

North Pacific Fishery Management Council

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NEWSLETTER

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North Pacific Fishery Management Council Met April 21-24

During the April meeting the Council addressed several issues including limited entry for groundfish and crab, salmon bycatch management, seasonal and gear allocations of Pacific cod, CDQ fisheries, and stock rebuilding schedules for Pacific ocean perch (POP) in the Gulf of Alaska. Details on these and other issues are inside this newsletter. Many of the major issues addressed by the Council are scheduled for final action at the upcoming June meeting, to be held at the Kodiak Westmark Hotel the week of June 20. The Advisory Panel, Scientific and Statistical Committee, and the Comprehensive Planning Committee will begin meeting at 1:00 p.m., Sunday, June 20. The Council will begin meeting on Monday, June 21. A draft agenda for the meetings should be available by June 4.

Major issues up for final action in June include salmon bycatch, Pacific cod allocation, POP rebuilding, and frameworking the opening date of the pollock 'A' (roe) season in the Bering Sea. The Council also will also discuss possible amendments to the sablefish/halibut IFQ program including the Sitka Block proposal, though final action on these amendments will not be until September. The other major issue for June will be continued discussion of the Comprehensive Planning or limited entry initiative, which may include defining some of the specifics of a possible individual share quota or license limitation program for groundfish and crab.

Advisory Panel Elects John Bruce and Beth Stewart

The Advisory Panel voted to have *John Bruce* and *Beth Stewart* serve as Chairman and Vice Chairman, respectively, for 1993. Mr. Bruce, Executive Director for the Deep Sea Fishermen's Union of the Pacific (Seattle), has been a member of the Panel since 1991. He also serves on the Council's IFQ Implementation Team. Ms. Stewart is Executive Director for the Aleutian East Borough (Juneau) and has also been an AP member since 1991.

New AP Member Appointed

Stephanie Madsen, a representative for Aleutian Logistics (Dutch Harbor), is the newest member of the Advisory Panel for 1993. Ms. Madsen was appointed to fill the seat vacated by departing member John Woodruff.

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Scallop Management

In January the Council was presented with information indicating the stocks of weathervane scallops were fully exploited and needed protection from overcapitalization. A control date of January 20, 1993 was set to notice the industry that a moratorium for this fishery may be implemented, and the Council requested staff to prepare an analysis of proposed federal management of the Alaskan scallop fishery.

Three alternatives are being examined: continuing State management (status quo), incorporating scallops into the Gulf of Alaska Groundfish Fishery Management Plan (FMP), and developing a separate scallop FMP. Both alternatives to the status quo would limit access to the fishery with a vessel moratorium, but most management measures would be deferred to the State of Alaska, including setting of harvest levels and in-season management of the fishery. At the April meeting, the Council received public comment on proposed federal management of Alaskan scallops. The Council will review a draft analysis in June and consider sending it out for public review, with possible adoption of a plan in September. Council staff contact is Dave Witherell.

Pacific Ocean Perch Rebuilding Plan

At the April meeting, the Council completed an initial review of a rebuilding analysis for Pacific Ocean Perch (POP) in the Gulf of Alaska. Overfishing in the 1960's depleted the POP stock and the current stock size (75,000 mt) is about half of the optimal level. The Council is considering whether and how fast to rebuild this stock to optimal levels by limiting harvest. The rebuilding analysis provides information on the biological and economic impacts of reducing POP harvest levels. This analysis is available for public review. The Council is scheduled to take final action in June. For more information, contact Dave Witherell at the Council office.

In December, the Council recommended an initial POP harvest level (or TAC) of only 2,560 mt to initiate rebuilding of the POP stock. This harvest level would not allow a target fishery for POP, but would allow POP taken as bycatch in other fisheries to be retained, rather than wasted. Although the recommended harvest levels for other groundfish were approved by the Secretary of Commerce in March, the POP specification for 1993 was disapproved because the biological and economic impacts resulting from the "bycatch only" harvest level were not evaluated. At the April meeting, the necessary biological and economic information was available, as it was included in the POP rebuilding analysis. Based on the new information, the Council reduced the 1993 ABC specification to the maximum sustainable yield level of 3,378 mt. The allowable harvest level (TAC) of 2,560 mt for POP, as recommended in December, was reaffirmed. This TAC level would provide a sufficient amount necessary for bycatch of POP in target fisheries, as well as a buffer between the quota and the overfishing level.

In December, the Council requested that NMFS develop a regulatory amendment which would adjust directed fishing standards for rockfish in the GOA. After review of this request, the NMFS Region will prepare a comprehensive regulatory amendment addressing directed fishing standards in all groundfish fisheries. Such an analysis may be ready for initial review at the June meeting.

Kodiak Trawl Closures

The Council reviewed a proposed groundfish amendment that would close the Kodiak crab protection zones to all trawling, including pelagic trawling. The Council earlier had closed the areas just to bottom trawling, but NOAA's Office of Enforcement expressed concern that restricting the closures only to bottom trawl gear would create enforcement problems. Aerial surveillance, which is the most effective and least costly and intrusive means to monitor closed areas, could be highly effective if all trawling were banned. Any vessels observed fishing with trawls in the closed areas automatically would be in violation. It would be much more difficult for aerial surveillance to determine if there was a violation if pelagic trawling was allowed. Analysis indicated, however, that closing these areas to pelagic trawling would

reduce some important nearshore pollock fishing grounds. Public testimony suggested that, because these closures have existed for several years and are closely monitored by the Kodiak fishing industry, extension of the prohibition to pelagic trawling was not necessary. The Council decided that the proposed ban on all trawling did not merit further consideration at this time.

Gulf of Alaska Atka Mackerel

The Council reviewed a proposed amendment to the Gulf of Alaska (GOA) Groundfish FMP that would establish Atka mackerel as a separate target species, and recommended sending the analysis out for public review. Currently, Atka mackerel is included in the "other species" category, which also contains bycatch species of minor commercial importance including sculpins, skates, squid, smelts, sharks, eulachon, capelin, and octopus. The "other species" category has been available as a Gulf-wide TAC equal to five percent of the sum of TACs for all target fisheries. However, a target fishery for Atka mackerel has developed recently. In 1992, "other species" became non-retainable in May in the entire Gulf due to the high landings of Atka mackerel. This year "other species" are apportioned by management area but a target fishery for Atka mackerel still closed directed fishing for "other species" in the Western GOA by April 2.

The purpose for the proposed amendment is to improve management and conservation by establishing Atka mackerel as a target species in the GOA. Two alternatives are analyzed: (1) the status quo, and (2) establishing a separate target category for Atka mackerel. Under Alternative 2, harvest levels of Atka mackerel would be based on biological stock assessments and would be around 4,800 mt in 1994. Without Atka mackerel, the TAC for the "other species" category would be slightly increased, because it is specified as 5% of the sum of the groundfish TACs. The "other species" category still would be comprised of species currently taken in very small amounts and which are needed for bycatch in target fisheries.

The draft plan amendment analysis will be made available for public review on May 14. The Council is scheduled to take final action on this proposal at the June meeting. Council staff contact is Dave Witherell.

Trawl Mesh Regulations

The Council reviewed a proposed regulatory amendment to require a square mesh top panel in trawl codends used in the Bering Sea/Aleutian Islands directed pollock fishery. Its purpose is to allow the escapement of undersized pollock, resulting in fewer discards and a higher percentage of larger fish retained. The three alternatives examined were: status quo, 90 mm stretched mesh panel, and 110 mm stretched mesh panel. Analysis indicated that the 110 mm mesh could potentially reduce discarding and sorting time. The costs associated with the proposed regulation include replacing the top panel of codends (\$5,000 to \$8,000 each), and increased effort required to reach the TAC. The Council expressed concern about possible escapement mortality and enforcement difficulties involved in mesh regulation.

Additional research on codend selectivity for pollock is underway, and could provide very useful information. The Alaska Fisheries Development Foundation, in cooperation with researchers at the University of Washington and the Fishery Industrial Technology Center, is studying codend selectivity on Alaskan pollock. The Council felt it was premature to develop mesh regulations before completion of that study, and has postponed further consideration of the proposal until 1994.

Ban on Night Trawling for Pacific Cod

The Council reviewed a discussion paper on a proposal to ban trawling for Pacific cod at night in the BSAI. The purpose of this proposal was to reduce halibut bycatch rate in the Pacific cod trawl fishery, thus allowing more groundfish to be harvested prior to halibut PSC closures. Analysis of observer data indicated that day-only trawling for Pacific cod could reduce total halibut and King crab bycatch by 13%. However, the Council noted that enforcement of such a ban would be extremely difficult, and recommended that further analysis was not warranted at this time.

Sablefish and Halibut IFQ Program

The Council received a status report from NMFS on implementation schedules for the fixed gear sablefish and halibut Individual Fishing Quota program which was approved by the Secretary of Commerce earlier this year. Though 1994 implementation is still considered a possibility, it is more likely going to be 1995 before the program goes into effect. The final regulations to implement the program will be published within the next few weeks, and there will be an update on possible implementation schedules at the June meeting in Kodiak.

At the June meeting in Kodiak the Council also will review proposed amendments to the IFQ program including the Sitka Block proposal, the Modified Block Proposal, and the 1,000 pound minimum halibut allocation proposal. The Council will consider releasing these proposals for public comment. A final decision is scheduled for the September meeting in Anchorage. The Council made their position clear on the record that the sablefish and halibut community development program should not be implemented ahead of the IFQ program. Council staff contact is Marcus Hartley.

Comprehensive Planning for Limited Entry

The Council's Comprehensive Rationalization Plan is moving forward, though under the simpler banner of Comprehensive Planning. Nomenclature aside, the focus is on two limited access alternatives to the status quo for management of all groundfish and crab fisheries under Council jurisdiction: Individual Transferrable Quotas (ITQs) and License Limitation. The Council received a progress report from staff who are working on the analyses for these two management alternatives. This report included a description of the analytical tools and methodologies which will be employed in the analysis of potential biological and socioeconomic impacts.

The Comprehensive Planning Committee (all Council members) then discussed the specific elements and options within the overall limited entry alternatives. Although some of these elements and options will not be decided until we get further down the road on this issue, some of them are relevant to the analyses currently underway. Staff will be further developing a discussion paper, or qualitative analysis, of some of these potential elements and options to present to the Council at the June meeting. It is anticipated that this qualitative analysis will help focus Council and industry discussion of the specifics of the program.

From a broad perspective, staff will be working through the summer on assembling the necessary data bases and analytical tools for the analysis. The detailed quantitative analyses will be completed this fall and early 1994, with a final decision by the Council scheduled for the spring or summer of 1994. A new system would not be in place until 1996. Council staff contact is Chris Oliver.

Observer Program

Last year the Council approved the North Pacific Fisheries Research Plan which will establish a user fee program to support observers. It soon will be submitted to the Secretary of Commerce for review, and once published as a proposed rule, there will be a 60-day public comment period and public hearings in Washington, Oregon, and Alaska. After final approval, which may occur by the end of the summer, the Council will set a fee percentage, not to exceed 2% of exvessel value of fish landed, to apply to the 12-month start-up funding period. During this 12 months, the requirements of the existing Observer Plan will remain in effect, including recently adopted changes to that plan which should become effective in mid-1993. The complete Research Plan will not likely go into effect until 1995. For more information on the specifics of the Research Plan, please contact our offices for a copy of our special True North newsletter titled "Eyes on the Horizon."

At the April meeting the Council also discussed issues concerning the types of information collected by the NMFS Observer Program, its use by government agencies, and the confidentiality of that information. There has been concern voiced by industry that some of the information collected by observers goes beyond that needed for biological assessment and in-season management. The Observer Program is working with the Council to address these concerns and to find ways to collect the information they need without unduly interfering with the operations of the fishing industry. Questions of data confidentiality are being assessed by NOAA General Counsel. Council staff contact is Chris Oliver.

Legal Gear Types Amendment

The Council took final action on a regulatory amendment to the groundfish fishery management plans which will define specific gear types which are legal for use in the groundfish fisheries. Previous regulations defined illegal gear types, and if a gear type was not listed, it could be used. Under the approved amendment, initial legal gears will be as follows:

Gulf of Alaska Groundfish: Hook and line, jig, troll, longline, pot, pelagic trawl, and trawl.

Bering Sea/Aleutian Islands Groundfish: Same as Gulf of Alaska except that Danish and Scottish seines could be used as bottom trawl gear, sharing that category's PSC limits.

Sunken gill nets and seines will no longer be legal gear for groundfish. Vessels participating in non-groundfish fisheries using undefined gear could still retain bycatch amounts of groundfish consistent with existing directed fishing standards.

New gear types could still be developed under experimental fishing permits where fishing efficiency, bycatch rates, and effects on the environment could be assessed. Gear types assessed under this process could subsequently be authorized to fish for groundfish under future regulatory amendments. Council staff contact is Chris Oliver.

Salmon Management

SE Alaska Troll Fishery

The Southeast Alaska chinook troll fishery was a topic of discussion at the April Council meeting. Due primarily to two extraordinary events, uncertainty exists about the number of chinook that will be allowed for commercial harvest for this summer's season. The first is that the Pacific Salmon Treaty (PST) Commission has failed, to date, to successfully negotiate a new chinook salmon annex to replace the old one which expired after the 1992 season. Without a 1993 PST chinook annex, there will be no catch quota specified for the 1993 Southeast chinook fishery.

The second event is the listing of spring/summer and fall Snake River chinook as "threatened" species under the Endangered Species Act (ESA). Tag return information indicates that fall Snake River chinook occur in the Southeast Alaska salmon fishery. The ESA allows for incidental take of a listed species (Section 7 of the ESA). NMFS consults with agencies managing the fishery where incidental takes occur to determine whether the incidental takes jeopardize the continued existence of any endangered or threatened species. NMFS may authorize the takes if the no jeopardy standard is met. NMFS has determined that, in order to authorize the incidental take of Snake River fall chinook in SE Alaska fisheries, a reduction in take levels of five percent in the incidental take are recommended. The bottom line is that consultation regarding the Southeast Alaska chinook fishery is necessary for Federal approval of the Southeast Alaska management regime for the 1993 fisheries due to the occurrence of a threatened species.

As provided for in the FMP for the Salmon Fisheries in the EEZ Off the Coast of Alaska, the Council retains oversight of the Southeast Alaska chinook salmon fishery, but has conditionally deferred regulatory management of the fishery to the State of Alaska. The Council annually reviews the provisions of the PST, including agreed annexes, and determines if the conditions of deferral to State management have been satisfied. At this meeting, the Council decided not to take any action under the provisions of the Salmon FMP. In so doing, it reaffirmed its deferral of management of the Southeast Alaska chinook salmon fishery to the State of Alaska, if the state provides a management plan that (1) includes a harvest quota of 263,000 treaty chinook salmon and (2) satisfies the ESA requirements through consultation with the NMFS.

BSAI Salmon Bycatch Management

Over the past two years, the Council has pursued the possibility of placing a limit on the incidental capture of chinook salmon in the BSAI trawl fisheries. At this meeting, the Council was set to recommend a chinook salmon Prohibited Species Catch program utilizing a combination of time/area closures for trawl fisheries triggered by bycatch of an established number of chinook salmon.

However, after reviewing a draft analysis of a proposed Vessel Incentive Program (VIP) for salmon, and also receiving an industry-sponsored concept of establishing a voluntary "salmon foundation" program to reduce chinook salmon bycatch, the Council decided to hold off final action on a possible salmon bycatch program until the June meeting. In so doing, the Council will be sending out for public review the analysis on a possible salmon VIP. In addition, the Council has agreed to consider a proposal from industry representatives which could result in reduced bycatch of chinook salmon through a combination of incentives.

Specifically, the industry "salmon foundation" proposal would require: (1) mandatory retention of all salmon bycatch with a stiff penalty (greater than \$10,000) for discard, (2) the retained bycatch would be analyzed by NMFS/ADF&G and later distributed to food banks, (3) publication of number of salmon bycatch by vessel name by week on NMFS' computer bulletin board, and (4) the creation of a foundation. The foundation would require that trawl operations pay into the foundation a fee for each salmon caught as bycatch, with a base rate for unavoidable bycatch that would match the cost to the terminal salmon fisheries of foregone harvest. The fee would be increased if an operation exceeded an unacceptable amount of salmon bycatch. This would be a punitive assessment for willful failure to avoid salmon bycatch. Funds from this foundation would be used for salmon research, such as stream-of-origin analysis, stock strength analysis, and bycatch pattern analysis. Council staff contact is Brent Paine.

Preferential and Seasonal Allocations of Pacific Cod in the BSAI

The Council reviewed an analysis of a proposal to establish allocations of Pacific cod in the Bering Sea (Amendment 24 to the BSAI FMP). Alternatives in the analysis include: (1) establish explicit allocations of the Pacific cod TAC among the trawl, longline, and pot groundfish fisheries, (2) change the

fishing season for Pacific cod from starting in January to starting in September, and (3) apportion the cod TAC by trimesters.

The Council recommended that the analysis be reviewed by interested members of the public between now and the June meeting, with some minor changes. First, the Council developed a problem statement for this issue, stating that:

The Bering Sea/Aleutian Islands Pacific cod fishery, through overcapitalized open-access management, exhibits numerous problems which include: compressed fishing seasons, periods of high bycatch, waste of resource, gear conflicts and an overall reduction in optimum benefit from the fishery. The objective of this amendment is to provide a bridge to comprehensive rationalization. It should provide a measure of stability to the fishery while allowing various components of the industry to optimize their utilization of the resource.

Secondly, though the Council's intent is to have this issue on its June agenda for a final decision, unless they are presented with substantial consensus among major industry components, the Council would be unlikely to take any action on this issue. The Council also requested that available 1993 product value data be considered and that jig gear be included in the analysis before sending the document out for public review. Those interested in the analysis can contact the Council office for a copy of the draft analysis. Council staff contact is Brent Paine.

Total Weight Measurement

In January 1992, the Council recommended that NMFS develop a regulatory amendment that would require accurate estimation and reporting of total catch by species for all groundfish fisheries within the exclusive economic zone (EEZ) of the GOA and BSAI. The Council believes that accurate measurement of total catch weight is necessary to improve information about total removals from groundfish stocks, to improve in-season management of groundfish total allowable catches (TAC) and other species bycatch, to improve the effectiveness of the Vessel Incentive Program (VIP), and to improve data used to prepare stock assessments.

Over the past year, NMFS has updated the Council on this issue and discussed some of the difficulties with developing regulations requiring total catch measurement either by volumetric measurement or weight measurement by scales. At this meeting, NMFS presented a proposed regulatory amendment to require improved total catch measurement by processors participating in the Western Alaska Community Development Quota (CDQ) pollock fisheries. Alternatives considered in the analysis include requiring two observers and certified bins for use in volumetric estimates of total catch, or requiring two observers and certified scales.

The Council decided to send the draft analysis out for public review, enabling the Council to take final action on this issue at the June meeting. Interested persons can contact the Council office for a copy of the total weight measurement analysis. Council staff contact Brent Paine.

Framework Opening Date for the BSAI Pollock 'A' Season

At the January meeting, the Council requested development of a framework amendment which would allow the opening date for the BSAI pollock 'A' (roe) season to be set during the September-December annual specifications process. This flexibility would allow for the setting of a date to help ensure maximum benefit from the 'A' season pollock harvest. A discussion paper and detailed outline of the amendment package were presented at the April meeting. The Council reaffirmed its desire to have the analysis finalized and sent out for review prior to the June meeting. Final action on the regulatory amendment can be made at the June meeting, allowing enough time for Secretarial review so that the

measure is in place for the 1994 pollock season. The amendment also may include a restriction on vessels participating in other trawl fisheries in the BSAI ahead of the 'A' season opening if they plan on fishing pollock during the 'A' season. Council staff contact is Brent Paine.

VIP Rate Standards

The Council recommended third and fourth quarter VIP rate standards for the remainder of the 1993 trawl fisheries in the BSAI and GOA. The recommended VIP rate standards are as follows:

Incentive Program Rate Standards

<u>Fishery and Quarter</u>	<u>Halibut</u> (kg Halibut/mt Catch)	<u>Red King Crab</u> (# of crab/mt catch)
BSAI Midwater Pollock Third & Fourth Quarter	1.0	n/a
BSAI Bottom Pollock Third & Fourth Quarter	5.0	n/a
BSAI Yellowfin Sole Third & Fourth Quarter	5.0	2.5
BSAI Other Trawl Fisheries Third & Fourth Quarter	30.0	2.5
GOA Midwater Pollock Third & Fourth Quarter	1.0	n/a
GOA Other Trawl Fisheries	50.0	n/a

Pollock "Roe-Stripping" Regulatory Adjustments

The National Marine Fisheries Service is proposing minor changes to the regulations governing "roe-stripping" in the BSAI pollock fishery, due to "loopholes" in the regulations that undermine the intent of these regulations. Changes include the following: (1) Change the definition of "fishing trip" so vessel operators cannot "top off" at the end of a lengthy fishing trip with roe product and also prevent a vessel operator from partially offloading some pollock product, but retaining other pollock product, such as roe, during a trip; (2) prevent vessel operators from using "unprocessed" pollock as primary product to calculate retainable amounts of roe or discarding any primary pollock product at sea that was used to calculate retainable amounts of roe; and (3) prohibit using primary roe-related product such as "headed and gutted with roe" to calculate retainable amounts of roe-only product.

The Council recommended that NMFS proceed with their proposed changes. If approved by the Secretary of Commerce, the regulatory changes will be in place prior to the 1994 BSAI pollock 'A' season.

Sea Lion Protection Measures

Expansion of the Seasonal 20 nm Closure Zones

The National Marine Fisheries Service presented a draft regulatory amendment modifying the seasonal 20 nm sea lion rookery protection zones. Specifically, the analysis considers expanding the seasonal no trawl zones around Steller sea lion rookeries at Sea Lion Rocks, Akun, Ugamak, Akutan, Agligadak and Seguam Islands, to November and December when significant pollock harvest is forecasted for these months.

The Council reviewed the draft analysis and decided to send it out for public review, enabling them to make a final recommendation on this NMFS proposal at the June Council meeting. Please contact the Council office if you wish to receive a copy of the draft document.

Critical Habitat Areas Proposed

The National Marine Fisheries Service proposes to designate critical habitat for the Steller sea lion pursuant to the Endangered Species Act (ESA). At the April meeting NMFS staff presented this proposal to the Council. The ESA allows for NMFS to designate areas as critical to listed species if the area is essential to the conservation of the species and may require special management considerations or protection.

The Steller Sea Lion Recovery Team recommended terrestrial and aquatic areas that should be considered as critical habitat for the Steller sea lion. The proposed critical habitat for designation includes: (1) all Steller sea lion rookeries and haulouts, including a zone that extends 3,000 feet landward and vertical of each rookery and haulout boundary, and that extends 3,000 feet seaward from rookeries and haulouts located east of 144°W longitude, or 20 nm seaward from rookeries and haulouts located west of 144°W longitude; (2) all of Shelikof Strait; and (3) two large areas in the BSAI region, one surrounding Seguam Pass and the other extending from just west of Sea Lion Rocks to west of Adugak Island, and extending as far north as 56°N latitude.

NMFS is soliciting information, comments or recommendations on any aspect of this proposal through June 1, 1993. Comments should be addressed to the Director, Office of Protected Resources, National Marine Fisheries Service, 1335 East-West Highway, Silver Springs, MD 20910. Contact the Council office for copies of the Proposed Rule for this proposal, which was published in the Federal Register on April 1, 1993.

Documents Available for Review and Comment

The following documents are being made available for public review and comment in the next few weeks. These subjects will be on the Council's meeting agenda for final decisions at their June 21-25 meeting in Kodiak, Alaska. Contact the Council office, 907-271-2809, to request copies.

Amendment 21b to the Bering Sea/Aleutian Islands Groundfish Fishery Management Plan. The analysis explores alternatives for control of chinook salmon bycatch in the BSAI groundfish fisheries. See article on page 6.

Amendment 24 to the Bering Sea/Aleutian Islands Groundfish Fishery Management Plan. The analysis covers several alternatives to establish fixed allocations of Pacific cod in the BSAI by gear type and/or by season. This amendment was developed as a result of an industry proposal. See article on pages 6-7.

Amendment 29 to the Bering Sea/Aleutian Islands Groundfish Fishery Management Plan. The analysis provides alternatives for Vessel Incentive Program in the BSAI trawl fisheries to reduce salmon bycatch. See article on page 6.

Amendment 31 to the Gulf of Alaska Groundfish Fishery Management Plan. The analysis provides an option to establish Atka mackerel as a separate target species in the Gulf of Alaska. Atka mackerel is currently part of the "other species" category to improve management and conservation. See article on page 3.

Amendment 32 to the Gulf of Alaska Groundfish Fishery Management Plan. This analysis explores various options for rebuilding depleted rockfish stocks in the Gulf of Alaska. See article on page 2.

Regulatory Amendment to Require Improved Total Weight Measurement in the Bering Sea/Aleutian Islands Community Development Quota Pollock Fisheries. The regulation is proposed to allow more accurate accounting for bycatch in the CDQ fisheries. Two options are explored: (1) Require two observers in each CDQ operation and the use of certified bins; and (2) Require two observers in each operation and the use of certified scales. See article on page 7.

Framework Amendment to Allow Setting the Opening of the BSAI Pollock 'A' Season on an Annual Basis. This amendment would allow the Council to determine the opening day of the BSAI pollock 'A' season each year during their annual September-December specifications process, and may restrict pollock vessels from participating in earlier fisheries. See article on page 7.

Changes in Regulations Governing "Roe-stripping" in the BSAI Pollock Fishery. The National Marine Fisheries Service is proposing minor changes to current regulations. See article on Page 9.

Expansion of the Seasonal 20 nm Closure Zones to Protect Sea Lions. The National Marine Fisheries Service has prepared a regulatory amendment modifying some seasonal sea lion protection zones to include November and December when significant pollock harvest is forecasted. See article on page 9.