Advisory Panel
E2 Motion
June 2026

E2 – Harvest Control Rule

The AP recommends the consideration of the following language in a draft purpose and need and alternatives to help identify objectives of this action and move the work forward.

Purpose and Need

The North Pacific ecosystem is experiencing rapid change and increased instability. The AP is interested in increasing ecosystem, industry, and community resilience under continued environmental variability, and is exploring management strategies that contribute to that goal. Modifications to existing Harvest Control Rules (HCR) for some or all Tier levels as well as some or all stocks may provide additional protection and increased resilience for the long-term sustainability of fish and crab stocks. The AP supports exploration of appropriate modifications to HCR's followed by testing and simulation through management strategy evaluation frameworks.

In exploring alternative HCRs, the objectives are to:

- Maintain precautionary harvest buffers in the Bering Sea and Gulf of Alaska
- Prevent overfishing
- Transition from the use of risk tables under the status quo system to an explicit analytical approach for species whose productivity is known to vary with environmental conditions
- Increase buffering against environmental shocks
- Increase socio-economic stability
- Identify and achieve community level objectives (may be fishery specific)
- Increase transparency in the ABC/TAC setting process
- Increase use of LKTK

Alternatives

Council staff have identified 4 HCR's in table 9 on p. 26 of the document which outline the current focus HCR's and the consideration of combining them or creating hybrid versions of HCR's. This list is not exhaustive and the AP recommends that the Council direct staff to identify the HCR's that should be moved forward for analysis.

It is the APs intent that Council's exploration and adoption of modified HCRs will start with the three candidate species identified in the HCR analysis: BSAI/GOA Pacific cod, pollock and sablefish, then proceed on a species by species or species aggregate basis as appropriate and ready for Council action.

Relative to sablefish, the AP recommends further development of the hybrid harvest control rule, which seems to meet both ecological and economic resilience objectives.

Motion passed 16-0

Rationale in Support of Motion:

- *In the analysis, staff recommended the development of a purpose and need and alternatives to continue to move this action forward. During the staff presentation, Council staff suggested that, in the alternative, recommendations could be made that can help inform a purpose and need and alternatives, but that they did not need to yet be fully developed as some considerations were taken in*

the action. This motion is a recommendation of language that could be used to inform a purpose and need and alternatives but importantly outlining the objectives of the action. The objectives are derived from the document.

- *The underlying goal of this action is to build resiliency into fisheries management. Resilience means stability and stability in a time of rapid changes in both ecosystem and economics is a goal that all fisheries are striving for. Alaska is experiencing rapid change and the NPFMC is at the forefront of trying to incorporate that change into decision-making. Management would benefit by providing variable buffers against uncertainty and instability, a higher level of protection for fish habitat, and a new focus on providing pathways for the industry and fishing communities to have the opportunity to also maximize value over volume.*

- *Both ecosystem and economic considerations are regularly considered during harvest specifications. Ecosystem considerations are built into single species stock assessments to varying degrees, but there is more opportunity to build in economic, ecosystem, bycatch, and community impacts in the final stages of the annual ABC and TAC setting process. Additionally incorporating LKTK into these considerations is both a management objective of this action and an opportunity for continued onramps of this important local and cultural knowledge to be utilized.*

- *The alternatives are derived directly from p. 26 of the document which outline the current suite of HCRS's under development and they include status quo, HCR #1. During the staff presentation it was stated that there are other HCR's that could be considered as well as combinations or hybrids. The list is not exhaustive and still being analyzed and staff can have the opportunity to present further recommendations in the next iteration of this process.*

- *The SSC expressed interest in moving this forward in groupings of species as outlined in the third section of this motion: "start with the three candidate species identified in the HCR analysis: BSAI/GOA Pacific cod, pollock and sablefish, then proceed on a species by species or species aggregate basis as appropriate and ready for Council action. "*

- *To date a lot of work has been done on the sablefish alternative HCR and MSE and the AP supports the continued work on this toward further simulation and implementation due to its level of completion.*

- *The sablefish Management Strategy Evaluation led by Dr. Cunningham had active inclusion of fishermen in the work. While not every simulation achieved the anticipated outcome, some of the alternative HCRs tested did meet objectives identified by fishermen: creating a stock reserve when recruitment is strong, minimizing stock and prices fluctuations, and maintaining resource value.*

- *With the development of these HCRs there is opportunity to test them through simulations using real time environmental and management actions that have taken place in the past and see what the outcomes could have produced if these tools had been available. A good example is the Pacific Cod crash and the application of alternative HCR to reflect environmental variables we now know were present prior to this occurrence.*

- *In defining objectives, it's important the Council broadly define climate resilience to include increased buffering against environmental shocks for the ecosystem as well as buffering shocks the fishing industry and fishery dependent communities. This should include socioeconomic and economic factors that may or may not be related to climate but are more relevant to creating more resilience in general.*

- *One AP member expressed support for the motion because of the clear recognition that it was a starting point for the development of a purpose and need statement and alternatives and not the initiation of an analysis. They also noted concerns about limitations and expectations with including*

bycatch in the HCR process given the lack of correlation between some target and non-target species, and suggested that it was more appropriate to consider that during TAC setting or bycatch cap actions.