

MEMORANDUM

TO: Council, SSC and AP Members

FROM: Chris Oliver  
Executive Director

*DO for*

ESTIMATED TIME  
4 HOURS

DATE: January 24, 2012

SUBJECT: Staff Tasking

**ACTION REQUIRED**

- (a) Review tasking and committees and provide direction.
- (b) Discuss process and schedule for groundfish PSEIS.
- (c) Review IFQ proposals and provide direction.

**BACKGROUND**

Committees and Tasking

The list of Council committees is attached as Item D-2(a). Item D-2(b) is the three meeting outlook and Item D-2(c) provides a summary of current projects and tasking. Item D-2(d) provides a status report on those projects listed as 'Items for Future Meetings' in the three-meeting outlook. The Council may wish to discuss priorities for completing ongoing projects, as well as any new tasks assigned during the course of this meeting.

Groundfish PSEIS

Once a year, the Council reviews its groundfish management policy (attached as Item D-2(e)). It was adopted by the Council in 2004 following a comprehensive review of the fisheries, in the Alaska Groundfish Fisheries Programmatic SEIS. The Council has developed a workplan to guide the full implementation of that policy in the management of the fisheries, the status of which is reviewed at each meeting, and which is attached as Item D-2(f).

It has now been eight years since completion of the Groundfish PSEIS, and at some point, the analysis will need to be supplemented. At this meeting, the Council is scheduled to discuss the timing and process for considering whether to initiate a supplement to the Groundfish PSEIS.

To assist with your consideration of this issue, and your review of the groundfish management policy and workplan, a discussion paper is attached as Item D-2(g). The discussion paper briefly reviews factors that may influence the timing for supplementing or revising the 2004 Groundfish PSEIS, and suggests an approach the Council might take to help in this deliberation. The paper also summarizes changes to the groundfish management program, which have occurred in the years since the adoption of the management policy. The management changes are mapped to the Council's management policy objectives, to provide a basis for Council review. Environmental changes since 2004 are also discussed briefly. Finally, the paper provides a short background on the development of the 2004 PSEIS.

## IFQ Proposals

The Council called for commercial halibut/sablefish Individual Fishing Quota (IFQ) proposals in 2009. The IFQ Implementation Committee convened in November 2009 to review IFQ proposals and recommended that several be advanced for analysis for consideration by the Council<sup>1</sup>. The committee reconvened in February 2010 to consider late IFQ proposals. At its February 2010 meeting the Council recommended that five proposed actions be developed into analyses. These proposed actions were completed by the Council in 2011. Four have been submitted to NMFS for approval and implementation (hired skipper provisions and three CQE program changes); one was considered by the Council but no action was taken (Area 4B fish up).

In February 2010 the Council also recommended that four proposals be developed into discussion papers before the Council would consider initiating further action. The Council directed that staff prepare the discussion papers as time was available after other higher Council priorities. Development of prior analyses and new IFQ analyses were identified as higher priorities over these discussion papers. These four proposals are:

1. Allow the retention of 4A halibut incidentally caught while targeting sablefish in the Bering Sea and Aleutian Island regulatory areas.
2. Allow the use of pots for the Gulf of Alaska sablefish fishery.
3. Explore problem of unharvested halibut IFQ in Area 4.
4. Remove the block program for sablefish A shares and increase the sablefish A share only cap.

In December 2011 the Council took testimony on a new proposal (to change the sablefish product recovery rate) and requested more information on it from the proposer. The Council also requested an update on the status of the four discussion papers previously requested by the Council in 2010. A status report on the discussion papers is attached as **Item D-2(h)**. Additional information on the new proposal for sablefish product recovery rate is attached as **Item D-2(i)**.

In addition to these items, the Council has received several other letters with proposed changes:

- Letters from Ray Welsh and Patricia Welch requesting the Council change the control date for hired skippers.
- A letter from Mr. Robert Snell again requesting fish-up of halibut IFQ in Area 4B.

Note that in October 2011, the Council took no action on this proposal to allow Area 4B IFQ category "D" quota shares to be fished on category "C" vessels. The Council cited several reasons for not scheduling final action on this topic: 1) the presence of Icicle Seafoods in Adak, 2) a potential for a newly created market for "D" class QS through an action to allow the community of Adak to purchase QS, and 3) the low amount of "D" class QS available for new entrants in Area 4B and the impact on the price of D class QS if it could be fished on C class vessels. The Council identified that it could schedule final action on this analysis in the future if conditions warrant it. In December 2011, during the Area 4B CQE discussion, the AP recommended that the Council bring back the 4B fish-up analysis for further consideration.

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<sup>1</sup> <http://www.alaskafisheries.noaa.gov/npfmc/halibut/sablefish-ifq-program.html>