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News & Notes

North Pacific Fishery Management Council

June 2012

Thank you, Kodiak

The weather cooperated, for the most part, during the Council's recent meeting in Kodiak. The City and Borough hosted a reception at the Kodiak Fisheries Research Center, and a BBQ was held on the Buskin River which was hosted by Kodiak Association of Charter Boat Operators. Many Council members, staff, and public were also privileged to attend a community reception at the village of Ouzinkie. In addition to the wonderful hospitality and food, the community had the opportunity to discuss various fishery issues. Kodiak residents were able to attend portions of the meetings, and Council members were able to get out and about in the Kodiak area. Thank you again for your hospitality and all who put in extra effort to make the meeting a success!

Benson retires

The Council said goodbye to Council member Dave Benson who has served 9 years on the Council and 10 years on the Advisory Panel. Benson joined the Council process initially representing Washington State trawl interests. A roast and toast was held during the City and Borough reception, and the Balsiger Blues Band sent him off with a short sing-along. Good luck in your future endeavors, Dave!



Halibut Workshop

The Council received a report on the recent workshop organized by the International Pacific Halibut Commission (IPHC) and the Council. The purpose of the workshop was to review the methodology and accuracy of the estimation of Pacific halibut bycatch in trawl and longline groundfish fisheries off Alaska, and the impacts of halibut bycatch on the halibut stock as a whole and by area, given the current understanding of halibut migration. The workshop also discussed general halibut ecology, including recent trends in exploitable biomass, spawning biomass, and size at age, and information concerning the causes and implications of declining size at age of halibut. More than 200 participants attended the two-day workshop in person or through a webcast of the meeting in late April 2012. Background papers, presentations, and a summary report are posted on the Council and Commission website.

Halibut Bycatch

At this meeting, the Council took final action to reduce halibut bycatch limits in GOA groundfish fisheries. The Council considered staff reports, its advisory panel recommendation, more than 400 pages of written testimony from more than 1,500 individuals, corporations, and communities, along with oral testimony from nearly 100 people over two days during the June meeting and adopted a preferred alternative to reduce halibut bycatch limits in the GOA trawl and hook-and-line groundfish fisheries with a vote of 10:1. Technically, the Council's preferred alternative would amend the

GOA Groundfish FMP to change the process for setting halibut bycatch limits. Instead of being set when the annual groundfish harvest specifications (quotas) are set each fall, halibut bycatch levels will be set in federal regulations; those limits would remain in effect until changed by a subsequent Council action to amend those regulations.

If approved by the Secretary of Commerce, the preferred alternative would reduce the GOA halibut PSC limit for the 1) groundfish trawl gear sector and 2) groundfish catcher vessel (CV) hook-and-line gear sector by 15%. The proposed reduction would be phased in over three years: 7% in year 1, 5% in year 2 (to 12%), and 3% in year 3 (to 15%). The proposed reduction for the 3) catcher processor (CP) hook and line gear would be 7% which would be implemented in one step in year 1. The Council intends that year 1 would occur in 2014 and that all reductions would occur by 2016.

This action would result in a new cap of 1,848 mt (in 2014), 1,759 mt (in 2015), and 1,705 mt (in 2016 and later years) for the trawl sector. The new hook-and-line halibut PSC limit may change annually, so the numbers reported are illustrative of what may occur in the future, based on the GOA Pacific cod split formula. Based on 2012 Pacific cod TACs in the Western and Central GOA the hook-and-line CP sector would fish under a 109 mt halibut PSC limit. The hook-and-line CV sector PSC limit would be 161 mt (in 2014), 152 mt (in 2015), and 147 mt (in 2016 and beyond). Note that the Council used 1,973 mt as the baseline for its proposed trawl PSC limit reduction, which results after deducting a 27.4 mt PSC limit reduction, which was implemented in

Grenadiers

The Council reviewed a discussion paper on a proposed action that the Council originally approved for consideration in 2008. At this meeting the Council initiated an analysis to consider four alternatives for moving grenadiers into the groundfish fishery management plans for the Gulf of Alaska and Bering Sea/Aleutian Islands. Additional regulatory options will be considered in the analysis. The paper and the June 2012 motion, which includes a problem statement and suite of alternatives, are posted on the Council's website. The Non-target Species Committee, which will continue to be chaired by retiring Council member Dave Benson, will convene to review and provide recommendations on the draft analysis prior to initial review by the Council. The Council will identify the timing of review of the analysis and committee meeting in the near future. Contact Jane DiCosimo for more information.



NMFS AFSC

(GOA Halibut Bycatch Caps Cont.)

This action would result in a new cap of 1,848 mt (in 2014), 1,759 mt (in 2015), and 1,705 mt (in 2016 and later years) for the trawl sector. The new hook-and-line halibut PSC limit may change annually, so the numbers reported are illustrative of what may occur in the future, based on the GOA Pacific cod split formula. Based on 2012 Pacific cod TACs in the Western and Central GOA the hook-and-line CP sector would fish under a 109 mt halibut PSC limit. The hook-and-line CV sector PSC limit would be 161 mt (in 2014), 152 mt (in 2015), and 147 mt (in 2016 and beyond). Note that the Council used 1,973 mt as the baseline for its proposed trawl PSC limit reduction, which results after deducting a 27.4 mt PSC limit reduction, which was implemented in 2012 under the Central Gulf Rockfish Program, from the 2,000 mt overall trawl cap.

The preferred alternative reduced the demersal shelf rockfish fishery halibut bycatch limit from 10 mt (22,000 lb) to 9 mt (19,840 lb). Given limited observer coverage in this fishery NMFS does not anticipate managing the fishery to that limit. The Council's motion also addressed three additional management issues, which are detailed in the Council motion which is posted on the Council website.

The Council balanced a number of national standards for fishery conservation and management. These include 1) achieving the optimum yield from each groundfish fishery without overfishing the stocks; 2) considering the importance of fishery resources to fishing communities and minimizing adverse economic impacts on such communities; 3) minimizing bycatch to the extent practicable; and 4) using best available science. The final analysis will be submitted to NMFS over the summer so that development of the proposed rule may begin this year. Contact Jane DiCosimo for more information.

GOA Comprehensive Bycatch The Council received a report concerning the development of measures to address prohibited species catch (PSC) in the Gulf of Alaska fisheries. Over the course of the past few years, the Council has advanced a number of actions to reduce the use of PSC in Gulf of Alaska fisheries. In addition to the reductions in halibut PSC adopted by the Council at this meeting, the Council also recently introduced Chinook PSC limits in the Gulf pollock trawl fisheries. The Council is also considering an action to extend similar Chinook PSC limits to non-pollock groundfish trawl fisheries in the Gulf. Participants in these fisheries have raised concerns that the current limited access management creates a substantial disincentive for participants to take

actions to reduce PSC usage (particularly actions that could reduce target catch rates). Other participants, who choose not to exert efforts to avoid PSC, stand to gain additional target catch by continuing to harvest fish at a higher catch rate, at the expense of vessels engaged in PSC avoidance. The paper is intended to provide a more comprehensive look at the available tools to aid fleets in achieving the desired PSC reductions by increasing incentives for PSC avoidance.

The paper provided a review of possible objectives for the proposed management action, as well as brief summaries of possible actions (such as area closures, bycatch quotas, comprehensive catch share allocations, and various incentive programs). In response to the paper and public testimony, the Council expressed its intent to schedule a specific agenda item, preferably for the October meeting, to develop a purpose and need statement identifying goals and objectives for the action and to begin the process of developing a program to provide tools for effective management of PSC, incentives for the minimization of bycatch, and vessel level accountability for the Central Gulf of Alaska trawl groundfish fishery. In the course of its deliberations, the Council encouraged participants in the Central Gulf trawl fishery and other stakeholders to provide input concerning objectives for the action, as well as the type of management actions that should be considered. Staff contact is Mark Fina.

Bering Sea/Aleutian Islands Halibut Bycatch Caps The Council reviewed background information on the status of the halibut bycatch caps in the BSAI and the process for revising them. The Council took no action at this time. Contact Jane DiCosimo for more information.

Charter Halibut Management

In April 2012 the Council adopted the unanimous recommendations of its advisory bodies and stakeholders to use ADF&G logbooks as the primary data collection method. The Council recommended using an adjustment factor based on the five-year average (2006 – 2010) of the difference between the harvest estimates provided by the logbooks and the SWHS, with an adjustment factor reduced by the amount of harvest attributed to skipper and crew. Council and ADF&G staff provided notice that a small error was found in the calculation to remove skipper and crew caught halibut from the adjustment factor that will affect the potential allocation to the charter sector in Area 3A only, since skipper and crew caught fish are prohibited in Area 2C.

(Charter Halibut Management cont.)

The Council affirmed that this correction is consistent with Council intent and that the revised analysis scheduled for review in October should use the corrected adjustment factor. The Council's revised understanding is that applying this adjustment factor would result in the following changes to the CSP allocations. No other changes to the motion or analysis were adopted.

Area 3A adjustment factor = ~~45.4%~~ 11.6%

Area 3A current CSP allocation in Tier 1 = 15.4%

Adjusted CSP allocation = (15.4% * ~~45.4%~~ 11.6%) + 15.4% = ~~17.8%~~ 17.2%

Area 3A current CSP allocation in Tiers 2 through 4 = 14.0%

Adjusted CSP allocation = (14.0% * ~~45.4%~~ 11.6%) + 14.0% = ~~16.2%~~ 15.6%

The **Charter Halibut Management Committee** will be scheduled to meet twice this fall to assist the Council in its selections of a preferred measure for Area 2C and Area 3A (if necessary) to keep the charter halibut sector under its respective Guideline Harvest Levels (GHLs) in 2013. The first meeting will be scheduled after the October 2012 Council meeting to provide recommendations for potential management measures for analysis. Another committee meeting will be scheduled between the dates of the interim IPHC meeting, when IPHC staff recommendations for 2013 GHLs and commercial catch limits are announced, and the December Council meeting. At its December meeting, the Council will review an analysis of potential management measures and recommendations from its committee, advisory panel, scientific committee, and stakeholders and select management measure(s) to be forwarded for consideration and adoption by the IPHC during the January 2013 IPHC annual Meeting. Contact Jane DiCosimo for more information.

Halibut/Sablefish IFQ Amendment

In 2006 the Council recommended to revoke quota shares (QS) that have been inactive since they were originally issued in 1995. Inactive QS are those held by persons that have never harvested their IFQ and have never transferred QS or IFQ into or out of their IFQ accounts. The action provides halibut and sablefish fishermen who hold active QS with an opportunity to fish for currently unavailable QS and more fully harvest TACs for these species. In the time since Council recommended this action, the amount of inactive QS and the number of inactive QS holders has reduced dramatically, as those inactive QS were transferred voluntarily to active fishery participants. There are 199 inactive QS.

The final rule to remove inactive QS from the Halibut and Sablefish IFQ Program becomes effective on Monday, June 18, 2012. *NMFS will **not revoke** the inactive QS of any person who responds in writing to NMFS within 60 days after NMFS issues a Notice of Determination of Quota Share Inactivity, requesting that the inactive QS not be revoked.* NMFS will allow transfers and fishing during the 60-day Notice period which would result in "activation" of the QS. These transfers could include gifting the QS to someone eligible to receive QS and IFQ by transfer. Even without payment, gifting would keep QS active and benefit communities as well as recipients.

The inactive QS and holder list is posted on the NMFS RAM web page under "Licenses Issued." A signed notice with an enclosed form to be returned to RAM will be mailed to all inactive permit holders on or about June 18; fishing, transferring QS or IFQ, or returning the form to RAM within the 60 day response period is the only way for those QS not to be revoked. Contact the RAM Program Division for more information: (800) 304-4846 #2, (907) 586-7202 #2.

Research Priorities

The Magnuson-Stevens Act requires the Council to adopt a five-year research plan each year. The Council adopted its most recent five-year research plan based on recommendations from its four Plan Teams, the Scientific and Statistical Committee, and the Advisory Panel. The Council also endorsed the SSC's intent to revise the process by which these priorities are annually considered. A workgroup consisting of members of the SSC, Plan Teams and staff will work to develop a database for use in considering and prioritizing research issues. Additional information will be available on this process for the October 2012 SSC meeting. The currently adopted research priorities are posted on the Council's website. Staff contact is Diana Stram.

Upcoming Meetings

Groundfish Plan Teams:
September 11-14 AFSC

Observer Advisory Committee,
September 17-18, AFSC

Crab Plan Team: September 18-21 AFSC

Charter Management Implementation Committee:
1) after October Council meeting in Anchorage
2) prior to December Council meeting in Anchorage

Groundfish Plan Teams:
November 13-16 AFSC

Crab Modeling workshop
January 7-11 AFSC

Non-Target Species Committee:
before February Council meeting (T) AFSC

SSLMC: July 15-17 – Seattle; July 30-31 – Seattle; August 1-2 - CIE Public Review panel – Seattle; Sept 5-7 - Juneau
Oct 2 - Anchorage during Council meeting; Oct 17-18 - Juneau
November 7-9 - Juneau

Arc Reader Application

At the April 2012 meeting, the Council tasked the Enforcement Committee to explore the availability of agency-issued software that could be integrated with existing navigation software to show closed areas in the North Pacific. Addressing this request, NOAA Office of Law Enforcement provided a demonstration of the Arc Reader application, interim replacement for MapViewer application, to the Enforcement Committee. Arc Reader is a stand-alone application that will allow one to download, view, query, navigate and print Steller sea lion protection measures charts and additional restricted groundfish areas from your PC without being connected to the internet. In addition, the Arc Reader application has GPS integration capabilities. This application is available for download to the industry at alaskafisheries.noaa.gov/maps/sslmapviewer.htm or can be provided in a CD format by NOAA Office of Law Enforcement.

Greenland Turbot Sector Allocation

The Council received a staff presentation summarizing the BSAI Greenland turbot longline and trawl fisheries and information the Council may wish to consider in advancing the issue of sector allocations for the BSAI Greenland turbot fishery. The Council heard about discussions 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. 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, with one objection, to adopt a draft purpose and need statement, and advance alternative regulatory actions for analysis. The draft purpose and need statement, as well as the alternatives for consideration, are available on the Council's website.

The Council requested an update from the Freezer Longline Coalition and the Amendment 80 cooperatives in October, 2012 on progress toward reaching a non-regulatory agreement to manage Greenland turbot catch. Staff contact is Steve MacLean.

BSAI Crab Specs

The SSC recommended OFLs and ABCs for four of the ten crab stocks under the BSAI Crab FMP. ABC recommendations are made by the SSC to the Council in order to comply with Annual Catch Limit provisions. Six of the ten stocks will have OFLs and ABCs established in October following the summer survey information availability. Two of the ten stocks (Norton Sound red king crab and AI golden king crab) have OFL and ABC recommendations put forward at this time in order to have approved OFLs and ABCs prior to the summer fisheries for these stocks. The remaining two stocks (Adak red king crab and Pribilof Islands golden king crab) have OFLs recommended based on Tier 5 formulation (average catch) and OFLs and ABCs are recommended in the spring. The table of OFLs and ABCs for these stocks is posted on the Council website. The Crab SAFE report will be produced in the fall following the Crab Plan Team meeting and will include these 4 stocks as well as the recommendations on management of the remaining 6 stocks. The Crab Plan Team also reported to the Council on the acceptance of an approved Tanner crab stock assessment model to be used for fall specifications, model progress on other stocks and the intent to hold a model workshop in January 2013 to address the stock assessment models for the Aleutian Islands golden king crab stock and the Norton Sound red king crab stock. The CPT further provided input to the Council on revisions to the proposed alternatives for establishing PSC limits in all groundfish fisheries for all ten crab stocks. The Council requested that staff provide a discussion paper including the recommended alternative revisions from the team as well as noting any further clarifications needed from the Council to move the suite of alternatives forward for analysis. Staff contact is Diana Stram.

BS Flatfish Specifications Flexibility

The Council initiated an analysis to change the harvest and accounting methodology for yellowfin sole, rock sole, and flathead sole, in order to allow increased flexibility in targeting these species. Under the proposed approach, the ABC surplus (i.e., the difference between ABC and TAC) for these species would be allocated among the Amendment 80 cooperatives and CDQ groups, using the same formulas as are used in the annual harvest specifications process. These entities would be able to exchange their yellowfin sole, flathead sole, and/or rock sole quota share for an equivalent amount of their allocation of the ABC surplus for these species. The approach is intended to increase the opportunity for maximizing the harvest of these species, while ensuring that the overall 2 million mt optimum yield, and ABCs for each individual species, is not exceeded.

The analysis also includes options to restrict flexibility in the exchange of yellowfin sole; if the analysis shows that there is a potential negative impact of the approach on users of yellowfin sole in the Bering Sea trawl limited access sector. The Council's problem statement and alternatives are available on the Council website. Staff contact is Diana Evans.

Pribilof Islands Blue King Crab Rebuilding Plan

The Council took final action on a revised rebuilding plan for the overfished Pribilof Islands blue king crab stock. While the directed fishery for this stock has been closed since 1999, and bycatch in the crab fisheries has been minimized, PIBKC are currently caught as prohibited species catch (PSC) in the groundfish fisheries. The purpose of this action is to reduce the risk of overfishing the PIBKC stock by amending the rebuilding plan to minimize PSC of blue king crab in the federally managed groundfish fisheries, in compliance with the Magnuson-Stevens Act and the national standard guidelines. In minimizing PIBKC bycatch in groundfish fisheries to the extent practicable, the Council intends to provide the maximum potential for rebuilding this very depressed stock.

The Council recommended Alternative 2b as its preferred alternative. This alternative closes the Pribilof Island Habitat Conservation Zone (PIHCZ) to fishing for Pacific cod with pot gear. The PIHCZ is already closed to trawling. The PIHCZ is the area known have key habitat components important to PIBKC. The closure is being recommended for extension to fishing for Pacific cod pot gear as this is the gear type with the highest observed bycatch. This closure would decrease the mortality on this stock and reduce the potential for overfishing due to bycatch. Staff contact is Diana Stram.

Staff Tasking

In addition to discussing the relative priority of previously tasked projects, the Council initiated several new projects, requested that several letters be prepared, and clarified several issues. Letters to be prepared include a letter of support for the USCG and NOAA Office of Law Enforcement, a comment letter on National Standard 1 based on the process proposed by the SSC, and letter to NMFS Alaska Region encouraging creative approaches to authorizing the testing of salmon excluder devices. New projects include: 1) a discussion paper to remove restrictions on CQE communities buying small blocks of IFQ especially from CQE residents, 2) a discussion paper on the legal issues and potential impacts of allowing AFA vessels to replace Amendment 80 vessels, 3) an analysis to provide a check-in/out or transit corridor for vessels needing to pass through the Round Island walrus area. Further direction was provided to the Observer Advisory Committee relative to reviewing the deployment plan and electronic monitoring, direction to the Non-target Species Committee to review the initial draft of the grenadier analysis (when available), and establishment of a new committee of council members that will provide feedback to staff on the programmatic groundfish supplemental information report. Other items clarified under staff tasking included direction regarding inclusion of a discussion on Pacific cod caps for the Amendment 80 sector in the flatfish specification flexibility analysis, request for NMFS to provide rationale relative to the subsistence regulations as they apply to family members, and lastly, expectations relative to the October discussion of tools to address PSC in CGOA trawl fisheries.

Freezer Longline MLOA adjustment

The Council identified a preliminary preferred alternative (PPA) for an analysis evaluating a

change to criteria, in order to allow owners of Bering Sea / Aleutian Islands (BSAI) freezer longline (hook-and-line catcher processor) vessels that fish for Pacific cod, to replace or rebuild their vessels to a length greater than that specified under the restrictions of the License Limitation Program (LLP) and the American Fisheries Act (AFA). Under the PPA, the maximum length overall (MLOA) on all LLP licenses in the sector would be increased to 220', and the Council would clarify that the capacity restrictions of the AFA would not apply to this fishery. An option would also apply, which would require those LLPs that also have a BSAI Pacific cod pot catcher processor endorsement to choose either to receive the larger MLOA, or to surrender their pot gear endorsement.

The Council also made minor revisions to the problem statement, and to Options 3.1, 3.3, and 3.4. Staff will revise the analysis to ensure that it provides a clear understanding of how replaced vessels may be used, and what impacts may result to freezer longline vessels that are only endorsed for Pacific cod in the GOA. The Council's revised problem statement and alternatives are available on the Council website. Staff contact is Diana Evans.

Freezer Longline Sideboards

At this meeting, the Council reviewed a discussion paper of the impacts of non-AFA crab sideboard for GOA Pacific cod on freezer longline vessels. The non-AFA crab sideboards were originally included in the crab rationalization program, which was implemented in 2005. When implemented, the sideboards were aggregated at the inshore and offshore level and were shared by all gears. However, as part of the GOA Pacific cod sector allocations implemented in 2012, the sideboard was modified from an inshore and offshore limit shared by all gears to sector specific limits. Recognizing this modification to the GOA Pacific cod sideboard will constrain sideboarded freezer

longline vessels, the Council at this meeting approved the following problem statement:

The narrowing of the sideboard limit under Amendment 83 from a non-gear sideboard to a sector specific sideboard significantly reduced non-AFA crab Gulf of Alaska Pacific cod sideboards for sideboarded freezer longline vessels active in the Gulf of Alaska Pacific cod fishery prior to the Pacific cod sector split. A recalculation of the Pacific cod sideboards resulted in the loss of fishing opportunities, future revenues, and an ability to participate in the Gulf of Alaska cooperative fishing efforts.

Under Amendment 83, the freezer longline sector has a direct allocation, and due to the harvesting capacity available to participate in the Gulf of Alaska freezer longline sector, must establish cooperative harvest control measures in order for NMFS to make the sector TAC available for directed fishing. Therefore, the need for catcher processor hook-and-line GOA Pacific cod sideboards to limit the catch of these vessels may no longer exist.

Removal of the non-AFA crab GOA Pacific cod sideboards for freezer longliners would restore to the sideboarded vessels the ability to participate in the GOA Pacific cod fishery. Removing sideboarded freezer longline vessels, however, may adversely impact GOA only freezer longline vessels and, to the extent practicable, there is a need to minimize the impact.

In addition to the problem statement, the Council also approved two alternatives for analysis:

Alternative 1: No Action.

Alternative 2: Remove freezer longline non-AFA crab GOA Pacific cod sideboards.

The no action alternative would leave in place the current freezer longline non-AFA crab GOA Pacific cod sideboard, while the action alternative would remove only the freezer longline GOA Pacific cod sideboard. Other sideboards for other sectors would remain in effect. Staff contact is Jon McCracken.

Round Island

The Council initiated analysis for a regulatory amendment to make to appropriate adjustment for either a check-in/check-out or transient corridor through the Round Island no transit area. The intent of this proposed action is to allow tenders with federal fishing permits to transit through the Round Island no transit area to the Togiak area and back.

Per 50 CFR 679.22 (a)(4), between April 1 and Sept 30, vessels with an FFP are prohibited from transiting between 3 and 12 nm from the baseline at Round Island and The Twins (Northern Bristol Bay area) (see Figure 1). This is a longstanding prohibition, intended to provide reduced disruption to the walrus haulouts at these locations.

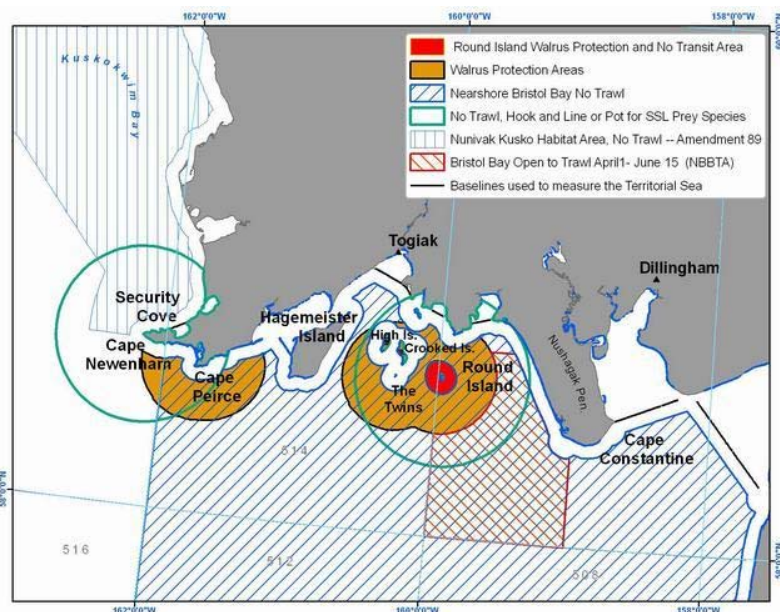
In the past, this has not been an enforcement priority, due in part to there being a process for vessel owner/operators to “surrender” their FFP to exempt themselves from the application of this prohibition, then reapplying in the fall or when done tendering. However, with the recent passage of the suite of regulations implementing GOA Pacific cod sector splits, the ability for a vast majority of vessels to surrender their FFP to comply with this prohibition has been precluded. A significant number of the vessels which operate as tenders in this area hold a FFP to participate in other fisheries, and if the FFP were surrendered, could not be re-obtained during the 3 year cycle. The primary fleet that this prohibition effects are the vessels serving as tenders between the Togiak area herring and maybe salmon fisheries and processors in Naknak and other areas within Bristol Bay.

Going “around” these two islands requires a significant detour through more offshore waters. Informal discussions with USFWS indicate a strong desire to limit increases in vessel traffic past the walrus haulout on the NW shore of Hagemeister Island. Likewise, another possibility technically involves remaining inside 3 nm state waters on the very northern shore of Bristol Bay, between Togiak Bay and the Nushagak Pen, but this area is reportedly shallow and potentially presents increased safety considerations.

Although the Round Island regulations are clear, it is recognized that the recent changes have exacerbated the enforcement and compliance situation. Compounding the issue is the regulation’s intent to afford some heightened protections for walrus, a species under primary management of USFWS. Staff contact is Steve MacLean.

AFA Vessels as AM80 Replacement Vessels

During staff tasking, the Council asked staff to prepare a brief discussion paper examining the legal provisions and potential impacts regarding the use of AFA vessels as Amendment 80 replacement vessels. Currently, NMFS is intending to prohibit the use of AFA vessels as replacement vessels, which is consistent with the Council’s understanding at the time Amendment 80 vessel replacement action was adopted by the Council. However, during the B reports at this meeting, NMFS informed the Council of a changing legal interpretation that would permit the use of AFA vessels as Amendment 80 replacement vessels. It was agreed by the Council that a brief review of NOAA GC interpretation of the Capacity Reduction Program legislation would help the Council better understand this issue. In addition, the discussion paper would be helpful for the Council as well as effected sectors to understand better in terms of the economic impacts and how AFA sideboards might apply, if the Council wanted to explicitly permit the use of AFA vessels as Amendment 80 vessels. After a review of the discussion paper, the Council could decide not to take any action, in which case AFA vessels would be prohibited for use as Amendment 80 replacement vessels or the Council could initiate an analysis of options that would allow the use of AFA vessels as Amendment 80 replacement vessels. Staff contacts are Mark Fina and Jon McCracken.



Programmatic Groundfish SEIS

The Council reviewed a discussion paper about whether the 2004 Programmatic Groundfish SEIS (PSEIS) is in need of revision, and opted to proceed with a more formal evaluation through a Supplemental Information Report process. The report will evaluate whether either of the requirements for supplementing an EIS have been met with respect to the PSEIS: a) whether there has been a substantial change to the groundfish fisheries that is relevant to environmental concerns, or b) whether there exist significant new circumstances or information relevant to environmental concerns, and bearing on the groundfish fisheries or their impacts. Staff will develop an analytical outline for the report and bring it back for Council approval at a future meeting. A Council member subcommittee, to be appointed, will provide direction on the development of the analysis. Staff contact is Diana Evans.

GOA Jig Gear

The Council and the Enforcement Committee reviewed a discussion paper on limiting other gear types on board vessels jigging for Pacific cod in the Gulf, and moved to table further discussion until such a time as more catch and participation data are available under the Amendment 83 sector split management structure. Under separate TAC allocations for each gear type sector, there could be incentives to increase the duration of one sector's season at the expense of another; the discussion paper stems from such a foreseen concern. It is unclear at this time, though, whether gear restrictions would adequately address accompanying issues of misreporting Pacific cod in the Gulf; for example, longline catch misreported as jig-caught. The federal B season for the jig sector opened on June 10. Based on catch data thus far in 2012, it is anticipated that the jig sector fleet will receive a 1% step-up in its TAC allocation for the 2013 season. Though recognizing the potential incentive to misreport Pacific cod catch under sector splits, the Council noted that there is no clear indication that widespread misreporting of catch is occurring at this time.



Photo: Tony Kenne, USCG

HAPC

The Council made an initial review of the analysis to identify areas of skate egg concentration as Habitat Areas of Particular Concern (HAPC); the Enforcement Committee also reviewed the analysis. The Council selected Alternative 2 and Options a, d, and e as its Preferred Preliminary Alternative (PPA), and released the document for public review.

The Council moved to strike from Alternative 2 its intent to "discourage fishing in these areas" of skate egg concentration with gear that makes contact with the sea floor. The Council adopted a revised statement of Purpose and Need, based on public comments. The motion is available on the Council's website.

Under Option a, NMFS would monitor HAPC

for changes in egg density and other potential effects of fishing, and the Council would request that industry support collection of data in evaluation of monitoring and management efforts relative to those HAPC. Under Option d, the Council would suggest adding research and monitoring of areas of skate egg concentration to the Council's research priority list. The intent of its PPA is to monitor the potential impacts of fishing activities in the proposed HAPCs primarily at the population level and if practicable to develop additional information on fishery interactions with areas of skate egg concentrations.

Finally, under Option e, the Council would adopt the formatting standards as stated in the final rule implementing Amendment 89 to the BSAI Groundfish FMP, which establishes Bering Sea habitat conservation

measures. This option is a housekeeping amendment to consolidate figures and tables that describe the Bering Sea Habitat Conservation Area (HCA), the Northern Bering Sea Research Area and Saint Lawrence Island HCA, and the Nunivak Island, Etolin Strait, and Kuskokwim Bay HCA. Staff contact is David Witherell.



Photo: Jane DiCosimo NPFMC



Photo: Peggy Kircher NPFMC

Above: Whale watching on the boat ride to Ouzinkie. Left: Hermann Squartsoff addresses the community and guests of Ouzinkie at a reception during the Council meeting. Below: The Coast Guard cutter Munro.



Photo: Mark Fina, NPFMC

DRAFT NPFMC THREE-MEETING OUTLOOK - updated 6/19/12

October 1-9, 2012 Anchorage, AK	December 3-11, 2012 Anchorage, AK	February 4-12, 2013 Portland, OR
SSL EIS scoping (T) SSL EIS analytical approach: SSC review Observer Deployment Plan: OAC report; action as necessary Charter Halibut: Review Methodology for 2013 limits (SSC only) Halibut CSP: Final Action CGOA trawl PSC tools: feedback; goals and objectives Halibut/Sablefish IFQ Leasing prohibition: NMFS Disc. paper (T) VMS Use and Requirements: Expanded Discussion Paper BSAI Crab ROFR: Initial Review (T) BSAI Crab active participation requirements: Initial Review BSAI Crab Cooperative Provisions for Crew : Discussion paper BSAI Crab Binding Arbitration - GKC: Workgroup report Binding Arbitration Issues (lengthy season, publishing decisions, IPQ Initiation): Discussion Paper Am 80 vessel replacement with AFA vessels: Discussion Paper AFA Vessel Replacement GOA Sideboards: Initial Review FLL Vessel Replacement (MLOA adjustment): Final Action Groundfish Catch Specifications: Adopt proposed specifications BSAI Crab SAFE: Final OFL/ABC specifications for 6 stocks BSAI Tanner Crab rebuilding plan: Revise Alternatives EFH Consultations: Report BS Habitat Conservation Area Boundary: Review Northern Bering Sea Research: Discussion paper Research/EFP Catch: Discussion paper (T) GOA pollock EFP: Review (T)	AI Risk Assessment: Report (T) SSL EIS: Identify Alternatives for Analysis Charter Halibut: Recommendations for 2013 Definition of Fishing Guide: Discussion Paper Retention of 4A halibut in BSAI sablefish pots: Disc. paper (T) BSAI Chum Salmon Bycatch: Initial Review GOA Chinook Bycatch All Trawl Fisheries: Initial Review (T) H/S IFQ Disc papers (GOA sablefish pots, unharvested halibut, sablefish A-share caps) (T) BSAI Crab ROFR: Final Action (T) BSAI Crab active participation requirements: Final Action HAPC - Skate sites: Final Action AFA Vessel Replacement GOA Sideboards: Final Action Groundfish Catch Specifications: Adopt Final specifications BSAI Tanner Crab rebuilding plan: Initial Review (T) PSEIS/SIR: Progress Report	Round Island Transit: Initial Review (T) Genadier management: Initial Review (T) Greenland Turbot allocation: Initial Review (T) GOA Chinook Bycatch All Trawl Fisheries: Final Action (T) CQE small block restrictions: Discussion Paper (T) Crab bycatch limits in BSAI groundfish fisheries: Disc paper BBRKC spawning area/fishery effects: Updated Discussion paper GOA P cod sideboards for FLL: Initial Review (T) BSAI Flatfish Specification Flexibility: Initial Review (T) BSAI Tanner Crab rebuilding plan: Final Action (T) ITEMS BELOW FOR FUTURE MEETINGS Crab PSC numbers to weight: Discussion paper BS Canyons: Updated AFSC report; Fishing activities and management discussion paper MPA Nominations: Discuss and consider nominations

AI - Aleutian Islands
 AFA - American Fisheries Act
 BiOp - Biological Opinion
 BSAI - Bering Sea and Aleutian Islands
 BKC - Blue King Crab
 BOF - Board of Fisheries
 CQE - Community Quota Entity
 CDQ - Community Development Quota
 EDR - Economic Data Reporting
 EFP - Exempted Fishing Permit
 EIS - Environmental Impact Statement
 EFH - Essential Fish Habitat
 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

October 1-9, 2012 - Hilton Hotel, Anchorage
December 3-11, 2012 - Anchorage
February 4-12, 2013, Portland
April 1-9, 2013, Anchorage
June 3-11, 2013, Juneau
September 30-Oct 8, 2013 Anchorage
December 9-17, 2013, Anchorage

(T) Tentatively scheduled