

ADVISORY PANEL
Motions and Rationale
December 5-8, 2023 - Anchorage, AK

E Staff Tasking

Motion 1:

~~The AP requests the Council initiate a discussion paper to explore changes that would allow for necessary flexibilities and cost efficiencies for Gulf of Alaska (GOA) trawl catcher vessels.~~ **(1) The AP requests the Council initiate a discussion paper to explore the following changes that allow for necessary flexibilities and cost efficiencies for Gulf of Alaska (GOA) trawl catcher vessels.**

This includes:

1. Modifications to the GOA Catcher Vessel 300,000 Harvest Limit for Pollock:
 - a. Impacts of a trip limit that ranges between 300,000 - 450,000 pounds
 - i. This could include, but is not necessarily limited to, trip limits of 350,000 and 400,000 and 450,000 pounds of pollock compared to the status quo of 300,000 pounds of pollock.
2. GOA Chinook Salmon PSC Management:
 - a. Impacts of reducing CGOA pollock catcher vessel chinook limit from 18,316 chinook to a range of 16,316 - 17,000 chinook and reapportioning:
 - i. A range of at least 1,000 chinook to the CGOA Rockfish Program (RP) catcher vessels for a new cap above the existing cap of 1,200 chinook.
 - ii. A range of at least 500 chinook to the C/WGOA non-Rockfish Program trawl catcher vessels for a new cap above the existing cap of 3,030 chinook.
 - iii. All ranges explored should not exceed the current GOA chinook cap.

Amendment 1 passed: 12/0

Amended Main Motion passed: 12/0

Rationale in Favor of Motion:

- *The AP heard public testimony and comment by AP members in earlier agenda items about the current struggles being felt by trawl catcher vessels and processors in the Gulf of Alaska due to poor market conditions and an increasing burden in regulatory constraints. The sector has been asking for management tools such as rationalization for decades to improve their fishery conditions and has still not been provided those tools.*

Advisory Panel

E Motion

December 2023

- *AP members felt there may be smaller management measures that could provide necessary flexibilities and cost efficiencies for the fleet, including adjustments to the 300,000 lb harvest trip limit for pollock and adjustments to GOA Chinook salmon PSC management.*
- *The original intent of the GOA trip limit was to keep the GOA a smaller, primarily locally owned and operated catcher vessel community. The goal of this motion and the resulting discussion would be to keep the original intent of the trip limit, while exploring options for more economic stability.*
- *There was agreement among AP members that costs such as fuel and insurance continue to rise while the pollock price has gone down, and the industry has had to travel farther to catch quota because of Steller Sea Lion and crab closure areas, the profit margins on trips are diminishing.*
- *The Pelagic Pollock Trawl EM EFP has provided some relief with the GOA pollock trip limit by allowing vessels to utilize a 4-trip average under the industry-managed performance standard on pelagic pollock EM trips. This will also be the case when the regulated program goes into effect in 2025. However, this only applies to pelagic pollock trips; Kodiak trawl is a multi-species fishery and without a directed cod fishery the pollock fleet needs to opt out of EM to be able to top off on Pacific cod to help provide economic stability. Unfortunately, that increases the risk of enforcement action and fines on non-EM trips. Even within the EM program and the industry managed performance standard (the 4 trip average) some feel the 300,000 trip limit is too low for economic stability.*
- *There was discussion about whether the fleet was in full agreement of supporting an increase in pollock trip limit. There has not been consensus or thorough discussion about this and there will likely be differing opinions but there have been multiple requests to raise the limit to keep the fishery functioning; this is why a discussion paper is being requested.*
- *The CGOA Rockfish Program shoreside primarily rockfish quota has nearly tripled from 8,279 mt in 2011 to 22,177 mt in 2023, but the hard cap of 1,200 chinook has remained the same. NMFS catch accounting manages the fishery's chinook harvest relative to the cap using the data from extrapolated, at-sea basket samples. This may provide instability in estimates and requires the fleet to have cooperative management measures such as strict stand-downs based on the chinook bycatch rate in their deliveries which vary in length and rate limit depending on the time of the season.*
- *The industry is exploring a Rockfish EM program which will operate under another pilot year in 2024 before hopefully moving towards an EFP in 2025. As it moves forward the program will need to shift to the actual number of chinook delivered to the processor, but the actual chinook harvest is greater than the at-sea catch accounting data shows. In order for the program to function and be able to provide better monitoring for both pelagic and non-pelagic gear, the sector would need to have additional chinook to prevent exceeding their 1,200 chinook hard cap.*
- *There are some concerns about increasing pollock TACs while decreasing available chinook which is why the particular range of numbers was selected. Recognizing that in the current environment asking for additional chinook is a sensitive issue, the AP felt that the possibility of reallocating existing chinook to where it is more critically needed was worth discussion.*

- *Exploring whether additional chinook could also be reallocated to the C/WGOA non-pollock non-RP trawl CV allocation which is a single chinook cap shared by CVs in the Western and Central gulf fishing primarily cod and flatfish, would also help prosecute those fisheries where a larger number of vessels share that cap.*
- *Although seemingly separate topics, both are management issues for GOA CVs so a single discussion paper was requested to consolidate staff effort into a single paper. The AP left it to the discretion of the Council to decide whether if moving these issues forward they should be left combined into a single paper or separated.*
- *Although other management measures could also benefit GOA trawl CVs, given that the MRA paper is already scheduled for the April meeting and the intent to minimize burden on staff time, the AP felt it was best to narrow the requests to these two topics.*

Motion 2:

The AP approved the October 2023 report.

Motion Passed unanimously