

Council Motion

E2: Climate Resiliency Work Plan - Harvest Control Rules

June 9, 2026

The Council's climate resiliency work plan is focused on 1) expanding the Council's processes, collaborations, and partnerships to facilitate inclusion of multiple knowledge systems in climate planning, and 2) considering management tools and options that can include existing and emergent climate information. The evaluation of Harvest Control Rules (HCRs) is one component of the plan.

The Council supports continued evaluation of whether modifying specific groundfish and crab HCRs to better incorporate changing ecosystem conditions is feasible and could improve conservation and/or management performance compared to status quo. The purpose of a harvest control rule formula is to calculate the fish or crab stock's overfishing limit and acceptable biological catch limit based on biological parameters, given risk and uncertainty, as required by the Magnuson Stevens Act. The Council's intent is to determine if a modified HCR for some species could perform better to protect spawning biomass while optimizing yield during climate shocks and longer-term changes that impact stock productivity under rapidly changing marine environmental conditions than the current HCRs in the BSAI and GOA Groundfish and BSAI Crab Fishery Management Plans.

Further work should explicitly recognize that 1) the emphasis of objectives in the harvest control rule will likely differ by stock; 2) environmental variables' influence on population dynamics will not be sufficiently understood for all stocks to proceed with modified HCR development; and 3) moving to an alternative HCR may not mean other methods to account for risk (such as qualitative risk tables) are unnecessary, as long as risk is not being double-counted.

The Council approves the following next steps:

- Include the SSC recommendations as possible
- Support the objectives provided by staff for purposes of the synthesis and initial review of performance metrics used to determine how alternative HCRs perform compared to status quo. The Council will refine objectives based upon preliminary stock specific results as alternatives are being developed.
- Evaluations for pollock and Pacific cod (BSAI and GOA) and Alaska sablefish. Relative to sablefish, recommend further development of the hybrid harvest control rule.
- Engagement and Communication Strategy: Per the Ecosystem Committee recommendations, develop plain language materials related to the Council's climate resilience work, including the current system to set overfishing and catch limits and the new harvest control rule work
- Outline the scalability of this work under varying budget scenarios, which includes survey data streams that are in flux due to budgets
- Finalize the results from the sablefish management strategies evaluation (including single area and spatial breakouts) and preliminary findings from Bering Sea HCR evaluations of pollock and Pacific cod and present to the Groundfish Plan Team in fall 2026