

NPFMC Committees & Workgroups

(Revised March 28, 2013)

Council/Board of Fisheries Joint Protocol Committee

<p>Updated: 3/19/2012</p> <p>Staff: Jane DiCosimo</p>	<table style="width: 100%; border: none;"> <tr> <td style="width: 50%; border: none;"><u>Council:</u></td> <td style="width: 50%; border: none;"><u>Board:</u></td> </tr> <tr> <td style="border: none;">Vacant</td> <td style="border: none;">Karl Johnstone (chair)</td> </tr> <tr> <td style="border: none;">Ed Dersham</td> <td style="border: none;">Sue Jeffrey</td> </tr> <tr> <td style="border: none;">Eric Olson</td> <td style="border: none;">Tom Kluberton</td> </tr> </table>	<u>Council:</u>	<u>Board:</u>	Vacant	Karl Johnstone (chair)	Ed Dersham	Sue Jeffrey	Eric Olson	Tom Kluberton
<u>Council:</u>	<u>Board:</u>								
Vacant	Karl Johnstone (chair)								
Ed Dersham	Sue Jeffrey								
Eric Olson	Tom Kluberton								

Council Coordination Committee

[Designated and renamed by Magnuson Act reauthorization April 2007]

<p>Appointed: 4/05 Updated: 10/28/12</p> <p>Staff: Chris Oliver</p>	<p><u>CFMC:</u> C: Carlos Farchette ED: Miguel Rolón</p> <p><u>GMFMC:</u> C: Doug Boyd ED: Steve Bortone</p> <p><u>MAFMC:</u> C: Richard Robins ED: Chris Moore</p> <p><u>NEFMC:</u> C: Rip Cunningham ED: Thomas Nies</p>	<p><u>NPFMC:</u> C: Eric Olson ED: Chris Oliver</p> <p><u>PFMC:</u> C: Dan Wolford ED: Don McIsaac</p> <p><u>SAFMC:</u> C: David Cupka ED: Bob Mahood</p> <p><u>WPFMC:</u> C: Arnold Palacios ED: Kitty Simonds</p>
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Council Executive/Finance Committee

<p>Updated: 8/10/07</p> <p><u>Status:</u> Meet as necessary</p> <p>Staff: Chris Oliver/Dave Witherell/Gail Bendixen</p>	<p>Eric Olson (Chair) Jim Balsiger (NMFS) Dave Hanson (PSMFC) Cora Campbell (ADFG) Roy Hyder (ODFW) Bill Tweit (WDFW)</p>
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Bering Sea Crab Advisory Committee

<p>Appointed 4/25/07</p> <p>Revised 11/15/07</p> <p>Staff: TBD Mark Fina</p>	<p>Jerry Bongen Steve Branson Florence Colburn Sam Cotten (Chair) Linda Freed Dave Hambleton Phil Hanson Tim Henkel</p>	<p>Lenny Herzog Kevin Kaldestad Frank Kelty John Moller Rob Rogers Simeon Swetzof Ernest Weiss</p>
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NPFMC Committees & Workgroups (Revised March 28, 2013)

Bering Sea Salmon Bycatch Workgroup

<p>Appointed: 3/07</p> <p>Staff: Diana Stram</p>	<p>Becca Robbins Gisclair John Gruver Karl Haflinger Jennifer Hooper Stephanie Madsen (Co-chair)</p>	<p>Eric Olson (Co-chair) Paul Peyton Mike Smith Vincent Webster (BOF)</p>
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Comprehensive Economic Data Collection Committee

<p>Appointed: 12/07 Updated: 2/9/09</p> <p>Staff: TBD Mark Fina</p>	<p>Bruce Berg Michael Catsi Dave Colpo Paula Cullenberg John Henderschedt (Chair)</p>	<p>Brett Reasor Glenn Reed Ed Richardson Mike Szymanski Gale Vick</p>
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Charter Management Implementation Committee

<p>Appointed: 6/11</p> <p>Staff: Jane DiCosimo</p>	<p>Gary Ault Seth Bone Ed Dersham (Chair) Ken Dole Tim Evers</p>	<p>Kent Huff Stan Malcolm Andy Mezirow Richard Yamada</p>
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Crab Interim Action Committee [Required under BSAI Crab FMP]

<p>Jim Balsiger, NMFS Cora Campbell, ADF&G Phil Anderson, WDF</p>

Ecosystem Committee

<p>Updated: 10/22/07</p> <p><u>Status</u>: Active</p> <p>Staff: Diana Evans</p>	<p>Jim Ayers Dave Benton Doug DeMaster Dave Fluharty John Iani Jon Kurland Stephanie Madsen Tim Towarak Bill Tweit (Chair)</p>
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NPFMC Committees & Workgroups
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Enforcement Committee

Updated: 7/03	Roy Hyder (Chair) Nicole Kimball, ADF&G Lisa Lindeman/Garland Walker, NOAA-GC Martin Loefflad, NMFS Matt Brown, NMFS-Enforcement Glenn Merrill, NMFS Phillip Thorne/Anthony Kenne, USCG Jon Streigel, AK F&W Protection
Status: Active	
Staff: Jon McCracken	

Golden King Crab Arbitration Workgroup

Appointed: 1/12	Larry Cotter Duncan Fields (Chair) Mark Johanson Brett Reasor	Joe Sullivan Dick Tremaine Greg White
Staff: TBD Mark Fina		

Halibut Charter Stakeholder Committee

Appointed: 1/06 Updated: 3/29/10 Status: Idle, pending direction	Seth Bone Robert Candopoulos Ricky Gease John Goodhand Kathy Hansen Dave Hanson (Chair) Dan Hull	Chuck McCallum Larry McQuarrie Scott Meyer Rex Murphy Peggy Parker Charles "Chaco" Pearman Greg Sutter
Staff: Jane DiCosimo		

IFQ Committee

Reconstituted: 7/31/03 Updated: 2/17/12	Bob Alverson Rick Berns Julianne Curry Tim Henkel Dan Hull (Chair) Jeff Kauffman	Don Lane Dave Little Kris Norosz Paul Peyton Jeff Stephan Phil Wyman
Staff: Jane DiCosimo		

Non-Target Species Committee

Appointed: 7/03 Updated: 8/10/07	Julie Bonney John Gauvin Ken Goldman Karl Haflinger John Henderschedt (Chair) Michelle Ridgway	Janet Smoker Paul Spencer Lori Swanson Anne Vanderhoeven Jon Warrenchuk
Staff: Jane DiCosimo, NPFMC/ Olav Ormseth, AFSC		

NPFMC Committees & Workgroups (Revised March 28, 2013)

Observer Advisory Committee

<p>Reconstituted: 1/20/11 Updated: 2/12 <u>Status</u>: Active</p> <p>Staff: Chris Oliver/ Diana Evans</p>	<p>Bob Alverson Jerry Bongen Julie Bonney Kenny Down Dan Falvey Kathy Hansen Dan Hull (Chair) Michael Lake</p>	<p>Todd Loomis Paul MacGregor Brent Paine David Polushkin Joe Reh fuss Darren Stewart Ann Vanderhoeven</p>
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Pacific Northwest Crab Industry Advisory Committee

<p>Appointed: 12/10 Revised: 5/12</p> <p>Staff: Diana Stram</p>	<p>Keith Colburn Lance Farr (Chair) Mark Gleason Kevin Kaldestad Garry Loncon Steve Minor Gary Painter Kirk Peterson</p>	<p>Rob Rogers (Vice Chair) Vic Scheibert Dale Schwarz miller Gary Stewart Tom Suryan Elizabeth Wiley Arni Thomson, Secretary (non-voting)</p>
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Rural Outreach Committee

<p>Appointed: 6/09</p> <p>Staff: Steve MacLean</p>	<p>Tim Andrew Paula Cullenberg Duncan Field Tom Okleasik Ole Olsen Eric Olson (Chair) Pete Probasco</p>
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Steller Sea Lion Mitigation Committee

<p>Appointed: 4/12 Updated: 5/12</p> <p>[formerly SSL RPA Committee; renamed February 2002]</p> <p>Staff: Steve MacLean Advisor: Dan Hennen</p>	<p>Larry Cotter (Chair) Kenny Down Dave Fraser John Gauvin Todd Loomis Gerry Merrigan Alvin Osterback Rudy Tsukada</p>	<p>Jon Warrenchuk Ernie Weiss</p>
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DRAFT NPFMC THREE-MEETING OUTLOOK - updated 3/25/13

April 1-9, 2013 Anchorage, AK	June 3-11, 2013 Juneau, AK	Sept 30 - Oct 8, 2013 Anchorage, AK
AFA Co-op Reports; ICA report: Action as necessary BSAI Chum Salmon Bycatch: <i>Industry Progress Report</i> Amendment 80 Co-op Reports: Action as necessary CGOA Rockfish Co-op Reports: Action as necessary Salmon Bycatch Genetics: Update	Observer Program: <i>3rd Party discussion paper; First year report; EM strategic plan</i>	Industry IPA report on BSAI chum salmon Observer Program: 2nd year deployment plan
Observer Program: outline 1st year report, EM strategic plan, OAC	SSL EIS: <i>Progress Report</i>	BSAI Crab Cooperative report on crew provisions (T)
SSL EIS: <i>Initial Review, Select PPA</i>	GOA Trawl Bycatch Management: <i>Discussion Papers; roadmap</i>	GOA Trawl Bycatch Management: <i>action as necessary</i>
BS and AI P. cod ABC/TAC split: <i>Updated Discussion Paper</i>	GOA Trawl Data Collection: <i>Initial Review</i>	GOA Trawl Data Collection: <i>Final Action</i>
Retention of 4A halibut in BSAI sablefish pots: <i>Discussion Paper</i>	H/S IFQ Disc papers (GOA sablefish pots, sablefish A-share caps) (T)	BSAI Halibut PSC: <i>Updated discussion paper (T)</i>
BS Sablefish IFQ & non-IFQ specifications: <i>Discussion Paper</i>	Halibut compensated reallocation pool: <i>Discussion Paper (T)</i>	Definition of fishing guide: <i>Final Action (T)</i>
	Halibut/Sablefish IFQ Leasing prohibition: <i>Disc. paper (T)</i>	
	Definition of fishing guide: <i>Initial Review (T)</i>	
	GOA Chinook Bycatch non-pollock trawl fisheries: <i>Final Action (T)</i>	
Crab modeling report: SSC only	BSAI Crab: <i>CPT report; OFL/ABC specifications for 4 stocks</i>	BSAI Crab: <i>CPT report; OFL/ABC specifications for 6 stocks</i>
	BS Canyons: Updated AFSC report; Fishing activities and management <i>discussion paper (T)</i>	Groundfish Harvest Specifications: <i>Adopt proposed specifications</i>
Scallop SAFE and harvest specifications: <i>Review and Approve</i>		EGOA skate fishery: <i>Discussion paper; PT recommendation</i>
AFA Vessel Replacement GOA Sideboards: <i>Final Action</i>	GOA P cod sideboards for FLL: <i>Final Action</i>	
Round Island Transit: <i>Initial Review</i>	Round Island Transit: <i>Final Action (T)</i>	
BSAI Flatfish Specification Flexibility: <i>Final Action</i>	Grenadier management: <i>Initial Review (T)</i>	Grenadier management: <i>Final Action (T)</i>
CQE Small Blocks: <i>Initial Review/Final Action</i>		
Research Priorities: SSC only	Research Priorities	ITEMS BELOW FOR FUTURE MEETINGS
Industry update on turbot fishery negotiations		BSAI Crab PSC numbers to weight: <i>Discussion paper</i>
		BSAI Crab bycatch limit evaluations: <i>Expanded discussion paper</i>
		Salmon EFH revisons: <i>Initial Review</i>
		ROFR Aleutia PQS: <i>Final Action</i>
		Greenland Turbot allocation: <i>Initial Review</i>
		Amendment 80 program 5-Year review
		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 Supplemental 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

June 3-11, 2013, Juneau
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

Status of 'Items for Future Meetings' from the 3-meeting outlook

A list of previously tasked items are included on the lower right corner of the 3-meeting outlook. This summary provides information on the status of these items.

BSAI Crab PSC numbers to weight: Discussion Paper

In June 2010, as part of the motion to initiate crab bycatch limits in all BSAI groundfish fisheries, the council briefly discussed the possibility of establishing crab caps by weight, rather than in numbers of crab. In June 2011, the Council explicitly tasked staff to prepare a separate discussion paper to evaluate changing the catch accounting of BSAI crab PSC from numbers to weight. This issue could be evaluated to some degree as part of the discussion paper addressing crab bycatch limits in BSAI groundfish fisheries, which could inform future direction on this issue. Alternatively, we could pursue this directly outside of any longer-term initiative to evaluate crab PSC limits in groundfish fisheries.

BSAI Crab bycatch limit evaluations: Expanded Discussion Paper

In February 2013, the Council reviewed a discussion paper on existing measures for trawl and pot bycatch management in the BSAI groundfish fisheries, as well as trends in bycatch by stock, and the relative percentage of the crab stock ABC the current bycatch comprises. For most stocks, while variable across years, groundfish bycatch represents a small (often <1%) component of the catch accruing towards the ABC. Following discussion of the relative complexity of the PSC limit analysis and its objectives, the Council requested an expanded discussion paper on four stocks: Bristol Bay red king crab, Bering sea Tanner crab, Bering Sea snow crab and St. Matthew blue king crab. The paper will include an historical evaluation of the existing closures for these stocks, for both permanent closures and those triggered by a PSC limit. Additionally, the paper will describe the stock and PSC (by groundfish gear type) distribution relative to these areas. The Council further recommended that the BSAI Groundfish Plan Team work together with the State to provide estimates of crab bycatch mortality in the respective groundfish fisheries by crab stock. This could help to reduce the uncertainty in projecting these estimates annually in TAC-setting, and assist the State in estimating an appropriate buffer level for groundfish bycatch, below the ACL.

Salmon EFH Revisions: Initial Review

At the time the Council took action on the 2010 EFH 5-year review, the AFSC was in the midst of developing a new methodology for refining EFH descriptions for salmon species. The Council opted to postpone action on updating the EFH sections of the Salmon FMP until the new methodology was ready for use. The methodology has now been peer-reviewed and published as a NOAA Technical Memorandum. In this amendment analysis, the Council would consider replacing the existing salmon EFH descriptions with the more refined descriptions resulting from the new AFSC methodology. Initial Review of the analysis will be scheduled when NMFS HD, AFSC, and Council staff time becomes available.

ROFR Aleutia POS: Final Action

In February 2013, the Council took final action on several provisions to modify rights of first refusal created to benefit community interests under the Bering Sea and Aleutian Islands crab rationalization program. To protect community interests, holders of most processor shares were required to enter agreements granting community designated entities a right of first refusal on certain transfers of those shares. The Council elected to take no action on a sixth action, which would have allocated up to 0.55 percent of the Bristol Bay red king crab processing quota share pool to Aleutia Corporation (a right

holding entity) to address a grievance concerning a right of first refusal that it formerly held on shares in that fishery. The Council urged the parties to that dispute to work to resolve their issues prior to further Council consideration of the matter, and scheduling of final action.

Greenland Turbot Allocation: Initial Review

In June 2012, the Council received a staff presentation summarizing the BSAI Greenland turbot longline and trawl fisheries and information relative to possible sector allocations for the BSAI Greenland turbot fishery. Discussions have occurred between the Freezer Longline Coalition and the Amendment 80 Cooperatives to reach non-regulatory agreement to manage Greenland turbot catch in the Bering Sea and Aleutian Islands subareas, but to date those cooperatives have not been able to reach agreement on measures to ensure the directed fishery remains open. Because the cooperatives have not yet reached agreement, the Council voted in June 2012 to move ahead by adopting a draft purpose and need statement, and alternatives for analysis. In December, the Council agreed to put the analysis on hold until the results of the 2013 fishery become available.

Amendment 80 Program 5-Year Review.

In accordance with MSA concerning limited access privilege (LAPP) programs, a formal and detailed review of the LAPP program is required 5 years after implementation of the program. The review provides an opportunity for the Council and the Secretary to determine whether the LAPP is meeting its intended goals and, if necessary, provide an opportunity for modification of the program to meet those goals. The specific MSA language at 303A(c)(1)(G) is as follows: "*Any LLP...shall...include provisions for the regular monitoring and review by the Council and the Secretary of the operations of the program, including determining progress in meeting the goals of the program and this Act, and any necessary modification of the program to meet those goals, with a formal and detailed review 5 years after the implementation of the program and thereafter to coincide with scheduled Council review of the relevant fishery management plan (but no less frequently than once every 7 years)*"

With the implementation of Amendment 80 Program in 2008, a 5-year review is required for this program in 2013. The Council may wish to discuss the priority for scheduling this review.

MPA Nominations: Discuss and Consider Nominations

In December 2009, the Council reviewed a discussion paper on the MPA nomination process, including a revised list of closure areas that appear to be eligible for inclusion into the national system of MPAs. The paper is posted: http://www.alaskafisheries.noaa.gov/npfmc/PDFdocuments/meetings/MPA_1209.pdf Based on its review, the Council tasked staff to prepare a follow-up discussion paper that would incorporate anticipated guidance on the NOAA interpretation of 'avoid harm to the extent practicable', and evaluate the council's existing quasi marine reserves (i.e., Option 2 from the December 2009 discussion paper -- seamounts, AI coral gardens, Bowers Ridge, GOA coral HAPC areas, Sitka pinnacles, and Steller sea lion 3-nm no-transit zones) relative to the avoiding harm from the effects of fishing on these areas. The paper will also review the original list of eligible MPAs forwarded by the MPA center and develop draft justification of why sites would or would not be recommended for inclusion into the national system of MPAs. Further, the paper would discuss how a MPA nomination process could potentially interface with the EFH/HAPC process specified in the FMPs. Further work on the discussion paper has been put on hold until NOAA issues guidance on the interpretation of 'avoid harm'.

Groundfish Workplan

Priority actions revised in February 2007, status updated to current

General Priority	Specific priority actions	Related to mgmt objective	Status (updated 3-25-13)	2013			
				Apr	Jun	Oct	Dec
Prevent Overfishing	a. continue to develop management strategies that ensure sustainable yields of target species and minimize impacts on populations of incidentally-caught species	5	Aggregate ABC/OFL for GOA 'other species' in 2008; BSAI skates TAC breakout in 2009; ecosystem component created in 2010 ACL II discussion paper under preparation				
	b. evaluate effectiveness of setting ABC levels using Tier 5 and 6 approaches, for rockfish and other species	4	AFSC responding to CIE reviews as part of harvest specifications process				
	c. continue to develop a systematic approach to lumping and splitting that takes into account both biological and management considerations	5	report from non-target species committee in Dec 09 Grenadier management initial review in Jun 2013				
Preserve Food Web	a. encourage and participate in development of key ecosystem indicators	10	Ecosystem SAFE presented annually GOA ecosystem assessment for 2013; EBS and AI ecosystem assessments developed in 2010, 2011				
	b. Reconcile procedures to account for uncertainty and ecosystem considerations in establishing harvest limits, for rockfish and other species	11	ACL II discussion paper under preparation				
	c. develop pilot Fishery Ecosystem Plan for the AI	13	FEP and brochure published 2007; AI ecosystem assessment developed in 2011				
Manage Incidental Catch and Reduce Bycatch and Waste	a. explore incentive-based bycatch reduction programs in GOA and BSAI fisheries	15	partially addressed in BS Chinook bycatch EIS, Kodiak Tanner crab closures (2010); GOA pollock Chinook PSC limits (2011), GOA halibut PSC limit reduction (2012) CGOA trawl catch shares, discussion paper in Jun 2013 GOA Chinook non-pollock PSC limits - final action Jun 13 BS chum bycatch review Oct 2013				
	b. explore mortality rate-based approaches to setting PSC limits in GOA and BSAI fisheries	20	partially addressed in BS Chinook bycatch EIS discussion paper on BSAI crab bycatch limits for 4 spp				
	c. consider new management strategies to reduce incidental rockfish bycatch and discards	17	partially addressed in rockfish program				
	d. develop statistically rigorous approaches to estimating bycatch in line with national initiatives	14, 19	National Bycatch Report revised in 2011 restructured observer program to be implemented in 2013				
	e. encourage research programs to evaluate population estimates for non-target species	16	Included in research priorities, adopted in June 2007				
	f. develop incentive-based and appropriate biomass-based trigger limits and area closures for BSAI salmon bycatch reduction, as information becomes available	14, 15, 20	bycatch limits for BS Chinook adopted Apr 09; BS chum bycatch review in Oct 2013				
	g. assess impact of management measures on regulatory discards and consider measures to reduce where practicable	17	partially addressed by arrowtooth MRA analyses (GOA - 2007, BSAI - 2010)				

Groundfish Workplan

Priority actions revised in February 2007, status updated to current

General Priority	Specific priority actions	Related to Management Objective	Status (updated 3-25-13)	2013			
				Apr	Jun	Oct	Dec
Reduce and Avoid Impacts to Seabirds and Marine Mammals	a. continue to participate in development of mitigation measures to protect SSL through the MSA process including participation in the FMP-level consultation under the ESA	23	RPA from final NMFS Biological Opinion implemented by Secretarial action for Jan 2011 SSL EIS initial review - April 2013				
	b. recommend to NOAA Fisheries and participate in reconsideration of SSL critical habitat	23					
	c. monitor fur seal status and management issues, and convene committee as appropriate	24, 25	monitoring through the Protected Species Report				
	d. adaptively manage seabird avoidance measures program	22	seabird avoidance measures in 4E in 2008				
Reduce and Avoid Impacts to Habitat	a. evaluate effectiveness of existing closures	26	partially addressed in Bristol Bay red king crab discussion paper				
	b. consider Bering Sea EFH mitigation measures	27	BS habitat closures in 2007; BS flatfish trawl sweep mods required in 2009; EFH 5-year review/omnibus amds approved Apr 2011 Bristol Bay red king crab discussion paper in Feb 2013				
	c. consider call for HAPC proposals on 3-year cycle	27	HAPC cycle changed to 5 years, adopted Apr 2011 HAPC skate nurseries, adopted Feb 2013				
	d. request NMFS to develop and implement a research design on the effects of trawling in previously untrawled areas	27	Included in research priorities, adopted in June 2007 Development of NBSRA research plan halted				
Promote Equitable and Efficient Use of Fishery	a. explore eliminating latent licenses in BSAI and GOA	32	Trawl LLP recency in 2008; GOA fixed gear latent licenses in 2009				
	b. consider sector allocations in GOA fisheries	32, 34	GOA Pcod sector allocations in 2009; GOA rockfish program renewed in 2010 CGOA trawl catch shares, discussion paper in June 2013				
Increase Alaska Native & Community Consultation	a. Develop a protocol or strategy for improving the Alaska Native and community consultation process	37	protocol approved in 2008				
	b. Develop a method for systematic documentation of Alaska Native and community participation in the development of management actions	37	outreach plans for BSAI salmon bycatch actions Council Outreach Committee meets periodically				
Improve Data Quality, Monitoring and Enforcement	a. expand or modify observer coverage and sampling methods based on scientific data and compliance needs	38, 39	improvements adopted in 2008, restructuring approved in 2010 Annual deployment review in June and plan in Oct (outline in April 2013) EM strategic plan in June 2013; EM pilot in 2013				
	b. explore development programs for economic data collection that aggregate data	40	partially addressed in BS Chinook bycatch in 2009, also Amd 80				
	c. modify VMS to incorporate new technology and system providers	41	VMS exemption for dinglebar Jun 08 VMS to be discussed with EM strategic plan in June 2013; Enforcement Cttee to consider use of advanced features				

Council Staff Workload and Timeline of Council Actions

Updated 3/25/2013

GROUND FISH ISSUES	Council Staff	NMFS Input	Discussion Paper	Initial Review	Final Action	Notes
GOA Trawl Bycatch Management	Darrell Brannan, Sam Cunningham, others	major contributor; GC input	Jun-13			A very big project for council staff, also M&E input from NMFS staff and possible GC input
GOA trawl Data Collection	Darrell Brannan, Sam Cunningham, others	major contributor; GC input		Jun-13	Oct-13	
Chinook salmon PSC for GOA non-pollock trawl fisheries	Diana Evans, Sam Cunningham	sections on M&E		Dec-12	Jun-13	Discuss in February schedule for final action - Final action in April will likely require revisitation in October
BSAI Chum Salmon Bycatch	Diana Stram	M&E, AFSC sections		April 2012, Dec 2012		No further staff work at this time. Industry Progress report on proposals to incorporate in ICAs in April
AFA vessel replacement GOA sideboards	Jon McCracken	contributor; GC input	Feb-12	October 2012, February 2013	Apr-13	Majority of work completed
BSAI Halibut PSC	Jane DiCosimo, contractor	contributor	Jun-13			Potential major analysis if initiated
SSL EIS	Steve MacLean	lead; GC input		Apr-13		EIS and BiOp development on court approved schedule - mandatory action. Extensive committee work
BS and AI Pacific cod ABC split/ AI processing sideboards	Jon McCracken, Steve MacLean	major contributor	Apr-13			High priority item with SSL and pending SSC split of ABC.
Grenadiers	Jane DiCosimo	lead	Jun-12	Jun-13		Lower priority
Greenland Turbot Allocation	Steve MacLean	tracking	Jun-12			Lower priority. On hold pending 2013 season
BS FLL GOA Cod sideboards	Jon McCracken	input from RAM	Jun-11	Feb-13	Jun-13	Majority of work completed
BSAI Flatfish Specifications flexibility	Diana Evans	major contributor; GC input	Jun-12	Feb-13	Apr-13	will require NOAA GC input on CDQ allocation
Round Island Transit Zones	Steve MacLean	M&E input, USFW input	Dec-12	Apr-13		will require coordination with AFSC, USFWS to establish appropriate zones and address M&E concerns
Groundfish ACL uncertainty	Jane DiCosimo, Diana Stram	AFSC				Ongoing work by plan teams; workgroup to involve SSC members
Crab bycatch limits/closures in BSAI groundfish fisheries	Diana Stram	AFSC, AKRO input on M&E	Feb-13			Expanded discussion paper on PSC and closures for BBRCK, SMBKC, Tanner and snow crab.
Observer 3rd Party Contract Model	Chris Oliver	major contributor	Jun-13			requires review of past efforts, legal and contracting issues

GROUND FISH ISSUES - continued

	Council Staff	NMFS Staff	Discussion Paper	Initial Review	Final Action	Notes
VMS Requirements	Jon McCracken	tracking	Dec-12			On hold pending 2013 EM deployment results, EM strategic plan April 3013
PSEIS SIR	Diana Evans	AFSC major contributor	Dec-12	Dec-13		Coordination role by Council staff
BSAI Crab PSC to Weight	Diana Stram	input on M&E	?			Not yet scheduled; combine with bycatch limits or pursue separately
BSAI sablefish TAC of IFQ/non-IFQ	Jane DiCosimo	tracking	Apr-13			Not yet scheduled; need further guidance on problem or issue
EGOA Skate Fishery	Diana Stram	inseason management input	Oct-13			Not yet scheduled; possible discussion paper to GOA PT in September
Bering Sea Canyons: Science and Fishery Information	Diana Evans, Diana Stram	AFSC report	Jun-13			Further action pending June review of information

CRAB ISSUES	Council Staff	NMFS RO Staff	Discussion Paper	Initial Review	Final Action	Notes
BSAI Crab ROFR Aleutia PQS	?	input from RAM		Feb-13		Parties to work together to resolve issues
BSAI Crab Modeling Workshop	Diana Stram	tracking; AFSC input	Apr-13			Feb 26-March 1 in Anchorage
BSAI crab control rules and uncertainty	Diana Stram	tracking; AFSC input				Ongoing work by Plan Team
BSAI Crab Co-op Provisions for Crew	?	major contributor, GC input	Feb-13			Cooperatives to report annually on measures to facilitate share acquisitions by active participants, factors affecting high lease rates and crew compensation.

HALIBUT ISSUES	Council Staff	NMFS RO Staff	Discussion Paper	Initial Review	Final Action	Notes
Halibut - federal definition of fishing guide	Jane DiCosimo	major contributor	Feb-13	Jun-13	Oct-13	Will require coordination with ADF&G and IPHC
Halibut IFQ - retention of halibut in pots in 4A	Jane DiCosimo	tracking	December 2012, April 2013			Discussion paper could lead to recommendation to IPHC
CQE Block restrictions	Sam Cunningham	input from RAM	Dec-12	Apr-13	Apr-13	
Halibut/Sablefish IFQ leasing practices	Jane DiCosimo	lead	Jun-13			Coordination with OLE needed to clarify direction
Halibut - Recreational Quota Entity common pool	Jane DiCosimo	major contributor	Jun-13			Pending report from stakeholders - potential Council staff workload
Allow Sablefish pots in the GOA	Jane DiCosimo	tracking	Jun-13			
Increase limits on sablefish IFQ holdings	Jane DiCosimo	input from RAM	Jun-13			

OTHER MANAGEMENT ISSUES

	Council Staff	NMFS RO Staff	Report	Initial Review	Final Action	Notes
Salmon EFH revisions	Diana Evans	NMFS HD, AFSC science input				Not yet scheduled - awaiting NMFS HD staff availability; originated from EFH 5-yr review
EFH 5-Year Review	Diana Evans	NMFS HD, AFSC science input				Scheduled for 2015
MPA nomination process	David Witherell	tracking	Dec-09	n/a	n/a	Awaiting NOAA Guidance on "Avoid Harm" before evaluating sites
Annual Co-op reports: AFA, Am 80, CGOA Rockfish	Jon McCracken	tracking	Apr-13	n/a	n/a	Annual Reports from Industry (April)
Observer Program	Diana Evans, Chris Oliver	lead	Feb-13	n/a	n/a	Updates as needed; Annual performance and deployment plan - Considerable Council staff involvement through 2013; 1.25% observer fee reevaluation in 2015
EFH Consultation Process	Diana Evans	lead	Jun-13	n/a	n/a	Biannual Reports from NMFS (Dec, June); standardized review procedure
Annual Halibut charter recommendations	Jane DiCosimo	lead	Dec-13	n/a	n/a	At every December meeting; requires ADF&G staff analysis
Research Priorities	Diana Stram	n/a	Apr-13	n/a	n/a	Developing a new tracking report for research priorities
Crab, Scallop, Groundfish plan team and SAFE reports	Diana Stram, Jane Discosimo	AFSC	most meetings	n/a	n/a	Crab PT: 4/30-5/3 Anchorage, 9/17-20 Seattle, Groundfish PT 9/10-13, 11/18-22 Seattle; Scallop PT Feb 19-20 Kodiak. Major Council staff workload
Crab and Groundfish Stock Structure Workshop	Diana Stram	AFSC	Feb-13	n/a	n/a	Workshop scheduled for April 16 at AFSC

Current Other Projects

Strategic Planning	Chris Oliver, David Witherell	Working with the NMFS RO staff and NOAA GC to improve the analytical and implementation process.
Analytical template (EA/RIR/IRFA)	Diana Evans	We are developing a standardized analytical template to improve our analytical content and speed the regional and GC review process.
MONF 3 Preparations and follow through	David Witherell, Diana Stram	MONF3 scheduled for May 7-9 in D.C. David and John H. are session moderators, Diana S is a rapporteur. Major workload through May
Community Profiles Glossy	Mike Fey, David Witherell	Similar to the groundfish and fleet profiles, we are preparing an overview of fishing communities affected by federal fishing regulations.
Update Reference Manual, Personnel Rules, other guidance	Chris Oliver, David Witherell	These manuals need updating, but it has been a lower priority to date.
Groundfish FMP Summaries Glossy	Jane Dicosimo	Our 2012 summer intern (Ben Williams) revised groundfish FMP summaries to make them more accessible to the general public. Still needs work

Ongoing Administrative Work

Notes

Preparation for and attendance of staff at other agency meetings (IPHC, BOF, NPRB, PSMFC, AMSS, etc)	Liaison staff	Staff gives presentations and participates at meetings of partner agencies, and responds to requests for presentations at various venues.
Preparation and attendance at national and international meetings (IPHC, NPFC, ICC, CCC)	Chris Oliver, et al.	Significant obligations primarily for CCC related activities
Staffing and minutes preparation, briefing book and presentation preparation for Council meetings; preparation of newsletter	All staff	Each Council meeting effectively uses up 3 weeks of each staff persons time. Meeting minutes take several weeks to prepare. Significant workload
Staffing and minutes preparation for standing Council committees (Ecosystem, Enforcement, Charter Implementation, OAC, PNCIAC, SSLMC, ROC, etc.)	All staff	Staff plans and attends meetings of various Council committees, and prepares minutes of these meetings. Significant workload
Document review, staff administration and oversight, correspondence, etc.	Chris Oliver, David Witherell	Administrative duties require a substantial portion of each day.
Website maintenance, Council minutes, phones, wordprocessing, document compilation, copying, filing, office supplies, etc.	Maria Shawback, Peggy Kircher	Maintenance of the website requires regular updates and posting of new information.
Response to FOIA Requests and Administrative Records for litigation	Bendixen, Shawback, Kircher, Oliver, Witherell, other staff	Some requests for records can require long search and copying times (for which we are not reimbursed), as well as transcriptions of audio files.
Budgets, finance and operations; biennial audit	Gail Bendixen, Chris Oliver, David Witherell	Bills paid, bank statements reconciled, meeting arrangements/contracts, human resources, etc. Significant workload. Biennial audit April/May 2013
Miscellaneous professional obligations (NPRB reviews, participation on scientific and advisory committees, professional presentations and publications)	All staff	Staff participates on various Scientific/Advisory Committees, peer reviews NPRB proposals, publishes papers and presents at scientific meetings.
Fishery Evaluations and Certifications	All staff	Staff contributes to reviews and status evaluations for MSC certifications, Global Trust Certifications, Fish Watch, etc.
Public Outreach	All staff	Staff prepares public outreach brochures, provides talks to students and delegations from other countries, and does rural outreach work as needed.
Legislation tracking and response	Chris Oliver, David Witherell	Potential for MSA reauthorization in 2013 - considerable workload in responding to various draft legislation in 2013 and beyond.

Note: While not a legal requirement, the target date for release of documents in advance of Council meetings is as follows:

Short Discussion Papers: 1 week
Final Action Analyses: 4 weeks

Initial Review Analyses: 2 weeks

Ecosystem Committee Minutes

March 19, 2013 1 – 3:30pm
teleconference

Committee: Bill Tweit, Stephanie Madsen, Jim Ayers, Dave Benton, David Fluharty, Steve Ignell, Jon Kurland, John Iani, Tim Towarak, Diana Evans (staff)

Others attending included: Nicole Kimball, Jim Menard, Charlie Lean, Jeanne Hanson, Matt Eagleton, Brian Lance, Steve MacLean, Earl Krygier, Kirsten Lopman, Jackie Dragon, Terra Lederhouse, Heather Brandon, Henry Mitchell, Ernie Weiss

EFH Consultation on Norton Sound Gold Mining

In February 2013, the Council asked the Committee to receive a briefing from ADFG staff that have been involved in the permitting process for Norton Sound mining operations, and then consider whether any alteration is needed to the Committee's February recommendations on this issue. Nicole Kimball provided a brief introduction, noting that the recommendations of the Committee in February were similar to concerns that have already been reflected by ADFG, and submitted to the Corps of Engineers (COE), via an extensive state permitting process.

The Committee received a short presentation from the ADFG area manager in Nome, Jim Menard, and then engaged in a discussion with both him and Charlie Lean, currently with Norton Sound Economic Development Corporation, but formerly (and for many years) the Nome ADFG area manager. Mr Menard described areas of juvenile crab distribution in the area, which has been identified in surveys. In the discussion, Mr Menard affirmed that his office remains concerned about the impacts of mining on crab in waters deeper than 30 ft, due to adverse and persistent impacts to important habitat. Mr Lean also noted that a previously permitted mining operation occurring in deeper water (60 ft) in the late 1980s, using the Bima bucket dredge, resulted in persistent changes to the seafloor sediment and topography, and additional benthic effects from disturbed silt smothering organisms on the seafloor before the silt dispersed. Permitting for the physical operation of mining operations is the responsibility of the COE and the State's Department of Natural Resources (DNR); Mr Menard's office submits comments to ADFG's Division of Habitat, which in turn submits comments to DNR. To date, ADFG's concerns regarding crab habitat have been accommodated through conditions on the permits. With respect to the recent increase in recreational mining activity, Mr Menard and his staff have primarily focused on mitigating potential interactions with existing salmon fisheries at river mouths, as for the most part, recreational miners do not tend to operate in waters deeper than 30 ft. The Committee also confirmed that a parallel permitting process exists with the State's Department of Environmental Conservation (DEC), under the Clean Water Act, for dredge discharge. Jeanne Hansen, of NMFS Habitat Conservation Division, informed the Committee that they have just been notified of a permit request to allow mechanical and bucket dredge operations in waters greater than 30 ft.

The Committee reaffirmed its February recommendations with respect to this issue, namely that the Council take two actions to address these concerns. First, the Council recommends that the Council task the Crab Plan Team with reviewing this issue at their next meeting, and providing further input on the status of knowledge regarding Norton Sound red king crab habitat, and its distribution. Secondly, the Committee recommends that the Council exercise its authority, under Section 305 of the MSA, to comment directly to the COE on its concerns with respect to the permitting of commercial mining operations in waters deeper than 30 feet in Norton Sound, copying the EPA and DEC as appropriate, as well as concerns regarding the cumulative impacts of the increasing scale of recreational mining activity in the area. The letter would be in support of both ADFG and NMFS' continued concerns about disturbance in habitats deeper than 30 feet. The letter could recommend to the COE that both of these issues (deeper water concerns and cumulative impacts of recreational mining) be fully scoped out by the agency, during consideration of whether to permit dredging operations further offshore, and that this scoping process

should factor into the decision of whether the appropriate analysis to support such a permit is an EA or an EIS. The Committee advises that the Council include in the letter a recommendation that the COE engage actively with communities around Norton Sound, to scope out concerns from regional residents, and also involve the Council.

Ecosystem-based Management Planning

The Committee received a presentation from Dave Fluharty regarding a report that is being developed by the NOAA Ecosystem Science and Management Working Group, which he chairs, on ecosystem-based fishery management best practices within NMFS regions. Diana Evans provided input to the working group in July 2012 on management practices in Alaska, on behalf of the Council. The report sets out a framework of questions to assess the extent to which various regions are integrating ecosystem considerations into management. Once the report is drafted, Dr Fluharty will be asking for review from Council staff in all of the Council regions about how it captures regional actions to date. With the Council's concurrence, the Ecosystem Committee volunteered to assist in the review of how the report portrays management practices in the North Pacific. The NOAA Science Advisory Board will review and consider adopting the report this summer, once it is finalized.

The Committee discussed how the preliminary findings of the report indicate that, with respect to many areas covered by the framework, the Council is actively engaging in ecosystem-based management, however there may also be some gaps. For example, the Committee discussed how the Council's existing management objectives from the Groundfish PSEIS or the AI FEP relate to the framework question of whether the Council has set ecosystem goals and developed indices of ecosystem health as targets for management. The Pacific Council FEP was also cited as an example where broad goals are associated with specific initiatives. The Committee determined that it would be helpful to task each Committee member with some specific preparation in order to facilitate further work on the Council's task of developing a draft workplan of next steps for moving forward with these ecosystem issues.

The Chair discussed planning for the next couple of Ecosystem Committee meetings, and **recommends that the Committee hold a one day meeting in June, on the Tuesday of the Council meeting, and a longer 1-2 day workshop in late summer, to develop the draft workplan to present to the Council in October.** Items for a June meeting would include a) recommendations on the Bering Sea canyon reports (already tasked to the Committee); b) a discussion of issues coming out of the Managing our Nations Fisheries Conference; 3) review of Dr Fluharty's report with respect to the North Pacific; and 4) planning and preparation needed for a late summer workshop. With respect to the workshop, the Committee discussed having the meeting in Seattle at the AFSC, in order to facilitate attendance by AFSC staff, potentially including members of the AI Ecosystem Team, or SSC members.

Enforcement Committee Minutes
Fireweed Room, Hilton Hotel, Anchorage, AK
April 2, 2013

Committee: Roy Hyder (Chair), Acting Special Agent in Charge Matt Brown, CAPT Phil Thorne, LT Anthony Kenne, Martin Loefflad, Glenn Merrill, Jon Streifel, Will Ellis, Susan Auer, Nicole Kimball, and Jon McCracken (staff)

Others present included: Jane DiCosimo, Steve MacLean, Doug Marsden, Jonathan Snyder, Vince O'Shea, Kevin Heck, Guy Holt, Karla Bush, Ed Dersham, Doug McBride, Todd Loomis, David Polushkin, Jason Anderson, Rachel Baker, Brent Paine

I. D-1(c) Retention of Area 4A halibut in BSAI sablefish pots

Jane DiCosimo (Council staff) provided a brief update on this agenda item, which would allow fishermen with commercial IFQs for both halibut and sablefish to retain halibut in IPHC Regulatory Area 4A that were caught in sablefish pots. The Committee noted if the action proceeds forward for analysis, there would need to be some level of coordination between IHPC and the Council so both IHPC and federal groundfish regulations comport. The Committee did not comment on the specific enforcement actions that could be adopted that were discussed in the paper at this time.

II. C-2(c) Round Island

Council staff Steve MacLean provided an overview of the EA/RIR/IRFA for a regulatory amendment to address a problem related to enforcement concerns with analysis. Included in the analysis are options for remedying the transit of Walrus Protection Area around Round Island for federal vessels by creating a transit area through the EEZ during specific dates for Round Island, Cape Newenham, and Cape Peirce.

The Committee spent time discussing the potential implications of a Critical Habitat (CH) designation for Pacific Walrus. Although difficult to speculate this early in the process, U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service (USFWS) representative Jonathan Snyder noted that Hagemeister Island, Round Island, Cape Newenham, and Cape Peirce are likely to be considered for CH designation. It was noted that CH restrictions would likely apply to all vessels (both State and federally permitted).

The Committee spent time discussing alternative approaches to transit corridors, which are often complicated to establish and maintain. The Committee discussed that rather than establishing a transit corridor vessels are expected to stay within, another approach could be to choose to modify the current prohibitions on transit through 12 nautical mile circles around the defined walrus haulouts while still adhering to the USFWS guidelines. This could be achieved by establishing a single straight line south of which transit is prohibited, while allowing federally permitted vessels to transit anywhere north of that line. This essentially establishes a navigational transit area, meeting the intent of providing transit provisions through the region for federally permitted vessels, while removing the requirement that the Council or agency define safely navigable waters, or potentially changing right of way requirements in the region. The Committee noted that there appears to be a tradeoff between accommodating the stated objective of the proposed action and developing an approach that would better accommodate Critical Habitat designation for Pacific Walrus.

There was a brief discussion concerning the difficulty of using VMS for monitoring narrow transit corridors for vessels required to use these corridors. VMS only provides limited information on a vessel's position at a specified interval, and there have been several instances where VMS units have been turned off inadvertently or the vessel's fisheries endorsement requiring VMS is removed, consequently allowing a vessel to turn off their VMS unit. Without VMS, the ability of OLE to track vessel movement is limited and requires on-scene enforcement assets. For the narrow corridors proposed due to minimum safe passing distance between vessels, current VMS poll rates are insufficient to adequately monitor these areas, and these poll rates would have to be increased to facilitate better tracking of a vessel through this region. Another difficulty is that most vessels using these transit corridors are not federal fishing vessels, so they are not subject to existing closures or required to carry an operating VMS unit. The Committee discussed the potential advantage of increasing polling rates for vessels with VMS transiting through the corridors. However, even the advantages of increased polling rates would be limited in track vessels transiting through narrow corridors.

The Committee recommends the Council to expand the alternatives to include other approaches such as navigational transit areas. Navigational transit areas allow for safe navigation on a vessel-by-vessel basis and increases the flexibility of the vessels in transiting through these areas. Finally, if transient corridors are utilized, then the Committee recommends development of a work group composed of the different enforcement agencies as well as the user groups directly impacted by the transient corridors.

III. Revocation of VMS access for State fishery managers

Karla Bush and Nicole Kimball (ADFG) provided an overview of the recent revocation of access to the current VMS database for State fishery managers by the NOAA Office of Law Enforcement Head Quarters. Since 2007, ADFG has had an agreement in place that allowed individual State managers/biologists to have access to the current VMS database through individual specific accounts. State enforcement personnel continue to have access to current VMS data. A letter was sent from Commissioner Campbell to NOAA OLE HQ outlining the need for current VMS access for area managers/biologists in December 2012. NOAA OLE HQ responded stating that it was their policy through the Joint Enforcement Agreement with all partner states to provide direct access to state enforcement personnel only, and it was determined that ADFG fishery managers' accounts had been provided in error (letters are attached at the end of the minutes). While ADFG managers can continue to access VMS data by request to NOAA OLE HQ, OLE HQ has stated that these recurring requests will be addressed on a monthly basis, which would clearly not support use of the data to manage fisheries. Alaska Regional OLE staff continues to try to communicate ADFG's need for access to current VMS data to OLE HQ staff.

ADFG managers need access to current VMS data for multiple fisheries jointly coordinated and managed with NMFS through Federal FMPs (specifically crab, scallop, and Pacific cod fisheries):

- To access fishery effort in-season and to anticipate when to close a fishery so as to be close to, but not exceed, catch limits (how many and which vessels are actively participating)
- To collect biological samples (tracking tenders or fishing vessels for delivery locations & ETA in order to have port samplers available)
- To access fleet distribution/harvest areas – the State is authorized to close areas if they have concerns about localized depletion
- To verify vessels are staying out of closed waters, most notably for SSL protection measures
- To verify actual fishing locations to amend fish tickets if the fish ticket notes an erroneous statistical area
- To notify Alaska Enforcement staff if a enforcement issue is identified

It was recognized by the Committee that the MSA provides the authority for sharing confidential data with state fishery managers for the purposes of managing fisheries. Given the authority for sharing current VMS data with State area managers/biologists and enforcement personnel exists, it appears to be a matter of the policies that establish the method of data sharing (access to current data through the database versus on a request basis) with State area managers/biologists. From the Committee's perspective, sharing access to the database (for real time information) with State managers/biologists is essential to effective management and enforcement of species managed under Federal FMPs.

To that end, the Committee recommends the Council send a letter to OLE HQ encouraging reinstatement of current VMS data for Alaska area managers/biologists. The Committee recommends the letter should note the MSA authority for sharing confidential data with State fishery managers, emphasize the collaborative approach of fisheries management in Alaska shared management under several FMPs, and the critical nature of the data necessary to manage the Alaska fisheries.

IV. Update on definition of halibut charter guide

Jane DiCosimo (Council staff) reported on a schedule for interagency staff meetings in April. Those meetings are intended to coordinate Federal and State efforts to develop proposed regulatory text for Council consideration to revise the definition of charter halibut fishing activities, including compensation and assistance. The first interagency meeting was held on April 1.

CAPT Phil Thorne provided a very brief update concerning work on halibut charter definition. Since the Council's February 2013 action relating to the alignment of the Federal and State definition of sport fishing guide services, NOAA OLE and the Coast Guard have had initial discussions relating to what alignment of these definitions may mean to enforcement on the water. It was noted in the update that OLE and the Coast Guard are cognizant that there is concern that charter-like activities are occurring in area 2C that may be outside of the intent of the Council's Charter Halibut Permit (CHP) program, and that any regulation changes that flow from Council decisions will likely affect how enforcement is conducted at-sea. Once the Council clearly states their intent through a preliminary preferred alternative, we will examine that intent for charter-like activities in an effort to provide clarity on what could reasonably be expected to be enforced at-sea.

V. Implementation recommendation of other VMS features for vessels already subject to VMS requirements

LT Anthony Kenne gave a short presentation on the progress NOAA OLE and the Coast Guard have made in looking at areas where consideration of enhanced VMS capabilities may be beneficial for the monitoring and enforcement of impending Council decisions. This first step looked at council actions currently in process that may benefit from the application of VMS capabilities that are not currently in use in the Alaska Region, including geo-fencing, increased poll rates, or gear, area, or species declarations. There was also discussion relating to management uses of VMS data. The committee has asked for an expanded review of management applications of VMS technologies. This preliminary review also highlighted several areas where additional data is required, and NOAA OLE has sent out work orders to the VMS vendors approved for the Alaska Region in an effort to determine potential costs and scope of work associated with expanding VMS capabilities on these vessels.

D R A F T
ADVISORY PANEL MINUTES
APRIL 2-4, 2013

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

Minutes of the February 2013 meeting were approved.

C-2 (a) Final action on BSAI Flatfish Specification Flexibility

The AP recommends the Council adopt Alternative 3, Option 1 for final action.

Motion passed 16/3 with 1 abstention.

Rationale:

- *This action will help achieve OY as well as reducing some of the pressure during TAC setting.*
- *Alternative 3 gives the Council the ability to decide how much of the ABC surplus may be traded, presumably using National Standard 1 criteria which allow adjustment of the ABC for any relevant economic, social, or ecological factor.*
- *Option 1, limiting the number of trades, will limit the burden on NMFS in-season management.*

The following motion failed 8/11 with 1 abstention.

The AP recommends the Council delay final action. The AP recommends a preliminary preferred alternative 3. The analysis needs to further analyze the effects on the CDQ sector of increasing the A80 harvest through flatfish flexibility. This will largely be qualitative:

1. A more thorough review of the fleet's harvest of CDQ allocations in the past is needed, including a more thorough discussion of the reasons for under harvest.
2. A more thorough discussion of the incentives and constraints on A80 fleet capacity, including but not limited to the effects of the Coast Guard reauthorization act of 2010 and alternative compliance on the fleet's current annual harvesting capacity;
3. A poll of A 80 companies to ascertain their level of interest in adding new capacity as opposed to replacing existing capacity and how far along they are in actually building that new capacity.

Further the AP recommends the Council expand the analysis to include a column in Tables 9 and 10 (page 21) showing how many pounds of halibut PSC have been used. Also, a description of how any of the alternatives and options may affect PSC usage.

Minority Report: *Minority Report: The minority acknowledged that the additional analysis would be largely qualitative. The analysis simply asserts that increased efficiency and new capacity will offset any expansion in the A80 harvest and continue to make CDQ quotas desirable. But the incentives around fleet*

capacity need to be more fully identified and articulated before their probable effects on CDQ harvest can be identified. The analysis needs to describe the anticipated effects alternative compliance and the Coast Guard Reauthorization Act of 2010 requirements on this aging fleet before any assertion can be made regarding fleet capacity. Building new, classed vessels does not necessarily lead to increased capacity. There are also many potential pitfalls to adding new capacity as well as likely constraints that are not identified or discussed in any way. Signed by: Anne Vanderhoeven, Jeff Farvour, Neil Rodriguez, Ernie Weiss, Chuck McCallum, Jerry Downing, Becca Robbins-Gisclair and John Gruver.

C-2 (b) Final action on AFA Vessel replacement GOA sideboards

The AP recommends the Council adopt Alternative 2 with the vessel removal provisions as follows, for final action.

Alternative 2 (status quo) – AFA vessel owners are allowed to rebuild or replace their vessels, as provided in the Coast Guard Act. AFA vessel owners may participate in GOA with a replacement or rebuilt vessel as long as the replacement or rebuilt vessel does not exceed the MLOA specified on the GOA LLP groundfish license assigned to the vessel at the time of fishing in the GOA by the vessel. If an AFA vessel owner removes an AFA vessel that is exempt from sideboard limitations, the sideboard exemption is extinguished and the exemption cannot be transferred to another vessel

Vessel removal provisions: Upon removal of an exempt vessel, the sideboard exemption is extinguished and cannot be transferred to another vessel.

Motion passed 15/5.

Rationale:

- *This motion allows for a vessel owner to comply with the AFA vessel replacement provision of the Coast Guard Act, vessel owners may now replace, rebuild, or remove a vessel from the fishery.*
- *Vessels that remain in the GOA fishery will still be constrained by the current regulations that AFA vessels are operating under:*
 - *300,000 lb daily trip limit,*
 - *sideboard restrictions*
 - *125 ft MLOA*
 - *cannot exceed MLOA on LLP*
- *Vessel owners will be able to rebuild or replace vessels that will more efficient, safer, optimal platforms for operating in the adverse conditions that they face on a daily basis while fishing in either the Bering Sea, Aleutian Islands or Gulf of Alaska fisheries.*

C-3(a) Steller Sea Lion EIS - Initial review; select PPA

The AP recommends the Council accept the SSLMC recommended PPA for the EIS, with the following clarifications for the measures for the pollock fishery in Table 1 on page 7 of the action memo:

- 2nd column (Area 543 Closures) should read, “Critical habitat closed except an area outside of 0-3 nm haulouts and 0-20 nm from rookeries at Shemya, Alaid, and Chirikof.”
- 4th column (Area 542 Closures), first entry should read, “Critical habitat closed 0-20 nm at rookeries and haulouts west of 178 degrees W. long.

- The last entry under the 3rd, 5th and 7th columns (Catch and Participation Limits for Areas 543, 542 and 541) should be reworded so that it's clear that the percentages are of the overall ABC that can be taken in the A season.

The AP also concurs with the comments on the Draft EIS noted by the SSLMC on pages 4-5 of their minutes provided in the notebooks. *Motion passed 19/1.*

C-3(c) BSAI Pacific cod ABC/TAC Split

The AP requests that the Council move forward an analysis of community protection measures in the Aleutian Island Pacific cod fishery to mitigate the combined impact of the re-direction of excess processing capacity by rationalized sectors into the AI cod fishery and impacts of the BSAI cod split in the context of the SSL protection measures in the AI cod fishery.

The analysis should include an option that would allocate the Directed Fishing Allocation (after CDQ and ICA) for areas 541 and 542 to CVs with a regionalized delivery requirement to shoreplants in the Aleutian Island management area. In the event that no shoreplant is operating in AI area or insufficient capacity is available, the regional shorebased delivery requirement would be waived.

This option would maintain the current P. Cod sector allocation percentages in the Bering Sea only. Area 541/542 would be a CV only allocation. (Area 543 would be CP or MS only as per the preliminary preferred alternative under the SSL EIS.)

If the 541/542 DFA exceeds:

- 2,500 tons
- 5,000 tons
- 10,000 tons

CPs would be allowed to harvest up to 50% of any additional DFA tonnage after April 30th.

Additional alternatives would include Alternatives 2 and 3 from the SSL EIS for Pacific cod, updated to the most current year.

Motion passed 14/6.

Rationale:

- Establish community protection for Adak and Atka
- Promote stability in the region by minimizing the race for fish between user groups.
- Simplify management measures for RAM (less stranded fish)

Minority Report: A minority of the AP felt that it is premature to address allocative issues in the Aleutian Islands Pacific cod fishery, and that when addressed this should be a separate action from the BSAI cod split. The SSL EIS and BiOp are still under development and the resulting actions are unknown. Further, the Board of Fish is considering an increase in the state water cod GHL which may address some community concerns. Until these actions are resolved, the need for and impacts of the proposed allocations cannot be determined and sectors with significant history may be severely harmed. Signed by: Ruth Christiansen, Andy Mezirow, Joel Peterson, Lori Swanson and Anne Vanderhoeven.

C-4 Scallop SAFE

The AP recommends the Council approve the Scallop SAFE report and set the ACL/ABC to 1.161 million lbs of shucked meats per the SSC and Plan Team recommendations. *Motion passed 20/0.*

C-5 Initial Review/Final Action on CQE halibut/sablefish block restrictions

The following motion failed 10/10:

The AP finds the Council document provides a good foundation for Council action and for informing the public and recommends that the Council adopt Alternative 2, Option 1.

Rationale FOR giving CQE's the opportunity to purchase any size blocks:

- *Allows greater flexibility to a program having difficulty gaining traction.*
- *Keeps restrictions in place – limited to ten blocks of halibut, five blocks sablefish per management area.*
- *To grow, CQEs will eventually need to sell smaller D shares in favor of larger blocks, maintaining individual entry level purchase availability.*
- *Increasing available quota in communities for residents will preserve culture, increase financial opportunities.*
- *The CQE's do not have a competitive advantage in the market place as shown by the fact that they have not purchased much quota. The ability to purchase small blocks is not going to suddenly give the CQE's the feared huge competitive advantage either.*
- *Alternative 2 is not acceptable because as a group the CQE communities have had a significant loss of halibut quota since the implementation of the program and this would lock the group into that depressed state. Each community wants to hold on or increase the quota holdings they have and being forced to buy small blocks only from CQE communities is too limiting.*
- *The ultimate goal of the CQE program is private, not public, ownership of the resource through anchoring access to the halibut and sablefish fisheries permanently in the community so that residents who want to go out and fish halibut or sablefish can always find an opportunity to do so.*

Rationale AGAINST expanding the CQE program:

- *Increases competition between two disenfranchised groups, entry level and communities, for fishing quota and opportunity.*
- *Goes against an IFQ program goal to maintain an owner-operated fleet, and turns it into a leasing program.*
- *Proposed action goes beyond the problem that initiated this action.*

D-1 (a) Preliminary review analysis to create vessel transit lane near Round Island

The AP recommends the Council create a workgroup to develop other alternatives to address comments from the SSC, Enforcement Committee and stakeholders. The workgroup should include: agencies, tender operators, the Am 80 fleet, the Walrus Commission and local communities potentially affected by changes in vessel traffic. *Motion passed 20/0.*

The AP recommends the Council re-state the Purpose and Need Statement to allow analysis of a new alternative for dropping the "no FFP" (Amendment 17) requirement for vessels transiting the Walrus Protection Areas. *Motion passed 14/6.*

D-1 (b) Discussion paper on Bering Sea sablefish TAC specifications

The AP recommends that the Council encourage industry stakeholders to work together to identify additional potential management approaches to reallocate unused sablefish trawl allocations to increase yield under the OY. Industry should report their suggested management approaches to the Council at the October 2013 meeting for consideration and analysis. *Motion passed 20/0.*

D-1(c) Expanded discussion paper on Retention of 4A halibut in BSAI sablefish pots

The AP recommends that the Council send a letter to the IPHC recommending the proposed action. *Motion passed 20/0.*

Rationale:

- *Fishermen holding halibut IFQ while targeting sablefish with pots in the identified area should have the ability to retain the halibut to reduce regulatory discards. The action will increase conservation of the halibut resource through reduced discard mortality.*

D-2 Staff Tasking

The AP recommends the Council initiate a discussion paper on BSAI Chinook salmon including the following:

- Status of Alaska Chinook salmon stocks, including subsistence and commercial fishery restrictions and whether escapement goals have been met.
- Updated genetic stock identification information from 2010-2011 and 2012 if available.
- An updated AEQ analysis utilizing the most recent genetic stock identification information. The AEQ analysis should include an estimate of the impacts to each specific stock grouping of bycatch at the current cap levels: 47,591 and 60,000.
- An analysis of bycatch performance under the current Amendment 91 incentive plan agreements in 2011 and 2012.
- Information about the numbers and rates of bycatch taken by month over the most recent 10 year time frame.
- Availability and feasibility of abundance indicators which could be used to design an abundance based cap (e.g. run forecasts, previous years run assessments, juvenile abundance indicators).

Motion passed 11/9.

Rationale:

- *Conditions have changed significantly since Amendment 91 was adopted: Chinook salmon stocks throughout Western Alaska have declined dramatically, with federal fishery disasters declared for 2008-2012 for the Yukon River and 2011-2012 for the Kuskokwim River.*
- *Recent genetic stock identification based on improved sampling indicates a higher proportion of Western Alaska stocks in the bycatch than previously thought (73% in 2010 and 2011).*
- *While we do not know the cause of the current Chinook salmon declines, in-river fisheries have been severely restricted and amounts necessary for subsistence have not been met on the Yukon or Kuskokwim Rivers in recent years and we must responsibly manage other sources of mortality such as bycatch.*
- *Under the current conditions of Chinook salmon abundance a few hundred more fish makes a difference and a few thousand more fish could mean making escapement goals.*
- *Given the changed conditions it is imperative on us as managers to take a look at the current state of the runs and the bycatch impacts and investigate possible solutions.*

The AP recommends the Council develop a discussion paper on the issue of tendering of trawl-caught groundfish in the Western, Central, and West Yakutat areas of the Gulf of Alaska. *Motion passed 20/0.*

The AP recommends that the Council initiate a review of the Charter Halibut Permit (CHP) program with particular attention to the practice of transferring Non-Transferable CHP's in Areas 3A and 2C. *Motion passed 20/0.*

The AP recommends that the Council send the Area O red king crab proposal as presented by ACDC to the Crab Plan Team for review at its upcoming meeting. *Motion passed 20/0.*

The AP respectfully requests that any agenda items regarding the newly restructured observer program also be included on the AP's agenda. *Motion passed 20/0.*

DRAFT REPORT
of the
SCIENTIFIC AND STATISTICAL COMMITTEE
to the
NORTH PACIFIC FISHERY MANAGEMENT COUNCIL
April 1st –3rd, 2013

The SSC met from April 1st through 3rd at the Hilton Hotel, Anchorage AK.

Members present were:

Pat Livingston, Chair
NOAA Fisheries—AFSC

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
International Pacific Halibut Commission

Franz Mueter
University of Alaska Fairbanks

Jim Murphy
University of Alaska Anchorage

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:

Vacant
Wash. Dept. of Fish and Wildlife

Vacant
US Fish and Wildlife Service

C-3 (a) Discussion paper on BS and AI Pacific cod ABC/TAC split

Jon McCracken (NPFMC) presented a discussion paper on splitting Pacific cod OFL and ABC between the Eastern Bering Sea and Aleutian Islands. Public testimony was provided by Dave Fraser (Adak Community Development Corporation), Jon Warrenchuk (Oceana) and Clem Tillion (Aleut Enterprise Corporation).

This paper was requested by the Council because the SSC informed the Council that it will be setting separate Pacific cod OFL/ABCs for the Aleutians and the Eastern Bering Sea. The current white paper explores some of the consequences of doing so. The SSC appreciates the clear presentation of the issue, the detailed summary of catches by area and sector, and an outline of the TAC-setting process necessitated by the split. We note that there are some obvious implications of this action for the SSL EIS, but that these implications will be explored and analyzed in the SSL EIS and the upcoming BiOp.

The paper also discusses Pacific cod sideboards that have been proposed previously as described in the document to protect shoreside processing opportunities, particularly in Adak. The discussion touches on some of the economic and social issues that will be important when/if the Council moves forward with the proposed sideboards. The SSC notes that the design of the economic RIR and RFA will be crucial and highly dependent on the guidance provided by the Council in the form of a Purpose and Need Statement and the suite of alternatives. **Of particular significance to the analysis of economic and socioeconomic implications attributable to managing a Pacific cod split are the interactions between**

AI sector Pacific cod sideboard limits and efforts to facilitate a viable shore-based processing sector in the Aleutian Island communities of Adak and perhaps, Atka.

As this analysis proceeds, it should include more focus with respect to the state of processing at the Adak facility. The Adak facility is critical to the management options and outcomes for the Aleutian Islands fisheries, following a Pacific cod ABC split. The structure of management alternatives depends upon the presumed operation of the onshore Adak facility, and the Adak facility's viability depends upon the provisions of the alternative selected (e.g., sideboard limits, responsive/flexible delivery rules). Finally, the SSC notes that constraints of both State and Federal confidentiality rules may impose substantial barriers to fully characterizing the implications of competing alternatives, in the context of SSL EIS actions.

C-3 (b) Initial review of Steller Sea Lion EIS

Melanie Brown (NMFS-AKR) presented the SSL EIS, Ben Muse (NMFS-AKR) presented the RIR/IRFA, and Michael Downs (AECOM) presented the community impact analysis. Public testimony was received by Jon Warrenchuk (Oceana), Chad See (FLLC), Simeon Swetozof (self), John Gauvin (Alaska Seafood Cooperative) and Dave Fraser (Adak Community Development Corp.).

EIS

Overall, the EIS is well written and organized, and provides a balanced treatment of the issues. The text is clear, mostly up to date, and provides the reader with a full picture of the strengths and weaknesses of the data available. This is an excellent compendium of information on the interactions of fishing and SSL. However, the document is long and difficult to navigate. This could be improved with a few slight changes. We recommend that the document include bookmarks for all chapters and major sections within chapters and that references to figures and tables in the text are hotlinked and/or have the page number provided so that moving back and forth from text to figures/tables is easier for the reader. In addition, some consistency in the location of figures and tables relative to the text would be helpful. Currently some tables and figures are inserted in the text, and some compiled at the end of a section. In addition, all figures should have legends that explain the color codes being used (and that figures display correctly if printed in black and white, to the extent possible). Finally, throughout the document there is a need for a careful check to ensure that references cited in the text are listed in the References Cited section. Since many references cited are in press, in preparation, or in the grey literature, it would be helpful to identify the web site from which these papers can be downloaded.

A central concept of the SSL EIS is the potential for prey competition between SSL and the fishery. This remains the core contentious issue, as documenting direct impact of the fishing industry on prey availability to SSL remains elusive. It is important to remember that competition, in an ecological sense, involves the use of a common limiting resource by two or more entities (individuals, demes, populations, species). In this instance, an unequivocal demonstration that the shared resource is limiting has yet to be documented either by direct or indirect methods (a negative correlation in prey use or demographics between the two potentially competing entities). Recognition of this could be accomplished by including reference to potential competition unless competition has been established (e.g., page ES-2 line 2) within the document.

The lack of clear proof of competition is central to many of the criticisms of the 2010 BiOp raised by independent reviews, and this EIS acknowledges these concerns both in the executive summary and in how it treats the evaluation of alternatives. However, as a result, the alternatives are only ranked as least to most likely to cause impact to SSL populations, and no assessment of the magnitude of the impact is provided (e.g., Alternative 4 is more likely to have an impact than Alternative 1, but whether Alternative 4 is 10% or 80% worse than Alternative 1 is not assessed). The SSC appreciates the difficulty of doing anything more than ranking the alternatives, but the approach does make it difficult to evaluate the

potential for a Jeopardy/Adverse Modification (JAM) finding should any alternative other than Alternative 1 move forward as the preliminary preferred alternative (PPA).

Assessing competition and the potential for JAM due to the changes proposed in Alternatives 2 through 4 clearly requires better information on seasonal and regional foraging behavior by SSL, and on spatially and temporally specific impacts of fishing activities on fish abundance and distribution (both within and outside the current critical habitat (CH) boundaries). Unfortunately, much of the data needed to make such assessments appear limited or absent. Consideration of the potential for exposure might be improved if the EIS were to include some evaluation of the sample size of telemetered sea lions needed to estimate total habitat range (by season, sex, rookery) so that the sample size of the current data could be compared to this. Such a discussion might also include treatment of how physical features of the habitat (bathymetry, current structure) influence the probability of that area being used by SSLs, as well as whether SSLs in the Western Distinct Population Segment (WDPS) are known to change their foraging locations in response to seasonal prey movements or concentrations (pages 5-27 to 5-32). Ultimately, information on the proportion of foraging by SSLs (by age and sex classes) that occurs within CH in each region (and the resulting increase in foraging activities that occur in CH opened to fishing under Alternatives 2-4) would be helpful. Similarly, information on changes in the abundance of pollock, cod and Atka mackerel by SSL region in the Aleutians should be included.

Relative to the sections on assessing causes of the ongoing population changes in the different regions, and whether changes can be linked to prey availability (within and outside CH), the SSC recommends that correlations between SSL abundance and regional prey density be considered. In addition, the SSC notes that examining the coincidence between changes in SSL population trends with the date of CH protection and regime shifts might inform analyses of impacts of fishing on CH or SSL population trends. Similarly, it would be helpful if the issue of density-dependent population change could be investigated. Perhaps the rapid growth of the WDPS east of Samalga Pass relative to population growth in SE Alaska is due to a rebound of the WDPS from being depressed relative to its prey base by some other mechanisms. Some comparison of population growth rate (Figures 5-2 through 5-10) by region in the WDPS relative to the theoretical r_{max} for SSLs, as well as to the growing Eastern DPS would be useful.

The SSC requests that the EIS include more detail on the age and/or size of the fish targeted by both the fishery and SSL. In addition, addressing the effects of fisheries impacts on forage fish and their habitat would be useful (e.g., fishery impacts on sand lance and sand lance habitat relative to ongoing cormorant declines, page 6-39).

The EIS includes consideration of the potential for fishing activities to have an indirect impact on SSLs via disturbance effects, and recognizes that one of the goals of the CH designations is to reduce this potential. In considering the potential for increased disturbance effects, should CH be opened to fishing under Alternatives 2-4, it might be useful to assess whether the Kanaga Island/Ship Rock haulout progressed to be a rookery in the presence of fishing activity nearby, or if the shift occurred after exclusion areas were imposed.

The seabird Chapter (6) is somewhat superficial, and needs work, particularly the sections on the impacts of the different alternatives, and the treatment of the current literature and terminology. For example, instead of using a new set of terms (e.g., page 6-25, Table 6-4) to describe seabird foraging methods, the chapter authors should use terms developed by Ashmole. In addition, the literature cited section needs to be updated to acknowledge the many papers now available on the distribution, abundance and feeding ecology of seabirds in the Aleutian Islands, and other endangered species such as the spectacled eider. The distribution maps need updating; they appear to reflect only data obtained before the mid-1980s. Some additional care should be given to the consideration of disturbance to seabird colonies by fishing activities, and the fact that the impact of disturbance may vary by season. Table 6-5 should mention the

impacts of night lights on storm-petrels, auklets and possibly murrelets, as there are accounts of massive strikes at night in Unimak Pass when auklets crash onto boats in the fog. Clarification of bycatch rates would be helpful. For example, are the numbers presented in Table 6-11 and on page 6-34 extrapolated from the observed boats or are they the raw numbers? Inclusion of information on the trends in bycatch rates and cumulative mortality estimates by seabird species would also be helpful.

The document ends with a section of research needs that does a good job of highlighting key needs relative to assessing the fishing impacts within the BSAI area as well as data gaps in the SSL literature. Research needs relative to seabirds and other marine mammals are not discussed, as the stated focus of this EIS is the impact of the fisheries on Steller sea lions. While the focus of this chapter is on 'data that would be useful to have' the SSC notes that data gaps identified in reviews of the previous BIOP are consistently included.

RIR/IRFA

Overall, the SSC was impressed with the scope of the analysis within the RIR and the manner in which SSC comments from October 2012 were addressed. The methods used in the analysis were appropriate given data and modeling limits, and were consistent with those presented to the SSC in October.

Based upon earlier SSC comments, the analysts dropped the use of variable cost data from the economic impact estimates. Although the SSC has long advocated for the use of cost data in analyses, in this particular case, the omission of cost data was appropriate because there was no meaningful way to estimate how the different alternatives would impact costs.

The SSC has concerns about how the revenue-at-risk and harvest-at-risk tables are presented. Given the lack of cost data, economic models of price impacts, and models of fishing behavior, this "at-risk" approach provides potentially useful information about the share of the historical catch that was harvested in areas that would be variously open under the different alternatives. However, these values should not be labeled as impacts in the table headings or in the discussion. To be appropriately labeled as estimated impacts, this analysis would need to include other factors such as changes in costs, prices, and fishing behavior. These additional factors are acknowledged in the analysis (e.g., page 8-88). The SSC recommends that the tables be labeled "Estimated Harvest at Risk" and "Estimated Gross Revenue at Risk" (e.g., Table 8-48 to 8-50, among many others). The discussion should be modified similarly. For example, page 8-89 contains the assertion "(Table 8-54) provides estimates of the reduction in retained catch associated with Alternative 1," which could be modified to "(Table 8-54) provides estimates of the retained catch that were historically harvested in areas that would be closed under Alternative 1." On page 8-89 is the statement, "Actual reductions in retained catch range between..." The values are not actual reductions, rather, they are estimates of the historical catch that was harvested in areas that are closed under the status quo and may be opened variously under the proposed alternatives to Alternative 1.

One way to deal with these concerns would be to include a separate section dedicated to a discussion of the concepts of revenue-at-risk and harvest-at-risk, including a rationale for the approach, its strengths and weaknesses, its role in estimating impacts to industry and net benefits to the Nation. Throughout the document, whenever this approach is used, there should be a cross-reference to this discussion. For the most part, this information is contained in various parts of the document, but it is not compiled in a single spot that is easily cross-referenced.

On a related note, gross revenue at risk should not be described as a cost to industry. For example, page 8-138 and Table 8-73 describe gross revenue at risk as the "Monetary Cost of Production Shortfalls." As already noted, these should be described as "Gross revenue at risk."

In multiple places, the document contains a discussion of the potential price impacts on Atka mackerel and Pacific cod. Although industry reports price impacts, on page 8-15, the analysis indicates that a statistical analysis of prices suggests otherwise. At subsequent points in the document, there appears to be more weight given to the anecdotal industry reports than the statistical analysis. During the presentation, the analyst indicated that there were concerns about the statistical model, and that the reports from industry were deemed more credible. Given this discrepancy and the potential for confusion about which sources to use, the document would benefit from a clearer discussion of this issue.

The summary on page 8-107 incorrectly states that the sector will not incur the costs of the harvest. In making adjustments to gross revenue at risk, however, the relevant adjustment is in changes to harvest cost. Similar summaries earlier in the document (e.g., page 8-98) correctly note that changes in variable costs should be deducted. These summary sections should use consistent language, where appropriate.

To the extent that new entrants are constrained by quota (e.g., pages 8-88 and 8-98), it is conceivable that existing fishery participants could benefit from an increase in the value of quota shares.

On page 8-89, the impacts are described as “significant.” This sentence should be deleted. The term is not meant to imply statistical significance, nor “significance” under EO12866 or RFA. Rather, it is a subjective assessment about the size of the impacts. This raises the question of what the threshold is for determining whether a value is significant. Subjective assessments of the values in a table are not necessary and should be removed.

With respect to the community impacts in Chapters 8 and 10, the analysts effectively addressed every concern and suggestion previously made by the SSC in connection with this proposed action. They have produced an impressive product, given the data gaps for these communities and a tight timeline; including moving analytical treatment of the community of Atka to a more central location in the analysis, broadening the definition of community, thoroughly evaluating Adak’s economic and social vulnerabilities, and carefully separating fishery engagement from dependency and vulnerability. In the subsistence hunting descriptions, the reasons for the decline in harvest are generally believed to be linked to the population of SSLs or to confusion among hunters about regulations. This section should also acknowledge that uncertainty about hunting regulations may affect reporting of harvest. It should include information describing changes in the population of SSL subsistence hunters in Atka. There were 92 people in Atka in 2000 (46 males and 46 females), and only 61 in 2010 (36 males and 25 females); this could indicate a loss of resident hunters.

Overall, the highest priority improvements to be made to the document before release for public review are: 1) improvements to navigating the document, 2) provide a definition of competition, and 3) appropriately characterizing the revenues and harvests at risk, as noted above.

C-3 (c) Update on BiOp analytical methods

Brandee Gerke (NMFS-AKR) provided an overview of the analytical methods that will be used in the 2014 Biological Opinion for Groundfish Fisheries (BiOp). Public testimony was received by Jon Warrenchuk (Oceana), Chad See (FLLC), John Gauvin (Alaska Seafood Cooperative), and Dave Fraser (Adak Community Development Corp.). The SSC appreciated the opportunity to review and consider these plans.

NMFS plans to limit their update to focus on the BSAI Action Area, with specific emphasis on the implications of proposed actions on Steller sea lions and their critical habitat, because the proposed alternatives in the draft EIS do not impact harvest strategies in the Gulf of Alaska. NMFS will continue to consider trends in three sub-populations within the AI region (western, central and eastern). While the

boundaries for these three regions may make sense during the period of breeding and pupping, it is less clear whether these boundaries are appropriate during the winter.

NMFS plans to compile and summarize all of the existing tagging and tracking information for the region to inform the new BiOp. The SSC notes that this summary may provide an opportunity to assess whether the proposed sub-population partitions are appropriate in the winter season. The SSC suggests that the analysts consider the relationship between sample size (number of animals tagged) and the resulting estimates of habitat use (by season, sex, habitat features, etc.), and work towards identifying how many animals might need to be tagged in order to reliably characterize population level use. The sample size may be larger than can be achieved in the short term. However, such an analysis may provide a good basis to evaluate the completeness and reliability of the current data to inform an assessment of habitat use patterns.

The SSC recognizes that the EA-RIR for Steller sea lion protection measures and the BiOp are being developed in parallel and that the two documents are related. However, the planned timing may not be adequate to inform the Council about which alternatives avoid jeopardy and adverse modification to critical habitat. Due to the compressed timeline, it will be useful for the BiOp to provide clear guidance on the thresholds associated with these two critical designations. To the extent that this BiOp is also being developed in response to concerns with the previous BiOp and the external reviews of that document, the SSC requests that the new BiOp carefully works through the external review criticisms and either directly addresses the concerns raised or clearly explains why they were not accommodated.

NMFS outlined the suite of quantitative and qualitative evaluations that will be used to evaluate the risks associated with different options regarding proposals for time-area closures and regional TACs in the AI. The quantitative analyses include an updated and revised Population Viability Analysis (PVA), and a simulation study to examine the utility of pup/non-pup ratios as indicators of birth rates under different assumptions regarding key parameters. These analyses will inform the risk assessment. **The SSC would like to be briefed on the details of these quantitative studies at the June Council meeting.** The SSC encourages NMFS to consider the comments provided on previous PVA models used in earlier BiOps as a potential guide for construction of the updated model, as well as the limitations of using a diffusion versus vital rates approach. As the PVA methodology rests on an unpublished method, the SSC would appreciate being provided with a copy of the Johnson and Fritz manuscript, as well as any other unpublished/grey literature used in the development of the BiOp and its underlying analyses.

The planned risk assessment will consider the exposure to disturbance, direct mortality, and nutritional stress resulting from the proposed action and the expected response(s). Exposure to nutritional stress will be evaluated based on seven key questions, which were paraphrased as follows: a) What prey are consumed? b) Does a prey species represent more than 10% of the seasonal diet? c) What is the spatial overlap? d) What is the temporal overlap? e) What is the depth of proposed removals? f) What size of prey will be removed? g) What amount of prey will be removed? The SSC noted that these seven issues do represent a necessary condition for competition. However, they do not necessarily represent a sufficient condition for competition, as that also requires that the resource be limited (although such limitations may be confined to certain times or locations). If the available resources are not limited, then fishing and successful foraging by sea lions could co-occur. The proposed harvest rate analyses may be able to inform this issue since they will consider rates of removal over time, evidence for replenishment of resources, and rates of removal relative to available biomass in the region. In addition, an evaluation of the expected interannual variability in available prey due to fluctuations in year-class strength and shifts in spatial distribution due to shifts in oceanography might be considered as part of the baseline. The SSC also noted that the response schematic did not consider the potential impact of shifts in prey diversity as a potential nutritional stress exposure factor. In the development of the 'weight-of-evidence'

conclusions, the SSC cautions the analysts to consider alternative explanations for changes in life history parameters, particularly where the results of such changes may mirror those of nutritional stress.

The SSC acknowledges that the frequency of occurrence (FO) of prey may have inherent biases related to the amounts and size spectrum of prey consumed, and that some of these biases cannot be removed by correcting for factors such as differential retention or digestion of hard parts. However, these biases are unlikely to lead to the conclusion that there is significantly more overlap between target species and SSL diet than actually exists. The agency is supplementing diet assessment with alternate methods (FFA, Stable Isotopes, prey DNA) but given the short time frame proposed for this analysis, the SSC agrees that the FO data represents the most spatially and temporally complete information available.

Possible responses of SSL populations to potential competition with fisheries include: changes in birth rate, changes in pup and adult growth rates, and changes in survival. The SSC noted that the proposed analysis only addresses birth and survival rates, and that changes in individual growth rates are not assessed. The SSC requests an update on the information regarding individual growth rates, should such data exist. With respect to population growth rate, the SSC requests an analysis of the growth rate relative to r_{max} so the rates by sub-area can be compared to rates observed in recovered or recovering populations. With respect to the evaluation of pup/non-pup ratios that will inform the assessment of vital rates, the SSC encourages the analysts to consider whether detection probability of pups might vary by haulout, season, or total population size.

The SSC supports the plan to compile a chronology of actions and population level responses as a qualitative evaluation of the efficacy of existing measures. In this analysis, it is essential to account for changes in the environment ("regime shifts") as confounding factors.

NMFS identified the need for winter surveys and dedicated assessments of local abundance and distribution of SSL and their prey. The SSC concurs that these are high priority research activities that would provide useful information for future BiOps.

C-4 Scallop SAFE

A presentation of the Scallop SAFE and February 2013 Scallop Plan Team Report was given by Diana Stram (NPFMC). She was accompanied by three members of the Scallop Plan Team. Brad Harris (Alaska Pacific University) presented an ongoing study of boring worms and mud blisters on scallops in Kamishak Bay. Ken Goldman and Rich Gustafson (ADF&G) provided information on survey gear, studies of selectivity and discard mortality, and an ongoing age-structured analysis in Kamishak Bay. There was no public testimony.

The Scallop Plan Team recommended setting the 2013/14 scallop ACL equal to an ABC of 1.161 million pounds of shucked meats and OFL equal to 1.29 million pounds. The ACL is estimated using the maxABC control rule of 90% of the OFL, which includes discards. The SSC supports the Plan Team's recommended OFL and ACL for 2013/2014.

The SSC appreciates efforts by the Plan Team to address the many questions and comments from the SSC in March 2012. Many of the SSC's questions and comments have been addressed in this year's SAFE. Lack of staff and funding has led the Plan Team to defer others (comments 3, 5, 12, 17, 18, 19, 22, 23, 26, and 28). The SSC appreciates the Team's attempts to schedule work on those in the future as possible.

This year, the SSC offers the following additional comments:

1. Last year, the SSC noted the closure of the Alaska Peninsula area since 2009-10 and Kayak Island west bed since 2010/11 owing to conservation concerns. Now, the Kayak Island east bed

has been closed since 2012/13. District 16 has experienced declining catch-per-unit-effort (CPUE) since 2000/01 and the size distribution for the 2011/12 fishery implies a lack of recruitment (few scallops < 110 mm SH, Fig. 3-5), although the fishery remains open. Once last year's catch data are finalized, it might be worth taking another look at this district (p. 39-40). Also, guideline harvest levels (GHLs) for Yakutat, Kodiak-Shelikof, and Dutch Harbor were reduced from 2011/12 to 2012/13. The main beds in Yakutat (1-4 and B) that make up a majority of the harvest are also showing a decline in CPUE over the last few years (p. 34). Over the same time, the statewide total of area-specific GHLs declined from 495,900 to 417,500 pounds. Although the statewide OFL and ABC appear to be precautionary (as justified in the SAFE) and the State of Alaska appears to be taking appropriate management action (by reduced GHLs, fishery closures) the SSC has concerns about these declines in fishery CPUE.

2. The above concerns formed the basis for the SSC's comments last year (comments 3, 5, and 28) regarding the need to reevaluate scallop fishery management, including biological reference points (e.g., natural mortality, F_{OFL}), target harvest rates, utility of Productivity Susceptibility Analysis, etc. In response, the Plan Team recommended a workshop on data-poor stocks to encourage evaluation and discussion of issues related to scallop stock assessment and management, as well as possible extension to other data-poor stocks in Alaska. **The SSC supports the Plan Team's proposal for a workshop on assessment and management of data-poor stocks.** The Pacific Fishery Management Council has some relevant experience on assessment and management of data-poor stocks. Alternative management strategies, such as rotational harvest, may be worthy of consideration. Experience with rotational harvest of shellfish resources in some other regions of the world suggest that such a rotational harvest strategy might lead to higher long-term yields. The cycle of rotation and target harvest rates should reflect recruitment cycles and full fishing mortality that may include cryptic mortality associated with dredge fisheries.
3. **The SSC appreciates the Scallop Plan Team's initial attempts to apply the stock structure template to weathervane scallops, as reported in the minutes of the February Plan Team meeting.** The SSC believes that continued work on this is critical, especially given the variability in growth rates, morphometrics and CPUE trends by region. **The SSC looks forward to the Team's further work on this project, including the review planned for the upcoming stock structure workshop in April 2013.** The Team should consult a recent scallop genetic study (Gaffney et al. 2010; CJFAS 55:2539-2547), although the stock units for management are likely to be smaller than population units. Also, weathervane scallops in Alaska may form a metapopulation, as was proposed for the Atlantic and other sea scallops.
4. The SSC wishes to clarify comment #6 in last year's review. For Kayak Island and Kamishak Bay, abundance estimate are generated by dredge fishery-independent surveys. Elsewhere, CPUE remains the primary index of abundance. Consider estimating statistical relationships (correlation/regression) between fishery-independent abundance estimates and fishery CPUE for Kayak Island and Kamishak Bay. The strength of these relationships could shed light on the validity of CPUE-based indices used elsewhere in the state.
5. Fig. 2-7 on p. 28 suggests that small Tanner crab dominate the bycatch in Yakutat and Shelikof Districts, whereas a broader size distribution that includes mature crab constitutes the bycatch in other districts. The SSC suggests that the Scallop Plan Team consider the merits of an "adult equivalents" approach to the bycatch cap enumeration, such as has been attempted for salmon PSC in the Bering Sea. Namely, should the bycatch of 40 mm CL Tanner crab count equally to a bycatch cap as 140 mm CL adult crab?

6. The SSC appreciates the information resulting from both fishery independent surveys in the tables on p. 43 and 50 in the SAFE, but it also might be useful to include some of this information graphically, such as estimated abundance with confidence intervals over time.
7. The SSC notes that discards were very low in the Bering Sea area in 2011/2012 (p. 71). It could be useful to see a comparison of discarded biomass over time among areas.
8. Some SSC comments from last year addressed ecosystem considerations (e.g., comments 18 & 19 on fishing effects and predators). To this list, the SSC wishes to add a request for brief discussion of climate change and ocean acidification and their potential to affect the scallop stock in section 4.2 Ecosystem effects on the stock (p. 80). There have been some interesting, recent findings on effects of ocean acidification on bivalves in the Pacific Northwest. Also, this issue was highlighted in the presentation received by the Plan Team.
9. In the Kodiak Southwest district, the fishery in the 2011/12 season encountered quite a few older scallops (p. 65). Is there any evidence of maternal effects (e.g., as in certain rockfish species), where older scallops contribute disproportionately to recruitment? This is probably unknown, but could be added as a future research priority.
10. The SSC was somewhat surprised to hear about the exploratory fishery in the Alaska Peninsula in 2012/13 (p. 68), given the recent poor CPUE in this district. The additional description about this exploratory fishery in the Unimak Bight area in the Scallop Plan Team minutes was helpful and should be included in the SAFE document.
11. The SSC is very supportive of ongoing research by Dr. Harris on boring worms and mud blisters. The SSC wishes to emphasize the importance of analyzing results with respect to age of affected individuals. This will be important when trying to evaluate whether these infections affect mortality.
12. The SSC is very supportive of ongoing research by ADF&G Central Region staff on gear selectivity of the sledge-dredge, scallop discard mortality, and development of an age-structured analysis for scallops in the Kamishak District. The SSC looks forward to reviewing results from these studies.
13. From the perspective of the SAFE's economic report, the very small number of participants in the scallop fishery, and the substantial operational concentration and affiliations among even these few entities, makes reporting more than aggregate catch amounts and aggregate gross receipts legally impossible (without securing a formal waiver from each member of the participating fleets). Even when, as the analyst reported, data on operational economics have been volunteered by one fishery participant, these cannot be reported without 100% cooperation and concurrence. Functionally, State and Federal confidentiality constraints make any disaggregate data reporting impossible for the Federal scallop fisheries. Unfortunately, the SSC is not able to recommend a solution to this problem other than continuing to seek voluntary waivers on confidential data from fishery participants.

C-5 Initial Review/Final Action on CQE halibut/sablefish block restrictions

The SSC received a presentation of the RIR/IRFA from Sam Cunningham (NPFMC). Public testimony was offered by Herman Squartsoff (Ouzinkie Community Holding Company(CQE)), Gene Anderson (Village of Ouzinkie), Chuck McCallum (GOAC3), Darren Muller (Ouzinkie Native Corp.), and Duncan Fields (Cape Barnabas, Inc., Old Harbor CQE).

The action alternative (with options) would modify the original CQE Pacific halibut IFQ and sablefish IFQ Program to relax constraints on quota share (QS) purchases by Community Quota Entities (CQEs). Originally, the Council was concerned that CQEs might exercise disproportionate and destructive market power, leading to excessive control over small (especially 'blocked') QS in the halibut and sablefish fisheries. To date, excessive concentration of QS ownership by CQEs has not been a problem and, indeed, the original restrictive provisions imposed upon CQE access to certain forms of QS, have been found to be counter-productive in achieving the Council's principal objectives for CQEs in these fisheries (i.e., maintenance of QS holding in remote rural communities, maintaining entry level opportunities, development of small community-based QS assets). As such, the action alternatives (listed as one alternative with three distinct "options") would, to a greater or lesser degree, relax the offending constraints on CQEs, with the expectation that small, remote, fishery dependent communities will more likely realize the benefits envisioned by the original "Purpose and Need" statement of the Council.

The draft RIR/IRFA before the SSC is concise and clearly prepared, given the stage of development of the amendment action. The draft identifies the empirical evidence supporting the asserted purpose and need statement, reasonably attempts to interpret available data, and draws from that interpretation some initial conclusions about the relative economic performance, social welfare effects, and distributional impacts associated with the three action choice.

The SSC believes that several discussions of "efficiency implications" have been mischaracterized. The analyst should reexamine interpretation of action alternative outcomes with respect to economic efficiency. The SSC is concerned with the way some of the welfare changes are characterized with respect to net benefit to the Nation. These arguments could be enhanced, elaborated, or extrapolated, especially in light of the public testimony, discussed below.

The SSC received informative testimony from the public that added substantially to our understanding of the evolution of the CQE Program and the unanticipated consequences that have emerged from original provisions limiting access of CQE entities to some forms of QS. From this testimony has come a recognition that previously adopted program changes, such as increases in the size of 'sweep up' amounts from 3,000 lbs. to 5,000 lbs., have had implications for CQE success. Some consideration for these effects is warranted.

The document's treatment of impacts on communities, small entities, etc., is incomplete, as one would expect, given the Council has not selected a Preferred Alternative. This presents a disconnect in the draft, where the author has forged ahead with preparation of aspects of the analysis, in the absence of the information and guidance necessary to do so. That will have to be corrected before finalizing the IRFA.

The SSC notes that a *CQ Entity* is not identical to a *CQE-qualified community*. Indeed, the interests and objectives of each may not be identical in all respects. Maintaining this distinction is important in understanding the distribution of impacts. There are several deficiencies or errors of a substantive nature in both the RIR and IRFA that need to be resolved before final release. These include clarifying or removing misleading tables and statements (e.g., latent vessel treatment). Furthermore, each CQE community has different features, histories, facilities, and locations that affect capacity to participate in the CQE program. It would be useful if the document could include a few examples demonstrating this range. Characterizing details of social science studies on the CQE and IFQ programs, as opposed to passive reference currently found in the document, would begin to address socioeconomic and cultural issues involved in the prospects for success of this program. The SSC believes these shortcomings in the analysis can be readily corrected in short-order. **The draft represents a technically sound analytic basis for informing the public and the Council of the economic and socioeconomic implications of the competing alternative actions.** However, the SSC noted the difficulty they are placed in when presented with a document that is presented for Initial review/Final Action. Ideally, we would hope there is a

sufficient timeline for improvements to be made to the document before Final Action is taken. In this case, we note that the draft could be finalized in a reasonably short time if the Council takes Final Action at this stage.

C-6 (e) Salmon genetics update

Jeff Guyon (NMFS-AFSC) gave an overview of genetic stock composition analyses of chum salmon sampled from the 2011 pollock fishery PSC in the Bering Sea, and Chinook salmon sampled from the 2011 pollock fishery PSC in the Bering Sea and the Gulf of Alaska. Public testimony was provided by Arni Thomson (Alaska Salmon Alliance).

This (2011) was the first year of implementing a systematic sampling protocol, with a 1-in-10 and 1-in-30 sampling rate for Chinook and chum salmon, respectively. Observers successfully implemented this approach with genetic tissue samples taken from 3.2% of chum salmon and 9.7% of Chinook salmon PSC. There was strong coherence spatially and temporally between the PSC of Chinook and chum salmon and the number of individuals sampled, with the exception of samples from the GOA region where opportunistic sampling was employed. Overall composition estimates of Chinook salmon PSC from the Bering Sea in 2011 did not differ substantially from previous years, with Alaska-origin fish making up the majority of the PSC samples (>60% in 2011). The analyst did note that the composition of 2011 chum salmon PSC in the Bering Sea differed from previous years in that there were lower proportions of Asian stocks and higher proportion of Eastern GOA/PNW stocks. An opportunistic sample of Chinook salmon PSC taken from the 2011 pollock fishery in the GOA continued to indicate the presence of GOA, Canadian, and PNW stocks in the PSC.

The SSC appreciates the hard work done by the fishery observers to plan and implement the new sample design and thorough reporting of results by the analyst. We also have the following recommendations for the collection, analysis, and reporting of genetic stock composition data:

- Although there appears to be consistency among years, it remains unclear how much bias there is in stock composition estimates from 2005-2010 in relation to the improved information obtained in 2011. A graduate student at UAF is working on an analysis that examines and attempts to correct for bias in Chinook salmon stock composition from the Bering Sea. We would like to see the results of this work once it is available and support this type of analysis for chum salmon PSC in the Bering Sea.
- The sample design for chum salmon resulted in many samples that were not analyzed. Only 1,472 of 6,102 samples taken were used in the analysis. A reassessment of the 1-in-30 sampling approach should be undertaken and the sampling rate revised accordingly.
- We would appreciate a statement of the objective(s), as well as the intended use and the application of the genetic tissue sampling and stock composition estimates in the introduction sections of the two reports. Specifically, an explanation of how these data are critical in the adult equivalent analyses would be helpful. The introduction of the reports should also underscore the importance of this information in many fishery management realms, including the Pacific Salmon Treaty and State of Alaska terminal salmon fisheries.
- As was summarized for the chum salmon PSC report, we would like to see, if possible, finer spatial and temporal stratification of stock composition for Chinook salmon in the Bering Sea.
- For genetic information to aid in the reduction of salmon PSC, it will have to be analyzed and reported on much more rapidly than has been achieved to date. Efforts should be made to achieve a more efficient turnaround of collecting and processing samples.
- Efforts should be made to update the current genetic baseline for chum salmon so that it includes populations in Cook Inlet. These populations are not in the baseline used to estimate stock composition for 2005-2011. Also, we look forward to an updated baseline for Chinook.

- **The SSC recommends that a comprehensive report of genetic stock identification along with stock-based adult-equivalency, run reconstruction, and PSC harvest rate analyses be produced for selected stocks of Chinook salmon to better inform the Council of the efficacy of its efforts to reduce Chinook salmon PSC in the Bering Sea pollock fishery.**

D-1 (a) Preliminary review vessel transit corridors near Round Island

The preliminary draft EA/RIR/IRFA was presented by Steve MacLean (NPFMC). Public testimony was provided by John Gauvin (Alaska Seafood Cooperative).

This is a preliminary review of a draft EA/RIR/IRFA that analyzes the potential impacts of a proposal to establish one or more transit corridors through the Pacific walrus protection areas at Round Island and Cape Newenham. These are intended to allow vessels with Federal Fisheries Permits (FFP) to transit through the areas while participating in state-managed herring and salmon fisheries in Togiak Bay, Cape Peirce and Cape Newenham area, and Security Cove. This action was expanded to include transit for Amendment 80 vessels participating in the yellowfin sole fishery that deliver product to processors in Togiak or in the Hagemeister roadstead. Component nine of the GOA FMP Amendment 83, implemented in September 2011, prevents vessels from surrendering their FFP and reapplying for it within a three year period. As a result, vessels that temporarily gave up their FFP in order to transit through these areas are now at risk of either being out of compliance with federal regulations, or at risk of losing their FFP if they choose to surrender their federal permit. The proposed action is intended to remedy these unintended consequences, while continuing to manage the potential disturbance of walrus in northern Bristol Bay due to fishing activities.

Overall, this draft was well-organized and as complete as it can be at this point. The SSC commends the author on the efforts made thus far. It is apparent from this preliminary draft that the highest priority moving forward should be to further refine the alternatives by making some key decisions. The SSC wishes to note at the outset of its review that the early assertion in this draft that "*a corridor is necessary...*" appears to prejudge the range of solutions and alternatives that could be considered to address the identified problem. At this stage in development, an inclusive examination of available strategies seems desirable (e.g., take action to exempt FFP holders operating as a tender in the Togiak fisheries from Amendment 83 provisions during that period).

However, if transit corridors are to be proposed, the immediate decision points include, but are not limited to, the latitude and longitude coordinates, track, and size of any transit corridor(s), whether or not the corridor(s) should be charted, and which vessels should be allowed to transit through these protection areas. Input from industry, as well as the Enforcement Committee, will be critical to both refining the alternatives and informing the analysis. Additionally, the Council may want to consider if/how to incorporate tender vessels with FFPs that need to access Kulukak Bay, where a large portion of the state managed herring fishery is prosecuted. Until the alternatives are further developed, it is difficult to comment in detail on the approach taken in the analysis or to discern potential impacts of those alternatives.

In addition to the proposition that a transit corridor through currently protected habitat is necessary to alleviate potential time and /or fuel costs associated with longer transit times for FFP vessels participating in state fisheries, there seems to be an implicit preference embedded in this draft to allow an increase in vessel transit disturbance of presently protected walrus sites (resulting from establishing new corridors), in order to extend protection from disturbance to a potential or developing haulout on Hagemeister Island associated with the current (i.e., status quo) traffic patterns. Similarly, the potential reduction of current disturbance levels of FFP vessels avoiding walrus protection areas by transiting through state waters, closer to haulout sites, is not emphasized, though it is mentioned. However, once the alternatives are

refined, these tradeoffs in the movement of the fleet and potential shifts in disturbance should be expanded upon and clarified.

The entire draft would benefit from a careful proof-read, as several errors distract from the message being presented (e.g., FFP is referred to as FMP). A figure showing the current transit pathways and the proposed transit corridors (should such be identified and charted) should be included in future versions.

Environmental Assessment: The SSC's main comments on the content of the EA are centered on Section 3.0, Affected Environment. For Section 3.2.1 on the herring fishery, it would be useful to include timing of the fishery in past years, as there are seasonal changes in walrus distribution in this area and variable timing of the fishery could result in different impacts. Inter-annual variability in tendering participation, including those with FFPs, is also essential to establish a baseline of potentially impacted vessels. Further investigation is required to determine the potential for both the state-prosecuted salmon fishery and the northern Bristol Bay halibut fishery to be impacted by this action. Currently, the description of these two fisheries is not sufficient and will need to be substantially expanded. Additional information should include details on landings, timing of each of these fisheries, and vessel participation.

The Marine Mammals section (3.3) is well organized and well written. Information on the methodology of the ADF&G surveys on Round Island would be useful to incorporate, as the draft relies heavily on this dataset. Updated observer data for incidental mortality of walrus, if this is available, should be included as well (Table 3-2, pg. 24). Finally, the discussion of each of the walrus haulout locations *separately* makes it difficult to assess the overall walrus population trend in northern Bristol Bay. A section synthesizing this information would be a helpful addition.

In both Section 4.0 (Environmental Effects) and within the RIR, there should be an expanded treatment of the cumulative impacts of the potential selection of both Alternatives 2 and 3, especially once the Council has provided some more guidance on the details of those alternatives. While the document suggests that risk of disturbance from opening transit corridors is low, opening both corridors would expose a larger proportion of the local population to disturbance, and remove potential sites of refuge from disturbance. The actual risk is likely to depend on some of the follow-on decisions that the Council must make (as above).

Regulatory Impact Review/Initial Regulatory Flexibility Analysis: In the RIR, there are assertions made that are not supported by either data or logical extrapolation of the underlying arguments. These should be examined and, where appropriate, elaborated upon to more fully present the potential economic and operational trade-offs. There appear to be several opportunities to explore existing information to enhance these assertions within the RIR, for example, by consulting industry sources on distances and running times for vessels tendering herring or salmon when: (a) not permitted transit, and (b) if permitted transit. Simply asserting there "may" be fuel savings, or there "may" be product quality improvements owing to (presumably) substantially shorter run times, could be more rigorously assessed or fully characterized.

Likewise, records on VMS capability should be available for every FFP vessel with a potential to benefit from the proposed action, allowing a narrowing of the range of possibly adversely impacted operations. Currently, the text states that 43 vessels functioned as Togiak tenders, but only 18 have VMS. Given the requirements in most federal groundfish and crab fisheries, it seems surprising that such a large number of (implicitly) FFP vessels (i.e., $43-18=25$) would not have VMS. The SSC's expectation would be that some of the 43 are not FFP holders. This is an empirical question that should be answered.

Extending from this same point is the matter of the cost of extra VMS reports. If the frequency of VMS signaling must be increased for enforcement purposes, what is the cost to fishermen? It is not clear how

one interprets and extrapolates the \$25.88/mo/additional VMS filing. Once that is clear, one should be able to estimate the approximate number of FFP vessels that typically serve as tenders, how many operational days each tender works on average, and what the per vessel and aggregate VMS increased costs should be. The same questions could be explored with respect to the yellowfin sole operations, should they be permitted transit privileges, or salmon or halibut fisheries, if necessary.

The IRFA awaits several decisions of the Council (e.g., PPA), and so cannot be developed at this stage.

Minor editorial comments:

- Figure 3.1 (p. 9): Please match the description of the closure areas in the legend to those in the text descriptions. Also, would it be possible to zoom in and allow for more detail in this figure?
- Figure 3.3 (p. 13): The text within the figure is too small to be read. Can the text or the figure be made larger?
- Figure 3.4 (p. 14): A key is needed for this figure. What is the difference between the black and red lines?
- 3.2.3 Halibut Fishery (p. 14): Please clarify the IPHC statistical areas referred to in the text.
- There are several locations where it is stated that Hagemester Island is a part of the Togiak National Wildlife Refuge (e.g., top paragraph of p. 21). However, Figure 3.8 (p. 20) does not include this island as part of the Togiak NWR.
- Section 5.1 (p. 33): There is no mention of the expansion of the action to include vessels participating in the yellowfin sole fishery in these two paragraphs of the introduction.

Overall, these additions and corrections do not appear excessively burdensome, and should probably be undertaken before this package moves forward.

D-1 (d) Crab modeling report

André Punt (University of Washington) presented an overview of the crab modeling workshop held in Anchorage, AK, during February 26 – March 1, 2013. He was assisted by Diana Stram (NPFMC). There was no public testimony.

The workshop was chaired by André Punt, and was attended by members of the Crab Plan Team, three members of the SSC, and individuals from the public and the fishing industry. The workshop focused on input data, CPUE standardization, and stock assessment models for the Aleutian Island golden king crab and Norton Sound red king crab stocks. General conclusions from the workshop report are: (1) CPUE standardization to remove factors that are not related to abundance does not guarantee that the resulting index will be proportional to abundance, (2) assembly of model input data should be reconstructed from the primary (raw) data and documented such that it is repeatable by the next generation of scientists, and (3) there is a need for thorough simulation testing of all assessment models. Progress toward a generic crab model was also reviewed and discussed. SSC comments on these three activities appear below. The SSC noted that the workshop was very productive and commended Drs. Punt and Stram for their organization and leadership.

Aleutian Islands Golden King Crab

Available catch and effort data for Aleutian Islands golden king crab (AIGKC) show a large increase in CPUE after fisheries rationalization in 2004. Also, size composition data trend towards larger average size over time. It is unclear if these changes in size composition and CPUE are a result of changes in abundance or changes in fishing behavior. Post-rationalization in 2004, soak times in the fishery have increased significantly and the proportion of zero catch in pots has decreased, indicating a change in fishing practices that may have caused an increase in CPUE. But the change in soak time cannot be

separated from a potential increase in abundance and a higher probability of catching crab. An industry survey, using modified pots with smaller mesh size and no escape rings, has demonstrated that the size composition of the population does contain sub-legal crab in the areas fished. The industry survey could be used in the future to develop an index of abundance for a broader range of size classes that are presently excluded in the standardized CPUE index.

There are two primary sources of data available for developing a CPUE index: observer data detailed on a pot-by-pot basis, and the fish ticket data detailed at the trip level. The fish ticket data lack information about soak time. Therefore, these data are not suitable for standardization. The workshop recommendation for CPUE standardization is to focus only on the observer data, including soak time as a covariate. Additional recommendations include splitting the CPUE series into pre- and post-rationalization (split at 1995/96), because the number of participating vessels decreased post-rationalization.

The AIGKC stock is currently a Tier 5 stock and an assessment model for this stock has been in development for a couple of years. The assessment is split into two areas, one east and one west of 174 degrees. Two separate models are currently in development for each of these areas. The workshop focused on model structure and not the model results. It was noted that there were a number of coding issues that may lead to spurious results associated with initial starting conditions and or constants that are hard-wired into the code. The model is not ready for adoption in its current form and requires a considerable amount of work to bring it up to standards where it would be recommended for guiding management advice. The workshop provided a long list of recommendations for the AIGKC model including issues relating to coding standards, simulation testing, and developing a standard set of model diagnostics and summary plots for residual fits to observed data.

The SSC recommends continued development of CPUE standardization and diagnostics for the AIGKC and recommends that the time series be split into pre- and post-rationalization periods. The SSC also endorsed the list of recommendations for the AIGKC model in the workshop report (most of which involve recoding the existing model). The SSC also discussed and recommend including the AIGKC as a case study for the Generic Crab Model (GCM) that is being developed over the next year.

Norton Sound Red King Crab

One of the most important data issues is re-analysis of the NMFS survey data. Large differences occurred when survey estimates were recomputed from raw data. So-called "pot survey" values were actually mark-recapture estimates; estimates from 1980-1982 were adjusted by a factor not based on data from those years. The choice of $CV = 0.34$ for the "pot survey" estimates needs justification. The SSC agreed with the workshop recommendation regarding standardization that interactions not be considered for years 1978-1992, but that interactions with year should be considered for later years, perhaps treating them as random effects or performing additional data filtering to reduce the magnitude of interactions. The SSC did not necessarily agree with the workshop recommendation that imputation not be used, but recommended that, if used, they be accompanied by a thorough justification.

In terms of assessment issues, the SSC learned that harvest specifications will be made in April starting next year to accommodate management of the summer fishery. While there is an approved assessment model, there is concern that the model does not fit the 1976 and 1979 indices very well. There is also evidence that catchabilities differ between ADF&G and NMFS surveys but are assumed equal in the assessment. The SSC agreed with the workshop report that initial size composition should be estimated and that an additional variance term is needed for CPUE data. The SSC notes that additional work is needed to prevent incomplete convergence from occurring. Finally, the SSC recommends that the analyst

conduct a sensitivity analysis of natural mortality, including examination of higher natural mortality and also time-varying natural mortality if time permits.

Generic Crab Model

At the workshop, Athol Whitten, a post-doc working with André Punt at the University of Washington, discussed the development of a Generic Crab Model (GCM) based on equations developed by Mark Maunder and the development of a library of functions, compatible with ADMB, commonly used in fisheries stock assessments (<https://code.google.com/p/admb-cstar/>). The goal is to develop an open-source software platform that can serve as the basis for all crab stock assessment models. The principle is the same as the Stock Synthesis platform, but differs in that it is a completely open source project and the owners of the code are stock assessment authors who contribute to the project. If successful, this will greatly facilitate future crab stock assessment reviews, reduce errors in model formulation, expedite the development of new models for other stocks, and facilitate the transfer of models to future assessment scientists.

The SSC supports the development of a GCM, including the plan to test the GCM against two established assessment models (Bristol Bay and Norton Sound red king crab). It will be important to validate the GCM using simulation modeling. Also, a minimum set of coding standards, model documentation, and use of version control (“an undo button”) should be established and this may be better facilitated through a developer’s workshop. Due to the open source nature, the SSC also recommends a series of benchmark tests that must be satisfied to ensure any future changes to the code do not “break” the code. Finally, as Athol Whitten’s post-doc lasts only two years, it will be important to establish a permanent home for the administration of the GCM project, including identifying an administrator who is responsible for maintaining the GCM website, code-repository, and other administrator activities.

D-1 (e) Research Priorities

The SSC received a report from Diana Stram (NPFMC) following up on our request from the June 2012 meeting to develop a more orderly process for submitting and prioritizing proposals for research priorities through the Plan Teams. The Plan Teams and Council staff have proposed a process to identify and describe research priorities, which have been incorporated in a spreadsheet and will eventually be made available online as a searchable database. Diana summarized the discussions of the Plan Teams and the structure of the database as currently envisioned. Michael Fey (AKFIN) provided a brief overview of how the Plan Teams and the SSC would enter and update priorities through a web-based interface.

The SSC discussion focused on the proposed process and the structure of the database. The review of updated research priorities and their relative rankings suggested by the Plan Teams were delegated to an SSC working group. **The process should provide an efficient means for prioritizing research and monitoring activities that are needed to support the Council's needs.** The proposed database should be designed to make it easy for the Plan Teams and for the SSC to annually (or more frequently, as needed) review and update research priorities and for users to easily view and search the Council’s research priorities. The target audience includes funders, in particular NPRB, agencies, and researchers who wish to identify research that is important to the Council, managers, and the public.

The SSC suggests some fairly substantial modifications to the current database structure as the research priorities are moved from a relatively static document to an online database. The rationale for the proposed modifications is that the research priorities should clearly flow from the management objectives and priorities of the Council. **Therefore, the SSC requests that the Council provides an updated list of ongoing (long-term), current, and upcoming management actions, along with a prioritization of these management actions, by April of each year.** These management priorities will guide the SSC in ranking corresponding research priorities and each research priority should be clearly

linked to a management priority to clarify **why** the research is needed (purpose/management context). In addition, each research priority should have specific **scientific objectives** and should identify **what** type of research is needed to address these objectives and possibly **how** the research may be accomplished (data needs, analytical approaches). The research priorities should further identify the geographic scope, the species of interest, the fishery/fisheries affected, and the scientific expertise (discipline/sub-discipline) required to address the objectives. The SSC further suggests eliminating the categories 'ongoing' and 'immediate concerns' that have led to unnecessary confusion and instead rely on the prioritization of research activities (High, Medium, Low), regardless of whether they are routine monitoring activities (e.g., trawl surveys), relate to ongoing research (e.g., ocean acidification), or address immediate concerns (e.g., research on skate nurseries).

The SSC discussed and refined a draft proposal for modifying the current suite of fields and associated keywords/phrases in the proposed database. These specific recommendations will be finalized by e-mail correspondence and will be forwarded to Council staff for further input and for moving current research priorities and proposed changes to the new format. A separate SSC working group will review research priorities as modified and ranked by the Plan Teams, as well as halibut research priorities from the IPHC that may be relevant to Council actions.