

**ADVISORY PANEL
Motions and Rationale
June 2-5, 2025 - Newport, OR**

C3b Pelagic Trawl Gear Innovation Initiative

AP Motion 2

The AP appreciates receipt of the Pelagic Trawl Gear Innovation discussion paper and respectfully requests the Council time future consideration of this action when additional research and data is available to inform potential management decisions. During the interim, the AP recommends the Council continue to request updates on relevant research including, but not limited to:

- Gear Innovation Initiative (APU and Pelagic Trawl Gear Industry Working Group)
- Improving Data on Fishery Gear Interactions with Bering Sea crabs: Stock-specific Analysis to Support Dynamic Management (AFSC, UAF, APU, AKRO, ABSC, and BSFRF)
- Other work to fill the data gaps for pelagic trawl gear identified by the Unobserved Fishing Mortality Working Group.

Main Motion Passed 12-7

Rationale in Support of Main Motion 2

- *Some AP members noted that more definitive action was impracticable until ongoing research cured existing data gaps.*
- *Specifically, some AP members noted that the baseline data from the GII research was essential for the Council to have before the Council develops a revised target or performance standard.*
- *The project under the second bullet came out of the data gaps identified in the Unobserved Fishing Mortality Working Group.*
- *The maker of the motion expressed an intention for other projects related to unobserved mortality and pelagic trawl gear to be included in future updates to the Council. They also noted that the phrase “time future action” was used in the motion rather than “pause” or “table” to signal intent that the research should continue and the Council should continue to request updates to ensure that work is progressing as intended.*
- *AP members noted that the GII is not industry-led and that the research will be peer reviewed by the SSC when the SSC incorporates the results into the Fishing Effects Model.*

Rationale in Opposition to Main Motion 2

- *Some AP members felt the motion is not responsive to the Council's request for input on innovation and incentives. Language from the failed substitute motion would have added to the intent and directive.*

- *Some AP members expressed concerns about the lack of a path forward with this motion, noting that it does not appear to get any closer towards action that would revise the current performance standard. Some AP members note this was not responsive to written and oral public testimony that requested a path forward despite the data needs.*
- *Some AP members noted that the discussion paper only touched the surface of what an expanded discussion paper could cover and therefore felt that the substitute motion was more appropriate.*

~~Substitute Motion: The AP appreciates receipt of the Pelagic Trawl Gear Innovation discussion paper and recommends the Council initiate an expanded discussion paper that evaluates regulatory measures that incentivize innovation and expands on collaborative research by identifying realistic and appropriate timelines that ensure this research and its application in management continue to move forward transparently. This work will continue to advance the Council's stated objectives to minimize impacts to benthic habitat and unobserved mortality while maintaining or improving fishing efficiency.~~

~~Regulatory measures analyzed should include:~~

- ~~1. Redefining bottom contact gear and mobile bottom contact gear definitions in 50 CFR 679.2 (1) and 50 CFR 679.2 (11) to include pelagic trawl gear~~**
- ~~2. Options for changes to the GOA bottom contact regulation at 50 CFR 679.24(b)(3) to improve enforceability~~**
- ~~3. Incentive Plan Agreements or similar frameworks that incentivise innovation and reduce bottom contact~~**
- ~~4. Existing or new EFPs that incentivise innovation and reduce bottom contact~~**

~~The discussion paper should additionally address the following research needs:~~

- ~~1. Research needs identified by the Unobserved Fishing Mortality Working Group~~**
- ~~2. Updating ongoing research including bottom contact sensors/cameras~~**
- ~~3. Updating ongoing research on bycatch reduction devices~~**
- ~~4. Potential updates and improvements to the Fishing Effects and EFH models~~**
- ~~5. Opportunities for third party verification of industry led science~~**
- ~~6. Performance standards: effectiveness, enforceability, other gear types with performance standards, pathways to re-evaluate current performance standards~~**
- ~~7. Other data gaps identified by Council, agency and Council staff (e.g. additional data on gear, net behavior, field measurements of bottom contact, and improved habitat information~~**

Substitute motion failed 6-13

Rationale in Support of Failed Substitute Motion

- *Members felt that this motion better addressed concerns about seafloor contact from pelagic trawl gear because it included an option to reclassify pelagic trawl gear as both bottom contact gear and mobile bottom contact gear.*
- *Regarding the potential reclassification of pelagic trawl gear, the maker of the substitute motion noted that current regulations classify dingle bar gear – which, like pelagic trawl gear, does not have sustained contact with the seafloor – as bottom contact gear and mobile bottom contact gear. The AP member noted the similarity in intent of operation of both the gears and the disparity concerning how each gear was defined.*
- *In support of the regulatory incentives in the substitute motion, one AP member noted that globally, and in the North Pacific, regulators have mitigated the impacts of bottom contact through gear requirements, area closures, and other management methods.*
- *Some AP members noted that an expanded discussion paper was needed because the current name, definition, and management are not appropriate given pelagic gear's contact with the seafloor; therefore, an expanded discussion paper that evaluates limits, targeted monitoring, and enforceable regulatory incentives for gear designs that avoid the bottom is appropriate.*
- *This motion could help address the lack of enforceability of the current performance standards as well as the footrope contact regulations in the GOA.*
- *The need for timelines and continued action is important because the Council indicated (in the Feb 2024 motion) that changes to the current performance standard will be separate from this action.*
- *Some AP members noted that the motion identified many research gaps, but recognized that it is not an exhaustive list. They also acknowledged the work done by industry and expressed appreciation for the presentations and updates received at this meeting.*
- *An AP member expressed that Innovation to reduce bottom contact is important and a Council and State priority.*
- *Several AP members expressed a concern with the timeliness of data.*
 - *One AP member noted that National Standard 2 calls for the best available science to be used in management decisions, and in the absence of specific data, decisions can still be made based on the best available science at that time.*
 - *Others noted that because research is always ongoing, tying the management decisions to the culmination of the research made making changes to the performance standard an unachievable goal.*
 - *While the previous discussion paper introduced some of these topics, the paper focused on barriers to implementation rather than opportunities for application. This next iteration should review and evaluate paths forward.*
- *The maker of the substitute motion noted that the intention behind the 'opportunities for third-party verification of industry-led science' bullet was not punitive and not directed at any specific fishery, and expressed the importance of peer review of all science so that it can be integrated into usable fisheries management.*
- *One AP member felt the original motion was non-responsive to public testimony because it did not address the bottom contact issue and put more pressure on seafloor species and salmon that Alaska Tribal communities rely on for food, culture, and survival.*

- *One AP member noted that language in the first section of the substitute motion was responsive to written and oral testimony—especially from Tribal and subsistence communities—calling for greater transparency from the pelagic trawl fleet about where they intend to fish.*
- *One AP member expressed that the research component under item 3 should include an evaluation of the continued use of salmon excluders that are not in compliance, with attention paid to how this may impact Tribal and subsistence users who depend on salmon and other species as part of a holistic way of life.*
- *Under item 5, third-party verification should be required for all sectors contributing data to ensure transparency and integrity in future research presentations.*

Rationale in Opposition to the Failed Substitute Motion

- *Some AP members did not feel that the substitute motion captured the trawl industry's needs, current work, or past achievements in gear improvements.*
- *Some AP members noted that an expanded discussion paper is unnecessary due to data gaps highlighted by the staff presentations and UFM workshop, and felt that a discussion paper wouldn't expedite the ongoing research that Council and other research entities have already prioritized.*
- *Some AP members expressed concern that identifying timelines for ongoing research was outside of the scope of the AP/Council; others had concerns about the impact Council-imposed timelines could have on the quality of research.*
- *Some AP members felt that the request to address research needs was duplicative of prior Council actions.*
- *Some AP members felt the Council staff didn't have to analyze opportunities for 3rd party peer review for industry-led or collaborative research because the SSC is the peer review body of the Council.*