

MEMORANDUM

TO: Council, SSC, and AP Members

FROM: Chris Oliver *Chris*
Acting Executive Director

DATE: November 28, 2000

SUBJECT: Staff Tasking

ESTIMATED TIME 4 HOURS (all D-2 items)
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ACTION REQUIRED

- (a) Receive industry and staff reports on salmon bycatch and develop alternatives for analysis as appropriate.
- (b) Discuss and provide direction on AFA report to Congress.
- (c) Review other, overall tasking and provide direction.

BACKGROUND

Salmon Bycatch Issues

This year's returns of chinook and chum salmon to the Yukon, Kuskokwim, and Norton Sound regions were poor. In July, Governor Tony Knowles declared this to be a disaster, and wrote a letter requesting the Council to stop or at least reduce bycatch of chinook and chum salmon. The Governor also asked the Council to require 100% observer coverage on all vessels fishing in the EEZ.

At the September meeting, the Council initiated consideration of measures to further improve bycatch controls for salmon taken incidentally in pollock fisheries. The Council also requested a letter be sent to Governor Knowles informing him of the Council's intention to further address salmon bycatch. The letter described existing management measures to control salmon bycatch, the voluntary program used by the fishing industry to avoid salmon bycatch, and noted the compounding problems of bycatch and measures taken to reduce fishery impacts on Steller sea lions. It also described potential industry based measures, enacted through co-op agreements, which the Council would be considering at this meeting. A copy of the Council's letter is attached as Item D2(a)(1).

At this meeting, the Council may develop alternatives for analysis based on industry proposals and information presented in reports from the Bering Sea pollock cooperatives. Alternatively, such measures may not require regulatory action by the Council if successfully implemented by the co-ops. We expect a draft of interco-op agreements in that regard for Council review this week. Based on discussions at the October meeting, staff has also made an initial examination of salmon bycatch in the Gulf of Alaska, with a discussion paper provided as Item D2(a)(2).

Report to Congress

I reported to you briefly in October regarding the report to Congress which was technically due on October 1, 2000, and our plan to spend this fall and next spring putting together a report which would encompass a year of full AFA implementation. I have spoken to some key Congressional staff about this and they recognize the rationale for postponing that report until sometime next year. In the meantime our staff has begun putting together a first draft of such a report. We expect to continue this work with help from NMFS and utilizing the co-op reports which will be finalized by the February 2001 meeting. We also are coordinating with ADF&G to the extent some of their research projects with AFA funds will lend themselves to information in that report to Congress. In particular is their project to examine the industrial organization of the fisheries and how that is changing under the AFA.

We also have initiated a contract, using some of our AFA funds, with Dr. Micheal Downs of KEA Environmental, Inc. to examine the social/community aspects of AFA implementation. I also intend to formally request assistance from the State of Alaska to provide us a report on the impacts to the CDQ program, as prescribed in the Act. I believe that between these various efforts, and those of our own staff, we will be able to compile a comprehensive report that responds to the various requests in the Act. Given the importance of this report, and its potential relevance to future co-ops in other fisheries, I would like to get some input from the Council on how you would like to be involved, in terms of Council and/or public review prior to submittal to Congress. Perhaps the April meeting would be an appropriate time for some type of review of a draft report, with final submittal by late May.

Existing and potential new tasking

Attached is a spreadsheet that should be familiar to you by now - Item D-2(c)(1). I have shortened it by deleting projects that are complete, or are largely complete (at least in terms of Council and Council staff workload). There are three sections - Existing Projects (which we are currently working on); Previously Tasked Projects (Council has provided direction, but projects are largely not started); and, (3) Potential New Tasking (includes issues previously discussed by the Council, but not formally tasked to staff). For each project I have estimated the required staff time, where possible, and provided an estimate of available staff time between now and April.

Major work currently envisioned between now and the February Council meeting includes: finishing the halibut charter IFQ/community set-aside analysis (and two Committee meetings to review the draft); continued work on AFA report to Congress; development of RFPs/SOWs for long-term AFA related contacts; HAPC stakeholder process; Observer Program issues and Committee meeting; completion of BSAI pot cod split amendment; finalize subsistence actions for submittal; and, GOA Rationalization Committee and associated preparation for February discussion. With these actions, and pending holidays, I don't believe we can expect any new analyses for February consideration, though you may wish to get started, as possible, on some new projects for further discussion in February, or possible review in April.

There are a few very large projects on the Potential New Tasking list - these include - GOA Rationalization, Crab Rationalization, SSL related measures, and alternatives for the groundfish processing sideboard package (IR/TU adjustments, trawl LLP recency, and other possible alternatives) which you scheduled for discussion in February. Once again for your reference, we have carried forward the 1999 groundfish, crab, and IFQ program proposals under Item D-2(c)(2). I believe February is going to provide a better opportunity for the Council to consider the range of issues and task staff accordingly.

North Pacific Fishery Management Council

David Benton, Chairman
Chris Oliver, Acting Executive Director

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September 28, 2000

The Honorable Tony Knowles
Governor, State of Alaska
P.O. Box 110001
Juneau, AK 99811-0001

Dear Governor Knowles:

Thank you for your August 8 letter regarding the status of this year's returns of chinook and chum salmon to the Yukon, Kuskokwim, and Norton Sound regions. Your letter requested the Council to stop the bycatch of chinook and chum salmon, and to require 100% observer coverage on all trawl vessels fishing in the EEZ.

The Council has enacted several measures to control bycatch of salmon in groundfish fisheries. Time and area closures for the Bering Sea trawl fisheries have been established to keep the fishery out of 'hotspot' bycatch areas. Additionally, the trawl fisheries are allocated a limited amount of salmon they can take as bycatch; if more salmon are taken, additional closures are implemented. To reduce the probability of additional closures, the fishing industry has implemented a voluntary program to avoid salmon bycatch by making bycatch rate information available to the entire fleet. A summary of these measures is provided as an attachment to this letter.

At its September meeting, the Council also heard from fishermen regarding the current court ordered injunction, which closes 58,000 square nautical miles to trawling, and the potential to compound salmon bycatch issues, as they have to fish in new areas with lower catch rates and longer tow times. Often characterized as a 'lightning strike' event, bycatch of salmon could potentially be exacerbated by these closures. For all these reasons, we share your concerns and are committed to developing appropriate remedies relative to the fisheries under our jurisdiction.

At our recent meeting the Council initiated development of a regulatory package to further improve bycatch controls for salmon taken incidentally in the pollock fisheries. One of the existing problems identified with the current bycatch management program is that there are no incentives for individual vessels to reduce their own bycatch. The current limits and controls apply at the fleet level. A possible improvement would be to subdivide the salmon bycatch limits among the pollock fishery cooperatives, and allow them to directly address the bycatch issue through a rate-based incentive program within their fleets. Such an approach proved quite effective in the days of the foreign fisheries off Alaska.

We intend to discuss this initiative again at our October meeting, and in December we will receive the end-of-year catch and bycatch reports from the pollock cooperatives, as well as a specific rate-based proposal. This will provide the Council and its staff the specifics with which to complete the necessary analyses and overall regulatory package. For the beginning of the 2001 fisheries, until such regulations are formally implemented, we anticipate a voluntary implementation of this approach by the pollock cooperatives.

The Honorable Tony Knowles

September 28, 2000

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With regard to observer coverage, the Council and NMFS are in the process of reviewing the observer program in its entirety. The Council did not specifically discuss the issue of additional observer coverage at this time, though nothing would preclude us from considering appropriate measures when we discuss this again in October and December. At our September meeting the Council received a report on the recently completed independent review of the groundfish observer program which was commissioned by NMFS. We have scheduled a more comprehensive review of the observer program for discussion at our February 2001 meeting in Anchorage. At that time the Council will undoubtedly consider the issue of observer coverage. Again, we share your concerns, and I wish to assure you that this Council is committed to developing further management measures that will minimize the bycatch of salmon.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "David Benton". The signature is fluid and cursive, with a large initial "D" and "B".

David Benton
Chairman

cc: Dan Coffey, BOF

Comments on Salmon Bycatch:

Some salmon are taken incidentally as bycatch in the Alaska groundfish trawl fisheries of the Bering Sea and Aleutian Islands (BSAI) and Gulf of Alaska (GOA). Bycatch is closely monitored through the fisheries observer program. Salmon bycatch from groundfish trawl fisheries is shown in the adjacent table. Bycatch of salmon in the BSAI has been somewhat variable in recent years. Most of the salmon bycatch is taken in the pelagic trawl pollock fishery.

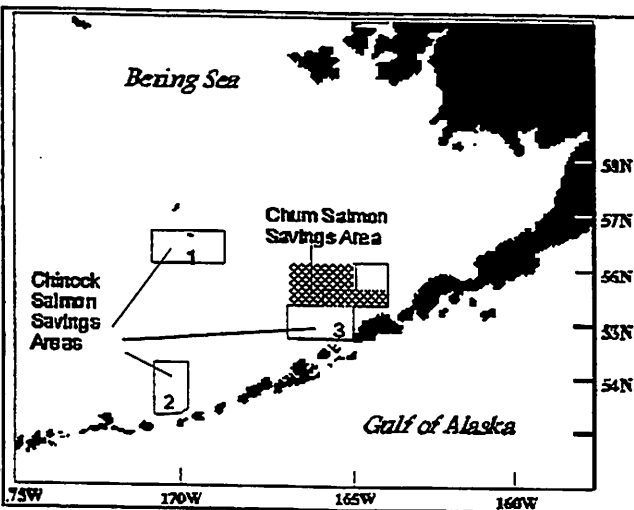
Virtually all salmon bycatch is chinook salmon and chum salmon, with less than 5% of the salmon bycatch comprised of sockeye, pinks, or coho salmon. Previous analysis of bycatch data had indicated the bycatch is primarily juvenile salmon that are one or two years away from returning to the river of origin as adults. The origin of salmon taken as bycatch includes rivers in western Alaska, central and southeast Alaska, Asia, and British Columbia. Four separate studies of salmon taken as bycatch in Bering Sea trawl fisheries have shown that about 60% of the chinook salmon originate from western Alaska rivers (Yukon, Kuskokwim, Bristol Bay drainages). An unknown, but likely lower, percentage of the GOA salmon bycatch originates from western Alaska. The origin composition of chum salmon taken as bycatch remains unknown, but preliminary work suggests that Asian and North American stocks are well intermixed in the Bering Sea, so one would expect bycatch to reflect relative run strengths. It has been estimated that bycatch from Bering Sea trawl fisheries accounted for < 1% of the chum salmon population and in the order of 2 - 4% of the adult chinook salmon population in Alaska.

Number of salmon taken as bycatch in BSAI and GOA groundfish trawl fisheries 1993-2000 (through 8/5/00). Note that >95% of the 'other' salmon is chum salmon.

	Chinook Salmon		Other Salmon	
	BSAI	GOA	BSAI	GOA
1993	45,964	24,465	243,246	56,388
1994	43,636	13,613	94,508	37,226
1995	23,079	14,647	21,780	64,792
1996	63,179	15,761	77,926	4,176
1997	50,218	15,095	67,536	3,416
1998	55,427	16,984	65,631	13,544
1999	12,924	30,600	46,295	7,522
2000	6,666	15,735	25,683	3,088

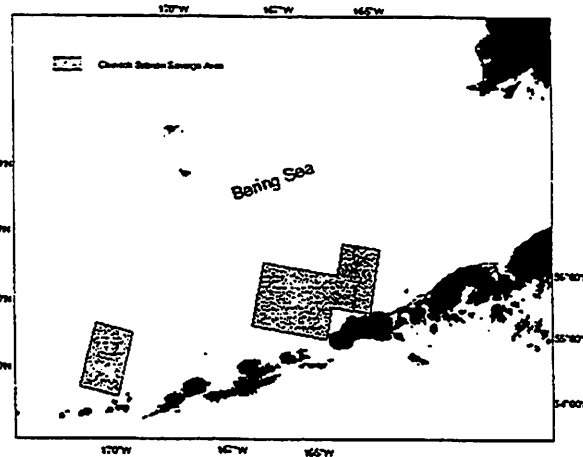
Salmon are listed as a prohibited species in the groundfish fishery management plans, meaning that they cannot be kept, and must be returned to the sea as soon as possible with a minimum of injury. However, regulations implemented in 1994 prohibited the discard of salmon taken as bycatch in BSAI groundfish trawl fisheries until the number of salmon has been determined by a NMFS certified observer. The intent of these regulations was to provide additional information on the magnitude of salmon bycatch in these fisheries. Additional regulations were adopted to allow voluntary retention of salmon for donation to foodbanks. Salmon retained for this purpose are processed and distributed in a fashion that is easily monitored.

The Council has taken measures to control the bycatch of salmon in trawl fisheries. Several bycatch "hotspot" areas have been closed to trawl fishing if too many salmon are encountered (see adjacent figure). Beginning in 1995, the Chum Salmon Savings Area has been closed to all trawling from August 1 through August 31. Additionally, regulations specify that the area remains closed if a bycatch limit of 42,000 chum salmon is taken within the catcher vessel operational area. Although more than 42,000 chum salmon were taken over the course of a year from 1995 through 1999, additional closures had not been triggered because the bycatch limit



was not attained within the area prior to the accounting period (January 1 to October 14). From 1996 through 1999, regulations were in place to prohibit trawling in the Chinook Salmon Savings Areas through April 15 if and when a bycatch limit of 48,000 chinook salmon was attained in the Bering Sea and Aleutian Islands trawl fisheries. More than 48,000 chinook salmon were taken as bycatch annually from 1996 through 1998, but the closure was not triggered because the bycatch limit was not exceeded before April 15.

In 1999, the Council adopted Amendment 58 to reduce the amount of chinook salmon allowed to be taken as bycatch in BSAI trawl fisheries. Specifically, the alternative adopted did the following (1) reduced the chinook salmon bycatch limit from 48,000 to 29,000 chinook salmon over a 4-year period, (2) implemented year-round accounting of chinook salmon bycatch in the pollock fishery, beginning on January 1 of each year, (3) revised the boundaries of the Chinook Salmon Savings Areas, and (4) set more restrictive closure dates. In the event the limit is triggered before April 15, the Chinook Salmon Savings Area closes immediately. The closure would be removed on April 16, but would be reinitiated September 1 and continue through the end of the year. If the limit were reached after April 15, but before September 1, then the areas would close on September 1. If the limit were reached after September 1, the areas would close immediately through the end of the year. The bycatch limit for 2000 fisheries was set at 41,000 chinook salmon.



Location of the chinook salmon savings areas in the BSAI, as modified by Amendment 58.

In light of the current situation of depressed chum and chinook salmon stocks in the Yukon, Kuskokwim, and Norton Sound regions, the North Pacific Fishery Management Council will review status of the those stocks at it next meeting beginning September 8, 2000. The Council will hear reports from the National Marine Fisheries Service and the Alaska Department of Fish and Game, and also may have recommendations from a joint committee of Council and Alaska Board of Fisheries members which will meet September 7. After reviewing the situation and cumulative bycatch information, the Council may consider taking further action as appropriate.

Salmon Bycatch in the Gulf of Alaska Groundfish Fisheries 1993-2000

Preliminary data analysis prepared by
Cathy Coon, Council staff

Pacific salmon, including chinook (*Oncorhynchus tshawytscha*), chum (*O. Keta*), coho (*O. kisutch*), sockeye (*O. Nerka*), and pink (*O. Gorbuscha*) are among the species taken incidentally in the groundfish fisheries within the Gulf of Alaska. National Marine Fisheries Service (NMFS) manages bycatch of salmon in two groups; the first is chinook and the other 4 species are combined into the 'other salmon' category. Over 95% of the 'other salmon' bycatch consists of chum salmon.

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Overview

I examined bycatch location of observed hauls using the North Pacific Groundfish Observer Program (NPGOP) database from 1999-2000* (through 10/21/00), and NMFS catch reporting statistics for groundfish rates and number of salmon bycatch (1993-2000*). This paper provides a preliminary spatial and temporal analysis of salmon bycatch within the pollock trawl fisheries between 1993-2000.

All five species of Pacific salmon have been taken in the GOA groundfish fisheries. The 'other salmon' category represents about 60% of the salmon taken by these fisheries. Gulf of Alaska trawlers fishing for groundfish in 1993-2000 reported an average annual bycatch of 19,800 chinook salmon and 25,000 'other salmon'. The fishery with the largest salmon bycatch during this time period is the pelagic trawl pollock fishery.

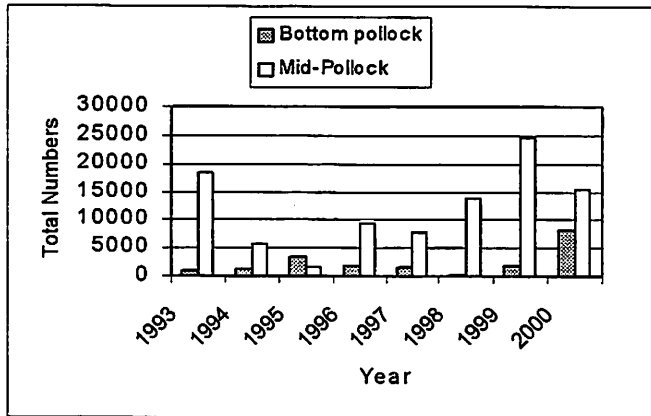


Figure 1. Number of chinook salmon bycatch in the GOA pollock fisheries between 1993-2000.

Temporal distribution of salmon bycatch

Between 1993 and 2000 there is annual variation in the amount of salmon taken as bycatch within the pelagic and non-pelagic pollock trawl fisheries. Bycatch is reported in this document as expanded number estimates.

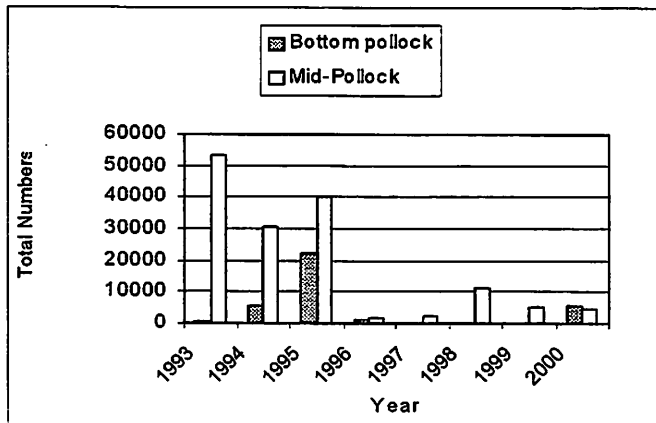


Figure 2. Number of 'other salmon' bycatch in the GOA pollock fisheries between 1993-2000.

The number of chinook salmon caught as bycatch in the pollock trawl fishery has increased from 9,550 to 23,500 between 1997

and 2000 (Figure 1). There has been a decline from over 54,000 'other salmon' caught in 1993 to just under 10,000 in 2000 (Figure 2).

The pollock fisheries in the Gulf of Alaska are managed on a quarterly basis, with the trawl fishery beginning on January 20th each year. Within the pelagic pollock trawl fishery, salmon bycatch fluctuates by season which can be tracked on a quarterly or weekly basis.

Chinook bycatch is highest (in numbers of fish) in the 1st, 3rd and 4th quarters (Figure 3). Within the 1st quarter bycatch rates are high between February and March with a quarterly average of 4,500 fish. The 3rd quarter had the highest weekly numbers reported between June and July with a quarterly average of 4,100 fish. The 4th quarter had high numbers throughout September to December with a quarterly average of 2,700 fish. The high number of salmon taken as bycatch in each quarter coincides with a lower rate of groundfish harvest as shown using 2000 data in Figure 4. For years 1997-2000 most weeks in October (4th quarter) have had high bycatch reported numbers compared to groundfish harvest levels indicating higher bycatch rates.

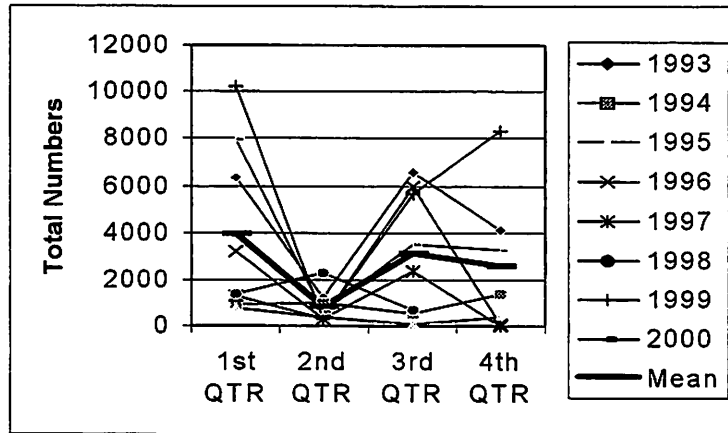


Figure 3. Number of chinook salmon bycatch from the pelagic pollock fishery by quarters 1993-2000.

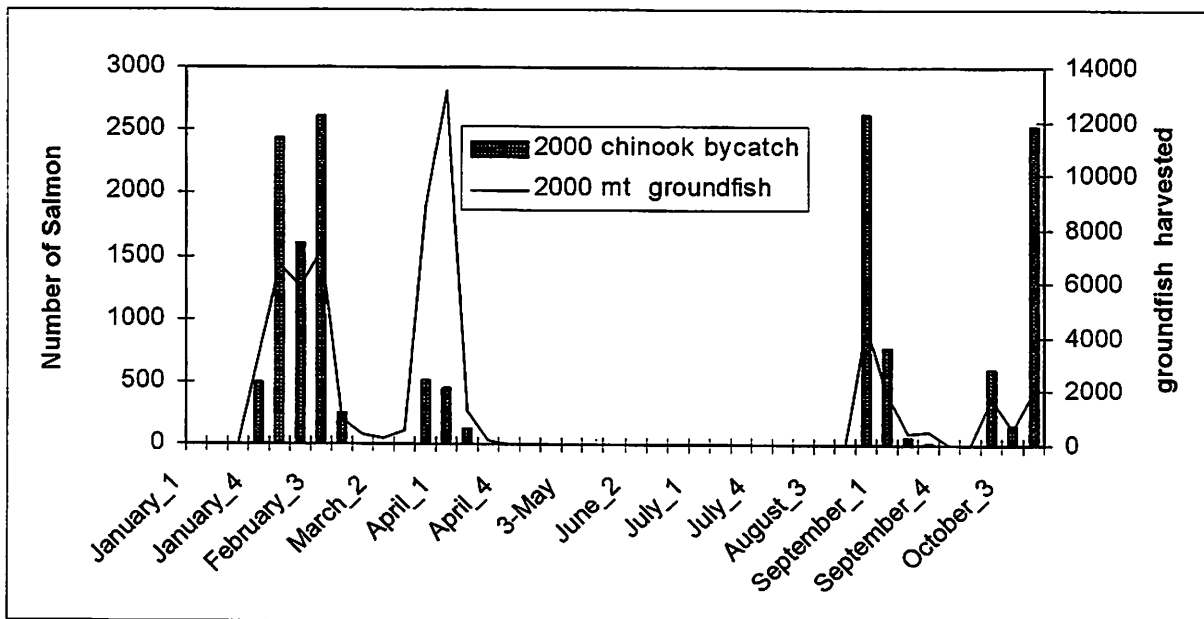


Figure 4. Chinook salmon bycatch and groundfish catch (mt) in the 2000 pelagic trawl fishery.

The highest average number of 'other salmon' bycatch was caught in the 3rd and 4th fishing quarters (Figure 5). Within the 3rd quarter, bycatch rates are highest between the 2nd week of July to the 3rd week of August. The average number of 'other salmon' taken within the 3rd quarter is 13,200 fish. Within 1993-1999 July and August typically have lower harvest levels of groundfish and higher bycatch incidences of 'other salmon', and September for year 2000 indicating high bycatch rates (Figure 6).

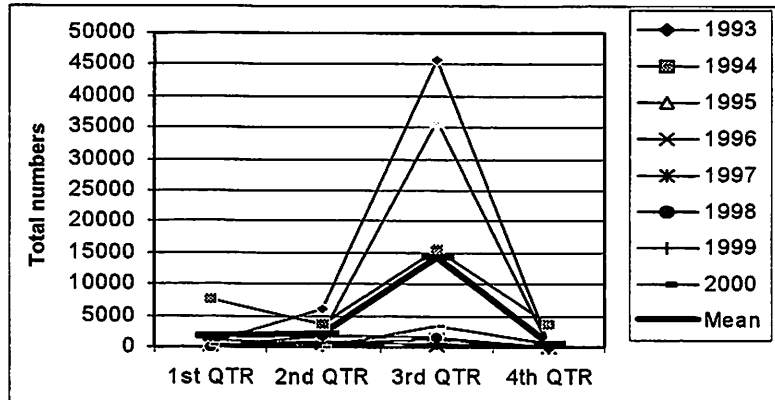


Figure 5. Number of 'other salmon' bycatch in the pelagic pollock trawl fishery by quarters 1993-2000.

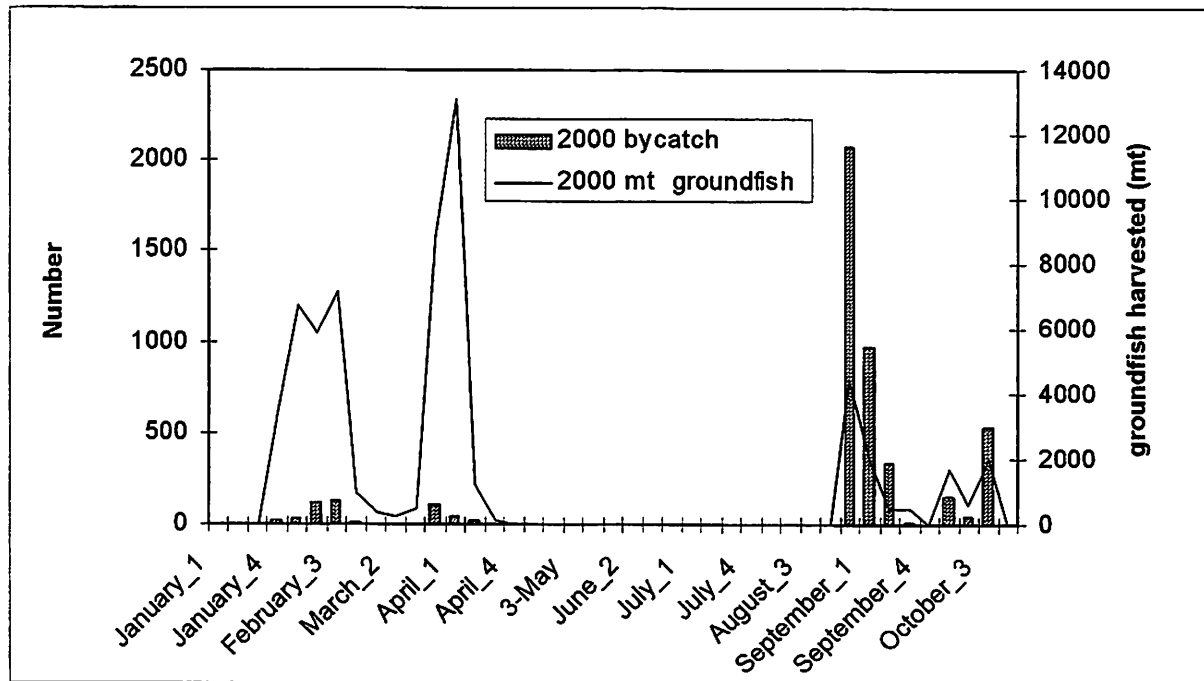


Figure 6. Bycatch of 'other salmon' and groundfish catch (mt) in the 2000 pelagic pollock trawl fishery.

Spatial distribution of salmon bycatch in the Gulf of Alaska pollock fishery

An examination of fishing effort for the pollock trawl fishery (both pelagic and bottom) was done using Geographical Information System (GIS) using 1999-2000 target data from NMFS for salmon bycatch rates (personal communication, Galen Tromble) and locations of the pollock trawl fishery from observed pollock trawls (catch weights equaling fifty percent or greater the overall catch). Although there seems to be a strong temporal component of when salmon bycatch occurs, there is also a spatial component to effort in the pollock fishery by quarter. Most of the observed pollock trawl fishery between 1999 and October 2000 occurred within the Steller sea lion critical habitat areas. The majority of the pollock fishery occurs in the central Gulf of Alaska, predominantly around Kodiak Island. There is some effort in the Western Gulf around Sand Point

and King Cove, and the location of that effort varies by fishing quarter.

The first quarter pollock trawl fishery has observed chinook salmon bycatch that occurred predominantly on the eastern side of Kodiak Island in Shelikof Strait (Figure 7). Within the first quarter, there were 451 sampled chinook salmon in 77 trawls out of 1,264 observed trawls. The third and fourth quarter fisheries occurred on the south end near Alitak Bay, Cape Barnabas, Horses Head, and near Marmot flats. There were 2,380 sampled chinook in 130 of the 753 observed trawls. Within the fourth quarter there were 1,130 chinook observed in 118 out of the 384 observed trawls.

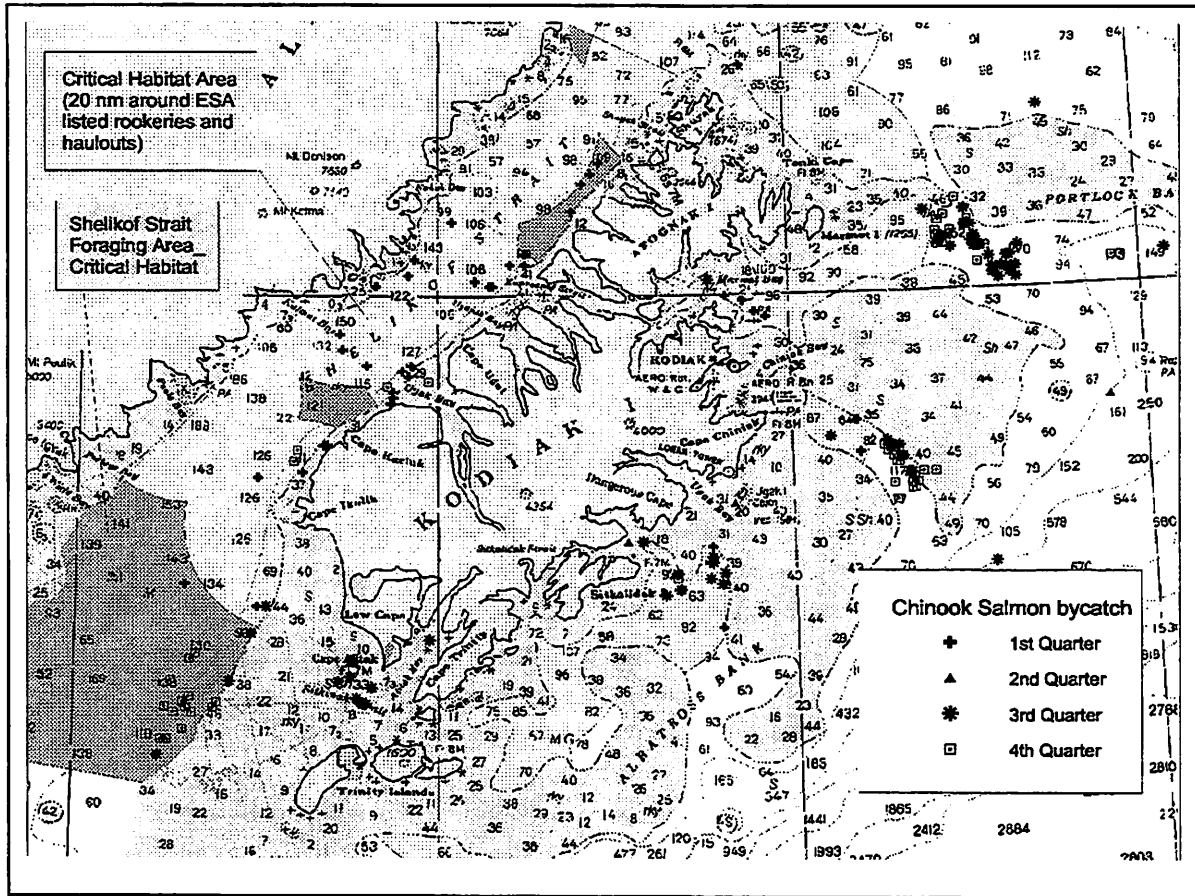


Figure 7. Locations of 1999-2000 chinook salmon bycatch in the pollock trawl fishery near Kodiak Island by quarter.

The locations of 'other salmon' bycatch within the pollock trawl fishery also predominantly occurred near the Kodiak Island region in the central Gulf of Alaska. Most of the bycatch occurred within the 3rd quarter pollock fishery. The effort of the 3rd quarter pollock fishery that had bycatch of 'other salmon' occurred outside the 20 nautical mile (nm) critical habitat areas for Steller sea lions. Most of the effort that had sampled bycatch was near Horses Head and Marmot Flats (Figure 8). For all years in this analysis the 3rd quarter had the highest bycatch amounts, however within 1999-2000 time period both the 3rd and 4th quarters had almost equal amounts of the 'other salmon' category sampled. The 3rd quarter had 590 'other salmon' sampled in 77 of the 1,264 observed trawls. The 4th quarter pollock fishery had 656 'other salmon' sampled in 74 of the 384 observed trawls.

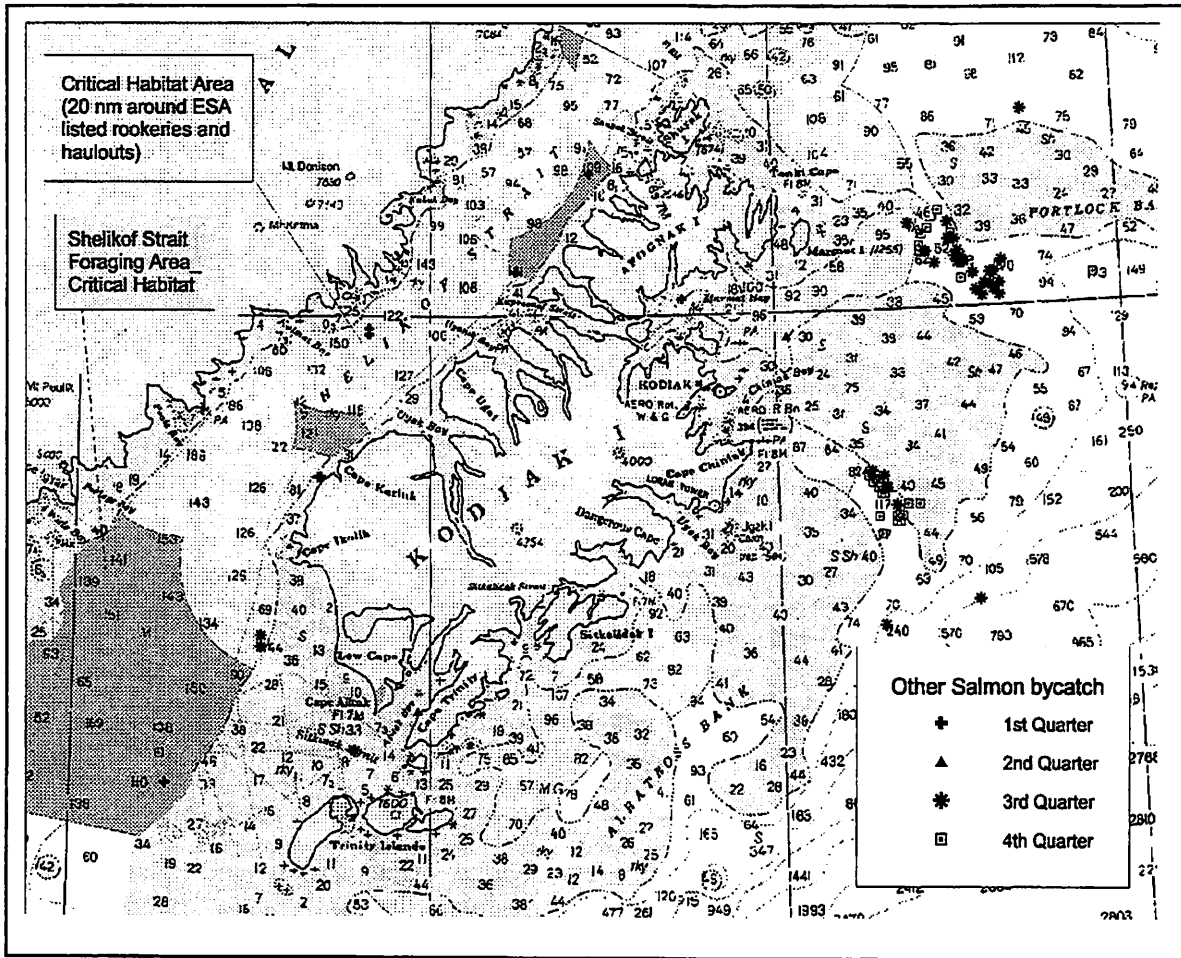


Figure 8. Locations of 1999-2000 'other salmon' bycatch in the pollock trawl fishery near Kodiak Island by quarter.

Council Staff Tasking Summary (as of December 1, 2000)

Existing Projects	Projected Weeks	A/E%	Comments
FMP Updates	3	100/0	Requires Council staff work in Spring 2001
AFA EIS/Proposed Rule	2	70/30	Requires Council staff work in Dec/Jan
AFA Report to Congress (final)	8	60/40	Final report will require staff work this fall/spring + contracts
EFH/HAPC Stakeholder Process	3	90/10	Council staff to coordinate stakeholder process in early 2001
Halibut Charter IFQ/Community Set-Aside	9	60/40	Major workload through January
BSAI pot cod split	1	35/65	Minimal additional analysis expected
Cook Inlet bottom trawl ban	1	50/50	Minimal additional analysis expected
Halibut Subsistence	2	100/0	Adak issue / BOF in March
Develop RFP's/SOWs for AFA contracts	3	30/70	Requires interaction with ADFG, NMFS, and SSC in Jan/Feb
Observer Program (long-term changes)	3	50/50	Scheduled for February 2001 Agenda - Pending progress on contracting

Total: 35

Previously Tasked Projects

CDQ Regulatory Amendment (Administrative)	1		Discuss in December
Three separate sideboard pools	4	35/65	Pending Council direction
P.cod reg. Amendments (2)	4	35/65	Pending Council direction - may depend on SSL measures
SR/RE retention	2.5	65/35	Not started
Shark/Skate FMP amendments	2.5	65/35	On hold pending tasking priorities
CDQ Reg amendments (omnibus)			On hold pending tasking priorities
HMAP			On hold pending tasking priorities
Salmon bycatch reduction measures			Pending further Council direction - Possible industry solution? Discuss in Dec.

Potential New Tasking

Community based QS (GCCC buy in proposal)	3	40/60	Pending Council direction - could be combined with charter IFQ set-aside package
GOA rationalization			Major project - pending Council direction & committee appt - Discuss in Feb or April
BSAI Crab Rationalization			Major project - pending Council direction & committee appt
IFQ amendments			Pending Council direction
Other AFA related Measures - MTC proposal	3	80/20	Pending Council direction
SSL measures			Potential major project - Discuss in December
Groundfish processing sideboard alternatives			Potential major project - Discuss in February
Catch/bycatch disclosure (vessel level)			Need discussion paper first - State/Federal confidentiality issues

** Footnote this next time*

30 Available staff wks from Dec-Feb meeting (taking into account Council Meetings, Committees, vacation, holidays, etc.)

25 Available staff wks from Feb-April meeting (taking into account Council Meetings, Committees, vacation, holidays, etc.)

1999 GROUNDFISH AND CRAB PROPOSALS

The Council received 14 plan and regulatory amendment proposals in the 1999 amendment cycle. The following section summarizes these proposals and incorporates comments from the Groundfish and Crab Plan Teams. These proposals are in addition to 10 IFQ proposals that were submitted in the biennial call for IFQ proposals. The halibut and sablefish IFQ proposals will be reviewed by the Council for staff tasking at the December Council meeting.

Overfishing

#1&2 A lengthy three-part proposal by the Center for Marine Conservation identified the need to: 1) establish explicit and precautionary minimum stock size thresholds (MSSTs) for each of the groundfish stocks in the BSAI and GOA; 2) increase the default target stock size to 50% of the pristine stock size; and 3) adopt more conservative harvest control rules. Alaska Marine Conservation Council (AMCC) also submitted a proposal to add MSSTs to the BSAI and GOA FMPs overfishing definitions. The Groundfish Plan Teams ranked these proposals for plan amendments as having the highest priority of all submitted in 1999. NMFS AFSC has already identified the need to calculate MSSTs (see Balsiger letter dated August 5 under Supplemental). The Groundfish Plan Teams discussed the need to include status determination criteria (for each stock presently in tiers 1-3). MSSTs will be provided by stock assessment authors beginning in November. Grant Thompson, AFSC, would likely take the lead in preparing the analysis. Initial and final review could be scheduled for April and June 2000.

Bycatch

- #3** Dave Fraser submitted a proposal to begin analysis of a comprehensive individual fishing quota program for these fisheries. This proposal was ranked high by the Groundfish Plan Teams, recognizing the overcapitalized state of the fisheries, the race for fish, National Research Council support for lifting the Congressional prohibition on development of additional IFQ programs, and crashed *opilio* crab stocks. The Groundfish Plan Teams noted that a comprehensive IFQ program would address many of the problems raised by other groundfish proposals submitted this cycle. The Crab Plan Team also noted that the Board of Fisheries and ADF&G have management difficulties due to high fishing effort on crab stocks. As noted in previous team minutes, analysis should examine other options (such as individual pot quotas, co-ops, restrictive LLP) to address overcapacity, the race for fish, and associated problems. In 1998, the Groundfish Plan Teams also ranked this proposal as a high priority. Analysis of this proposal would require significant staff time and would not likely be scheduled for initial review before April 2001, given previously assigned analyses.
- #4** AMCC submitted a proposal to allow public disclosure of catch and bycatch data. The Groundfish Plan Teams noted this proposal is not a plan or regulatory proposal, but ranked it as high priority for development into the discussion paper to describe the legal issues and public interest in describing bycatch. The Groundfish Plan Teams further noted that it may more appropriately be submitted to Congress as an MSFCMA amendment or to NMFS and the state of Alaska to develop a data request protocol for public acquisition of currently confidential data. This would not require a significant amount of staff time.
- #5** AMCC also submitted a proposal to establish "true" PSC limits for the Bering Sea pollock fishery, requiring a BSAI regulatory amendment to separate pollock from the pollock/Atka mackerel/"other species" category and to account for pollock bycatch separately. The Groundfish Plan Teams ranked

this proposal as having medium priority because regulations are currently in place to prevent exceeding overall PSCs. The Groundfish Plan Teams noted that PSCs have not been exceeded by the trawl fleet in recent years. Further discussion can be found on a related issue under proposal #7. The Crab Plan Team noted that the midwater pollock fishery generally catches very few crabs. The team would like more research on unobserved mortality of crabs due to pelagic and bottom trawl gear. This analysis would likely require a low to moderate amount of staff time.

- #6** United Catcher Boats submitted a BSAI plan amendment to: 1) rescind the mandatory August trawl closure and to 2) allow for a chum salmon cap of 42,000 to be managed under the co-op system. The Groundfish Plan Teams ranked this proposal as low, noting that the Council is examining an individual bycatch accounting program. This would require a reasonably significant amount of staff time.
- #7** Groundfish Forum submitted a BSAI and GOA regulatory amendment to allow PSC limits to be reapportioned from one fishery category to another within the same gear group during a fishing year, thus providing flexibility to adjust to unforeseen market and fishery conditions. The Groundfish Plan Teams gave a high ranking to development of a discussion paper of this proposed change. The Crab Plan Team noted that flexibility could potentially result in crab bycatch limits reaching the caps. The team was particularly concerned that the bairdi caps not be allowed to be adjusted between zones. It was noted that the flexibility may be more important for halibut than crab, and the team suggested that this first be tried with halibut only, if the proposal is recommended for analysis. This analysis would likely require a low to moderate amount of staff time.

GOA management

- #8** Alaska Dragger Association submitted a placeholder proposal for a GOA plan amendment to split the Pacific cod quota by gear (mobile vs fixed) based on the 1995-97 average. The Groundfish Plan Teams noted that this proposal addresses a longstanding problem in the GOA between trawl and fixed gear fisheries and provides greater access for all fishing sectors. This fishery may also see additional effort as a result of the opilio crab situation (see recommendations under #11 and 12). The Groundfish Plan Teams ranked this as medium priority. This would likely require a significant investment of staff time, as seen by the work required to develop the BSAI cod split (BSAI Amendment #64).
- #9&10** Alaska Groundfish Databank submitted a GOA plan amendment proposal to: 1) create a 14-day advance registration program for rockfish fisheries; 2) apportion Central GOA rockfish fisheries into several short openings; and 3) allocate rockfish between at-sea and catcher vessels. Groundfish Forum also submitted a GOA plan amendment proposal to create an advance registration program for rockfish fisheries in the Central GOA to prevent TAC shortages/overages and to minimize preemption of shore-based catcher vessels and processors. Its intent is similar to #9, except for designating the advance notice. The Groundfish Plan Teams supported such a registration program, and noted that the Council already recommended a preseason registration program for Western/Central GOA pollock and cod that has not yet been implemented. These proposals would create two additional TACs, but would provide a benefit to the fleet. Industry noted that these proposals are placeholders while industry attempts to resolve quota overages for GOA rockfish and that LLP will impact participation in 2000 and beyond. The Groundfish Plan Teams recommend a staff review panel (Council, NMFS Regional Office, NMFS AFSC, and ADF&G) for management of GOA rockfish and ranked this proposal as medium priority (see related discussion under #10).
- #11** Robert Filiatraut submitted a GOA plan amendment to open the October 1 Pacific cod fishery to the longline fleet instead of trawl fleet and increase the halibut PSC limits for longliners. The Groundfish

Plan teams suggested that a direct solution to the lack of halibut PSC later in the fishing year could be addressed under the specifications by shifting more halibut PSC on October 1, but would need the gear split as proposed under proposal #8. This proposal was ranked as moderate priority (see related discussion under #8). This would require a low investment of staff time, because the Council can effect a change during final specifications.

#12 Alaska Druggers Association submitted a GOA plan amendment for a buy-back program for GOA trawlers. This proposal by itself does not reduce the race for fish but should be included for analysis as one tool to reduce overcapitalization. It received a high ranking (#3 would address this problem). A buy-back program could require a significant amount of staff time.

LATE Ocean Beauty submitted a GOA groundfish proposal to: 1) change the season start date for the Central Gulf pollock "C" season from August 20 to September 1; and 2) to release the 4th quarter halibut PSC limit on October 15 to provide equal access to all fishing sectors. The August 20 start date was selected in 1999 as part of the overall Steller sea lion RPA action. Alternative dates were included as part of that recent analysis. While one outcome of the new date may be increased salmon bycatch, there are obvious legal issues related to the proposed action. The second part of the proposal addresses the impacts on catcher vessels of halibut PSC preemption by catcher processors. This was submitted after the committees had met; therefore, there are no ranking or comments. Part 1 would require minimal staff workload since the RPA analysis is only months old and halibut PSCs can be adjusted during the final specification process for Part 2.

Other

#13 Scott Jacobsen et al. submitted a BSAI regulatory amendment to allow a 24 inch tunnel in fish pots to allow the use of the gear in the Greenland turbot fishery due to high predation on fish from killer whales. The Groundfish Plan Teams assigned this proposal a high ranking as an experimental fishing permit proposal. It would increase the tunnel opening from 9 to 24 inches; the 9 inch size was originally chosen to avoid halibut bycatch and allowed a pot exemption for halibut PSCs. Benefits to this change include: 1) allowing participation by pot vessels in the turbot fishery; 2) providing a better estimate of fishing mortality for Greenland turbot due to orca predation; and 3) allowing the TAC to be taken. Negative impacts include: 1) the possibility of increased bycatch of crab and halibut with this gear configuration; and 2) enforcement problems resulting from the difficulty of determining the actual depth the gear is fished. This may not require a significant amount of staff time, but all EFPs now require a regulatory amendment.

#14 North Pacific Longlining Association resubmitted this proposal from 1998 as a late proposal in this cycle. The proposed BSAI cod split may mitigate the need for this action, but inseason frameworking of season start dates would enhance efficiency. It was ranked low in 1998, but received a medium ranking in 1999. Given when shorttail albatross leave the fishing grounds, a delayed start date could further minimize seabird interactions; however using seabird interactions as a sole justification for this action would make an earlier start date (back to October 1 through frameworking) would be harder to justify. Frameworking this change may not require a significant initial staff investment, but the potential for annual changes may affect staffing.

IFQ Proposals (as of 8/23/99)

No.	Proposal	Proposer	Species	Area	Amendment	Comments	Rank
1	inc. # blocks to 3 or 4 in Areas 3B and 4	Mack	halibut	both	regulatory	Block program	1
2	unblock portion of blocked halibut quota > 20,000 lb	Whitmire	halibut	both	regulatory	Block program	1
3	inc. # blocks + eliminate B & C Class in Areas 4B,C,D & BS & AI	Dierking	both	both	plan	Block program/vessel class	1
4	inc. # blocks to 4 in Area 4 or increase sweep-up to 10,000 lb per block	Schrader	halibut	BSAI	plan	Block program/sweep-up	1
5	allow hired skippers for medical emergencies	Schrader	halibut	BSAI	plan	transfer provisions	2
6	emergency medical transfer for B-D Class QS	PVOA	both	both	regulatory	transfer provisions	2
7	fish up D Class shares on C Class vessels in Areas 3B and 4A	Wagner	halibut	both	regulatory	Vessel class	1
8	allow vessel cap overage of 10% of remaining poundage before last trip	Lundsten	both	both	plan	Vessel cap overage	3
9	change IFQ meeting cycle	Lundsten	both	both	neither	administration	4
10	allow community-based non-profit regs. to acquire QS	GCCC	both	both	plan	Ownership criteria	not approved

**IFQ IMPLEMENTATION TEAM MEETING
OCTOBER 10, 1999**

The IFQ Implementation Team convened at approximately 1 pm on Sunday, October 10, 1999. Committee members in attendance were Jeff Stephan, chairman, Arne Fuglvog, John Woodruff, Dennis Hicks, Don Iverson, Jack Knutsen, John Bruce, Norman Cohen. Drew Scalzi did not attend. Staff in attendance were: Jane DiCosimo, Steve Meyer, Phil Smith, Jim Hale, John Kingeter, Heather Gilroy. Thirteen members of the public attended.

Phil Smith provided an administrative update on the IFQ program. Jim Hale reported on the status of the omnibus amendment package for IFQ changes, Amendments 54/54 (hired skipper) with anticipation for implementation for the 2000 IFQ season. Jane DiCosimo provided a brief summary of the IFQ weighmaster subcommittee findings. Steve Meyer presented two reports on IFQ enforcement and continued cases of serious violations. A USCG enforcement report was also distributed to committee members.

The main purpose of the meeting was for the committee to review ten IFQ proposals submitted in the 1999 biennial call for IFQ proposals. Committee recommendations on which proposals should be approved for analysis will be reported to the Council at its December meeting. A summary sheet is attached to the minutes.

Westward area

The committee combined its review of proposals 1, 2, 3, 4, and 7 because they address similar problems in the IFQ fisheries in westward areas (Areas 3B, 4A, and 4B). The Team identified the following problem statement for westward IFQ fisheries:

Five years into the halibut and sablefish IFQ program, a reexamination of the needs of the block program because it appears that it does not protect small boat fishermen in Western Alaska for halibut as originally intended.

The committee recommended that the Council, as its highest priority for IFQ changes, initiate an analysis of the following alternatives for the IFQ halibut fisheries in Areas 3B, 4A, and 4B that were proposed under #1, 2, 3, 4, and 7. The committee noted there may be some merit in combining B and C category QS with A category QS for sablefish only, they did not recommend this for analysis.

Alternative 1: Status quo.

Alternative 2: Block program:

- Option 1: Increase number of blocks from 2 to 4
- Option 2: Unblock all quota shares >20,000 lb
- Option 3: Allow quota shares >20,000 lb to be divided into smaller blocks

Alternative 3: Quota share categories:

- Option 1. Allow D category quota shares to be fished as C category shares.
- Option 2: Allow D category shares to be fished as C or B category quota shares
- Option 3: Combine B, C, and D category quota shares
- Option 4: Combine C and D category quota shares

The issues to be addressed in the analysis include:

- the limit of two quota share blocks has created economic hindrances to catching the entire subarea quotas
- travel to/from fishing grounds resulting in subarea quotas not being reached
- transferring quota shares has resulted in economic hindrances because blocks are now so big due to increases in quotas that cost is too high for resale
- fish down has rendered resale of D class shares boats untenable and safety issue

#5 Part 1 leasing/hired skippers

The committee recognized the merit of addressing fairness issues, and recommended that leasing restrictions are fundamental to the IFQ program and recommended no change to expanding leasing/hired skipper allowances.

#5 Part 2 and #6 medical transfers

The committee noted that while the issue of medical emergency transfers was worthy for Council review, injured QS holders had could transfer their QS to others who could fish them. The committee ranked these proposals as #2 in priority.

#8 overage on vessel cap

The committee supported this proposal to allow an overage on the vessel cap as #3 ranking.

#9 adjust annual cycle

The committee modified proposal #9 to recommend that the Council adjust its biennial IFQ amendment cycle so that IFQ final action occurs in December when IFQ fishermen can attend the Council meeting. The dates for the Council call for IFQ proposals and initial review also would be adjusted as appropriate. This is a policy change by the Council and requires no staff analysis.

#10 community-based non-profit entity as QS holder

A motion to recommend a proposal to allow a community-based non-profit entity to hold quota share failed on a tie vote (4:4). The committee was split on whether to involve the Council in the design of a program to provide access to GOA communities as a QS holding entity or to not create another category of QS holder that would compete with fishermen who are currently eligible to be QS holders.

The overall ranking of proposals grouped into analytical packages by the committee was:

<u>Proposals</u>	<u>Rank</u>
1-4 & 7	#1
5 & 6	#2
8	#3
9	#4

The meeting adjourned at 5:45 pm.