



NORTH PACIFIC FISHERY MANAGEMENT COUNCIL

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Action Memo

File Number: ID 14-005

Agenda Date 2/3/2014

Agenda Number: E-1

Eric Olson, Chairman
Chris Oliver, Executive Director

SUBJECT:
Committees and Staff Tasking

ESTIMATED TIME:
4 hours

ACTION REQUIRED:
Review tasking and committees and provide direction.

BACKGROUND

Committees and Tasking

Attached is the list of Council committees, the three meeting outlook, an updated work plan for implementing the programmatic groundfish management policy, and an updated project and staff workload table. The Council may wish to discuss priorities for completing ongoing projects, as well as any new tasks assigned during the course of this meeting.

Also attached is a draft overview of the regulatory process used by the NPFMC. The intent of the summary is to provide the public with a better understanding of the process. Once finalized, it will be posted on the Council website. The Council may wish to provide comments on the draft.

Enforcement Interval Change for all MRA Species

At the December 2013 meeting, the Council initiated a regulatory amendment adjusting the maximum retainable allowance (MRA) enforcement period for all groundfish species harvested in the Bering Sea and Aleutian Islands (BSAI) and Gulf of Alaska (GOA). Specifically, the proposed action would change the MRAs from instantaneous (at any point in time during a trip) to the time of offload.

With the exception of pollock in the BSAI for non-AFA vessels, current regulations prohibit the retention of a species (that is closed to directed fishing) in amount that exceeds the MRA percentage of the basis species *at any time during a fishing trip*, and excess catch must be discarded. Under the proposed action, compliance with the MRA would be determined at the end of each offload, and any excess at the time must be discarded.

The impacts of changing the enforcement period for MRAs in all fisheries from instantaneous to the time of offload will differ among vessel type (catcher vessel vs catcher/processors), gear type, area, and target fishery. As noted in previous MRA actions, "topping off" of high valued species like rockfish, skates, and Pacific cod could become more prevalent for different vessel types or gears under the proposed action. This potential change in fishing behavior could have undesirable consequences for management of those species. As a result, rather than launching straight into an analysis that considers only one solution for all fisheries, vessel

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types, and gears, the Council may wish to start with a discussion paper that provides more general information about the nature of these differences, and potentially develop a problem statement and a more defined set of alternatives for analysis.

IFQ Program Issues

In December, the Council postponed to a future meeting any further action on amending the vessel caps under the halibut and sablefish IFQ program. The Council expressed a desire for more information from the industry perspective before they acted further on this issue (including whether vessel caps would be statewide versus just Area 2C, addressing unfished quota in Area 4), and for such information to be reported under staff tasking when industry had more to report. The issue was not explicitly listed on the agenda because staff could not be sure whether or when there would be more input from the affected industry. Industry representatives may wish to testify under this agenda item with additional details of their proposal.

Another issue raised in December was the season dates for sablefish, which by regulation is tied to the halibut season that is adopted by the IPHC each January for the upcoming season. The Council noted concerns regarding the impact of the season dates on the sablefish IFQ fishery, and these concerns were relayed to the IPHC in January. For 2014, the IPHC approved a season for Pacific halibut of March 8 - November 7. A list of IFQ season dates for 1995 through 2013 is attached for reference. Further discussion of this issue could be scheduled for October, when the Council will deliberate proposed harvest specifications.

The last issue involves the December 2013 motion to initiate an analysis of allowing the use of pot gear in the GOA sablefish IFQ fishery. Committee recommendations, public testimony, and Council discussion noted a preference for the use of pot longline gear only (as opposed to allowing single pots), however the language of the motion did not specify that intent. Staff seeks Council clarification in order to proceed with preparation of an analysis that matches Council intent.