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News & Notes

North Pacific Fishery Management Council

April 2011

Senator Begich Addresses Council

The Council members had a chance to discuss national fishery policy with Alaska Senator Mark Begich during his visit to the Council meeting. He briefly discussed his role on the Subcommittee of Oceans, Atmosphere, Fisheries and Coast Guard. Senator Begich commented on the visibility of the Arctic, and its challenges and opportunities. Senator Begich noted the value of the Council process, the North Pacific Council's leadership in sustainable fisheries management, and his appreciation for the public process it provides in fisheries management decisions.



Halibut Actions

In April 2011 the Council approved a change to the halibut and sablefish IFQ program to amend the **hired skipper** privileges granted to individual and non-individual (corporate) initial recipients of catcher vessel quota shares (QS). The IFQ regulations would be modified to prohibit the use of hired skippers for class B, C, or D halibut or sablefish QS that were transferred after February 12, 2010. The hired skipper provision would be retained for those QS swept up into blocks after the February 12, 2010 control date and before the effective date of the amendment. Initial recipients of QS also would be allowed to sweep up additional QS units to the amounts they hold after the effective date, but these swept up blocks would not retain the hired skipper privilege (i.e., the QS holder must be on board when the IFQs are fished). Applications for transfer of QS/IFQ by initial recipients that were received by NMFS as of February 12, 2010, and were (or will be) approved by RAM after that date, shall be allowed for use by hired skippers. The Council did NOT change the hired skipper privilege for initial QS recipients for any QS held as of the control date. The public review analysis is posted on the Council website.

The Council initiated analyses to consider reducing the halibut **prohibited species catch** (PSC) limits in the Gulf of Alaska for 2012/2013 through the annual harvest specification process; this action will require an environmental assessment and a regulatory flexibility analysis. Currently halibut PSC limits are set annually at 2,000 mt for trawl gear and 300 mt for fixed gear and the Council is evaluating a

5-15% reduction in the limits. The Council cited both 1) conservation of the halibut resource and 2) allocation impacts on commercial, sport, and subsistence fisheries as the purpose for the proposed action. American Fisheries Act sideboards, Amendment 80 sideboards, and allocations to the Rockfish Program in the GOA will also be considered in the analysis. The Council would consider 1) redefining those sideboards to be in specific numbers (i.e., number of mt) or 2) applying those sideboards as a percentage of a reduced halibut PSC limit.

The Council also requested 1) a discussion paper that describes all other individual or cooperative bycatch allocation programs worldwide and 2) a comprehensive FMP/regulatory amendment to consider actions to reduce halibut bycatch by all sectors and gear types engaged in GOA groundfish fisheries for future years. The discussion paper will be reviewed in October along with the PSC limit analyses. At that time the Council may provide further direction for development of the comprehensive amendment package. The motion can be found on the Council website.

The Council also discussed future action to allow halibut vessel category D quota shares in Area 4B to be fished on category C vessels (known as "**fish up**"). The Council may consider scheduling this coincident with another proposed action that addresses a potential Area 4B Community Quota Entity program. This may occur in either October 2011 or December 2011. The public review analysis is posted on the Council website. Staff contact is Jane DiCosimo.



Capt. Mike Cerne will be retiring from the USCG after participating many years in the Council process. Also moving on is ADM Colvin who will be replaced by ADM Thomas Ostebo representing the 17th district USCG. Capt. Greg Saniel will be joining us at Council meetings. We look forward to working with them.



Impacts on Cod Trawlers

At its April 2011 meeting, the Council reviewed a discussion paper on Bering Sea winter Pacific cod fishery to determine if participating American Fisheries Act (AFA) vessels are adversely impacting participating non-AFA trawl catcher vessels. The Council tasking originated from a request by the Independent Cod Trawlers Association, which includes the fishing vessels Lone Star, Miss Leona, and Windjammer. After reviewing the discussion paper and listening to public testimony, the Council opted to take no further action on this agenda item at this time. The Council encouraged the parties involved to work together to formalize the current practices of limiting AFA vessels on the winter cod grounds when Independent Cod Trawlers Association vessels are on the cod grounds, and to the degree possible mitigate some of the concerns raised by Independent Cod Trawlers Association vessels owners. The Council noted that the winter cod fishery had an increase in the number of AFA vessels and a shortened season, but given the dynamic nature of the fishery and the many variables influencing participation in the fishery, it's not clear if there has been economic harm to the non-AFA trawl catcher vessels. If competition from AFA vessels on the winter cod grounds is significantly harming non-AFA trawl catcher vessels in the future, the Council could reconsider its action on this issue. Staff contact is Jon McCracken.

Salmon Bycatch in the GOA Pollock Fishery

Following initial review of a draft analysis for measures to address Chinook salmon bycatch in the Gulf of Alaska (GOA) pollock fishery, the Council adopted a preliminary preferred alternative for the analysis. The preliminary preferred alternative identifies a prohibited species catch (PSC) limit of 22,500 Chinook salmon for the western and central GOA pollock fisheries combined. This limit would be apportioned between the two areas based on a combination of the proportional historic pollock TAC and historic average Chinook salmon bycatch, using the time series 2001-2006 and 2008-2009. 2007 and 2010 were dropped from the time series because these were abnormally high bycatch years in the central and western GOA respectively, and inclusion of these years biases the apportionment calculation. This calculation results in the following annual PSC limit allowances for the two areas; once the PSC limit is reached, the pollock fishery in the respective area would be closed for the remainder of the year:

Central GOA: 15,816
Western GOA: 6,684

Additionally, the preliminary preferred alternative would implement an interim observer requirement of 30% coverage for trawl vessels under 60 ft while directed fishing for pollock in the central or western GOA. The interim requirement would expire once the observer restructuring program is implemented (currently targeted for January 2013), because that program also provides for observer coverage on vessels under 60 ft. Full retention of all salmon would be required by all vessels directed fishing for pollock, and NMFS will work with the industry to improve observed and extrapolated Chinook salmon estimates and their timeliness.

Although the amendment analysis contains an option to allow a 25% overage provision once in three years, this option was not selected by the Council for their preliminary preferred alternative. Should the PSC limit regulation be implemented mid-year, however, the Council did identify smaller central and western GOA PSC limits that would be in place for the implementation year only, for the C and D pollock seasons. These limits would be 7,710 Chinook salmon for the central GOA, and 5,598 Chinook salmon for the western GOA.

At this meeting, the Council was informed that administrative requirements are likely to limit the effectiveness of the proposed mandatory salmon bycatch control cooperatives evaluated as Alternative 3 in the initial review analysis. Consequently, the Council has removed this alternative from the amendment package. The Council noted that a more comprehensive Chinook salmon bycatch amendment package has been initiated on a longer time track, and some of the tools available through a salmon bycatch control cooperative may be evaluated in the longer term package.

The Council had considerable discussion about the timing for final action on this issue, and chose to continue with scheduling final action for the June Council meeting in Nome. This timing would allow (although not require) possible implementation of the PSC limits in mid-2012.

As part of the initial review analysis, the Council received an update on NMFS' current plans for increasing sampling of Chinook salmon caught as bycatch in the GOA pollock fisheries. The Council has requested that the agency clarify whether existing sampling protocols are appropriate for conducting genetic analysis on those samples to determine their stock of origin, and report back on the timeline for developing an estimate of Chinook salmon stock composition in the GOA pollock fishery bycatch.

The Council's motion revising the alternatives for analysis, and identifying a preliminary preferred alternative, is posted on the Council website. Staff contacts are Diana Evans and Mark Fina.

There's No Place Like NOME

The Council will hold its June meeting in Nome, Alaska June 6-14. The AP and SSC will start on June 6, at Old St. Joe's Church and Pioneer Hall, respectively, and the Council will begin June 8 at the Mini Convention Hall. The agenda will be available early by late April. Accommodations are limited, but the Nome Convention and Visitors Bureau can help you find places to stay around the town. Please call 907-443-6555 or go to www.visitnomealaska.com and someone will be able to help you plan your stay.

Joint Groundfish Plan team Teleconference to Review Proposals for 2011 Pacific Cod Stock Assessment

The BSAI Groundfish Plan Team and Gulf of Alaska Groundfish Plan Team will convene via teleconference on Tuesday, May 17, 1:30 pm (ADT). The teams will be reviewing proposals for model runs for GOA and BSAI Pacific cod and making recommendations to the author for those that will be reviewed at the August 2011 Groundfish Plan Team meeting. Proposed model runs include those by the author, BSAI Plan Team, GOA Plan Team, Science and Statistical Committee, CIE reviewers and the public. Joint Plan Team recommendations from this May 2011 meeting will be reviewed by the author with the SSC in June 2011. A meeting room and conference line will be arranged by the AFSC- Seattle for local participants. Meeting rooms in Juneau, Kodiak, and Anchorage may also be coordinated among those local participants. The **deadline** for proposing models has been extended to **April 29** to allow the public an opportunity to consider the results of the CIE reviews, which are anticipated on April 22. Proposals are to be submitted to Grant Thompson. Contact Jane DiCosimo for more information.

Observer Advisory Committee

The Observer Advisory Committee (OAC) met March 22 to: 1) receive an update from NMFS on the development of the proposed rulemaking to implement the observer restructuring action the Council approved in October 2010; and 2) discuss the scope and potential use of electronic monitoring (EM) on specified small boat sectors that will be included in the observer restructuring action. The Council asked the OAC to evaluate the development of an EM alternative such that it is available to specified fleets, if it is determined effective to meet NMFS' monitoring objectives, at the time the restructured observer program is implemented (scheduled for 2013).

The OAC recommended focusing an initial EM effort on the 40' – 60' longline IFQ sector, recognizing that information resulting from the initial design will be key to potentially expanding EM to other sectors. The decision was based on starting a limited program for those sectors: 1) newly included in the observer program; 2) in which it would be relatively impractical or unsafe to carry an observer; and 3) that are not dependent on near real-time data in order to manage the fishery (e.g., are not subject to PSC caps that close the fishery). Another significant consideration is that NMFS and the IPHC do not have at-sea discard information associated with the halibut fleet, while other small vessels operate in fisheries that have larger vessels that have been carrying observers under the existing program and thus have some level of associated data, albeit not specific to the <60' fleet. The Council agreed with the direction the OAC proposed on EM.

The Council also agreed to fold the OAC into the review process for the annual sampling and deployment plan under a restructured observer program, and the use of the OAC to review

implementation issues in the draft proposed rule in September and provide recommendations to the Council at its October 2011 meeting. NMFS' schedule provides for these reviews, with the intent to publish a proposed rule early in 2012. The schedule also incorporates public hearings in AK, WA, and OR during the 45-day comment period for the proposed rule. Meeting details for a September OAC meeting will be posted when available. The March OAC report is on the Council website; staff contact is Nicole Kimball.

Scallop SAFE Report

The Council reviewed the Stock Assessment and Fishery Evaluation (SAFE) report on the Scallop fishery in Alaska. The SAFE report provides an overview of scallop management, scallop harvests and the status of the regional weathervane scallop stocks. Scallop stocks are neither overfished nor approaching an overfished condition. The Council approved the SAFE report and endorsed the SSC comments and recommendations for inclusion in the SAFE report for the following year. The Council also approved the ABC level for the 2011/12 fishing year recommended to the Council by the SSC. The SSC made this recommendation in anticipation of a pending amendment to the FMP to meet Annual Catch Limit (ACL) requirements. The SSC recommendation is for a statewide ABC of 1.161 million lbs of shucked scallop meats. The State of Alaska must then ensure that the sum of the regional GHL levels do not exceed this amount to prevent harvests exceeding the statewide ACL. Beginning in 2011/12 all catch will accrue towards the ACL so estimated discards are also being tabulated in the annual SAFE report. Staff contact is Diana Stram.

Crab Modeling Workshop

An NPFMC-sponsored crab modeling workshop took place from February 16-18, 2011 at the Alaska Fisheries Science Center in Seattle WA. The over-arching objective of the workshop was to give the assessment authors feedback and recommendations on the assessment models that are currently in use for estimating stock status and reference points. Assessment models for Bering Sea Tanner crabs, blue and red king crabs from the Pribilof Islands, red king crabs from Bristol Bay, and selectivity experiments from the Eastern Bering Sea snow crab were presented at the workshop. Discussions about the data, assessment models, and interpretation of the results took place. The majority of the meeting focused upon review and development of the Tanner crab model. The SSC reviewed the results of the workshop report and commented on the development of the Tanner crab model as well as the workshop recommendations. The Council moved to support scheduling of additional NPFMC-sponsored crab modeling workshops to facilitate development and review of crab models for assessment purposes. The Council also requested that the Crab Plan Team review criteria for establishing the base years for reference point determination for all crab stocks at their upcoming May meeting and to seek an additional plan team member with quantitative stock assessment experience. Staff contact is Diana Stram.

Council Connections

Heather Fitch, the new Alaska Department of Fish and Game BSAI area management biologist for shellfish and groundfish in Dutch Harbor has recently been appointed to the Crab Plan Team. She will be a valuable part in the state-federal coordination of the FMPs and we welcome her to the process.

Steve MacLean has been hired by the Council for the position of protected species coordinator/fisheries analyst. Steve is from Barrow, and got his Master's degree in wildlife and fisheries science from Texas A&M, working on bowhead whale research in the Sea of Okhotsk. He was previously the Director of the Polar Marine Program for The Nature Conservancy.

Impacts on BBRKC Habitat

The Council reviewed a discussion paper evaluating effects of fishing on essential fish habitat (EFH) for Bristol Bay red king crab (BBRKC). The discussion paper follows up on concerns identified by the Crab Plan Team during the EFH 5-year review in 2010.

The information presented suggests that there is an area southwest of Amak Island that may be particularly important for rebuilding red king crab populations, due to the fact that eggs released in this area may have a greater chance of survival through larval and juvenile life history stages, compared to eggs released in other parts of Bristol Bay. Trawl fishery interactions with ovigerous female crab in this area may have a disproportionately adverse effect on the red king crab population.

The Council requested that the discussion paper be expanded, and reviewed by the Crab Plan Team. Additional information to be included in the discussion paper includes an analysis of the efficacy of existing red king crab protection areas (i.e., the Red King Crab Savings Area and the Nearshore Bristol Bay Trawl Closure); the importance of environmental variables and fishery removals on red king crab distribution in the Amak area; and cumulative effects on red king crab habitat from other non-fishing activities and climate change. Staff contact is Diana Evans.

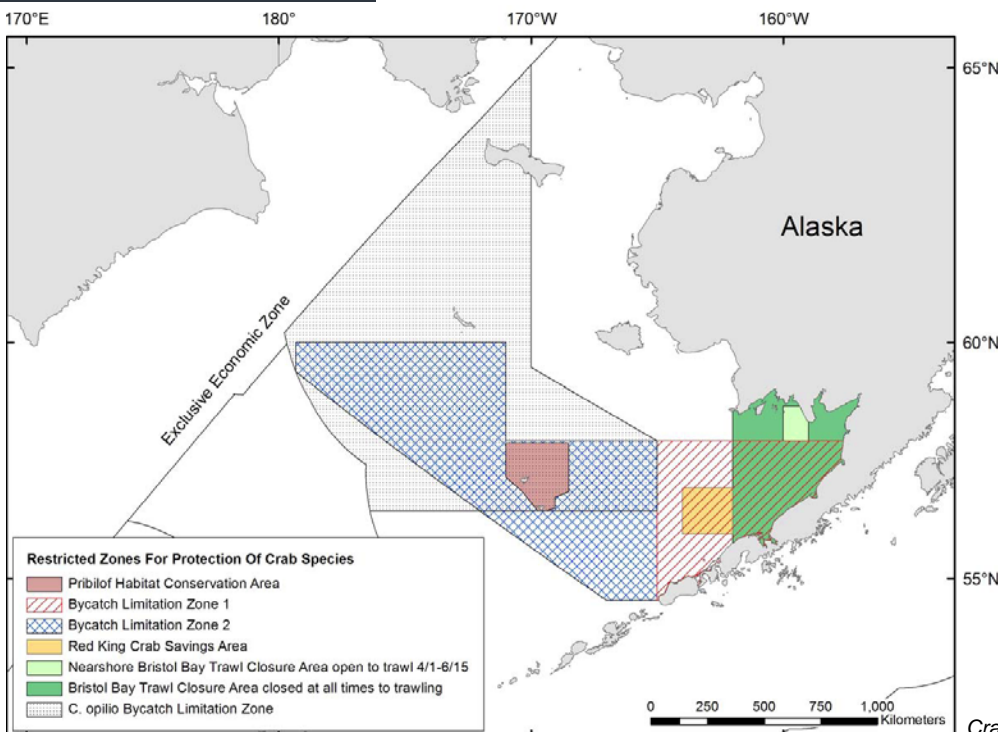
EFH Omnibus Amendment

The Council adopted the seven actions contained in the essential fish habitat (EFH) omnibus amendments, which implement FMP updates resulting from the 2010 EFH 5-year review. The actions will be FMP amendments only; there are no regulations that will be changed as a result of these amendments. The actions are as follows:

- Action 1 Update BSAI Groundfish FMP species EFH descriptions
- Action 2 Update GOA Groundfish FMP species EFH descriptions
- Action 3 Update BSAI King and Tanner Crab FMP species EFH descriptions
- Action 4 Update Scallop FMP species EFH description
- Action 5 Update conservation recommendations for non-fishing activities affecting EFH in all six Council FMPs
- Action 6 Change default timing for HAPC process from 3 to 5 years in all six Council FMPs
- Action 7 Update research approach for EFH in all Council FMPs (except Arctic)

For the most part, these actions update the EFH descriptions and conservation recommendations contained in the FMPs with new information that was identified in the EFH 5-year review. With respect to the HAPC process, the Council noted that while the change in timing will allow information from EFH 5-year reviews to be used to identify HAPC priorities, it does not preclude the Council from designating HAPC priorities out of cycle when appropriate.

In addition to the omnibus actions, there are two trailing issues from the 5-year review on which the Council may take action at a subsequent meeting. A new methodology is being reviewed by the Alaska Fisheries Science Center to better delineate EFH for the marine life history stage for all salmon species, and once the review is completed, an amendment will be developed for the Council. The other trailing issue is the BBRKC discussion paper (see left). Staff contact is Diana Evans.



Crab protection in the Bering Sea.

Exempted Fishing Permits

Salmon EFP

The Council approved an application from Gauvin and Associates for an Exempted Fishing Permit (EFP) to continue research on salmon excluder devices in the eastern Bering Sea pollock trawl fishery. The EFP will allow for continued development and improvement of the Chinook excluder design developed in earlier studies, and for evaluation and/or modification of the design to improve escapement rates for chum salmon. Salmon are a prohibited species in the groundfish fisheries with annual limits placed on salmon taken in the BSAI trawl fisheries. The experiment will be conducted from fall 2011 through fall 2012. A draft EA from NMFS indicates no expected significant impacts from issuing the EFP. Staff contact is Sarah Melton.

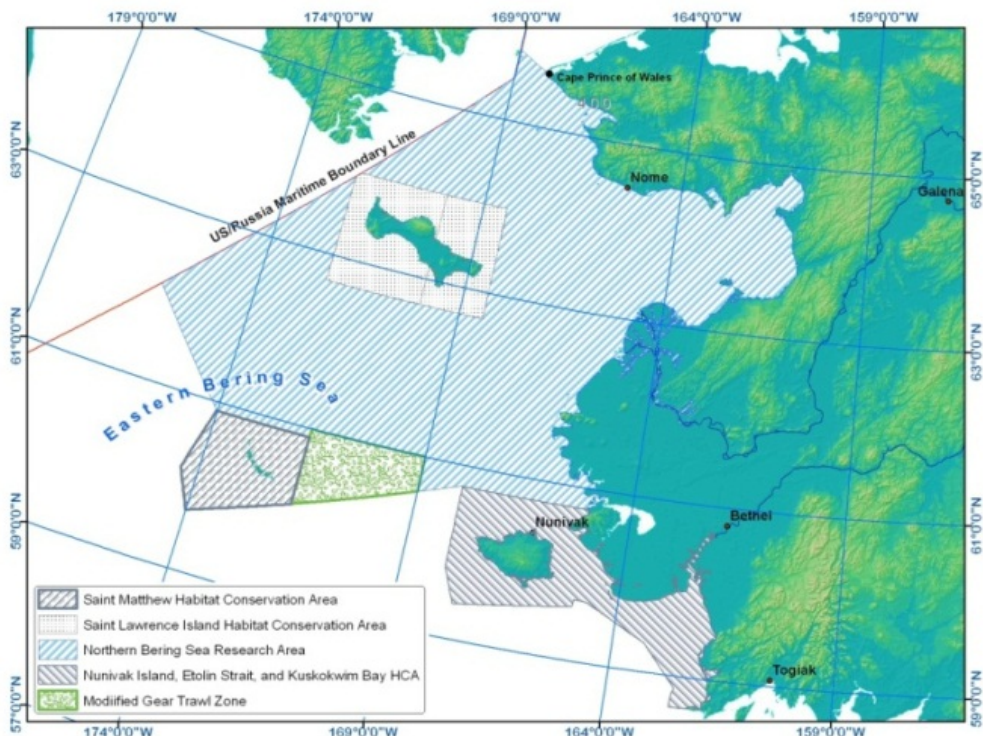
Halibut RAMP EFP Report

The Council received the Final Report from the North Pacific Fishery Foundation (NPFF) on their experiment to examine a proposed method of evaluating discard mortality of Pacific halibut in Bering Sea non-pelagic trawl fisheries during 2009 and 2010. The IPHC also provided a description of their standard discard mortality assessment protocol. The basic design of the experiment was to collect paired estimates of halibut condition as determined from the standard IPHC method and the reflex action mortality predictor (RAMP) assessment protocols. The NPFF study was also designed to develop a mortality curve for the RAMP assessment and investigate environmental and fishing-related factors affecting mortality of halibut discards. NPFF's study demonstrated that the RAMP protocol can be successfully utilized in a working fishery environment, however sample size constraints prevented development of a mortality curve. The Council thanked NPFF for its research efforts. NPFF concluded that further research on the RAMP method may best be conducted on a research vessel where sample sizes can be increased and the necessary halibut conditions obtained. Staff contact is Sarah Melton.

Habitat Conservation Area boundary

In July 2007, the Council adopted Amendment 89 to the BSAI Groundfish FMP, creating a number of Bering Sea habitat conservation areas in which bottom trawling is prohibited. One of these areas is the Nunivak Island-Etolin Straits-Kuskokwim Bay Habitat Conservation Area (Nunivak HCA; see map). During the development of Amendment 89, the boundaries for the Nunivak HCA were developed in close consultation with a working group consisting of industry and the Association of Village Council Presidents. As part of the Council's final motion adopting the closure, the Council agreed to receive a report in four years to review the boundary line developed for the Nunivak HCA, and to consider whether further action is necessary.

The boundary review is on the Council agenda for June 2011. Members of the public will have the opportunity to inform the Council whether there is any conflict concerning the existing Nunivak HCA boundary. In June, the Council could choose to initiate analysis of a new boundary, take no action, or request further information prior to initiating an action. Staff contact is Diana Evans.



Nunivak Island-Etolin Strait-Kuskokwim Bay

Upcoming meetings

Crab Plan Team:

May 9-13, TSMRI/Lena Point
NOAA Lab, Juneau

Pacific cod modeling

teleconference: May 2011

Groundfish Plan Team Meetings:

AFSC, Seattle

Aug 29 – Sept 2, 2011

November 14 -18, 2011

Observer Advisory Committee
meeting, mid-Sept. Details TBA

Salmon FMP workshop: Details
TBA

Pribilof Islands Blue King Crab Rebuilding Plan

The Council reviewed the public review draft EA/RIR/IRFA for a revised rebuilding plan for the Pribilof Islands blue king crab (PIBKC) stock. The PIBKC stock remains overfished. The purpose of this proposed action is to reduce the risk of overfishing the PIBKC stock by developing an amended rebuilding plan for this stock in compliance with the Magnuson-Stevens Act and the national standard guidelines.

Five alternatives are considered in this analysis. Four of the alternatives consider time and area closures to better protect the PIBKC stock. The fifth alternative considers trigger caps and associated time and area closures in groundfish fisheries which have contributed historically to bycatch of this stock. Alternatives 2-5 retain all of the current protection measures in place for the PIBKC stock and apply additional measures as described in the specific alternatives and options. Analysis of the impacts of these closure configurations on the rebuilding potential for the PIBKC stock shows limited effect on rebuilding between the ranges of alternative closures. However, the trigger cap and/or closures may protect against any additional catch of this depleted stock and prevent overfishing on an annual basis.

Closures are proposed to apply to either the Pacific cod pot fishery or to the combined groundfish fisheries which have contributed to bycatch of PIBKC (from 2003-2010) above two different threshold criteria (>5% of the ABC and > 10% of the ABC). While an ABC has not yet been established for this stock, in anticipation of an on-going amendment to establish an ABC (and ACL) for all crab stocks, one was inferred for this analysis consistent with the Council's recommended ABC control rule. The fisheries which meet the threshold criteria are the trawl fisheries for rock sole, flathead sole, yellowfin sole and other flatfish as well as the Pacific cod hook and line and pot fisheries.

The Council moved to include a sub-option for the trigger cap alternative under Option 5d to analyse an allocation by gear type of non-pelagic trawl (40%), Hook and Line (20%) and Pot (40%). The Council also requested that staff explore using the annual specifications process for gear allocation of a cap and to discuss the implications of a different, non-allocated cap whereby closures occur on a threshold basis (50%, 75%, 90% of the cap) and apply only to the gear type which has contributed the most in-season towards the bycatch at each threshold.

Additional council requests for the analysis include further information on the extrapolation procedures for the bycatch accruing from the less than 100% fleets, and the accounting procedures that will be used in future years for assessing bycatch from the Pribilof District. The Council requested that staff compile bycatch data from

the whole Pribilof District (as opposed to NMFS Area 513 only) by fishery for presentation to the Council prior to Final action.

Final action is scheduled for October 2011. The Council will review bycatch data from the entire Pribilof District by fishery as available and make any necessary analytical modifications for the analysis at the June Council meeting. The full motion is posted on the Council's website. Staff contact is Diana Stram.

Tanner Crab Rebuilding Plan

On October 1, 2010, the Council was informed by NMFS that the Bering Sea Tanner crab (*Chionoecetes bairdi*) stock is overfished according to criteria in the Fishery Management Plan for the Bering Sea/Aleutian Islands King and Tanner crab. This notification was based on the most recent stock assessment for Tanner crabs indicating that the stock biomass had declined below its minimum stock size threshold (MSST). In order to comply with section 304(e)(3) of the Magnuson-Stevens Act (MSA), the Council and NMFS thus have two years from that notification to develop and implement a plan to rebuild the overfished Tanner crab stock.

Under section 304(e)(4) of the MSA, the rebuilding plan for Tanner crab must specify a time period for rebuilding the fishery that is as short as possible, taking into account the status and biology of the stock, the needs of fishing communities, and the interactions of the stock within the marine ecosystem. The rebuilding plan shall not exceed 10 years, except if the biology of the stock or other environmental conditions dictate otherwise.

At this meeting the Council began consideration of alternative management measures for rebuilding the Tanner crab stock. These measures may include a combination of directed fishery constraints, bycatch constraints in other fisheries and other considerations. Given the information provided on relative catch in various fisheries, the Council noted that bycatch constraints will likely be considered in the directed Tanner crab fishery, the EBS snow crab and Bristol Bay red king crab fisheries, and the combined groundfish fisheries. The Council noted that it will need to work with the BOF on consideration of catch constraints in crab fisheries given that these are delegated to the State of Alaska under the FMP. A Tanner crab stock assessment model is under development and was reviewed both at the Crab Modeling Workshop as well as by the SSC at this meeting. Further work on development of this model will be presented to the CPT in May for consideration for use in setting specifications in this assessment cycle. The Council requested that the CPT draft alternative management measures for rebuilding the Tanner crab stock in conjunction with their May meeting and provide these for Council consideration this fall. Staff contact is Diana Stram.

BSAI Crab Issues

The Council addressed two issues concerning the Bering Sea and Aleutian Island crab rationalization program at its April 2011 meeting. Under the first item, the Council took action to move the IFQ, IPQ, and cooperative application deadline from August 1st to June 15th. The action also shortens the time to appeal an initial decision to withhold IFQ or IPQ from 60 days to 30 days. These two changes are intended to allow for increased time for administration of applications and appeals. If appeals are pending at the time IFQ and IPQ are issued, NOAA Fisheries must reserve IFQ or IPQ in an amount sufficient to cover any possible finding in favor of the applicant. Reserving these shares can result in stranded IFQ and IPQ, in the event the appeal is unsuccessful or is not decided until late in the season. Allowing additional time to finalize determinations will reduce the potential of stranding these shares.

The Council also reviewed alternatives to revise the crab economic data reporting (EDR) program. This program collects economic data from participants in the fisheries for use in analyzing the effects of management actions (including the rationalization program itself). The Council previously expressed its intent to modify the data collection program to limit the scope of collection to data of sufficient accuracy that are not redundant with data available from other sources. The Council identified for analysis two action alternatives for the catcher vessel sector and two action alternatives for the shore-based processing sector. Staff will adapt these alternatives to the catcher processor and floating processor sectors for analysis. The status quo program collects comprehensive economic data. The revised alternatives would scale back the collection by eliminating data elements that are inaccurate or that may be available from other sources. The specific alternatives are posted at the Council's website. Staff contact is Mark Fina.

GOA Pcod Jig Fishery

The Council received a proposal to open Federal waters to directed fishing for Pacific cod with jig gear concurrent with the State of Alaska Guideline Harvest Limit fishery for Pacific cod in the GOA. The Council selected Alternative 2, which proposes implementing a reverse parallel fishery, as its preliminary preferred alternative. Under the reverse parallel fishery, operators using jig gear would likely have year-round access to Federal waters. Catches in Federal waters would accrue to the State jig GHL, which is specified as a percentage of the GOA Pcod ABC. Under the status quo, jig operators would have access to Federal waters only during the parallel/Federal waters A and B seasons, and timing of the jig fishery would likely continue to be a factor limiting jig catches. Jig gear was recently exempted from the Limited License Program requirement in the GOA subject to gear limits. The Council considered taking final action in April, but decided to postpone final action until December 2011 to provide an opportunity for the Alaska Board of Fisheries to comment and take action during their meeting in October. The Council also requested that staff include a comparison of State and Federal management regulations in the analysis, and added an option to Alternative 2 that would prohibit operators participating in the Federal jig fishery from using any other gear type onboard. Council staff contacts are Jeannie Heltzel and Sarah Melton.

Salmon FMP

At the April meeting, NMFS presented a preliminary review of the Salmon Fishery Management Plan and a discussion of alternatives and options for updating the FMP. The Council passed a motion providing direction for Initial Review, tentatively scheduled for this fall. The Council selected Alternative 3 as its preferred preliminary alternative, which would modify the FMP's management unit to exclude the three historical fishing areas in the West Area, and defer management to the State of Alaska in areas where the FMP does apply. The full Council motion and specific analytical requests are on the website.

The Council also requested analysis of annual catch limit and accountability measure requirements using the international fishery agreement exception for stocks managed under the Pacific Salmon Treaty and the State's salmon management program as an "alternative approach" for satisfying the National Standard 1 requirements.

On March 15, 2011, the Council received a letter from NMFS clarifying the applicability of an "alternative approach" for Alaska salmon fisheries: (a) the FMP must comply with Magnuson-Stevens Act and NS1 requirements; (b) State salmon escapement goal management appears to be consistent with the MSA and NS1 requirements; and (c) an alternative approach to satisfy those requirements may be appropriate because of salmon life history characteristics.

Finally, the Council also passed a motion to hold an informational workshop for stakeholders, agencies, and other interested participants on the FMP before the September Council meeting (details TBA). Staff contact is Sarah Melton.



Seining for Salmon



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North Pacific Fishery Management Council

Jim Branson, Jay Ginter



The Council mourns the loss of Jim Branson, the first Executive Director of the NPFMC, and Jay Ginter, longtime employee of the NMFS Alaska Region.

Jim Branson passed away last month. He pioneered the first 12 years of the Council as the Executive Director, phasing out foreign fisheries and negotiating a new structure of fishery management. Jim set the course for the Council process, and set the standards for a professional Council

staff. Two services will be held June 18 in Halibut Cove and June 19 in Kodiak. Cards and condolences can be sent to 4085 Calhoun, Homer, AK 99603

Jay Ginter passed away in March from complications from mantle cell lymphoma, a blood cancer. He was fully engaged with NMFS and Council operations until his retirement two years prior to his passing, and played a big part in current fisheries management. Among his many achievements was development of regulations for the halibut and sablefish IFQ program.

The School of Marine and Environmental Affairs at the University of Washington has been given permission by Jay Ginter's family to honor Jay's legacy by setting up a memorial scholarship fund in his name. The Jay Ginter Memorial Scholarship Fund will benefit students in the School of Marine and Environmental Affairs who can continue Jay's determination to contribute to important changes in regional and national marine policy.

Memorial gifts and donations can be made directly online at

https://www.washington.edu/giving/make-a-gift?source_typ=3&source=GINTER

and/or can be directed in form of cash or check made out to the UW Foundation/Jay Ginter Memorial Scholarship Fund and mailed to UW School of Marine and Environmental Affairs, College of the Environment, 3707 Brooklyn Ave NE, Seattle, WA 98105-6715. For further information, contact Dave Fluharty 206 685-2518, fluharty@uw.edu or Sandra Schumann 206 221 6808, shumsa@uw.edu.



International Meeting on Climate Effects on Polar and Sub-Polar Marine Ecosystems to be held in Seattle in May

The international, regional program, Ecosystem Studies of Sub-Arctic Seas (ESSAS) will hold its second Open Science Meeting in Seattle, Washington, May 22-26, 2011 at the Seattle Marriott Waterfront Hotel. Nearly 200 registrants from – countries are expected to attend. The theme of the meeting, Comparative Studies of Climate Effects on Polar and Sub-Polar Ecosystems: Progress in Observation and Prediction, will be discussed in a series of workshops, plenary sessions with invited speakers, parallel sessions and a poster reception. Twenty-nine invited speakers from the USA, Canada, Russia, Japan, Korea, China, Norway and Argentina will provide talks on fisheries and oceanographic implications of climate change. Sessions on nutrients and biogeochemistry, new understanding of the Bering Sea, interactions of gadids and crustaceans, comparative studies of sub-polar and polar ecosystems, insights from International Polar Year studies, modeling ecosystem dynamics, and socio-economic consequences of change in sub-polar marine ecosystems among others. Social events will include a reception at the Seattle Aquarium on the evening of May 23, and a poster reception on the evening of May 25. Members of the Council family and members of the fishing industry are welcome to attend. Registration is now \$450 and covers all five days and the two social events.

DRAFT NPFMC THREE-MEETING OUTLOOK - updated 4/11/11

| June 6 -, 2011 Nome, AK | September 26 -, 2011 Unalaska, AK | December 5 -, 2011 Anchorage, AK |
|---|---|--|
| Halibut Catch Share Plan: Review Algorithm Methodology SSL Research: NMFS Update GOA Halibut PSC: Progress Report P. cod assessment model review (SSC only) Groundfish uncertainty/Tot catch accounting: Disc. Papers (SSC) BSAI Chum Salmon Bycatch: Initial Review GOA Chinook Salmon Bycatch: Final Action BSAI Crab draft SAFE: Review and approve catch specifications for Norton Sound RKC and AI GKC Habitat Conservation Area Boundary: Review Northern Bering Sea Research Plan Report: Review Halibut mortality on trawlers EFP: Review/Approve (T) Pribilof BKC Rebuilding Plan: Review Data | Observer Program: Review Restructuring Regulations; OAC Report GOA Halibut PSC: Initial Review; white paper on IBQs GOA Pacific cod A-season opening dates: Discussion paper BSAI Chum Salmon Bycatch: Final Action (T) Salmon FMP: Initial Review; Workshop Report Halibut/Sablefish IFQ Leasing prohibition: Discussion paper (T) CQE vessel use caps: Initial Review/ Final Action (T) CQE in Area 4B: Initial Review; 4B Fish-up guidance BS & AI P.cod split: Initial Review (T) GOA Flatfish Trawl Sweep Modifications: Initial Review BS Freezer longliners: Discussion paper on vessel replacement; Draft Regs Catch Monitoring & Enforcement Crab EDR Revisions: Initial Review BSAI Crab: Report from stakeholders BSAI Crab SAFE: Approve catch specifications Pribilof BKC Rebuilding Plan: Final Action Tanner Crab Rebuilding: Review Alternatives HAPC - Skate sites: Initial Review Groundfish Preliminary SAFE: Adopt proposed specifications | AFA Vessel Replacement: Discussion Paper (T) Halibut Subsistence: Update GOA Halibut PSC: Final Action Halibut Migration Model: SSC Review (T) GOA P.cod Jig Fishery Management: Final Action (T) GOA Chinook Bycatch All Trawl Fisheries: Discussion Paper (T) Salmon FMP: Final Action Halibut/sablefish IFQ changes: Discussion paper (T) CQE vessel use caps: Final Action CQE in Area 4B: Final Action BS & AI P.cod split: Final Action (T) GOA Flatfish Trawl Sweep Modifications: Final Action Groundfish PSEIS: Discuss schedule Crab EDR Revisions: Final Action Groundfish SAFE: Adopt final catch specifications BBRKC spawning area/fishery effects: Updated Disc paper (T) HAPC - Skate sites: Final Action |
| | | ITEMS BELOW FOR FUTURE MEETINGS |
| | | BSAI Tanner Crab rebuilding plan: Initial Review Crab bycatch limits in BSAI groundfish fisheries BSAI Flatfish specification flexibility Grenadiers and EC Category: Discussion paper AI P.cod Processing Sideboards: Initial Review MPA Nomination Discussion Paper: Review |

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
GOA - Gulf of Alaska

GKC - Golden King Crab
GHL - Guideline Harvest Level
HAPC - Habitat Areas of Particular Concern
IFQ - Individual Fishing Quota
MPA - Marine Protected Area
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

June 6 -, 2011 - Nome
September 26 -, 2011 in Unalaska
December 5 -, 2011 in Anchorage
January 30- Feb 7 2012 - Reannaissance Hotel, Seattle
March 26-April 3, 2012 Hilton Hotel - Alaska
June 4 - June 12, 2012 Kodiak Best Western
October 1-Oct 9, 2012 - Hilton Hotel, Anchorage
December 3 - Dec 11, 2012 - Anchorage

(T) Tentatively scheduled