Particular Concern.

The SSC also received a presentation of a discussion paper presented by Council staff that summarized fishing activities, characterized by average catch from 2004 through 2012, within the Pribilof and Zhemchug canyons. Fishing activity was summarized by gear type and by target fishery, and PSC; incidental and observed invertebrate bycatch was also summarized. Management measures potentially affecting the canyons were described, including the various types of area closures, fishing cooperatives, and gear modifications.

D-1(c) Research Priorities

The SSC considered research priorities for inclusion in the annual NPFMC list of Research Priorities. Per the policy adopted at the June 2012 Council meeting, the SSC asked the Plan Teams to provide their research priorities to the SSC. Research priority lists were provided by the Plan Teams in their Plan Team report and were entered in "Track Changes" in the Council's list of Research Priorities, as "published" in the minutes of the previous year's June Council meeting. Using this input, the SSC then updated a working copy of the Research Priorities, using the new database format developed by Council staff in consultation with a subcommittee of the SSC over the past year. **The SSC provides its recommended list of research priorities to the Council in Appendix A**. The appendix is organized from high to medium to low priority, with the status of each research project noted (No Action, Partially Underway, Underway).

D-1(d) Pacific cod model presentation

Grant Thompson (NMFS-AFSC, and Pacific cod stock assessment author) presented Groundfish Plan Teams' (Team) recommendations for models to consider in the 2013 preliminary Pacific cod assessment. Public testimony was given by Kenny Down (Blue North). These recommendations were based on

proposals by the senior assessment author, the Plan Teams, the SSC, and the public. Following the process established in recent years, all proposed models were evaluated and a reduced set of models was recommended for the 2014 assessment. Given the increasingly technical nature of the review and the declining number of participants of Team members, the Team is considering tasking this review to a subcommittee. This might have the benefit of reducing the number of meetings for many Team members. The SSC endorses Team recommended changes to the review process.

The Team also reviewed and provided comments on a study that compared Pacific cod catches from survey bottom trawls with low and high vertical openings (summary of 2012 pilot field study, by Robert Lauth and Cynthia Yeung). This study did not identify a statistically significant difference in catchability of the nets used in the EBS and GOA surveys for Pacific cod in the 60 cm to 81 cm size range. However, the pilot study was conducted in a small area, which may not necessarily represent the survey catchability across the entire Pacific cod distribution. The Program Manager for the Groundfish Assessment Program felt that the results were inconclusive, and the Team and SSC agreed. The SSC concurs with the Plan Team that studies investigating Pacific cod catchability receive high priority. The SSC encourages gear researchers to consider designing a comprehensive, cooperative study to obtain improved estimates of survey catchability across a range of habitats (depth, substrate, etc.), conducted at the time of the summer survey to control for seasonal differences in catchability. The SSC requested to see designs for future paired studies prior to implementation. Given funding limitations, cooperative research with the industry could be explored.

For the preliminary EBS assessment, the Team recommended including the following models:

- Last year's final model (Model 1), which is the same as the 2011 final model
- Last year's "exploratory" model (Model 4), but with the logarithm of survey catchability estimated internally, using a non-constraining uniform prior
- Last year's "exploratory" model (Model 4), but with the logarithm of survey catchability estimated internally, using a normal prior derived from the archival tagging data used by Nichol et al. (2007), and with asymptotic trawl survey selectivity

The SSC concurs with author and Team's EBS model development for this coming year. The SSC recommends that model changes be kept to a minimum to ensure that we can track model sensitivities to specific changes in model structure. In addition to the recommended models, the assessment author reported that he will likely bring forward an EBS model similar to last year's Model 4, which the SSC supports. The SSC encourages the author to investigate annually changing fishery selectivity, for example modeled as a random walk process. The SSC concurs with the Team recommendation to discontinue models with no age data.

For the preliminary GOA assessment, the Teams recommend including the following models:

- The 2011 final model
- Last year's final model (Model 2)
- Last year's Model 4, but with all selectivities forced to equal zero at age zero, growth parameters fixed at the values from Model 2, and time-invariant survey selectivity for the 27-plus cm sized fish

The SSC concurs with these recommendations and with the Team's recommendation to not re-tune survey catchability for the 27-plus sized fish in the GOA models, unless the average of the product of catchability and selectivity across the 60 cm to 81 cm size range departs appreciably from the value of 0.92 estimated by Nichol et al. (2007). The SSC also recommends that the author(s) investigate a more parsimonious model for comparison.

For the preliminary AI assessment, the SSC has no additional suggestions at this time and is looking forward to a revised and updated assessment model. The SSC agrees with the Team and the AI authors

that pre-1991 survey data should be omitted from the assessment. To improve biomass estimates in the Aleutians, we further encourage an examination of existing longline survey data (sablefish and IPHC) to determine if a cooperative, cost-effective longline survey could be developed in the Aleutians, and to determine if these data should be incorporated into the AI Assessment.

Appendix A.

SSC's Five-Year Research Priorities: 2013 through 2017 (as proposed in June 2013)

The Scientific and Statistical Committee (SSC) has identified priorities for research in the next 1 to 5 years as those activities that are the most important for the conservation and management of fisheries in the Gulf of Alaska, Aleutian Islands, eastern Bering Sea, and the Arctic. This listing of priorities has two purposes: 1) to meet the requirements of the revised Magnuson-Stevens Act for the Councils to identify research that is needed in the next 5 years, and 2) to provide guidance on research priorities to the research community and funding agencies.

Five-Year Research Priorities: 2013-2017

2013 Research Priorities - High Priorities

	Res_Title
101	**Life history research on non-recovering crab stocks** Status: No Action Why certain stocks have declined and failed to recover as anticipated is a pressing issue (e.g., Pribilof Island blue king crab, Adak red king crab). Research into all life history components, including predation by groundfish on juvenile crab in nearshore areas, is needed to identify population bottlenecks, an aspect that is critically needed to develop and implement rebuilding plans.
105	**Spatial distribution of male snow crab** Status: Partially Underway There is a need to characterize the spatial distribution of male snow crab relative to reproductive output of females in the middle domain of the EBS shelf.
107	**Improve handling mortality rate estimates for crab** Status: Partially Underway Improve estimate of discarded crab handling mortality rate. This will require improving understanding of the post-release mortality rate of discarded crab from directed and non-directed crab pot fisheries, and principal groundfish (trawl, pot, and hook and line) fisheries. The magnitude of post-release mortality is an essential parameter in the determination of the overfishing level used to evaluate overfishing in stock assessment and projection modeling. Empirical data exist for snow crab, so new handling mortality data are needed for Tanner and king crab by size, sex, and fishery type with consideration of temperature.

110 **Maintain the core biological and oceanographic data (e.g., biophysical moorings, stomach data, zooplankton, age 0 surveys) necessary to support integrated ecosystem assessment**

Status: Underway

Maintain the core data needed to support integrated ecosystem assessments. Core data include inputs for single- or multi-species management strategy evaluations, food web, and coupled biophysical end-to-end ecosystem models (e.g., biophysical moorings, stomach data, zooplankton, age 0 surveys).

114 **Develop a spatially-explicit model for BSAI pollock**

Status: Underway

Conduct studies to determine stock structure and potential spatial management for BSAI pollock (e.g., movement). Evaluate interactions of BSAI pollock with those in Russian waters. These studies should lead to a detailed spatial age-structured stock assessment model with at least 3 regions (Russia, NW EBS, SE EBS].

115 **District-wide survey for demersal shelf rockfish in Southeast Alaska**

Status: No Action

Conduct a district-wide survey for demersal shelf rockfish in Southeast Alaska on a biennial or triennial basis. Survey information is becoming extremely dated.

116 **Studies to identify crab stock boundaries**

Status: No Action

Conduct studies to evaluate stock boundaries (e.g., Bristol Bay red king crab, Adak red king crab, Pribilof blue king crab). Studies are needed in the areas of genetics, reproductive biology, larval distribution, and advection. Mark-recapture studies are needed, as well.

117 **Study vertical distribution of Pacific cod to better understand catchability**

Status: Underway

Research is needed on the vertical distribution of Pacific cod relative to the EBS bottom trawl, and comparisons of gear between the EBS and GOA trawl gear. This is because there is controversy about fishery and survey catchability.

118 **Pacific cod stock assessment for the Aleutian Islands**

Status: Underway

Develop Pacific cod stock assessment for the Aleutian Islands region. The Aleutian Islands and eastern Bering Sea regions' cod stocks will soon be split and get their own ABC's and OFL's. Therefore, there is need to develop an assessment model for cod in the Aleutians.

119 **Evaluation of salmon PSC mitigation measures**

Status: Underway

Develop a research program that will facilitate evaluation of salmon (both Chinook and non-Chinook) PSC mitigation measures in the BSAI and GOA. This includes updated estimates of the amounts reasonably necessary for subsistence, timing of runs and openings relative to subsistence requirements, and access to cost data for the commercial pollock and salmon industries so that impacts on profits (not simply gross revenues) can be calculated.

120 **Improve knowledge for salmon PSC impact assessment**

Status: Underway

Improve the resolution of Chinook and chum salmon genetic stock identification methods (e.g., baseline development, marker development), improve precision of salmon run size estimates in western Alaska, and initiate investigations of biotic and abiotic factors influencing natural mortality rate during ocean migration in the GOA and BSAI. Baseline development is nearing completion, but more work on Cook Inlet chum stocks is needed.

122 **Improve methods of monitoring fishery interactions**

Status: Underway

Develop improved catch monitoring methods of fishery interactions, including direct and alternative options (e.g., electronic logbooks, video monitoring), particularly on smaller groundfish, halibut, and commercially guided recreational fishing vessels, including an assessment of feasibility for small vessels.

125 **Research ecosystem indicators and their thresholds for inclusion in ecosystem-level management strategy evaluation**

Status: Underway

Initiate/continue research on the synthesis of ecosystem indicators, developing and evaluating thresholds for ecosystem indicators, and ecosystem-level management strategy evaluation.

126 **Evaluate interactions between fisheries and pinnipeds**

Status: Underway

Studies of the interactions between fisheries and protected species, such as Steller sea lions in the Central and Western Aleutian Islands (areas 541, 542, 543) and northern fur seals on the eastern Bering Sea shelf are needed. These studies should be conducted at appropriate spatial and temporal scales, with an emphasis on seasonal prey fields, diet, and movement of fisheries and pinnipeds.

127 **Assess vital rates of Steller sea lions**

Status: Underway

Assess vital rates (i.e., reproduction and survival) of Steller sea lions in the western DPS (including Russia) at sufficient frequency to track population dynamics.

128 **Assess the health of Stellar sea lions**

Status: Underway

Assess possible indirect effects of fisheries removals via periodic health assessments, indices of body condition, survival of pups and juveniles, and natality of Steller sea lions in the western DPS.

129 **Quantify killer whale predation of Steller sea lions**

Status: Underway

Quantify killer whale predation of Steller sea lions, particularly in the western and central Aleutian Islands.

135 **Conduct routine fish, crab, and oceanographic surveys in the northern Bering Sea and Arctic Ocean**

Status: Partially Underway

Dynamic ecosystem and environmental changes in the northern Bering Sea and Arctic are occurring. Assessment of the current baseline conditions and trophic interactions is important. This effort should not supplant the regular surveys in the BSAI and GOA, which are of critical importance to science and management.

136 **Effects of trawling on female red king crab and subsequent recruitment**

Status: Partially Underway

Research is needed on the effects of trawling on the distribution of breeding and ovigerous female red king crab and subsequent recruitment. Relevant studies include effects of potential habitat modifications on the distribution of females, particularly in nearshore areas of southwest Bristol Bay (partially underway), and environmental effects (e.g., trawling overlap in warm vs. cold years). Retrospective studies, the use of pop-up tags to identify larval release locations, and larval advection using Regional Ocean Modeling System would help address this need.

138 **Continuation of State and Federal annual and biennial surveys**

Status: Underway

Continuation of State and Federal annual and biennial surveys in the GOA, AI, and EBS, including BASIS surveys and crab pot surveys, is a critical aspect of fishery management off Alaska. It is important to give priority to these surveys, in light of recent Federal budgets in which funding may not be sufficient to conduct these surveys. Loss of funding for days at sea for NOAA ships jeopardizes these programs. Budgetary concerns have resulted in cuts to not only days at sea, which increases uncertainty, but also sampling the deepest strata, which threatens the value of trawl surveys as a synoptic ecological survey. These surveys provide baseline distribution, abundance, and life history data that form the foundation for stock assessments and the development of ecosystem approaches to management. Although an ongoing need, these surveys are considered the highest priority research activity, contributing to assessment of commercial groundfish and crab fisheries off Alaska.

139 **Conduct routine surveys of subsistence in the northern Bering Sea and Arctic Ocean**

Status: Partially Underway

Conduct routine surveys of subsistence use of marine resources in the northern Bering Sea and Arctic Ocean. These surveys will become increasingly important under ongoing warming ocean temperatures because range expansions of harvested fishery resources may occur. If range expansions or shifts occur, data will be needed to adjust standard survey time series for availability.

141 **Estimate scallop stock abundance**

Status: No Action

Estimate scallop stock abundance in unsurveyed areas using fishery independent methods.

143 **Alternative approaches to acquire fishery-independent abundance data for Aleutian Islands golden king crab**

Status: No Action

Explore alternative approaches to the triennial ADF&G Aleutian Islands golden king crab pot survey to acquire fishery-independent abundance data on stock distribution and recruitment of Aleutian Islands golden king crab, including the potential for future cooperative research efforts with Industry.

144 **Assess seasonal diets and movements of fish and shellfish**

Status: No Action

Assess seasonal or species-specific information for use in improved assessment and management (e.g., expand or continue cooperative research). The data would be useful in studies of species interactions in spatially explicit stock assessments.

147 **Studies on factors that affect catchability, particularly for Tanner crab and Aleutian Islands golden king crab**

Status: Partially Underway

For groundfish and crabs, studies are needed on factors that affect catchability, as they directly bear on estimates of the stock assessment. Research to refine the estimates of survey catchability, q, used to infer absolute, rather than relative, abundance would substantially improve the quality of management advice. Particular emphasis should be placed on Tanner crab, because of recent trends in stock status, and on fishery and fishing gear selectivity for Aleutian Island golden king crab to improve the stock assessment model.

149 **Quantitative reproductive index for the surveyed BSAI crab stocks**

Status: Underway

Advance research towards developing a quantitative reproductive index for the surveyed BSAI crab stocks. Research on mating, fecundity, fertilization rates, and, for snow and Tanner crab, sperm reserves and biennial spawning, is needed to develop annual indices of fertilized egg production that can be incorporated into the stock assessment process and to model the effects of sex ratios, stock distribution, and environmental change on stock productivity. Priority stocks for study are eastern Being Sea snow and Tanner crab and Bristol Bay red king crab.

151 **Acquire basic life history information (e.g., natural mortality, growth, size at maturity) for data-poor stocks.**

Status: Partially Underway

Acquire basic life history information needed for stock assessment, PSC, and bycatch management of data-poor stocks, such as scallops, sharks, skates, sculpins, octopus, grenadiers, squid, and blue king crab (Bering Sea), golden king crabs (Aleutian Islands), and red king crab (Norton Sound). Specifically, information is needed on natural mortality, growth, size at maturity, and other basic indicators of stock production/productivity).

157 **Develop and validate aging methods for crabs.**

Status: No Action

Develop and validate aging methods for crabs to improve estimates of M for stock assessments.

163 **Expanded studies to identify stock and management boundaries**

Status: Underway

To identify stock boundaries, expanded studies are needed in the areas of genetics, mark-recapture, reproductive biology, larval distribution, and advection. Such boundaries are to be evaluated so that consequences of management and risks are clear. Verify stock structure and source/sink dynamics, including physical oceanographic, genetic and life-history studies.

164 **Develop spatially explicit stock assessment models**

Status: Partially Underway

Develop spatially explicit stock assessment models. High priority species for spatially explicit models include: walleye pollock, snow crab, Pacific cod, sablefish, yellowfin sole, rock sole, arrowtooth flounder, Pacific ocean perch, black spotted rockfish, rougheye rockfish, and Atka mackerel.

166 **Develop age-structured models for scallop assessment**

Status: Partially Underway

Age structured models for scallop are needed to increase understanding of population dynamics and harvestable surpluses.

167 **Refine methods to incorporate uncertainty into harvest strategies for groundfish**

Status: Underway

Refine P* and decision theoretic methods to incorporate uncertainty into harvest strategies for groundfish for ACL estimation. Continue existing management strategy evaluations at the stock level.

168 **Conduct prospective and retrospective analyses of changes in the spatial and temporal distribution of fishing effort in response to management change**

Status: Underway

Conduct prospective and retrospective analyses of changes in the spatial and temporal distribution of fishing effort, in response to management actions (e.g., time/area closures, marine reserves, PSC and other bycatch restrictions, co-ops, IFQs).

169 **Develop a framework for collection of economic information**

Status: Partially Underway

Develop a framework for collection of economic information on commercial, recreational, and charter fishing, as well as fish processing, to meet the requirements of the MSFCMA sections 303(a)(5, 9, 13), 303(b)(6), and 303A.

179 **Conduct pre- and post-implementation studies of the benefits and costs, and their distribution, associated with dedicated access privileges**

Status: Partially Underway

Conduct pre- and post-implementation studies of the benefits and costs, and their distribution, associated with changes in management regimes (e.g., changes in product markets, characteristics of quota share markets, changes in distribution of ownership, changes in crew compensation) as a consequence of the introduction of dedicated access privileges in the halibut/sablefish, AFA pollock, and crab fisheries. "Benefits and costs" include both economic and social dimensions.

181 **Economic, social, and cultural valuation research on protected species**

Status: Underway

Economic, social, and cultural valuation research on protected species is needed (i.e., non-market consumptive use, passive use, non-consumptive use).

182 **Foraging ecology studies of Steller sea lions**

Status: Underway

Foraging ecology studies of Steller sea lions in the Gulf of Alaska, Aleutian Islands, and Russia are needed, including at-sea tracking of older animals, and diet composition of sea lions throughout the region.

188 **Evaluate current and alternative Council PSC/bycatch reduction initiatives**

Status: Partially Underway

Analyze the effects of recent Council actions on PSC and bycatch, including the interaction among PSC and bycatch reduction initiatives (e.g., halibut, salmon, crab). Attention should be given to different incentives that have the potential to cost-effectively reduce PSC.

194 **Research the role of habitat in fish population dynamics, fish production (growth, reproduction), and ecosystem processes**

Status: Partially Underway

Research is needed on the role of habitat in fish population dynamics, fish production, and ecosystem processes. Specifically, studies are needed to evaluate how habitat-forming species (e.g., corals) influence life history parameters (e.g., mortality, growth, movement) of FMP species and their preferred prey. Such research will identify key habitats (including essential fish habitat and habitat areas of particular concern), improve the design and management of marine protected areas, and ultimately improve stock assessments and restoration efforts.

195 **Evaluate efficacy of habitat closure areas and habitat recovery**

Status: Partially Underway

Establish a scientific research and monitoring program to understand the degree to which impacts on habitat, benthic infauna, etc., have been reduced within habitat closure areas, and to understand how benthic habitat recovery of key species is occurring. (This is an objective of EFH research approach for the Council FMPs).

198 **Maintain moorings and develop/maintain sea ice formation, sea ice retreat, and spring bloom indices for the EBS**

Status: Partially Underway

Develop and maintain indices of sea ice formation, sea ice retreat, and timing/extent of the spring bloom for the EBS. For this, maintenance of moorings, especially M-2, is essential. If recent changes in ice cover and temperatures in the Bering Sea persist, these may have profound effects on marine communities.

200 **Collect and maintain zooplankton biomass and community composition time series**

Status: Partially Underway

Collect and maintain zooplankton biomass and community composition time series in the eastern Bering Sea. Develop, collect and maintain time series of zooplankton biomass and community composition for the GOA, AI, Arctic.

203 **Maintain indicator-based ecosystem assessment for EBS.**

Status: Underway

Maintain indicator-based ecosystem assessment for EBS.

204 **Develop indicator-based ecosystem assessments for AI (in progress), GOA, Arctic.**

Status: Partially Underway

Develop indicator-based ecosystem assessments for AI (in progress), GOA, and the Arctic.

205 **Develop stock-specific ecosystem indicators and incorporate into stock assessments**

Status: Partially Underway

Develop stock-specific ecosystem indicators and incorporate into stock assessments. (in progress)

216 **Collect and maintain time series of ocean pH**

Status: Partially Underway

Collect and maintain time series of ocean pH in the major water masses off Alaska to improve understanding of ocean acidification and its effects on managed species, upper level predators and lower trophic levels

217 **Assess whether changes in pH would affect managed species, upper level predators, and lower trophic levels.**

Status: Partially Underway

Assess whether changes in pH would affect managed species, upper level predators, and lower trophic levels.

220 **Collect, analyze, and monitor diet information**

Status: Underway

Collect, analyze, and monitor diet information (species, biomass, energetics), from seasons in addition to summer, to assess spatial and temporal changes in predator-prey interactions, including marine mammals and seabirds. The diet information should be collected on the appropriate spatial scales for key predators and prey to determine how food webs may be changing in response to shifts in the range of crab and groundfish.

301 **Investigate ecosystem effects and inter-species interactions of halibut**

Status: Underway

Investigate potential ecosystem effects and inter-species interactions on Pacific halibut recruitment and size-at-age. Includes integration of existing IPHC and NOAA trawl survey observations of size-at-age, diet, and population distribution and trends for multiple species in the GOA and BS.

302 **Study temporal and spatial patterns in size-at-age of Pacific halibut**

Status: Underway

Reanalyze historical records of Pacific halibut size-at-age. Requires identifying samples from consistent spatial areas, as well as re-ageing of older samples that utilized differing methods for age determination. Relate observed patterns to somatic growth via otolith increment analysis and development of bioenergetics model relating long-term environmental and ecological drivers to halibut size-at-age. Continue to explore the potential role of fishing in observed size-at-age trends via direct or evolutionary pathways and the interaction with size-selective fishing. Include these analyses in harvest policy analyses.

305 **Study Pacific halibut PSC, bycatch, and discard behavior in fisheries**

Status: Underway

Continue to explore management actions that reduce the incentives for PSC-, bycatch- and discard-related mortality of Pacific halibut. Evaluation of observer coverage, accuracy, and representativeness of PSC and bycatch estimates should be included.

306 **Effects of changes to the observer program**

Status: Partially Underway

Evaluate the effects on biological parameter estimates and on estimated catch, bycatch, and PSC from changes to data collection protocols that occur because of the observer restructuring. Ensure that data can be compared easily to the previous data collection methods so that time series remain intact. Improve biological data collection, including representative length and age samples from all sectors of the fleet. Attempt to separate temporal changes from sampling design effects.

310 **Develop a simulation model of Steller sea lion and commercial fishery interactions**

Status: No Action

__Management strategy evaluation tools based on coupled bio-physical models with fishing and top trophic level foragers (e.g., Steller sea lions) should be developed to evaluate the performance of different fishing strategies, to inform future management decisions, and to prioritize field studies.

311 **Continue to improve stock assessment methodology with respect to uncertainty**

Status: Underway

Recent studies have made advances in determining effective sample size, effective number of parameters, Bayesian parameterizations, and weighting of datasets in assessments with multiple datasets. However, results appear to vary from paper to paper, and no general rules have emerged. Thus, our ability to characterize uncertainty remains elusive and efforts to develop and improve characterizations should continue.

312 **Continue to investigate time variation and the shape of fishery and survey selectivity models**

Status: Underway

There is considerable controversy about (1) whether selectivity should be dome-shaped or asymptotic, and (2) whether selectivity should be time-varying by default. Using a dome-shaped curve can create a large increase in biomass that may not be real. Treating selectivity as time-varying increases the number of model parameters greatly, which may lead to confounding among parameters. Better scientific guidance through research studies is needed to address these two problems.

314 **Updated sperm whale stock assessment**

Status: No Action

Updated sperm whale abundance estimates are needed. Sperm whale depredation interactions with longline fisheries have increased, but little is known about sperm whale populations. Updated population estimates and defined PBR's are needed to effectively respond if a take occurs in the longline fishery

2013 Research Priorities - Medium Priorities

	Res_Title
102	**Catch accounting of crab sex and size** Status: Partially Underway Improvements are needed for catch accounting by sex and size for crab in non-directed fisheries with high bycatch or PSC rates, particularly for blue king crab in the Pacific cod pot fishery in the Pribilof Islands.
103	**Methods for reliable estimation of total removals** Status: Underway Develop methods for reliable estimation of total removals (e.g., surveys, poorly observed fisheries) to meet requirements of total removals under ACLs. Catch Accounting System now provides total removals annually. Improved reporting on some data, such as subsistence catches and Pacific cod bait in crab fisheries is needed.
106	**Improve discard mortality rate estimates for weathervane scallops** Status: Partially Underway Conduct field studies estimating weathervane scallop discard mortality: relationship between capture, release condition and survival of scallops
108	**Tagging studies of Aleutian Islands Pacific cod and Atka mackerel** Status: Partially Underway Tagging studies of Aleutian Islands Pacific cod, Atka mackerel, Alaska skate, and walleye pollock are needed to create models of short-term movement of fish relative to critical habitat (tagging for Atka mackerel and skates are partly underway).
109	**Age determination methods for Pacific cod, Pacific sleeper sharks, and spiny dogfish** Status: Partially Underway Studies are needed to validate and improve age determination methods for Pacific cod, Pacific sleeper sharks, and spiny dogfish. Conventional tagging studies of young of the year and/or one-year old Pacific cod would be useful in this regard; vertebrae are currently being evaluated for aging of spiny dogfish (partially underway for cod and dogfish).
111	**Biomass indices and alternate methodologies for lowest tier species** Status: Partially Underway Develop biomass indices for lowest tier species (Tier 5 for crab, Tier 6 for groundfish), such as sharks and octopus . Explore alternative methodologies for Tier 5 and 6 stocks, such as length-based methods, catchability experiments (e.g., net selectivity), or biomass dynamics models.

112 **Analyses of fishery effort and observer data for scallop fisheries**

Status: No Action

Assess impacts of temporal and spatial distribution of effort by the few vessels participating in the fishery on CPUE and observer data for management purposes.

113 **Research on stock- recruit relationships**

Status: Underway

New information and data are needed that would inform our understanding of the stock-recruit relationship for groundfish, Pacific halibut, and crab to project year-class strength.

121 **Investigate factors affecting the guided angler sector of the halibut fishery**

Status: Underway

Continue to investigate factors that affect angler demand in the guided angler sector of the halibut fishery resulting from regulatory changes under consideration by the North Pacific Management Council and/or general economic conditions.

123 **Develop bioeconomic models**

Status: Partially Underway

Develop bioeconomic models with explicit age- or size-structured population dynamics for BSAI and GOA groundfish fisheries to estimate maximum economic yield and other bioeconomic reference points under uncertainty.

124 **Benefits and costs of directed halibut catch and halibut PSC utilization**

Status: Underway

Research the benefits and costs of directed halibut catch and halibut PSC utilization in different fishing sectors. For halibut and other PSC and bycatch species, conduct research to better identify where regulations restrict the utilization of fish from its most beneficial use, and evaluate how changes in existing regulations would affect different sectors and fisheries.

130 **Develop methods to estimate sea lion abundance**

Status: Underway

Develop new methods to estimate sea lion abundance, such as the use of unmanned aerial vehicles, which could increase the probability of acquiring abundance estimates in remote areas.

131 **Assess the impact of the displacement of the groundfish fleet on Northern fur seals**

Status: Partially Underway

Assess the impact of the displacement of the groundfish fleet due to Steller sea lion protection measures on the prey availability, foraging ecology, diet, movements, and vital rates for Northern fur seals.

132 **Evaluate the impact of seabird bycatch in fisheries on bird populations, and methods to reduce takes**

Status: Underway

Assess the extent and impact of seabird bycatch in fisheries on bird populations, and develop methods to reduce seabird bycatch, particularly protected species, such as short-tailed albatross.

133 **Determine potential impacts of fishing activities on marine mammals**

Status: No Action

Determine potential impacts of fishing activities on marine mammals (e.g., state managed gillnet fisheries), and in particular on North Pacific right whales and the Eastern North Pacific blue whales, particularly in identified critical (NPRW) or essential (NPBW) habitat.

134 **Assess whether Bering Sea canyons are habitats of particular concern**

Status: Partially Underway

Assess whether Bering Sea canyons are habitats of particular concern by assessing the distribution and prevalence of coral and sponge habitat, and comparing marine communities within and above the canyon areas, including a comparison of mid-level and apex predators to neighboring shelf/slope ecosystems.

137 **Impact of fisheries on benthic habitat and trophic interactions**

Status: Underway

Assess the impact of bottom trawl fisheries on invertebrate abundance and species composition in benthic habitats. This is especially relevant to the foraging ecology of walrus (candidate species for listing under ESA), but also bearded seals, and gray whales.

142 **Survey capability for forage fish**

Status: Partially Underway

Develop a long-term survey capability for monitoring forage fish (partially underway). The NPRB funded GOA and Bering Sea projects are currently describing the spatial and temporal variability in the structure of forage fish communities and the effect of this variability on predators. This work should be continued and methods for long-term monitoring should be developed.

145 **Monitor skate egg case concentration sites**

Status: No Action

The HAPC action for skate egg case concentration sites included two recommendations that the Council suggested should be addressed during the annual research priority discussion: (a) skate egg case concentrations should be monitored every 2 to 3 years using non-invasive research design, such as in situ observation; and (b) skate conservation and skate egg concentration areas remain a priority for EFH and HAPC management and within Council and NMFS research plans.

146 **Improve surveys in untrawlable habitat, particularly for rockfish, Atka mackerel, and sculpins**

Status: Partially Underway

For groundfish in general, and rockfish and Atka mackerel in particular, continue and expand research on trawlable and untrawlable habitat to improve resource assessment surveys. For example, improved surveys, such as hydro-acoustic surveys, are needed to better assess pelagic rockfish species that are found in untrawlable habitat or are semi-pelagic species, such as northern and dusky rockfish. A number of publications specific to untrawlable grounds and rockfish sampling have been published recently, but have not been incorporated directly into stock assessment or routine survey designs.

148 **Research on survey analysis techniques for species that exhibit patchy distributions**

Status: No Action

Continue research on the design and implementation of appropriate survey analysis techniques, to aid the Council in assessing species (e.g., some crabs and rockfish) that exhibit patchy distributions and, thus, may not be adequately represented (either over- or under-estimated) in the annual or biennial groundfish surveys.

150 **Collect maturity scans during fisheries that target spawning fish**

Status: Underway

Expand existing efforts to collect maturity scans during fisheries that target spawning fish (e.g., pollock). Time series of maturity at age should be collected to facilitate the assessment of the effects of density-dependence and environmental conditions on maturity. Maturity information for pollock and Pacific cod is collected by observers and should be analyzed. Maturity information for rockfish species near Kodiak has been collected recently, both during the fishery and dedicated scientific cruises, and should be analyzed. A dedicated survey to examine spawning sablefish has also been conducted. Efforts to collect maturity data, and then analyze for rockfish and other species should continue. In particular, retrospective studies to identify factors (e.g., fishing, climate, prey quality and quantity) influencing the maturity schedule should be conducted.

156 **Improve estimates of natural mortality (M) for Pacific cod and crab stocks.**

Status: Partially Underway

Improve estimates of natural mortality (M) for several stocks, including Pacific cod and BSAI crab stocks.

160 **Develop and evaluate global climate change models (GCM) or downscaled climate variability scenarios on recruitment, growth, spatial distribution**

Status: Underway

Quantify the effects of historical climate variability and climate change on recruitment, growth, and spatial distribution, develop standard environmental scenarios (e.g., from GCMs) for present and future variability based on observed patterns.

161 **Climate and oceanographic information covering a wider range of seasons is needed**

Status: Partially Underway

There is also a need for climate and oceanographic information that covers a wider range of seasons than is presently available.

162 **Development of projection models to evaluate (a) the robustness and resilience of different management strategies under varying environmental and ecological conditions and (b) to forecast seasonal and climate related population shifts**

Status: Partially Underway

There is a need for the development of projection models to evaluate the robustness and resilience of different management strategies under varying environmental and ecological conditions. Projection models are also needed to forecast seasonal and climate related shifts in the spatial distribution and abundance of commercial fish and shellfish.

170 **Continue to evaluate the economic effects from crab rationalization programs on coastal communities.**

Status: Underway

Continue to evaluate the economic effects from crab rationalization programs on coastal communities. This includes understanding economic impacts (both direct and indirect), and how the impacts are distributed among communities and economic sectors.

171 **Improve estimation of fishery interactions with non-target groundfish, and prohibited species.**

Status: No Action

Improve estimation of fishery interactions (including catch) and non-target groundfish (e.g., sharks, skates), and prohibited species.

172 **Conduct studies documenting the subsistence harvest (patterns, norms, quantities) in communities affected by Council actions.**

Status: Partially Underway

Conduct studies documenting the subsistence harvest patterns, norms and quantities in communities that depend upon resources that may be affected by Council action.

173 **Evaluate the effectiveness of setting ABC and OFL levels for data-poor stocks**

Status: Partially Underway

Evaluate the effectiveness (e.g., potential for overharvest or unnecessarily limiting other fisheries) of setting ABC and OFL levels for data-poor stocks (Tier 5 and 6 for groundfish and Tiers 4 and 5 for crab, e.g., squid, octopus, shark, sculpins, other flatfish, other rockfish, skates, grenadier, and crab). Research is needed to refine the basis for setting gamma for Tier 4 crab stocks.

174 **Examine interactions between coastal communities and commercial fisheries**

Status: Underway

Examine interactions between coastal communities and commercial fisheries (e.g., subsistence-commercial linkages, adaptations to changes in resource use, economic opportunities for coastal communities).

175 **Retrospective analysis of the impact of Chinook salmon PSC avoidance measures on the BSAI pollock fishery**

Status: Partially Underway

Conduct retrospective analyses to assess the impact of Chinook salmon PSC avoidance measures on the BSAI pollock fishery. Analyses should include an evaluation of the magnitude and distribution of economic effects of salmon avoidance measures for the Bering Sea pollock fishery. In this case, it is important to understand how pollock harvesters have adapted their behavior to avoid Chinook and "other" salmon, under various economic and environmental conditions and incentive mechanisms.

176 **Develop management strategy evaluations that incorporate changing climate and market economic conditions.**

Status: Partially Underway

Develop management strategy evaluations under differing assumptions regarding climate and economic conditions. Promote the standardization of "future scenarios" from different models to promote comparability of model outputs.

177 **Develop an ongoing database of product inventories**

Status: No Action

Development of an ongoing database of product inventories (and trade volume and prices) for principal shellfish, groundfish, Pacific halibut, and salmon harvested by U.S. fisheries in the North Pacific and eastern Bering Sea.

178 **Analyze current determinants of demand for principal seafood products**

Status: Partially Underway

Analyze current determinants of ex vessel, wholesale, international, and domestic retail demand for principal seafood products from the GOA and BSAI.

184 **Investigate gear modifications and changes in fishing practices to reduce bycatch and PSC**

Status: Partially Underway

Gear modifications and changes in fishing practices to reduce bycatch and PSC are necessary. Studies of efficacy and cost of adopting these changes are needed.

185 **Conduct studies of sperm whale and killer whale depredation of catch in long-line fisheries and surveys**

Status: Underway

Studies of sperm and killer whale depredation of catch in long-line fisheries and surveys are needed to improve the quality of abundance estimates derived from long-line surveys.

191 **Improved habitat maps**

Status: Partially Underway

Improved habitat maps (especially benthic habitats) are required to identify essential fish habitat and distributions of various substrates and habitat types, including habitat-forming biota, infauna, and epifauna in the GOA, BS, and Aleutian Islands.

192 **Develop a GIS relational database for habitat, to include a historical time series of the spatial intensity of interactions between commercial fisheries and habitat.**

Status: Partially Underway

Develop a GIS relational database for habitat, including development of a historical time series of the spatial intensity of interactions between commercial fisheries and habitat. Such time series are needed to evaluate the impacts of changes in fishing effort and type on EFH.

193 **Assess the extent of the distribution of corals**

Status: Partially Underway

Assess the extent of the spatial distribution of deep-sea corals off Alaska and conduct routine monitoring of these areas.

196 **Develop a multivariate index of the climate forcing of the Bering Sea shelf**

Status: Partially Underway

Develop a multivariate index of the climate forcing of the Bering Sea shelf. Three biologically significant avenues for climate index predictions include advection, setup for primary production, and partitioning of habitat with oceanographic fronts and temperature preferences.

197 **Develop bottom and water column temperature databases and indices**

Status: Partially Underway

Develop bottom and water column temperature databases and indices for use in EBS, GOA, and AI stock assessments.

199 **Collect and maintain primary production time series**

Status: No Action

Collect and maintain primary production time series in the EBS, AI, GOA, and Arctic; particularly in relationship to key climate and oceanographic variables.

201 **Collect and maintain data on forage fish community composition and abundance**

Status: Partially Underway

Collect and maintain data on forage fish community composition and abundance in the Bering Sea, GOA, AI, Arctic.

202 **Collect and maintain time-series data on the community composition, production, and biomass of benthic invertebrate and vertebrate fauna**

Status: Partially Underway

Collect and maintain time-series data on the community composition, production, and biomass of benthic invertebrate and vertebrate fauna.

207 **Assess the impact of increases in recovering whale populations on lower trophic level energy pathways**

Status: No Action

Assess the impact of increases in recovering whale populations (e.g., gray, humpback and fin) on lower trophic level energy pathways.

209 **Cooperative research efforts to supplement existing at-sea surveys that provide seasonal, species-specific information on upper trophic levels**

Status: Partially Underway

Continue and expand cooperative research efforts to supplement existing at-sea surveys that provide seasonal, species-specific information on upper trophic levels (seabirds and marine mammals). Updated surveys to monitor distribution and abundance of seabirds and marine mammals are needed to assess impacts of fisheries on apex predators, improve the usefulness of apex predators as ecosystem indicators, and to improve ecosystem management.

211 **Assess the relative importance of non-commercially exploited species to human communities**

Status: Partially Underway

Assess the relative importance of non-commercially exploited species (invertebrates, fish, marine mammals, and seabirds) to human communities, particularly in Arctic.

214 **Measure and monitor fish composition**

Status: No Action

Measure and monitor fish composition: evaluate existing data sets (bottom trawl surveys, acoustic trawl surveys, and BASIS surveys) to quantify changes in relative species composition of commercial and non-commercial species, identify and map assemblages, monitor changes in the distribution of assemblages, and understand the spatial importance of predator-prey interactions in response to environmental variability. Additional monitoring may be necessary in the Aleutian Islands, northern Bering Sea, and areas of the Gulf of Alaska.

215 **Assess the movement of fish to understand the spatial importance of predator-prey interactions in response to environmental variability**

Status: Partially Underway

Assess the movement of fish in response to environmental variability to understand the spatial changes of predator-prey interactions.

221 **Conduct ecosystem structure studies**

Status: Underway

Studies are needed to evaluate the effects of global warming, ocean acidification, and selective fishing on food webs. For instance, studies are needed to evaluate differential exploitation of some components of the ecosystem (e.g., Pacific cod, pollock, and crab) relative to others (e.g., arrowtooth flounder).

223 **Modeling studies of ecosystem productivity**

Status: Underway

Modeling studies of ecosystem productivity in different regions (EBS, GOA, and AI). For example, studies could evaluate the appropriateness of the 2 million t OY cap.

300 **Assess the population status of harbor seals in the Aleutian Islands and determine factors affecting their population trajectories**

Status: No Action

Assess the population status of harbor seals in the Aleutian Islands and determine factors affecting their population trajectories

307 **Determine quantitative indicators of spatial structure, particular for walleye pollock and Pacific cod**

Status: No Action

The next generation of stock assessment models will be spatial age- and length-structured assessment models, in line with the goal of ecosystem-based fishery management. Current distributions of spatial location have been empirically summarized, but methods should be explored to convert these to movement patterns for biological and/or management regions.

308 **Investigate in situ methods of tagging species that experience barotrauma**

Status: No Action

Species with swim bladders experience barotrauma, so that tagging studies result in high mortality and little information. Icelandic and Norwegian scientists have developed in situ methods for tagging, so that these fish never change depth. This could provide precise estimates of movement rates from tagging studies needed for spatial stock assessments. Such a recommendation for walleye pollock is found in a 2011 Report of a Workshop on Spatial Structure and Dynamics of Walleye Pollock (AFSC Processed Report 2011-04).

309 **Effects of changes to the observer program**

Status: No Action

Evaluate the effects of changes to data collection protocols that occur because of observer restructuring. Ensure that data can be compared easily to the previous data collection methods and time series remain intact.

313 **Retrospective analysis of the impact of Chinook PSC avoidance measures on communities of western Alaska**

Status: No Action

Conduct retrospective analysis, using qualitative and quantitative methods, of salmon dependent communities of western Alaska that may be affected by Chinook salmon PSC avoidance measures in the BSAI. Analysis should evaluate long-term changes in local Chinook abundance and uses, and provide detailed ethnographic work, exploring the meaning of salmon to these communities in the context of industrialized offshore fisheries.

315 **Area-specific variability in scallop population processes**

Status: No Action

Investigate area-specific variability in vital population processes, including growth, recruitment, natural mortality and movement.

2013 Research Priorities - Low Priorities

	Res_Title
104	**Improve species identification** Status: Partially Underway Improve species identification, by both processors and observers, for priority species within species complexes in catches, to meet requirements of total removals under ACLs. Methods that quantify and correct for misidentifications are also desired.
140	**Identification and integration of archived data** Status: Partially Underway Identification and recovery of archived data (e.g., historical agency groundfish and shellfish surveys) should be pursued. Investigate integrating these data into stock and ecosystem assessments. Some archival acoustic data have been cataloged, and most trawl surveys have been included in databases. Some one-time research surveys remain neglected.
154	**Conduct multivariate analysis of bycatch data from the scallop observer program** Status: Underway Conduct multivariate analysis of bycatch data from the scallop observer program (haul composition data) and camera sled data. The analysis should include an investigation of localized depletion of scallops relative to fishing effort.
159	**Evaluate hybridization of snow and Tanner crabs.** Status: No Action Evaluate the assessment and management implications of hybridization of snow and Tanner crabs.
206	**Develop methodologies to monitor for new/emerging diseases and/or parasites among exploited species and higher trophic levels** Status: No Action Develop methodologies to monitor for new/emerging diseases and/or parasites among exploited species and higher trophic levels.
210	**Initiate and expand non-market valuation research of habitat, ecosystem services, and passive use considerations** Status: No Action Initiate and expand non-market valuation research of habitat, ecosystem services, and passive use considerations.
218	**Assess the synergistic effects of ocean acidification, oil, dispersants, and changes in temperature on productivity of marine species.** Status: No Action Laboratory studies are needed to assess the synergistic effects of ocean acidification, oil, dispersants, and changes in temperature on productivity of marine species.
219	**Monitor contaminant flux and loads in lower and higher trophic levels, and assess potential for impact on vital rates.** Status: No Action

Monitor contaminant flux and loads in lower and higher trophic levels, and assess potential for impact on vital rates.

303 **Determine effects of migration on the Pacific halibut population and management**

Status: Underway

Extend existing analyses of tagging studies to include age-specific components. Continue to evaluate the role of migration in contributing to population dynamics and trends associated with area-specific catch, PSC levels, and downstream effects.

304 **Investigate long term effects of fishing on Pacific halibut**

Status: Underway

Collect genetic samples for future comparison.

316 **Ocean Acidification and Scallops: monitoring water quality**

Status: No Action

Seasonal water quality monitoring in known scallop areas is desired.

317 **Effects of Ocean Acidification on Scallops**

Status: No Action

Studies to understand the mineralization of scallop shells through life cycle and across spatial variability should be undertaken.

DRAFT Ecosystem Committee Minutes *9/20/2013*

June 4, 2013 10:00am – 5:00pm
Sustainable Fisheries Conference Room
Federal Building
Juneau, AK

Committee: Bill Tweit, Stephanie Madsen, Jim Ayers, Dave Benton, David Fluharty(online), Steve Ignell, Jon Kurland, John Iani (online), Steve MacLean (staff)

Absent: Tim Towarak

Others attending included: Jon Warrenchuk, Merrick Burden, John Henderschedt, Megan Peterson, Raychelle Daniel, Jackie Dragon, Verner Wilson, Amanda Stern-Perlot, Dave Martin, Kris Balliet, John Hocevar, Donna Parker, Jim Cannon, Paul MacGregor, Frank Kelty, Mike Sigler, Chris Rooper

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Managing Our Nation's Fisheries 3 update

The Managing Our Nation's Fisheries 3 (MONF3) conference occurred in Washington, DC in May, 2013. Mr. John Henderschedt provided a summary of "findings" from the MONF3 conference (available at http://www.cvent.com/events/managing-our-nation-s-fisheries-3/custom-21-94ddf325198f4501996ccc62aa396aa2.aspx) related to the development and advancement of Ecosystem Based Fishery Management (EBFM). The findings are summaries of ideas that were presented at the MONF3 conference, and do not indicate consensus or agreement by conference participants. The findings will be published in the conference proceedings. Mr. Henderschedt noted that his presentation was his own comments and are not part of the conference proceedings or majority view.

During the presentation, Mr. Henderschedt answered questions from the committee members and some discussion occurred for some of the findings. One finding from MONF3 suggested creation of a separate SSC for each council to consider EBFM. There were questions about what role a new SSC would have, membership, and the bureaucratic role of a new SSC.

Mr. Henderschedt reported that there was a lot of overlap in the sections of this session and in other MONF3 sessions. Findings from the Climate Panel, in an ecosystem sense, included three questions that were raised by Phil Levin:

1. Is the ocean healthy?
2. How is the ocean vulnerable?
3. How can we trade off uses of the ocean to respond to those vulnerabilities?

Overall, there was discussion about what is a regional perspective of a healthy ocean, and how do we balance multiple uses of the ocean in management tradeoffs? Mr. Henderschedt, in response to questions from the committee, noted that climate changes introduce much uncertainty into managing our oceans. A precautionary approach is warranted in response to that uncertainty. Some climate changes may have impacted stocks or habitats that may make current rebuilding or other management goals unreachable, and some changes to those goals may be necessary.

Discussion about the findings from the Habitat panel at MONF3 focused on the development of measureable conservation objectives when considering habitat management. The chairman noted that the N PFMC has, generally, not yet taken the step to identify measureable conservation objectives for habitat management to ensure that actions are having the intended effects. It was noted that some of these objectives are funding limited, and measuring effects would require additional research to identify forage fish impacts, climate impacts, etc. There was discussion about the NPRB's BSIERP and NSF's BEST program in the Bering Sea, and hopes that the results from those studies would provide a baseline to

identify climate related, fishery related, and other changes to the Bering Sea ecosystem, and provide a way to differentiate those changes. It was noted that these questions are central to the Ecosystem Committee's role in helping the Council address ecosystem questions.

Bering Sea Canyons

The Committee received a presentation from Dr. Mike Sigler on behalf of himself and colleagues summarizing their report on the Bering Sea canyons (Agenda Item C-7(a)), as requested by the Council in April 2012. The report addressed five questions:

1. Are the canyons unique habitats?
2. Are the canyons homogeneous habitats?
3. What are the fish associations with habitat features?
4. What is the vulnerability of the canyons?
5. Are benthic habitats vulnerable?

The Committee also received a presentation from Dr. Diana Stram summarizing the Council staff report to the council identifying fisheries activities in the Bering Sea canyons areas (Agenda Item C-7(b)).

The Committee questioned Drs. Sigler and Stram about some parameters that were used in their analyses, and received clarification on the applicability of the predictive models and next steps for model development and groundruthing model predictions.

The Committee received public testimony from Jon Warrenchuk (Oceana), Jackie Dragon (Greenpeace), John Hocevar (Greenpeace), and Verner Wilson (WWF) before beginning its discussion of the Bering Sea canyons. The Committee discussion proceeded, loosely, on four main components that were identified by one committee member: (1) Areas that we know now that may warrant protection in the near term, but may need additional information to refine; (2) whether or not to recommend to the Council a process to look more specifically at the slope ecosystem in a structured manner; (3) identifying and setting research priorities; and (4) funding priorities and cycles. With regard to component (1), the Committee agreed that there are areas where the models now predict to be areas of high coral abundance, including areas inside and outside the canyons. The Committee, however, disagreed on the necessity of groundtruthing those predictions: some areas have already been truthed via trawl survey data, some areas correspond to observed coral bycatch, and some areas are modeled only. One member of the Committee also expressed concern that selection of areas for additional action (conservation, research area, etc.) would be limited to those areas of known coral distribution.

The Committee also generally agreed that enough information now exists to consider thinking about the slope area as a distinct ecosystem and consider development of a Slope Fishery Ecosystem Plan (FEP), similar to the AI FEP developed earlier. Dr. Steve Ignell indicated that the AFSC is interested in the process to develop a Slope FEP, but funding issues may preclude immediate action toward that goal. A question was raised whether the Committee was comfortable expanding the scope beyond the canyons, as originally requested by the Council, to considering the entire slope. It was noted that it is necessary to consider the entire slope when addressing ecosystem impacts, that the canyons are integral parts of the slope ecosystem, and that it would be impossible to develop FEPs for each canyon or inter-canyon area. After extensive discussion, the Committee agreed on the following motion:

1) The Ecosystem Committee recommends the Council continue to look at those areas in the canyons identified in the analysis with known localized concentrations of corals that might warrant protection in the near term. As part of this, we recommend the Council:

a. Request the Sigler et al. model be run to look solely at deep sea coral species (ie: without sponges etc.) to determine distribution of deep sea corals. (ref MSA Sec. 303 (b) (2) (B) and (C); and
b. Take subsequent action to identify sites where there is a high level of confidence for known concentrations of deep sea corals, and take further action as appropriate, including habitat vulnerability analyses; and
c. Request continued work to improve and verify the model predictions, as well as the vulnerability index.

2) The Ecosystem Committee recommends the Council consider proceeding with preparation of a Fisheries Ecosystem Plan for the BS slope. This FEP would be modeled after the AI FEP and be used to identify processes and features that help shape the slope environment, identify appropriate ecosystem indicators, and eventually become a tool to assist the Council in developing appropriate research questions and possible adaptive management approaches as may be warranted.

3) When considering research priorities, The Ecosystem Committee recommends that the Council consider the funding trajectories for NOAA and research funders such as NPRB; and with regard to NPRB call its attention to research needs in the BSAI and GOA as a high priority and ask that NPRB consider the effects of decreasing funding and the potential impact of potential new NPRB programs on these high priority research needs for the BSAI and GOA.

The Committee was in agreement that there are areas of high predicted coral concentration, and that some of those areas have been verified by trawl survey data. However, there are also areas where more data are needed to verify the modeled findings. The Committee was not able to reach consensus about whether more habitat assessment (groundtruthing predicted areas of high coral concentration) is necessary *before* the Council considers protections for predicted areas of high coral concentration in the Bering Sea canyons.

Ecosystem Committee Workshop

The Committee discussed planning for a proposed Ecosystem Committee Workshop tentatively scheduled for late-summer 2013. Council staff will continue to work with Committee members to identify an available time for the workshop (likely mid- to late-September), identify pre-workshop committee member assignments, and to develop a workshop agenda.

The committee discussed the tentative list of agenda items that had been distributed previously (after March 19 Ecosystem Committee meeting) and agreed that they were still appropriate for the workshop. Those include:

- Current goals and objectives relative to EBM, expressed in existing Council actions
- Next steps for AI FEP implementation
- Next steps for Arctic FMP implementation
- Other FEP tools (esp PNW)
- Use Fluharty framework to focus on NPFMC gaps/workplan

- EBM goals/objectives – consider whether a Council ecosystem vision statement would be useful, discussion of how might be linked to specific initiatives
- Further discussion of FEPs for other areas

Additional topics for the workshop include further discussion of the Bering Sea slope FEP concept (if approved by the Council), discussion of potential areas that could serve as closures to provide research control areas, additional findings from MONF3, and outputs from BSIERP/BEST to establish quantitative measures of a "healthy" Bering Sea ecosystem.

The Committee adjourned at 4:50 pm.

Observer Advisory Committee

June 3-4 2013 Juneau, Alaska

Committee members present: Dan Hull (Chair), Bob Alverson, Julie Bonney, Michael Lake, Dan Falvey, Kathy Hansen, Stacey Hansen, Anne Vanderhoeven, Paul MacGregor, Jerry Bongon, Joel Reyfuss, Todd Loomis, Brent Paine

Agency Staff: Chris Oliver, Glenn Merrill, Martin Loefled, Craig Faunce, Jennifer Modragon, Megan Peterson, Nicole Kimball, Jim Balsiger, Tom Meyer, Mary Furuness, Gretchen Harrington, Gregg Williams, Diana Evans, Michael Camacho, Nathan Logerway, Frank Bonadona, Jason Gasper

Others attending: Liz Mitchell, Linda Behnken, George Hutchings, Peggy Parker, Jeff Farvour, Brian Lynch, Luke Szymanski, Dale Kelly, Megan Pasternack

Review of first year implementation (and annual deployment plan)

Overall, the OAC recognized that the restructured program was functioning largely as intended in the 2013 ADP. While some specific concerns were raised (see more detail below), full coverage was achieved for all full coverage vessels, nearly all non-AFA pollock deliveries, and coverage rates were as expected.

The OAC recognizes that major changes for 2014 are not practical, including changes in coverage rates for specific fisheries, and there is a need to continue to collect information on newly observed sectors. However, there might be minor changes to the deployment plan that we could make for 2014, which could be pursued this fall (based on issues raised in this report and/or information we may receive this fall). This report focuses on deployment of coverage in the first 4 months of the program, rather than the data resulting from that deployment (which could be used in the future for informing changes to coverage rates by fishery).

The program review raised concerns with regard to tendering and the 'observer effect' which may be occurring. There appear to be differential effects by area. Addressing the concern raised about tenders may require a regulatory amendment or may be addressed to some extent through the 2014 deployment plan. There was a request to identify both trips (leave port- return to port) and deliveries (offloads to tenders) in future presentations about tenders. The agency will consider ways to address tenders over the summer, collect more information, and may have recommendations in this regard for the 2014 annual deployment plan (ADP).

The OAC recommended that future annual performance reports about the observer program include information on the volume of catch observed in both vessel and trip selection pools, recognizing we need to be clear as to the definition of observed catch (catching vs delivering). Also, the OAC would like to know in trip selection how many vessels were picked for sequential trips and how many trips they took.

Regarding the vessel release process, the OAC noted that more than half of the vessels selected in the vessel selection pool were 'released' (most of these due to crew size problems), highlighting difficulty for small vessels to carry observers. Once released, need to clarify how long the release is good for (just the trip or the quarter?). Need to clarify that vessel modification is not a requirement (some vessels seem to be getting conflicting information in this regard from NMFS). Regarding releases for life raft capacity,

we should monitor how big a problem this is or becomes. Some release requests are taking too long to get processed, or get repeated when a vessel is selected multiple times. There should be some way to store this information, recognizing that changes could have occurred changing the vessel's status. Need to consider allowing 'deminimus catch' as a criterion to receive a release, for very small 'cleanup' trips. Should consider allowing EM as a condition for release (though guidance to date has suggested this would be a regulatory change – see further discussion under EM Strategic Plan).

RE departures from intended sampling design (bias) the OAC would like to get agency recommendations on how significant each of them are and how best to proceed in addressing them.

Regarding program costs, a number of issues were raised which could inform future iterations of the deployment plan and/or coverage levels, and inform relative to cost efficiencies/priorities. These include: more specific information on why the current program costs twice as much per day as direct-pay observers; number of vessels which were repeat selected; how much volume or how many sets were sampled relative to overall vessel activity (what percentage); how much catch was actually observed; how many stand by days are included in billable days vs actual days observing at sea for vessel selected pool; what were the reasons for the stand by days; regarding the two month deployment for vessel selection, consider shortening to one month; consider logistics/location of debriefing process. The OAC hopes to have further discussion of these cost issues, and overall program costs, as previously requested by the Council in December 2012, during the annual performance review in June 2014.

As a longer term project, the OAC would like to consider that it may be useful to tease out potential observer effect between trip and vessel selection pools and help determine whether there really is the need for two pools. The OAC would like the Council, at some point, to consider whether and how to base coverage on tonnage of catch (or anticipated catch). The full year's data provided in the annual performance review in June 2014 will further inform these issues and assist the Council in understanding whether the current deployment sufficiently tracks effort and volume.

Other information requests or recommendations include the following: (1) Include in a questionnaire', or voluntary post-trip report by skippers information on the impacts/costs of having an observer onboard (logistical issues/challenges and in terms of cost); (2) consider, in the 2014 ADP, that the vessel selection timeframe be 1 month instead of 2 months. However, there was some concern with vessels being more easily able to avoid coverage by not fishing during the one month period. So perhaps there is a way to address the observer effect of vessels choosing not to fish in the shorter time period, if you get automatically selected for next time period? (3) Figures 5 and 6 (the heat maps) should be broken out by BSAI and GOA separately; (4) what/where is the information from halibut vessels being used and is IPHC using the basic discard info in any way yet? (5) comparison of shoreside monitoring pre and post implementation; (6) identification of any contracting issues with current contractor; (7) number and nature of violations being pursued by OLE; (8) how many observers available for each pool;(9) how many trips to tenders in 610 and 620 (pre restructure vs after);(10) 'stranding' of observers if trip canceled; (11) non-compliance issues should be further specified; (12) projection of total observer fees being collected in 2013.

OAC members reiterated that the conditional release from the observer requirement is important and that the conditions for release should not change in the 2014. Two additional conditions for release were requested to be considered: 1) release for vessels fishing very small amounts of quota held by an IFQ holder; and 2) release for participating in the voluntary EM projects (see EM Strategic Plan discussion

below). In the first case, vessels holding IFQ are required to carry an observer when they participate in other fisheries, such as the salmon troll fishery and any state waters pacific cod fishery, if it is possible they will land IFQ species.

Review of EM Strategic Plan:

Martin provided an overview of national EM initiatives and the recent NMFS Policy Directive. Major highlights include further work at national level to finalize white papers, coordinate with specific regional efforts, and interact with Council Coordination Committee (Dan Hull is member of CCC subcommittee for EM). The Council's work is well aligned with the Policy Directive, which is enabling rather than prescriptive.

Farron Wallace and Martin provided the OAC with the EM Strategic Plan. Farron noted low rate of volunteers for pilot project – this is an issue the agency and industry will continue to address (see further discussion below).

OAC identified SWOT aspects of the operational environment in which the EM Plan is being developed and implemented. Weaknesses identified are that the Plan does not adequately reflect the objectives and priorities already expressed by the Council, and is focused more on capacity building than on actual implementation. Some members felt that opportunities which are not adequately detailed in the Plan include existing outside expertise from previous EM projects, including the Canadian program and others. Regarding costs, rather than be passive (measuring costs) the Plan should attempt to identify a more specific cost target and identify measures to achieve it, including how to balance costs with objectives and priorities. The OAC did acknowledge that the pending EM workgroup can work further on those issues.

OAC members provided a variety of over arching comments about the Strategic Plan that indicated an understanding that it is a big picture view of developing and integrating EM into the Observer Program across fisheries, and that this is appropriate. However, the connection between the big picture view and the specific steps to achieve the initial EM priority (to develop EM for the small boat IFQ fleet) of the Council are not as clear. The Strategic Plan should include specific discussion of how to prioritize among various (potentially competing) monitoring objectives and specify timelines for each; i.e., more specific information on 'where the rubber meets the road', and a clearly defined funding stream for the EM component. **The OAC believes catch estimation should be the EM priority, at least for sablefish and halibut fisheries, noting that the Canadian (logbook) model might be more appropriate for fixed gear cod fisheries and other (more PSC driven) fisheries.** This is likely to be an iterative implementation process, with decision points along the way. Plan ideally should have a more specific 'phase-in' component to allow initial, limited, on-the-water implementation which would allow for resolution of incremental aspects rather than wait until everything is deemed workable. For example, it is difficult to discern a specific definition of the 2013 pilot project, although it is discussed in the text and appendices of the Strategic Plan. This could also be a primary task for the EM workgroup.

Regarding the EM Workgroup – 1) OAC supports the Council's original focus for the workgroup to evaluate alternative EM approaches, with a consideration of tradeoffs between achieving monitoring objectives, timelines, and other factors (e.g. costs, disruption to fishing practices) (see April 2013 council motion); 2) Work group should identify performance standards, operational procedures, sampling and deployment plan appropriate for these vessels (for QS vessels) and also look at implementation vehicles

and potential phase-in approaches; 3) Sections of the strategic plan that can guide the workgroup are shown on page 14 (Goal II, Objective 1, Strategy C) and page 16 (Goal III, Objective 1, Strategy A); 4) Work group should focus on developing a catch estimation based program for the IFQ fisheries rather than a logbook audit approach;5) Regarding composition, the workgroup should be a subgroup of OAC along with a couple other industry members with technical expertise and broad outreach connections, and include appropriate agency personnel. Broad outreach connections could help to increase interest and participation in the EM pilot projects, which are necessary to develop performance standards in regulation and move EM forward as a regulatory alternative. The workgroup members could also include vessels greater than 57.5' and representatives of other fixed gear types (pot and jig). Regarding timing, the workgroup should meet this fall (perhaps in conjunction with October Council meeting) and again prior to the beginning of the 2014 season.

Regarding the lack of participation in the current voluntary program, the OAC encourages the Council to consider vehicles to effect this implementation (perhaps through an EFP process, including a process for specifically testing system operations, as well as incentives for vessels to participate (such as a waiver/release from observer coverage when carrying EM). Offering a release from carrying an observer might be a different question if under an EFP vs under the current pilot project structure (which would be a specific regulatory change and guidance to date has suggested performance standards are necessary in regulation). Other incentives to carry EM should also be considered if release from the observer requirement is not possible. These could include financial incentives, such as direct compensation.

Regarding timing and urgency, most OAC members reiterated their desire to see some form of EM implemented ASAP. Other members were more concerned with making sure we 'get it right', and resolve data quality issues, and receive at least some observer data from the previously unobserved fleets prior to implementation.

Two committee members were concerned that we are not discussing VMS specifically in the context of potential EM applications. It was noted that the Council intends to revisit the overall VMS issue once the EM Strategic Plan is more fully realized.

At least one member expressed concern with the possible management tool of crew collecting data, and with statements in the strategic plan about EM replacing observers.

Regarding the potential use of an EFP (appendix H), one advantage could be that vessels would be more eager to join a voluntary program, particularly if they would have an incentive…i.e., be exempt from carrying a human observer. An EFP could also include a clear way to test equipment and attainment of objectives, but an application for an EFP would have to be received in order for the specific design to be evaluated.

<u>Review of Regulatory Amendment Proposals:</u>

Major Discussion Points:

Chris summarizes proposals received to date, noting that some are regulatory proposals, some could be addressed through the ADP, and some are separate initiatives.

OAC consensus is that criteria of highest importance by which to evaluate regulatory proposals are: bias in data quality, cost equity, cost savings, and enforcement. Then ask "can this be addressed through ADP

rather than reg amendment process?". Examples: tendering issue may be addressed through ADP. Cost equity related to the method of fee collection for IFQ fleet. Council has already asked for discussion (in ADP) about allowing vessels to choose to be in either trip selection or vessel selection pool.

Discussion of specific proposals:

UCB proposal to allow them to be in 100% coverage – they could continue to sign a compliance agreement and not need reg amendment in short term. But, enforcement wants reg requirement for 100% coverage. Payment of fee, in addition to direct-pay, implies cost equity issue (250k approximately at 1.25%). Request is to be exempt from fee, which would require reg amendment. OAC supports moving forward with this proposal.

Vessels that act as both CVs and CPs – raises cost equity issue, likely inadvertent impact. OAC supports moving forward with this reg amendment change, looking at changing control date, and an option to choose on annual basis.

Allow choice between trip and vessel selection pool – already requested by Council in 2014 ADP, and supported by OAC for future consideration. In June 2014 there should be more information to inform this issue. Noting that under the ADP there is a recommendation to consider changing from two month to one month deployment obligation.

Changing method of fee collection for IFQ fleet (i.e. use standardized, current-year price rather than standardized price based on previous year; and bill vessel (rather than processors/registered buyers) for entire fee) – raises cost equity issue, was analyzed in original restructuring analysis. OAC supports moving forward for additional consideration as reg amendment.

EM performance measures – no action, being addressed through existing channels.

AGDB proposals – tendering being addressed (potentially) through the 2014 ADP. May require reg amendment in future. Regarding the 72 hour issue, it is not a priority problem at this point, so not necessary to pursue a fix yet.

Proposal to use tonnage as basis for observer coverage selection: raises a data quality/bias issue. To be addressed through information in 2014 performance review.

Review of 3rd Party Issue:

Chris provided overview of previous 3rd party efforts, and the range of possibility for the role and responsibilities of a 3rd party entity, and requested further clarity on what we mean today when we say '3rd party', prior to devoting additional staff resources to this issue. The type of 3rd party construct currently envisioned will affect liability and contracting questions, as well as potential cost savings.

From the perspective of the OAC, the 3rd party concept has particular potential for implementation of the EM component specifically (perhaps through the EFP vehicle), which could potentially integrate all aspects of EM implementation under a single operational and administrative structure. The OAC would like to see further consideration of this concept within the work of the EM workgroup. Potential cost savings (application of federal procurement rules, labor law, etc) could still be explored within this more refined 3rd party construct.

Draft
Joint Protocol Committee
North Pacific Fishery Management Council/Alaska Board of Fisheries
June 12, 2013
Juneau, Alaska—Centennial Hall

The meeting was chaired by Eric Olson. Member present were: Eric Olson, Ed Dersham, Roy Hyder from the North Pacific Fishery Management Council (Council); Karl Johnstone, Tom Kluberton, John Jensen from the Board of Fisheries (BOF). Also in attendance were Chris Oliver (Council Executive Director), Monica Wellard (Board Executive Director), Lance Nelson (AK Dept of Law), John Lepore (NOAA GC), and numerous other Council, Board, NMFS, and ADF&G staff.

The Protocol Committee received staff reports/updates on the following management issues (major questions or discussion points are summarized for each item):

A. Update on Council action on Gulf of Alaska non-pollock Chinook salmon bycatch (PSC) caps. Sam Cunningham- NPFMC Staff

The Council action in Juneau set a hard cap of 7,500 Chinook salmon, noting the balance struck between implementing a cap, and allowing prosecution of Federal trawl fisheries. Uncertainty pool allows some flexibility for trawl fleet from year to year (could rollover up to 1,000 fish from one year to next if under the cap), noting that bycatch could NOT exceed 15,000 fish over any two year period.

Board members had questions regarding the new full retention requirements, and associated genetic information to be collected on Chinook salmon, and whether sampling would indicate specific bycatch locations, depth, and other information on all bycaught salmon. Staff responded that many of the salmon are not counted/sampled until they arrive at the processor, but information can be linked back to fish tickets. Board members were also interested in the percentage of vessels/catch subject to observer coverage, and how bycatch numbers were obtained for unobserved hauls (extrapolations from observed hauls).

B. Update on Council action regarding BSAI salmon bycatch. Diana Stram - NPFMC Staff

Dr. Stram provided an overview of other salmon bycatch management measures implemented by the Council (Bering Sea/Aleutian Islands measures), including recognition of numerous requests for more stringent bycatch caps. The Council will be receiving a staff report in October which attempts to identify effectiveness of measures in place to date. This report will include updated information on Chinook salmon stock status in Alaska, updated information on genetics (stock of origin information), and estimates of current impacts. The Board expressed interest in that report and any potential next steps by Council.

C. Update on Council initiative for Gulf of Alaska trawl bycatch management. Chris Oliver – NPFMC staff

Mr. Oliver provided an update on Council discussion at the Council's June meeting, noting that seven proposals had been submitted for Council consideration. Staff will be evaluating these proposals against the Council's stated objectives (essentially to effectively manage bycatch while providing the trawl fisheries the tools necessary to do so), and the Council will further define its management approaches at the October meeting in Anchorage. For the economic data collection aspect, the Council has prioritized this and is scheduled to take final action in October (in order to collect information that will allow a pre vs

post examination of the management program). Changes in tendering activities are also being scrutinized and may be further addressed by the Council, as necessary, later this year.

Discussions noted that the range of alternatives is still open for Council to determine. Board members were concerned with the urgency of this initiative to address bycatch – Council members responded that numerous bycatch (PSC) measures have been implemented already (Chinook bycatch caps in all trawl fisheries in the GOA and reductions in halibut PSC caps), in advance of this initiative to provide tools to the fleet to further reduce/manage bycatch.

D. Update on Council actions regarding restructured observer program and electronic monitoring. Chris Oliver – NPFMC staff

Mr. Oliver provided an update to the Committee on recent actions by the Council, including a performance review of the new program (first 6 months), a review of the Strategic Plan to implement electronic monitoring (EM), and further Council actions to expedite EM, including formation of an EM Workgroup. Board members were keenly interested in the EM development, and had specific questions regarding how video data are handled in terms of reviewing fishing activities (recognizing this is a time consuming and expensive aspect of EM technology).

E. Update on status of Steller Sea Lion EIS and associated issues, including Aleutian Islands shoreside processing provisions and relationship to Board of Fish state water groundfish fishery proposals. Steve Maclean – NPFMC staff

Mr. Maclean provided an update on development of the EIS for potential SSL management measures to be considered and recommended by the Council in October, noting the need to also consider Board of Fisheries actions this fall relative to State water fisheries, particularly in the Aleutian Islands area. The Council provided the Committee with its June motion on this issue, which includes transmitting concerns to NMFS regarding the EIS analysis and the pending Biological Opinion (including use of the Recovery Plan criteria as the basis for analysis and a possible jeopardy/adverse modification decision in the pending BiOp).

F. Update on Federal definition of a halibut sport fishing guide and coordination of State and Federal regulations. Chris Oliver – NPFMC staff and Ed Dersham – NPFMC member

Mr. Oliver and Mr. Dersham provided the Committee with an overview of Council action on this issue (intent is to revise Federal definition to be consistent with State definition, which does not require the guide to be onboard the same vessel as the client to be considered guiding,in order to prevent circumvention of the differential bag limit for guided anglers in Area 2C; could also become an issue for Area 3A in the future). Council has final action scheduled for December. Board members expressed desire to have narrow, enforceable regulations. Council is considering removal of "by being onboard the vessel" and may also consider adding definitions of 'assistance' and 'compensation'.

G. Report on Pacific cod and other ground fish proposals being considered by the Board of Fish. Mark Stichert and Heather Fitch – ADF&G staff

ADF&G staff provided a summary of proposals which will be considered by the Board of Fisheries at either their upcoming October meeting (Pacific cod proposals), or at future Board meetings (other proposals related to State water groundfish fisheries). Discussion by Committee members included timing of Board action, relationship to ongoing Council actions (including Gulf of Alaska trawl bycatch initiative and Steller sea lion considerations), and monitoring aspects (bycatch caps, observer requirements, etc) of State water fishery proposals.

III. Public Testimony was received by the following persons:

- Kelly Brennen- Seldovia Fish and Game Advisory Committee
- Jeff Steele
- Brent Paine- United Catcher Boats.
- Israel Payton- Matanuska Susitna Fish and Game Advisory Committee
- Bruce Morgan/ Jim Stubbs- Anchorage Fish and Game Advisory Committee
- John Zeller-Middle Kuskokwim Fish and Game Advisory Committee
- Craig Lowenberg- Bering Sea Pot Cod Cooperative
- Tony Guggenbickler- Wrangell Fish and Game Advisory Committee
- Henry Mitchell- Coastal Villages Region Fund
- Tom Payton- Mt. Yenlo Fish and Game Advisory Committee
- George Hutchings - Americans for Equal Access
- Frank Kelty- Unalaska Fish and Game Advisory Committee
- Tom Evich
- Beth Stewart- Peninsula Fishermen's Coalition
- Tim Andrew – Association of Village Council Presidents
- Art Ivanoff- Southern Norton Sound Fish and Game Advisory Committee
- Mike Alfieri – F/V Ocean Storm
- Chad See – Freezer Longline Coalition
- Julie Bonney- Alaska Groundfish Databank
- John Martin Sr. and Victoria Johnson – Tenakee Tribe
- Rose Fosdick - Kawerak

IV. Committee Discussion of Agenda Items A through G

Committee discussion focused primarily on intersection of Council process with Board of Fisheries consideration of State water groundfish proposals. Council member Dersham noted the complexity of issues associated specifically with BOF Pacific cod proposals, and how Board action on State water cod fisheries would have substantial implications, and perhaps unintended consequences, for upcoming Council actions on Gulf of Alaska trawl bycatch management, while Mr. Olson reiterated the Council's recognition of Board authority for State water fisheries. The Council will review relevant Board proposals at its meeting during the first week of October, and will forward to the Board specific comments prior to the Board's meeting October 18 – 22. The Council committed to also have staff available to further advise the Board, if necessary, during its deliberations. Board members noted the lengthy process for Council management actions (analysis, review, and rulemaking) and hoped that Council input would further inform the Board in their consideration of State water fishery proposals (including information on monitoring and observer requirements, and any information on EM alternatives that may be useful to the Board deliberations on new state water fisheries).

V. Determination of next Protocol Committee meeting or full meeting of the Council/Board of Fisheries

The Executive Directors of the Council and Board will coordinate in terms of exchanging necessary information for this October's respective meetings (or other meetings where additional Board proposals will be considered), and will determine the need and timing for the next meeting of the Joint Protocol Committee, or possibly a full joint meeting of the full Council and full Board.

VI. Other Business

No other business

VII. Adjourn

The meeting was adjourned at 3:06 pm

Eric A. Olson
Chairman
Chris Oliver
Executive Director

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News & Notes

North Pacific Fishery Management Council

June 2013

Photo: Sam Cunningham

Parnell, Begich, Sullivan Address Council

The Council heard from three distinguished guests during the Council meeting week – Alaska Governor Sean Parnell, Alaska Senator Mark Begich , and Dr. Kathryn Sullivan, Acting Undersecretary for the Department of Commerce. They spoke about major issues facing Alaska's fisheries, and took questions from the Council members. A "meet and greet" for the public and Council family provided the opportunity to chat informally with Dr. Sullivan about fisheries, Alaska, and the gorgeous Juneau weather.

Photo: City of Juneau, Auke Bay

Thank you, Juneau!

After 22 years, the Council returned to Alaska's capital for its June meeting. A big thanks to community and industry sponsors who hosted a reception for the Council family, and provided a chance for visitors to meet with local stakeholders. Also during the reception, the Council said goodbye to Council member Sam Cotten, who has finished his term on the Council. Sam was toasted by many at a roast acknowledging, among many other things, his skills at conveying fisheries issues to local residents.

Chinook Bycatch in GOA Trawl Fisheries

The Council took final action on management measures to limit prohibited species catch (PSC) of Chinook salmon in the Gulf of Alaska (GOA) non-pollock trawl fisheries. As a prohibited species, capture of Chinook salmon must be avoided. The Council adopted an annual PSC limit of 7,500 Chinook salmon in the Western and Central GOA. Attainment of this hard cap will close the fishery. The hard cap is apportioned by operational type sector (CV and CP). The cap level for each sector is set proportional to historic average Chinook salmon PSC over a recent 5-year period. For the catcher/processors, no more than 66% of the sector's annual PSC limit can be taken prior to June 1. The Council made a separate apportionment – from the total PSC limit for catcher vessels – to CVs operating in the Central GOA Rockfish Program; this apportionment was also based on historical Chinook salmon bycatch. Annual PSC limits for the three identified trawl sectors would be:

- Central GOA Rockfish Program Catcher vessels: 1,200 Chinook salmon
- Non-Rockfish Program Catcher vessels: 2,700 Chinook salmon
- Catcher/Processors: 3,600 Chinook salmon

The Council included a provision that gives the fleet sectors an incentive to encounter Chinook salmon bycatch at levels that are below the hard cap limit. A sector that encounters less than its proportional share of a GOA-wide 6,500 Chinook salmon PSC level in one year would be able to access its proportional share of an additional 1,000 Chinook salmon PSC in the following year. In addition to promoting positive action to minimize Chinook salmon bycatch, this provision grants trawl sectors that have fished below their cap level some flexibility in the case of a single year with high Chinook salmon encounter. This provision ensures that average annual PSC in the fishery would not exceed the adopted limit of 7,500 Chinook salmon per year, over any two-year period.

As part of this action, the Council will also require full retention of all salmon bycatch until the number of salmon has been determined by the vessel or shoreside processing plant observer, and any scientific data or biological samples have been collected from the salmon; if no plant observer is available, the species of each salmon shall be recorded on the fish ticket. Full retention and enhanced sampling are key prerequisites to estimating the relative composition of trawl-caught Chinook salmon in the GOA non-pollock fishery by stock of origin.

The Council initiated a related action that will consider allowing unused Chinook salmon PSC in the CV Rockfish Program fishery to be "rolled over" for CV use in fall season non-pollock fisheries. Several alternatives were proposed, with the goal of supporting fall fisheries without compromising the incentive structure laid out in the Council's preferred alternative. An initial review of these alternatives is tentatively scheduled for the October Council meeting agenda.

The Council motion is posted on the NPFMC website. Staff contact is Sam Cunningham.

Steller Sea Lion EIS

The Council received presentations from NMFS Protected Resources Division and Alaska Fisheries Science Center staff outlining PRD's initial response to the Preliminary Preferred Alternative and their planned analytical methods for analysis of the preferred alternative in the upcoming Biological Opinion. After public comment and deliberation the Council passed a motion directing staff to send a letter to NMFS Regional Administrator reiterating the Council's continued frustration with the EIS process and requesting that NMFS fully address the criticisms of the 2010 Biological Opinion in this EIS, fully evaluate the consequences of each alternative on the wDPS of Steller sea lions, and reevaluate the use of recovery plan criteria in the EIS and upcoming Biological Opinion. Staff contact is Steve Maclean.

BSAI Crab

The Council approved SSC recommendations for OFLs and ABCs for four crab stocks: Norton Sound red king crab, Aleutian Islands golden king crab, Aleutian Islands red king crab and Pribilof Islands golden king crab. The Council will set OFLs and ABCs for the remaining 6 crab stocks at the October meeting. In order to facilitate more timely specifications for the Norton Sound red king crab stock, the assessment cycle will be shifted and OFLs and ABCs will now be set in the fall with the other 6 stocks. Staff contact is Diana Stram.

Bering Sea Canyons

The Council reviewed discussion papers on two canyons in the Bering Sea. The papers were initiated in response to numerous proposals and public testimony to the Council previously regarding consideration of management measures to preserve representative portions of the highly productive shelf break zone in the Bering Sea, specifically the Pribilof and Zemchug canyons as candidates to provide EFH protection to deep-sea corals, sponge, and benthic habitat for fish and crab species. The discussion papers were structured to better understand the importance of these canyons as unique coral and sponge habitats for FMP-managed species as well as to understand the current fishing activities in the canyons and the potential current and future management activities in the vicinity of the canyons.

The first paper addressed a request by the Council to the Alaska Fisheries Science Center to review existing and new scientific information on the canyons, their habitat, and fish associations in those areas and present a report on whether or not the two canyons were biologically unique. The analysis found that the physical differences in the Zhemchug and Pribilof Canyons are more tied to latitude than characteristics unique to those two canyons and cannot be distinguished based on biological characteristics because coral and sponge presence and fish and crab densities are similar in other canyons and on the adjacent slope.

The second paper provided an overview of the relative fishing activity in each of the canyons compared to the catch outside of those areas as well as the directed and incidental catch of other groundfish and crab species and catch of prohibited species such as salmon and halibut. The paper also reviewed existing management measures affecting the spatial and temporal distribution of fishing effort in the Bering Sea shelf zone as well as the discretionary authorities by which the Council could consider management measures to afford protections to these areas.

Based on the reports, the Council passed a motion to proactively pursue further research on the Bering Sea canyons. The motion contained three steps forward to identify and validate, where necessary, areas of coral concentrations for possible management measures for the conservation and management of deep sea corals in Pribilof and Zhemchug canyons. The first step is to request that the AFSC scientists overlap model results with existing data to better validate indications of modeled coral concentrations (particularly in Pribilof Canyon where model results indicated a relatively high proportion of coral concentration) as well as to incorporate a biodiversity index and rare species considerations into the analysis. The second step is to task Council staff with the development of a discussion paper to develop a suite of management measures to be considered for conserving areas of coral concentrations and associated fish activity. The Council explicitly requested that this paper be developed in coordination with the AFSC and stakeholders. Finally the third step is for the Council to draft a letter to NOAA's Deep Sea Coral Research and Technology Program (DSCRTP) requesting that further research be done to identify and characterize areas of relatively high coral abundance in the Pribilof canyon using camera drops or similar techniques capable of gathering empirical data. The request also noted that this research be used to inform longer term research priorities including: refining predictions of coral presence, acquiring information on the characteristics of coral in this area such as height and density, the role of these coral as habitat for fish, and documenting presence and degree of fishing gear effects.

Finally the Council initiated a discussion paper on the process for developing a Bering Sea Fishery Ecosystem Plan (FEP). The Council has already developed an Aleutian Island FEP using a multiagency, multi-disciplinary approach and this paper will draw on the process and lessons learned in the development of that FEP to lay out a potential approach for development of a Bering Sea FEP. A timeline for these papers has not yet been determined but the Council did indicate that consideration of both the discussion of appropriate tools and management measures for conserving areas of coral concentrations and the development of an FEP as an ecosystem management approach remain a high priority. Further information on the timing and development of both papers will be posted on the Council's website. Staff contact is Diana Stram.

Call for Nominations: Scientific and Statistical Committee

The Council's Scientific and Statistical Committee (SSC) is widely recognized as a critical foundation to the North Pacific fisheries management success. The SSC advises the Council on numerous management decisions, including stock assessment and modeling techniques, data collection, ABC recommendations, achievement of rebuilding targets, social and economic impacts of management decisions, protected species interactions, and sustainability of fishing practices. SSC members serve one year terms, and can be federal employees, state employees, academicians, or independent experts not employed by advocacy or interest groups. The Council is looking for a person familiar with the economic analysis and issues usually covered by the council, including catch share programs, development of management systems that are both environmentally and socioeconomically feasible, and multispecies fishery management systems. Interested parties should submit a cover letter and resume, along with a letter of recommendation to the Executive Director, chris.oliver@noaa.gov, by August 15, 2013.

Charter Halibut Definition

At its June 2013 meeting, the Council revised its problem statement and range of alternatives and options for a proposed action to revise the Federal definition of "sport fishing guide services" in Federal regulations that govern the charter halibut fishery in Southeast (Area 2C) and Southcentral Alaska (Area 3A) to be more consistent with State of Alaska regulations. A clear definition would enhance public understanding of Federal regulations implementing the Council's management programs for Pacific halibut and enhance fairness for a common and clear understanding of Council intent and legal fishing activities.

The Council approved release of a revised analysis for public review and comment to reflect its changes and other recommendations that may result from additional Federal and State agency staff discussions of the proposed action. Additional analysis of Option 3 to define "assistance," particularly as it relates to "physical" assistance (i.e., whether that term includes verbal assistance). The public review draft will be released by September 1, 2103. The Council's final action on the proposed action is scheduled for its next meeting in October 2013. See the Council website for the new language that will be used to revise the May 2013 initial review draft of the analysis. Contact Jane DiCosimo for more information.

Sablefish IFQ Fishery Management

The Council reviewed preliminary discussion papers for the remaining two halibut and sablefish IFQ proposals from its 2009 call for proposals. The Council is ***calling for nominations for a Gear Committee*** to be comprised of persons who may be affected by potential deployment of single or longline pots in the Gulf of Alaska sablefish IFQ fishery. The committee will represent a wide range of gear types used in all areas of the Gulf. The committee is *charged with developing implementation strategies to allow the use of pots in the Gulf of Alaska sablefish IFQ fishery* to mitigate negative impacts of whale depredation on sablefish caught on longline gear on killer whales and sperm whales, sablefish, and sablefish fishermen. Letters of nomination are due in the Council office by July 30. Notification of appointment will occur by August 31. The committee likely will meet for a one day meeting prior to the October Council meeting (possibly Sunday, Monday or Tuesday (September 29, September 30, or October 1)). Background documents are posted on the Council website, including a discussion paper that the Council reviewed at its June 2013 meeting. The committee will assist staff in expanding information in the next draft of the paper on a variety of topics related to the use of sablefish pot gear in the Gulf.

In addition to the original list of topics to be covered in the paper, the Council identified the following additional items to address:

- Update on whale depredation and interactions
- Update on whale deterrent work in progress
- Update on Canadian sablefish gear usage and pricing by gear type
- Discussion of pre-emption of fishing grounds due to lost gear
- Gear conflicts between all gear types
- Discussion of shift in predation to halibut
- Review of current literature on whale predation

Agency staff with expertise on management of the sablefish IFQ fishery, marine mammal depredation and gear avoidance techniques, and sablefish biology, surveys, and stock assessments will assist the committee. The committee report may be provided to the Council at its meeting in October or December.

The Council also reviewed a discussion paper on a 2009 proposal to increase the use cap of sablefish Category A quota share holders in the Bering Sea and Aleutian Islands management areas but took no action. The Council deferred the issue to the next meeting of the IFQ Implementation Committee (which has yet to be scheduled) in order to consider potential impacts on all sablefish QS holders of creating a separate use cap for BS/AI sablefish Category A QS holders. The Council deferred to a future meeting of the IFQ Implementation Committee a proposal by Petersburg Vessel Owners Association that proposed changes to the Federal regulations that govern the enforcement of maximum retainable amounts (MRAs) for catcher vessels and catcher/processors, so that MRAs would be calculated at the time of offloading rather than during a fishing trip. At its meeting in either October or December, the Council will discuss whether and when to call for new IFQ proposals. Contact Jane DiCosimo for questions regarding the halibut and sablefish IFQ program.

The audience listening on day 3 of the Council meeting.

Dr. Kathryn Sullivan talks with the public at the meet and greet.

Research Priorities

The Magnuson-Stevens Act requires the Council to adopt a five-year research plan each year. The Council adopted its most recent five-year research plan for 2014-2018 at this meeting based on recommendations from its four Plan Teams, the Scientific and Statistical Committee, and the Advisory Panel. Under a revised process for development of research priorities, the Council prioritized its research priorities into "critical" and high, medium and low. The Council indicated the research priorities addressing our core stock assessment surveys were the most critical, and that the Council's current management objectives highlight the importance of research addressing integrated ecosystem-based management, salmon bycatch issues and stellar sea lion interactions. Council staff and AKFIN staff are working to develop a web-based interface for a relational database for organizing and cataloguing research priorities annually. Additional information on the database development will be available for the October Council meeting. The Council's revised research plan for 2014-2018 is posted on the website. Staff contact is Diana Stram.

Cost Recovery Program

NOAA Fisheries is developing an RIR/IRFA under Secretarial authority to implement a cost recovery program for the Amendment 80, CDQ halibut and groundfish, AFA/AI pollock, and Freezer Longline Coalition Pacific cod fishery. A draft of the initial review document was presented to the Council along with a summary of two meetings between NOAA staff and the affected industry sectors that occurred in May. After receiving the report the Council requested that they continue to be informed of progress on this issue. NOAA staff committed to updating the Council at a future meeting, likely in October. Staff contact is Darrell Brannan.

Upcoming meetings:

Groundfish Plan Team meetings: September 10-13, 2013 (AFSC Seattle); November 18-22, 2013 (AFSC Seattle)

Ecosystem Committee: September 16-17, AFSC, Seattle.

Crab Plan Team: September 17-20, 2013 AFSC, Seattle.

Observer Committee: September, Details TBD

Gear Committee: Late September, TBD

Charter Management Implementation Committee: Mid October and Early December (TBD)

GOA Trawl Bycatch Management

Gulf of Alaska trawl bycatch management issues were addressed by the Council in three parts. The first was a review of discussion papers it had requested at its February meeting; the second was an initial review draft of the baseline data collection program; finally, the third issue was a review of the tendering regulations and tendering patterns in the Gulf pollock and Pacific cod fisheries.

After the Council reviewed the discussion papers requested in February it was presented a series of management proposals from stakeholders during public comment. Because most of the proposals were presented to the Council at this meeting and are preliminary in nature, its members had little time to review and fully understand the proposals. Therefore, the Council requested that staff prepare a discussion paper for the October meeting that briefly summarizes each proposal and describes the structure using the Tier 1 issues from the June roadmap discussion paper. The proposals will also be reviewed relative to the Council's goals and objectives and how each proposal addresses those goals and objectives.

The review is not intended to be an analysis of various elements and options, but should provide information that allows the Council to craft elements and options to be analyzed. This discussion paper will also identify areas where the proposals may not comply with the Magnuson-Stevens Act, or may encounter other legal constraints. In addition, staff was asked to provide a discussion of management of fisheries when a substantial portion of the harvest is taken from State waters. This discussion should include delegation of Secretarial authority to the State of Alaska. Finally, the discussion paper will include a section that addresses the criteria that the Council must develop if they wish to allow Commercial Fishing Association to be part of the catch share program.

The second action was to review the RIR/IRFA that would impose a mandatory baseline data collection program on the GOA trawl participants. The Council addressed specific questions that were raised in the RIR/IRFA. Those changes/clarifications will be made to the document before it is released for public review. Final action on this item will be scheduled for the October Council meeting. The Council also supported the Alaska Fisheries Science Center staff proposal to develop a voluntary survey that focuses on collection of community data. As that survey is being developed the Council requested the opportunity to review and provide input as necessary, so that specific questions they have could be addressed.

The third issue, tendering of pollock and Pacific cod in the GOA trawl groundfish fisheries, was addressed by the Council after a report from staff. The report provided an overview of the legal framework associated with tendering in the GOA groundfish fisheries, a description of tendering activity in the GOA pollock and Pacific cod fisheries from 2010 through April 2013, and a description of the management and observer implications for tendering activity in the GOA pollock and Pacific cod fisheries.

After considering the report, the Advisory Panel's recommendation, and public testimony, the Council tasked staff to update the discussion paper for review at a later date with the following additional information:

- Data from the remainder of the 2013 fishing year
- Proportion of AFA vessels operating as tender vessels in the GOA pollock and Pacific cod fishery
- Information on impacts of tendering GOA pollock and Pacific cod concerning timely catch accounting
- Information concerning possible impacts of genetic sampling protocol of tendered GOA pollock

Staff contacts are: Sam Cunningham, proposals and data collection, and Jon McCracken, GOA tendering.

Freezer Longline GOA Cod Sideboards

At this meeting, the Council took final action to permanently remove GOA Pacific cod hook-and-line sideboard limits applicable to freezer longliners that were created under the crab rationalization program. After considering the public review document, Advisory Panel's recommendations, and public comment, the Council recommended as its preferred alternative to permanently remove GOA Pacific cod hook-and-line sideboard limits for affected FLL vessels/federal fishery permits and LLP licenses when all GOA Pacific cod FLL endorsed LLP holders notify NMFS of an agreement to remove the sideboards. The FLL endorsed LLP holders would have one year from the publishing date of the final rule to provide notification to NMFS. During that one year period, sideboards would remain in effect until notification of an agreement. If NMFS does not received notification during that one year period, the sideboards would remain in effect and the option to permanently remove the sideboards would expire. The Council also included in its preferred alternative the flexibility to remove the sideboards for CGOA and WGOA independent of each area to assist in cooperative formation.

The Council was concerned about the ongoing negotiating between the GOA FLL owners during rule making process, so the Council requested that updates be provided to the Council on the progress of negotiations. These updates should include how negotiations are meeting the Council's objects, which are creating an enduring voluntary cooperative agreement in the GOA FLL fishery and achieving a level playing field for all GOA FLL participants. Staff contact is Jon McCracken.

Observer Program

The Council reviewed two reports from NMFS: (1) a report on overall program performance for the 2013 (to date) fishing year, and (2) the Strategic Plan for Electronic Monitoring (EM) implementation. The Council, guided primarily by recommendations from its Observer Advisory Committee (OAC), acknowledged that the restructured observer program was operating largely as expected thus far through 2013, but made a number of requests for additional information in the next iteration of the program performance review (to be reviewed in June 2014). Additionally the Council motion included a number of requests for additional information to be included in the annual deployment plan (ADP) for 2014, which will be reviewed by the Council at its upcoming October meeting in Anchorage. Further requests, separate from the ADP, included more detailed information on program costs and ways to achieve cost savings; information to better understand observer coverage changes under the new program; and, assessment of 2013 coverage levels relative to collection of salmon stock genetic information. Regarding a number of proposed changes to the program which have been received by the OAC or the Council over the past year, many of those are being addressed through the ADP, while others are separate initiatives or would require regulatory amendments to the program. The Council motion identified three specific regulatory proposals to be further considered by the Council through an initial discussion paper, likely to be reviewed by the Council no sooner than December of this year. In its discussions with NMFS, the Council recognized that program workload priorities between now and the end of this year include on-going implementation responsibilities, response to litigation, preparation of the 2014 ADP, and continued work on EM implementation. The full text of the Council motion, including details on the specific information requests, is posted on the Council website.

Regarding the EM Strategic Plan, the OAC and the Council noted ways in which the Plan could better address specific implementation aspects of EM, including identification of performance standards, operational procedures, and more specific implementation vehicles and potential phase-in approaches for EM in order to expedite overall implementation of EM for the small boat, fixed gear fleet. The Council also clarified that, for IFQ fisheries, EM implementation should focus on a catch estimation based program rather than a logbook audit approach. As part of its discussions under Staff Tasking, the Council approved appointment of an EM Workgroup to work with Council and agency staff to implement the EM Strategic Plan, using that document, and the Council process, as the vehicle for EM implementation (rather than through a 3rd party or EFP concept). The Workgroup would consist of some members of the existing OAC, as well as additional members from appropriate divisions of NMFS, as well as other members of the public with specific expertise relative to EM implementation. **Nominations for the EM Workgroup will be accepted at the Council offices until July 30** (please send Attention: Chris Oliver). Appointments to the EM Workgroup will be made by the Council Chairman in time for an anticipated meeting sometime in October or November. The EM aspect of the restructured program will not be a specific agenda item for the Council in October; rather, this would be scheduled for discussion by the Council in December or February.

In order to increase participation in the EM pilot program, and thereby expedite EM as a viable alternative to human observer coverage, the Council also will be sending letters to various fishing organizations within the small boat, fixed gear fleet encouraging their members to provide volunteer vessels to participate in the project that is currently underway. The letter will include a summary of the project participation requirements so that it is clear what NMFS needs from volunteer vessels, such as number of trips desired, specific equipment needed, logistics, etc.

The Council's OAC will meet sometime in September (date TBD) to review the 2014 ADP and any other information requested by the Council, and will provide their comments and recommendation to the Council in October. Council staff contacts are Chris Oliver or Diana Evans.

Joint Protocol Committee Meets

The Joint Protocol Committee, consisting of three Council and three Alaska Board of Fisheries members, met on June 12 in Juneau to exchange information and perspectives on a number of management issues of mutual interest. Items discussed included: Council actions to control salmon bycatch in Federal groundfish fisheries; Council initiatives regarding Gulf of Alaska trawl bycatch management; the restructured groundfish observer program and electronic monitoring (EM); status of the Steller sea lion EIS, potential management measures, and pending biological opinion; definition of fishing guide (to achieve consistency between state and federal regulations); and, state water fishery management proposals pending before the Board of Fisheries. Many of the proposals for state water fisheries, which the Board of Fisheries will consider this fall, have the potential to impact ongoing or future Council management programs, and may also have implications for Steller sea lion management measures. In early October the Council will review several of these proposals and may provide comment to the Board of Fisheries prior to Board consideration of these proposals in mid-October. Council contact is Chris Oliver.

Staff Tasking

In addition to discussing the relative priority of previously tasked projects, the Council initiated several new projects and clarified direction and tasking for its various committees. The Council passed a lengthy motion regarding shortcomings of the Draft EIS for Steller Sea Lion protection measures, and requested that NMFS reconsider the use of the recovery plan as a policy choice for use relative to the EIS and jeopardy or adverse modification (JAM) determinations. Additionally, the Council tasked staff to do the following:

- send a letter to members of the GOA fixed gear sector requesting their participate in the electronic monitoring pilot project, along with an attachment that includes EM participation requirements;
- solicit names in newsletter for an electronic monitoring workgroup;
- solicit names in the newsletter for membership in a fixed gear committee to develop implementation strategies to allow the use of sablefish pots in the GOA;
- Prepare analysis of options to include in the GOA non-pollock trawl Chinook bycatch action a rollover of unused PSC in the Rockfish Program CV sector to support other CV fisheries in the fall;
- provide additional legal clarification on contract terms relative to the right of first refusal, specifically to answer the question: Do the regulations allow such private contracts that agree to something different than is stated in the list of required ROFR contract terms? ;
- prepare a discussion paper to provide an evaluation of allowing a directed octopus fishery in one or more of the GOA subareas.;
- send a letter to the appropriate State and Federal agencies requesting collaboration on multi-beam mapping as a way to get additional information on coral and sponge distribution; and
- send a letter to NOAA requesting that the Fisheries Finance Program loans for new vessel construction be modified to allow the fleet to access the loan program to allow building of replacement vessels participating in a rationalized fishery.

DRAFT NPFMC THREE-MEETING OUTLOOK - updated 6/20/13

Sept 30 - Oct 8, 2013 Anchorage, AK	Dec 9 - 17, 2013 Anchorage, AK	Feb 2 - 10, 2014 Seattle, WA
BS Sablefish TAC Apportionment: ***Industry Report***		
VMS Report: ***Enforcement Committee Recommendations***		
LAPP Cost Recovery: ***Update***		
Observer Program: 2014 year deployment plan	Observer Program Regulatory Amendments: ***Discussion paper***	
Safety report from NIOSH (T)	Electronic Monitoring Workgroup Report	
AI P. cod processing: ***Discussion Paper (T)***		BSAI Halibut PSC: ***Updated discussion paper***
SSL EIS: ***Final Action (T)***	SSL EIS: ***Action as necessary***	
GOA Trawl Bycatch Management: ***Updated discussion paper***	GOA Trawl Bycatch Management: ***action as necessary***	
GOA Trawl Data Collection: ***Final Action***		GOA Tendering: Update
GOA Rockfish Chinook Cap rollover: ***Initial Review (T)***	GOA Rockfish Chinook Cap rollover: ***Final Action (T)***	
	Charter Halibut Measures: ***Cttee report and action as necessary***	GOA Pot Gear for Sablefish: ***Expanded Discussion Paper***
	Definition of fishing guide: ***Final Action***	
Co-op Reporting Requirements: ***Discussion Paper (T)***		
Industry IPA report for BSAI chum salmon		
BSAI Chinook Salmon Report: **Review**		
Salmon Donation Program: ***Update (T)***		
BSAI Crab: ***CPT report; OFL/ABC specifications for 6 stocks***		
BSAI Crab Cooperative reports; crew provisions, etc. (T)		
BSAI Crab ROFR contract clarification: ***Discussion (T)***		
Stock Structure Workshop Report	PSEIS SIR: ***Review Draft (T)***	
Groundfish Harvest Specifications: ***Adopt proposed specifications***	Groundfish Harvest Specifications: ***Adopt final specifications***	Bering Sea FEP: Discussion Paper
EGOA skate fishery: ***Discussion paper; PT recommendation***		
GOA octopus fishery: ***Discussion paper; PT recommendaiton***		
	Grenadier management: ***Initial Review***	Grenadier management: ***Final Action***
Round Island Transit: ***Initial Review (T)***	Round Island Transit: ***Final Action (T)***	
		ITEMS BELOW FOR FUTURE MEETINGS
		BSAI Crab PSC numbers to weight: ***Discussion paper***
Ecosystem Committee Report on EBFM Workplan		BSAI Crab bycatch limit evaluations: ***Expanded discussion paper***
		Salmon EFH revisons: ***Initial Review***
Amendment 80 program 5-Year review: ***Develop Workplan***	BS Canyons: ***AFSC report; Discussion Paper (T)***	ROFR Aleutia PQS: ***Final Action***
		Greenland Turbot allocation: ***Initial Review***
EFP to reduce halibut mortality on Am 80 vessels: **Receive report**		Charter Halibut Compensated Reallocation Pool: ***Disc Paper***
		MPA Nominations: Discuss and consider nominations

AI - Aleutian Islands
AFA - American Fisheries Act
BiOp - Biological Opinion
BSAI - Bering Sea and Aleutian Islands
BKC - Blue King Crab
BOF - Board of Fisheries
CQE - Community Quota Entity
CDQ - Community Development Quota
EDR - Economic Data Reporting
EFH - Essential Fish Habitat
EFP - Exempted Fishing Permit
EIS - Environmental Impact Statement
FLL - Freezer longliners
GOA - Gulf of Alaska
GKC - Golden King Crab
GHL - Guideline Harvest Level
HAPC - Habitat Areas of Particular Concern
IFQ - Individual Fishing Quota
IBQ - Individual Bycatch Quota
MPA - Marine Protected Area
PSEIS - Programmatic Suplemental Impact Statement
PSC - Prohibited Species Catch
RKC - Red King Crab
ROFR - Right of First Refusal
SSC - Scientific and Statistical Committee
SAFE - Stock Assessment and Fishery Evaluation
SSL - Steller Sea Lion
TAC - Total Allowable Catch

Future Meeting Dates and Locations

September 30-Oct 8, 2013 Anchorage
December 9-17, 2013, Anchorage
February 2-10, 2014, Seattle
April 7-15, 2014, Anchorage
June 2-10, 2014, Nome
October 6-14, 2014 Anchorage
December 8-16, 2014, Anchorage
February 2-10, 2015, Seattle

(T) = Tentative