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News & Notes

North Pacific Fishery Management Council

April 2014

Senator Begich Addresses Council

Alaska Senator Mark Begich thanked the Council for their work in Alaska fisheries, and briefly addressed a recent discussion draft of an MSA reauthorization bill. He outlined the major changes and encouraged comment on the draft.



Adios Gregg!

The Council would like to thank Gregg Williams, of the IPHC, for his dedicated service to the North Pacific fisheries. For over 36 years he has been a part of the fisheries management process, and we wish him luck in his future endeavors.



Photo: David Witherell

Bering Sea Salmon Bycatch Management

The Council received several reports related to Chinook and chum salmon bycatch management in the Bering Sea. Genetic stock composition analyses were presented for Chinook salmon samples in the Bering Sea and Gulf of Alaska trawl fisheries from 2012, and stock composition analyses of chum salmon in the Bering Sea in 2012. The majority (64%) of Chinook salmon bycatch in the Bering Sea is from the aggregate Coastal western Alaska stock grouping which includes rivers from Norton Sound to Bristol Bay (including the middle and lower Yukon and the Kuskokwim). Estimated annual stock composition from the Upper Yukon is approximately 2.4%. These results are similar to estimates from 2011 samples. Chum salmon bycatch in the Bering Sea pollock fishery remains dominated by stocks of Asian origin (~60%) with annual contribution from western Alaska chum stocks of roughly 14%. Sampling protocols in the GOA limit the ability to estimate Chinook stock composition thus results can only be used to determine presence or absence of individual stocks at this stage. The samples show an abundance

however of southern stock groups (British Columbia, West Coast of the United State and Coastal Southeast Alaska). All genetic analyses are available on line at NOAA Technical memorandums (see Council website).

The Bering Sea pollock industry provided their annual reports on their respective sector incentive program agreements (IPAs) for Chinook salmon bycatch management as well as the report on the current combined cooperative management of chum salmon bycatch. These reports are available on the Council website and provide an overview of each IPA's efforts to avoid Chinook salmon bycatch in 2013 as well as estimates of the number of salmon avoided. The Council was updated by staff on the upcoming discussion paper for the June Council meeting which will address a number of analyses of potential changes to the current Chinook bycatch management including shortening the pollock season, requiring salmon excluders and additional constraints on the fleet when bycatch rates are high. The paper will also provide an overview of the modifications to goals and objectives of the program necessary to incorporate chum salmon bycatch into the existing IPAs. The discussion paper will be available on the Council website in mid-May. Staff contact is Diana Stram.

No Place Like Nome

The Council will be meeting in Nome, Alaska June 2-10. For those who are interested in attending, who may be looking for lodging, please contact the Chamber of Commerce (907)443-6555, or www.visitnomealaska.com. They will be able to help you with arrangements.

Round Island Transit

The Council reviewed the final EA/RIR/IRFA for an action to allow seasonal transit opportunities for vessels with FFPs through walrus protection areas at Round Island and Cape Peirce in northern Bristol Bay, Alaska. The Council approved a motion to select the Preliminary Preferred Alternative, Alternative 2 Option 1, and Alternative 3, as its Preferred Alternative. The text of the Preferred Alternative reads:

- *Alternative 2, Option 1:*
Establish a transit area, open from April 1 through August 15, annually, north of a line from 58° 47.90' N, 160° 21.91' W to 58° 32.94' N, 159° 35.45' W, maintaining a minimum of 3 nm from Round Island.
- *Alternative 3: establish a transit area in the EEZ near Cape Peirce, open from April 1 through August 15, annually, east of a line from 58° 30.00' N, 161° 46.20' W to 58° 21.00' N, 161° 46.20' W*

Staff contact is Steve MacLean

GOA Trawl Bycatch Management

The Council reviewed a discussion paper that responded to an October 2013 motion outlining a potential program framework to manage and reduce bycatch in the GOA trawl fisheries. The paper covered program elements that were outlined in the motion (allocation of target and bycatch species, cooperative management, observer coverage, gear conversion, existing sector allocations, and community stability measures), as well as some issues that were not addressed (sideboards, license and quota transferability, and quota share/use caps).

The Council passed three motions on this item. The first motion modifies and expands the previous program framework. Program eligibility is defined for both the inshore and offshore sectors. The list of species to be considered for allocation was expanded from pollock and Pacific cod to include some flatfish and rockfish target species, as well as some secondary species. The motion provides ranges of years to be considered for qualifying history. For each sector, the motion provides a potential list of required elements to be addressed through a cooperative contract. The motion maintains community stability measures that were part of the October 2013 motion, and adds a range of ownership, use, and processing caps for preliminary analysis; a placeholder for other eligibility criteria that would protect fishing communities is maintained from the previous motion. The motion narrows the focus of gear conversion measures to the harvesting of trawl quota with pot gear. Finally, the motion states that the Council will consider whether or not to maintain existing sideboards, and whether new sideboards are necessary to protect unallocated Pacific cod trawl fisheries (West Yakutat) and pot fisheries (Western and Central GOA).

The other two motions requested separate discussion papers on elements that could be incorporated into the program framework. One paper will examine how "Community Fisheries Association(s)" might address Council Objectives

relating to community stability, and how the CFA tool contrasts with stability measures that are already included in the Council's proposed framework. The paper will identify legal and implementation issues, as well as how inclusion of CFAs would affect other elements of the program. A proposed CFA structure is described in the CFA motion. The other paper would explore how an adaptive management quota set-aside was implemented in the West Coast groundfish trawl ITQ program, the expected opportunities and challenges that are associated with adaptive management quota, and the Pacific Council's rationale for its inclusion.

The Council also reviewed the forms that will be used for economic data collection (EDR) on the GOA trawl fisheries. Science Center staff indicated that some minor modifications might be made to the forms, based on the results of pre-testing. The Council requested that the Executive Director review any changes to determine if they warrant further consideration by the Council before the forms are finalized.

The Council also endorsed Council outreach meetings with Western GOA fishermen in May, in order to better inform them of potential program elements and prepare them to provide specific input on WGOA inclusion.

The motions can be found on the NPFMC website. Staff contact is Sam Cunningham.

Digital Council Meetings

The Council and the public have been using a new document management system which greatly reduces the amount of paper necessary pre, during, and post Council meetings. All of the items available during a meeting are accessible digitally by accessing the agenda, either from our website, or from npfmc.legistar.com. Additionally, agendas and attached items are also available through an app for the ipad called iLegislate. For more information, or to get set up using the app, contact Maria Shawback or Peggy Kircher at the office.

Bering Sea Canyons

The Council reviewed a discussion paper that summarized information presented at the Bering Sea Canyons Workshop held in Seattle, WA on February, 3, 2014, and presented information on the management measures that the Council has used to protect corals in the Gulf of Alaska and Aleutian Islands, and could use if they wished to protect corals in the eastern Bering Sea. After public comment and deliberation, the Council approved a motion to draft a Purpose and Need Statement, which is available on the Council website.

In passing this motion the Council noted that they have consistently acted to identify significant concentrations of deep sea corals and to protect those areas from fishery impacts. This action continues a process to re-examine the potential value and need for management measures to protect habitat in Bering Sea canyons. This motion focuses action on the coral habitat of Pribilof Canyon and the directly adjacent slope. The objective of the action is to protect significant concentrations of coral in this area from fishing impacts. The Council will schedule a time for scoping testimony during one of its upcoming meetings, but no sooner than October 2014, to focus on two topics: the general range of alternatives that should be considered under this action; and the best process by which to identify, develop, and refine alternatives. It was noted that alternatives would not be finalized until after adequate review of the data that will be provided by the Fisherman's Information and drop camera surveys to be completed in summer 2014. Staff contact is Steve MacLean.

Scallop Management

The Council received the annual stock assessment and fishery evaluation (SAFE) report for the weathervane scallop stocks in Alaska. The SSC set the acceptable biological catch (ABC) limit at 1.161 million pounds of shucked scallop meats, a level equivalent to 90% of the overfishing limit (OFL) per the established ABC control rule. The ABC is specified statewide while actual guideline harvest levels (GHLs) are established by the Alaska Department of Fish and Game by registration area. The Council was informed of the new State waters fishery that may be prosecuted in several areas of the state following the sunset of the prior state vessel based moratorium. Actual management by ADF&G in each of the allowable areas for the State waters component of the bed will be determined based upon an assessment of effort by region prior to the opening of the fishery. The SSC was supportive of the Scallop Plan Team's intent to hold a data-poor assessment workshop for scallop stocks and provided some input on additional topics for consideration for that workshop. The Team intends to schedule that workshop in early 2015. The Council also reviewed a request from State of Alaska Representative Paul Seaton, asking for a

review of permit consolidation in the scallop fisheries, but took no action on the request. Staff contact is Diana Stram.

PSEIS SIR

The Council reviewed the draft Supplemental Information Report (SIR) on the 2004 Alaska Groundfish Fisheries Programmatic Supplemental Information Statement (PSEIS). The objective of the draft SIR is to synthesize relevant information about the nature of changes to the groundfish management program since the 2004 PSEIS, and new information about the impacts of the fisheries relevant to environmental concerns, in order to assess whether the NEPA conditions that require an EIS to be supplemented have been met. Following a review of the information contained in the draft SIR, the Council recommends that a supplement to the PSEIS is not necessary at this time. The SIR will be finalized to incorporate SSC comments, after which NMFS will make its determination on the SIR. In response to public testimony, the agency noted that they would consider any public comments on the SIR before making their final determination if received before the end of May. Staff contact is Diana Evans.

Bering Sea FEP

The Council discussed the next steps for the development of a Bering Sea Fishery Ecosystem Plan (FEP), a project that was initiated in February 2014. The Council is soliciting public input on what the objectives of the FEP should be, and whether and how a Council FEP could provide added value to the Council. The Council will schedule an opportunity for stakeholder input on the FEP at the June Council meeting in Nome, and also intends to hold outreach hearings in Anchorage and Seattle later in the summer/fall. Based on public input, including recommendations from its Ecosystem Committee, the Council will then consider whether and how to proceed with the FEP, including questions of FEP design and content, and staff workload. Staff contact is Diana Evans

Staff Tasking

In addition to discussing the relative priority of previously tasked projects, the Council provided clarifications on several issues and discussed tasking for its various committees. Additionally, the Council tasked staff to do the following:

- Send a letter to the NMFS Assistant Administrator regarding inconsistencies with insurance requirements for federal observers.
- Meet with IPHC staff to re-examine the halibut discard mortality rates for CDQ fisheries and discuss why they would be different than the non-CDQ fisheries.

Upcoming Meetings

Crab Plan Team: May 5-8, 2014. Federal building Juneau, AK. Agenda Online.

Joint Protocol Alaska BOF and NPFMC: May 21, Anchorage

EM Workgroup: May 15-16, 1:00pm Clarion Suites, Anchorage

Observer Advisory Committee: May 28-29, 10am (TBD)

Council Meeting: June 2-10, Nome, AK

Groundfish PT: September 23-27, November 17-21, Seattle, AFSC

Ecosystem Committee: Seattle, September 2014 (TBD)

Amendment 80 5-Year Review

At this meeting, the Council reviewed a draft Amendment 80 Program 5-year review. As part of the Amendment 80 program developed by the Council and as required by section 303 (A) of the Magnuson-Stevens Fishery Conservation and Management Act (MSA), a 5-year review of the program is required to determine progress in meeting the goals of the Amendment 80 Program and the MSA. After reviewing the draft report, the Council asked staff to include suggested changes and additions to the document and bring back for a final review at the October meeting. A copy of the Amendment 80 5-Year review is available on the Council website. Contact is Jon McCracken.

Fishing Cooperatives Report Review

At the April meeting, the Council reviewed cooperative reports for the Amendment 80 Program, Central Gulf Alaska Rockfish Program, and American Fisheries Act Program. As part of these programs, cooperatives have provided annual written reports detailing the use of the cooperative quota. These reports are intended to be a resource for the Council to track the effectiveness of the cooperative and its ability to meet the Council's goal for the programs. Additionally, the reports are a tool for the cooperatives to provide feedback on the programs to the Council. At this meeting, the Council did not take any action concerning the cooperative reports, but they did note their appreciation for the written reports and the oral presentations provided by the cooperative managers. Copies of the cooperative reports are available on the Council website. Staff contact is Jon McCracken.

EFH 5-year review

The Council was briefed on the proposed approach for the 2015 EFH 5-year review. The 2015 review will focus on three key areas where revised workproducts are anticipated: refining EFH species descriptions with specific habitat data, streamlining and updating the fishing effects model, and developing a spatial dimension to the non-fishing effects descriptions. The review will also prioritize stocks for habitat assessment, in accordance with the Habitat Assessment Improvement Plan (HAIP), and will inform the Council's 5-year consideration of whether habitat priorities should be identified for a HAPC call for proposals. The Council supported the approach, and requested that SSC and Ecosystem Committee comments be taken into account. The Council also hopes the review will specifically highlight any new information relevant to the habitat of the Bering Sea shelf break, slope, and canyons areas. Staff contact is Diana Evans/Steve MacLean.

BSAI Crab Cooperative Reports

The Council discussed the content and format of the first round of BSAI crab cooperative reports. The majority of these reports were submitted in December 2013, with two additional reports submitted for this April meeting; representing a total of 9 of the 10 crab cooperatives. Council members deliberated on the appropriate expectations for a voluntary cooperative report. The Council passed a motion that encourages responses from all cooperatives in the future and recommends all cooperatives' answers to be as quantitative as possible. Additionally, the motion establishes the seven question format, as exemplified by the ICE report of 2013, as a preferred reporting format. Reports should be submitted by March 1 of each year. Staff contact is Sarah Marrinan.

EM Workgroup

The Council appointed a Council Fixed Gear Electronic Monitoring (EM) Workgroup at this meeting. The Workgroup is tasked with reviewing the different research tracks going forward as part of the 2014-2015 EM cooperative research program, and providing input on research objectives and data protocols. The Workgroup will also review how the research will inform the Council's objectives for estimating catch and discards, and will identify a timeline, milestones, and decision points for integrating EM into the Observer Program. The composition of the Workgroup includes appointed representatives of the fixed gear fleets and EM service provider companies, and agency representatives from NMFS, ADF&G, PSMFC, IPHC, and the Council. The Workgroup will hold its first meeting in May. Staff contact is Diana Evans.

DRAFT NPFMC THREE-MEETING OUTLOOK - updated 4/18/14

June 2-10, 2014 Nome, AK	October 6-14, 2014 Anchorage, AK	December 8-16, 2014 Anchorage, AK
MSA Reauthorization: Update SSL EIS: Update		VMS Discussion paper: Review
BSAI Halibut PSC Stock Impacts: Discussion paper Sector reports on BSAI Halibut PSC measures	CDQ Halibut PSC discard mortality rates: Report BSAI Halibut PSC Deck Sorting: Discussion paper (T) GOA Trawl Bycatch Management: Discussion papers	GOA Trawl Bycatch Management: Action as necessary
Observer Advisory Committee report Observer Program Annual Report Observers for Tending: Initial Review Electronic Monitoring: Workgroup report	AI Pcod Allocation: Initial Review Draft Observer Annual Deployment Plan: Review Observers for Tending: Final Action (T)	AI Pcod Allocation: Final Action (T) Observer coverage on small CPs: Discussion paper Observer coverage on BSAI trawl CVs: Discussion paper
Crab ROFR contract terms: Initial Review	Charter Halibut Common Pool: CATCH report/Disc paper	Area 4A halibut retention in pots: Initial Review (T) IFQ Vessel Caps: Discussion paper (T)
CDQ P.cod fishery development: Initial Review	Crab ROFR contract terms: Final Action ROFR Aleutia PQS: Final Action CDQ P.cod fishery development: Final Action	Pribilof canyon corals: Receive comments re range of alternatives
BSAI crab ABC/OFLs for 3 stocks: Approve; PT report	BSAI Crab SAFE report: set ABC/OFL for 7 stocks: PT report	BSAI Crab bycatch: Discussion paper
Norton Sound RKC LLPs: Discussion paper	GOA sablefish longline pots: Initial Review	GOA sablefish longline pots: Final Action
Bering Sea Chinook/chum salmon bycatch: Disc. paper	Proposed groundfish harvest specs: Approve; PT report	Final groundfish harvest specs: Approve; PT report
Bering Sea FEP: Receive comments	GOA Skate MRA revisions: Initial Review MRA calculation all fisheries: Discussion Paper	GOA Skate MRA revisions: Final Action
Research Priorities	Bering Sea FEP: Update/review objectives	ITEMS BELOW NOT YET SCHEDULED
BS Trawl Salmon Excluder EFP: Review/consultation	EFH 5-year Review update: SSC only	Greenland Turbot allocation: Initial Review EFH 5-year Review (2015) GOA Tending (Feb 2015) Observer fee collection methods: Discussion paper Observer exemption for deminimus IFQ: Discussion paper Observer requirements for multiple area fishing: Discussion paper
	Am 80 5-year review: Final Report	

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
EFH - Essential Fish Habitat
EFP - Exempted Fishing Permit
EIS - Environmental Impact Statement
FEP - Fishery Ecosystem Plan
FLL - Freezer longliners

HAPC - Habitat Areas of Particular Concern
IFQ - Individual Fishing Quota
ICA - Inter-cooperative Agreements
IPA - Incentive Program Agreements
LLP - Limited License Plan
MPA - Marine Protected Area
MRA - Maximum Retainable Allowance
PSEIS - Programmatic Supplemental Impact Statement
PSC - Prohibited Species Catch
RKC - Red King Crab
ROFR - Right of First Refusal
SIR - Supplemental Information Report
SSC - Scientific and Statistical Committee
SAFE - Stock Assessment and Fishery Evaluation

Future Meeting Dates and Locations

June 2-10, 2014, Nome
October 6-14, 2014 Anchorage
December 8-16, 2014, Anchorage
February 2-10, 2015, Seattle
April 6-14, 2015, Anchorage
June 1-9, 2015, Sitka
October 5-13, 2015 Anchorage
December 7-15, 2015, Anchorage

(T) = Tentative