C3 MRA MODIFICATIONS

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PRESENTATION OVERVIEW

- Introduction
- Description of Alternatives
- Background
  - History of this Action
  - Description of Groundfish Species, and Sector Groundfish Activity
- Management & Enforcement Considerations
- Expected Effects of Alternatives
- Environmental Impacts of Alternatives
- Enforcement Committee Report

INTRODUCTION

KEY DEFINITIONS

MRA - Maximum Retainable Amount of species that are closed to directed fishing

Directed fishing - When a species is retained over the MRA

Targeting - Species intended to be harvested on a haul by haul basis

Retained – Fish either processed on a catcher processor or retained in a refrigerated seawater tank or vessel hold for catcher vessels.

Bycatch - Any discarded catch

Incidental Catch - Retained catch of species while targeting a different species

Harvest - all retained and all discarded catch

"Topping-off" - Targeting a species that is closed to directed fishing in order to retain as close to the MRA as possible.

TAC - Total Allowable Catch ***Note: All harvest (total retained and discarded catch) accrues towards the TAC***

Trip – Period for MRA calculation.

Intrinsic Rate – Natural rate of a species encountered in normal fishing operations for a specific target species

Basis Species – Species open to directed fishing that is used for calculation of the MRA

More detailed information will be provided in this presentation on some terms

WHAT IS AN MRA?

Maximum Retainable Amount (MRA)

Maximum round weight of a species closed to directed fishing that may be **retained** onboard a vessel

- MRAs both limit and allow for some retention of species closed to directed fishing (referred to as incidental catch species) while a vessel operator is engaged in fishing for species/species groups open to directed fishing (referred to as basis species).
- MRAs are determined by percentages in regulation (see Appendix 2 of the analysis), and are based on the retained round weight of basis species caught during that fishing trip.
- Example: MRA percentage 20/100 = **20%**
  - Retained species open to directed fishing (basis species) = **100 mt** (round weight)
  - Retained species closed to directed fishing (incidental species) = **20 mt** (round weight)

- Basis species change when a directed fishing changes.
- Note that MRA calculations include only retained fish.
- There is no MRA allowed for species in prohibited catch status (PSC).

MRA APPLICATION

- The accounting period for most MRAs is known as "instantaneous," because the **MRA cannot be exceeded at any point in time during the fishing trip**.

- Most MRAs are based ONLY on the weight of retained basis species onboard the vessel caught during the current fishing trip. Any exceedances must be discarded immediately.
    - Example: If a vessel has **not yet caught any basis species during that fishing trip, all incidental species caught by the vessel must be discarded** until the vessel has caught and retained a volume of basis species during that fishing trip.

- Exceptions include species currently under offload-to-offload accounting periods (BSAI Pollock and BS Atka Mackerel). *More detail on this is included later in the presentation.*

DEFINITION OF A FISHING TRIP

- MRAs are calculated based on the basis species volume retained during the current fishing trip.
- A groundfish fishing trip, as defined in regulation, begins when harvesting, receiving, or processing of groundfish has begun on a vessel. For CVs, a fishing trip ends when all fish or fish product has been offloaded or transferred from that vessel.
- For C/Ps and motherships, five conditions end a fishing trip, based on whichever condition occurs first:
    A. The effective date of a notification prohibiting directed fishing in the same area;
    B. The offload or transfer of all fish or fish product from that vessel;
    C. The vessel enters or leaves an area where a different directed fishing prohibition applies;
    D. The vessel begins fishing with a different type of authorized fishing gear; or
    E. The end of a weekly reporting period (Saturday)

- Vessels often participate in several different management programs at the same time, and currently calculate MRAs for each management program separately.
- MRA calculations can be complex for C/Ps and motherships.
    - Vessels often trigger numerous new fishing trips during the duration of their time at sea
    - Each regulatory fishing trip requires a separate MRA calculation, using only the basis species retained during that trip to determine allowed incidental catch volume retention.

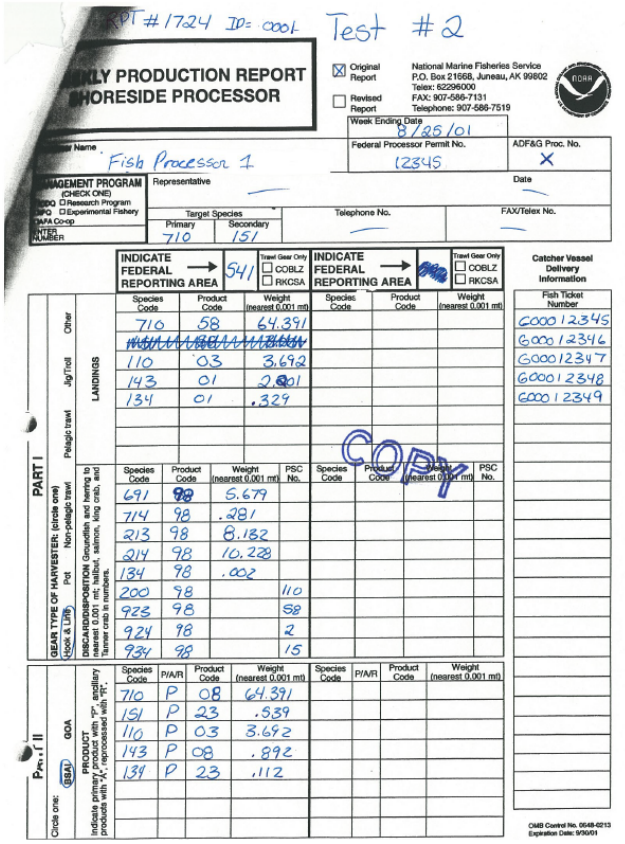
HISTORY OF MRA DEFINITION

Back in time: 1985

- Amendment 9 implemented the MRA definition and the definition of directed fishing
- Weekly Processor reporting for catch accounting

1985 – 2003

Primary tool for tracking catch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LY PRODUCTION REPORT
HORESIDE PROCESSOR

Original Report / Revised Report

National Marine Fisheries Service
P.O. Box 21668, Juneau, AK 99802
Telex: 5229600
FAX: 907-586-7131
Telephone: 907-586-7519

Week Ending Date: 9/25/01

Name: Fish Processor 1

Federal Processor Permit No.: 12345

ADF&G Proc. No.: X

GEMENT PROGRAM (CHECK ONE)
Research Program
Experimental Fishery
AFA Co-op

Representative

Date

Target Species: Primary 710, Secondary 151

Telephone No.

FAX/Telex No.

INDICATE FEDERAL REPORTING AREA → 541

Trawl Gear Only: COBLZ / RKCSA

INDICATE FEDERAL REPORTING AREA →

Trawl Gear Only: COBLZ / RKCSA

Catcher Vessel Delivery Information

PART I

GEAR TYPE OF HARVESTER: (circle one) Pot / Non-pelagic trawl / Pelagic trawl

LANDINGS: Other / Jig/Troll

Species Code	Product Code	Weight (nearest 0.001 mt)
710	58	64.391
~~110~~	~~03~~	~~3.692~~
143	01	2.801
134	01	.329

Fish Ticket Number
6000 12345
6000 12346
6000 12347
6000 12348
6000 12349

DISCARD/DISPOSITION Groundfish and herring to nearest 0.001 mt; halibut, salmon, king crab, and tanner crab in numbers.

Species Code	Product Code	Weight (nearest 0.001 mt)	PSC No.
691	98	5.679	
714	98	.281	
213	98	8.182	
214	98	10.228	
134	98	.002	
200	98		110
923	98		58
924	98		2
934	98		15

COPY

PART II

Circle one: GOA / BSAI

PRODUCT: Indicate primary product with "P", ancillary products with "A", reprocessed with "R".

Species Code	P/A/R	Product Code	Weight (nearest 0.001 mt)
710	P	08	64.391
151	P	23	.539
110	P	03	3.692
143	P	08	.892
134	P	23	.112

OMB Control No. 0648-0213
Expiration Date: 9/30/01

Recordkeeping and Reporting was:

- Weekly
- By Reporting Area
- Target species was primary production
- Shoreside / motherships multiple vessels aggregated together

PURPOSE OF AN MRA?

- Directed fishing (described in following slides) is defined through reference to the MRAs, making MRAs essential to fishery management.
  - Directed fishing closures help ensure vessel operators generally follow management decisions to limit harvest.
- MRAs allow some retention of species closed to directed fishing but places a cap on how much.
  - Used as a management tool to allow harvest to meet OY at a controlled pace when a fleet catch capacity exceeds the TAC.
  - Inseason Management assumes continued harvest of valuable species when making management decisions, including "top-off" behavior.
    - Example: Trawl Pacific Cod in the Central GOA - Pacific cod is a valuable species, sometimes not able to be managed inseason through a directed fishery. Vessels can top-off while participating in other fisheries to achieve the Pacific cod TAC.
  - Inseason will prohibit retention (PSC Action) if harvest is expected to exceed TAC, thereby setting MRA to zero.

PURPOSE OF AN MRA?

- MRAs slow the harvest rate of species closed to directed fishing
  - Removes incentives for vessel to catch species closed to directed fishing in excess of MRA due to the operational costs to discard.
  - Spreads catch out over time on individual vessels, but limited impact on management as the overall fleet operations stagger over time due to operational constraints (E.g. dock space, processing capacity, hold capacity etc.)
    - i.e. Vessels in the fleet do not leave the dock and offload at the same time resulting in overall fleet catch spread out over time.

MRAs do not prevent a vessel from catching a species and discarding

Discarded catch still accrues towards a TAC

- Retention may be required if improved retention/improved utilization (IR/IU) species
  - Retention required up to the MRA if species closed to directed fishing
- ***Not applicable to MRA regulations*** are those programs that require full retention
  - Retention of rockfish for non-trawl CVs,
  - Trawl EM trawl program

WHAT IS DIRECTED FISHING?

Directed fishing means:

(1) ***Unless indicated otherwise,*** any fishing activity that results in the retention of an amount of a species or species group on board a vessel that is greater than the maximum retainable amount for that species or species group as calculated under § 679.20.

(2) With respect to license limitation groundfish species, directed fishing as defined in paragraph (1) of this definition.

(3) With respect to crab species under this part, the catching and retaining of any crab species.

(4) With respect to the harvest of groundfish by AFA catcher/processors and AFA catcher vessels, any fishing activity that results in the retention of an amount of a species or species group on board a vessel that is greater than the maximum retainable percentage for that species or species group as calculated under § 679.20.

(5) ***With respect to the harvest of flatfish in the Bering Sea subarea,*** for purposes of nonpelagic trawl restrictions under § 679.22(a) and modified nonpelagic trawl gear requirements under §§ 679.7(c)(5) and 679.24(f), fishing with nonpelagic trawl gear during any fishing trip that results in a retained aggregate amount of yellowfin sole, rock sole, Greenland turbot, arrowtooth flounder, flathead sole, Alaska plaice, and other flatfish that is greater than the retained amount of any other fishery category defined under § 679.21(b)(1)(ii) or of sablefish.

(6) ***With respect to the harvest of flatfish in the Central GOA Regulatory Area,*** for purposes of modified nonpelagic trawl gear requirements under §§ 679.7(b)(9) and 679.24(f), fishing with nonpelagic trawl gear during any fishing trip that results in a retained aggregate amount of shallow-water flatfish, deep-water flatfish, rex sole, arrowtooth flounder, and flathead sole that is greater than the retained amount of any other trawl fishery category as defined at § 679.21(d)(3)(iii).

DIRECTED FISHING AND MRA INTERACTION

Directed Fishing means any fishing activity that results in the **retention** of an amount of species…

- RETENTION is defined in Retain on board 50 CFR 600.10 and 679.27(c)(2)
- Simply defined:
  - Catcher Processors – Processed fish
  - Catcher Vessel – Stored in hold or refrigerated seawater tanks (RSW)

….that is **greater than the maximum retainable amount** for that species.

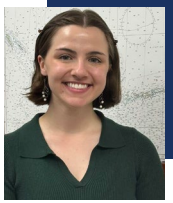
MRA percentages are defined in 50 CFR 679 Tables 10, 11, and 30 (see Appendix 2)

- Some flatfish species set at 35%: Arrowtooth (GOA) and some flatfish species (BSAI)
- Most species set at 20% including Pollock, Pacific Cod, Atka Mackerel, etc.
- Rockfish species range from 1% to 15%
- Skates 5% (GOA) and 20% (BSAI)
- Sablefish 1% or 7%

Directed fishing closures and MRAs do not prohibit a vessel catching and discarding fish, it only limits retention

Directed fishing closures and MRAs do not prohibit a vessel from targeting that species as long as the MRA is not exceeded.

BACKGROUND & DESCRIPTION OF ALTERNATIVES



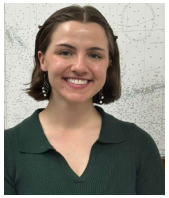
HISTORY OF MRA ACTIONS

- Full timeline of pertinent actions regarding MRAs is available in Appendix 1.
- Three actions are associated with a changing an MRA calculation interval from instantaneous to offload; similar to Alternative 4.
    - 69 FR 32901, 2004: Changed BSAI pollock MRA from instantaneous to offload, for non-AFA vessels, to allow for greater utilization of pollock and reduce discards
    - 74 FR 7209 (proposal), and 74 FR 65503 (withdrawal), 2009: Proposed to revise MRA accounting interval to offload-to-offload for certain species, for the H&G trawl C/P sector (now called A80).
        - Before taking final action on the item in December of 2006, the Council determined that a relaxed interval would increase incentives to harvest SSL prey species in protection areas. The Council revised the preferred alternative to 1) trigger a new trip if an H&G trawl C/P entered or left certain SSL protection areas in the BSAI, and 2) leave MRA accounting intervals at status quo in SSL protection areas.
        - NMFS withdrew the proposed rule after receiving withdrawal requests from representatives of the sector. Industry noted that the proposed rule, as amended, would no longer assist the sector in increasing the value of groundfish catches.
    - 79 FR 70286, 2014: Changed BS Atka mackerel MRA from instantaneous to offload, for non-AFA vessels, to allow for greater utilization of BS Atka mackerel.

HISTORY OF THIS ACTION

- NMFS identified challenges with current MRA regulations at the October 2023 Council meeting. Agency noted that minor revisions were needed to improve clarity, efficiency, and effectiveness. In addition, NMFS received a proposal from industry requesting a modification of fishing trip triggers and MRA calculation intervals for applying MRAs in BSAI and GOA groundfish fisheries.
    - The Council moved to initiate the development of an MRA discussion paper in October of 2023.
- The discussion paper was presented by NMFS staff in April of 2024.
    - After reviewing the paper and receiving testimony, the Council took action to move the paper forward to an initial review analysis. The Council adopted the following purpose and need statement (as well as the list of alternatives and options for analysis previously discussed):

The purpose of this action is to improve the regulations that implement the MRA of species closed to directed fishing (incidental catch species) while a vessel operator is engaged in fishing for species or species groups that are open to directed fishing. This action is necessary to clarify current MRA regulations, make MRA calculations easier, reduce regulatory discards, and address medical, mechanical, or weather issues that can impact MRA calculations. The Council intends to maintain the original intent of MRAs and is not considering changes that increase MRA percentages or changes in how MRAs assist in limiting harvest of a groundfish species within its annual total allowable catch.



DESCRIPTION OF ALTERNATIVES: ALT. 1 & ALT. 2

Alternative 1: No Action (Status quo). Federal regulations at 50 CFR 679.20(e) establish MRAs as a percent of a basis species in Table 10 to part 679 for the Gulf of Alaska (GOA), Table 11 for the Bering Sea/Aleutian Islands (BSAI), and Table 30 for the Central GOA Rockfish Program. The percentage of a species closed to directed fishing that is retained in relation to a basis species must not be exceeded. In most cases, any additional catch amounts must be discarded at sea.

Alternatives 2-5 are not mutually exclusive.

Alternative 2: This alternative would revise MRA regulations to clarify (1) the definition of a fishing trip, (2) calculations for MRAs, and (3) applications of MRAs. These changes would not change how the MRA regulations are currently implemented.

Option 1: Modify the definition of a fishing trip to make it clear that motherships are responsible for the overall MRA of any catcher vessel delivering unsorted codends.

- Motherships do not actively harvest groundfish, therefore MRA application and fishing trip regulations are currently unclear.
- Clarify regulations to state mothership trip triggers reflect activity of CVs delivering to motherships, and clarify mothership responsibility (including weighing, calculating, discarding, and ensuring compliance) for the overall MRAs of CVs that deliver unsorted codends

DESCRIPTION OF ALTERNATIVES: ALT 2, CONT.

Option 2: Clarify that MRAs are calculated by fishery management program due to different fishing prohibitions in place for each fishery management program.

- Vessels currently calculate MRAs by management program, since different management programs may have different applicable basis species.
- This is not captured in current MRA regulations.

Option 3: Correct regulation citations for American Fisheries Act (AFA) vessels and AFA replacement vessels.

Option 4: Clarify that when Community Development Quota (CDQ) uses an AFA vessel to harvest Amendment 80 species BSAI pollock and Bering Sea (BS) Atka mackerel MRAs are calculated at the time of the offload and clarify the species used as basis species for CDQ.

- Per FR 6492, vessels participating in CDQ fisheries cannot have more restrictions than vessels participating in non-CDQ fisheries.
- Many AFA vessels participate in various CDQ fisheries. Some AFA vessel regulations are more restrictive than non-AFA regulations. Regulatory clarification needed to allow AFA vessels the same regulatory flexibility allowed to non-AFA vessels when participating in CDQ fisheries.

DESCRIPTION OF ALTERNATIVES: ALT 2, CONT.

Option 5: Clarify that MRAs take precedence over improved retention/improved utilization (IR/IU) regulations when vessels fish in areas with different fishing prohibitions.

- Under MRA regulations, CVs that harvest fish from an area closed to directed fishing must apply the lowest MRA for the duration of their fishing trip. Conflicts with IR/IU regulations, which state that CVs must retain IR/IU species to the maximum degree possible (all IR/IU species caught in open areas, up to the MRA of species caught in closed areas)
- NMFS & OLE currently direct industry to give precedence to the MRA regulations over IR/IU – once a CV fishes in an area closed to directed fishing, directed fishing of that species is now closed in all areas to that CV for the duration of their fishing trip.

Option 6: Update IR/IU regulations for Amendment 80 vessels to reflect past Council actions.

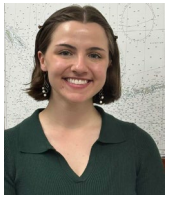
- Current IR/IU regulations still require full retention of all FMP groundfish by A80 C/Ps, which is inconsistent with the requirements in FR 12627.
- Under Option 6, some species would be removed from the 100% retention IR/IU requirement. Regulations would instead reflect FR 12627 requirements, which removed certain groundfish retention mandates, and implemented a 15% utilization standard for all retained FMP groundfish species.

DESCRIPTION OF ALTS: ALT 2, OPTION 7

Originally included in June 2024 Council motion, as Alternative 3. Included in this analysis per staff recommendation.

Option 7: Revise the definition of directed fishing at 50 CFR 679.2 for vessels participating in the pelagic trawl EM program such that vessels deploying pelagic trawl gear are directed fishing for pollock if the amount of pollock is 80 percent or greater of total catch.

- Discard prohibition in trawl EM category conflicts with directed fishing regulation. Vessels are simultaneously prohibited from retaining any incidental catch volumes above the MRA, and from discarding any catch volumes under the trawl EM program regulations.
- Pelagic trawl vessels frequently incidentally encounter Pacific Ocean Perch (POP), especially as biomass has increased. In the event of a high incidental catch haul, Option 7 would remedy this regulatory bind by modifying the directed fishing definition, which would allow retention of incidental POP volumes above the MRA.



ALTERNATIVE 3

Alternative 3: Revise the triggers that end a fishing trip from five to two triggers in the definition of a fishing trip for C/Ps and motherships (not including current offload-to-offload species - BSAI pollock, Bering Sea (BS) Atka mackerel, and weekly reporting period species in the Central GOA Rockfish Program).

Three triggers would be removed:

1. The effective date of a different fishing prohibition in the area the vessel is fishing,
2. When a vessel enters or leaves an area with a different fishing prohibition, and
3. The end of a weekly reporting period.

Two triggers would remain:

1. When all fish or fish product is offloaded, and
2. If the vessel changes authorized gear type.

ALTERNATIVES 4 & 5

Alternative 4: Add additional species to an offload-to-offload MRA application in the BSAI and GOA for all vessel sectors. Continue to exclude AFA vessels for BSAI pollock and BS Atka mackerel from the offload calculation.

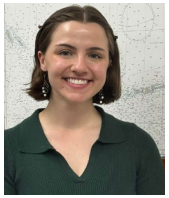
Option 1: add BSAI Pacific cod, GOA Pacific cod, GOA pollock, BS skates, Central GOA Rockfish Program, and GOA shallow-water flatfish

Option 2: include all groundfish species, except as noted above

Alternative 5: Provide exemptions in regulation from MRA requirements in cases of medical emergencies, mechanical emergencies, or poor weather that ends a fishing trip.

DESCRIPTION OF SPECIES AND SECTORS

- This action would impact a wide variety of fishing vessels participating in the federally regulated groundfish fisheries off Alaska.
    - A full list of the BSAI and GOA groundfish species impacted is included in Section 3.3. The information and tables in this section provide all the species that are caught in conjunction with the target groundfish fisheries.
    - A description of the fishing vessels, grouped into fleets based on the fish species they target and the gear used, is included in Section 3.4. These sectors include: A80 C/P, AFA C/P, trawl CV (AFA CV and non-AFA CV), Hook & Line C/P, Hook & Line C/V, and Pot C/P & C/V.



MANAGEMENT CONSIDERATIONS

MANAGEMENT IMPACTS UNDER ALTERNATIVES

- Impact to management under any scenario is likely limited.
- NMFS already assumes continued harvest after a closure, including topping-off and discarding, in current management.
- NMFS can further disincentivize catch by prohibiting retention of a species if the TAC is reached (set MRA to zero).
    - This does not prevent catch and discard of that species under any Alternative.
- Only species that have an intrinsic rate higher than the MRA are concerns and likely not impacted under any alternative
    - Intrinsic rate: natural rate of a species encountered in normal fishing operations for a specific target species
    - e.g. The intrinsic rate of sablefish in trawl fisheries is often higher than the 1% MRA allowed. Allowing more retention is unlikely to increase overall harvest or reduce discards if a vessel is already maximizing retention of that species.
    - Hold capacity likely provides an upper cap on additional harvest.

INSTANTANEOUS CALCULATION ON CVS

INSTANTANEOUS CALCULATION on CVs is difficult to enforce

- To calculate an instantaneous MRA, the amount by weight of every species onboard has to be known every moment of the trip.
- CVs typically store catch in RSW tanks or in fish holds.
    - Impossible to audit in the middle of a fishing trip.
- Logbooks:
    - Smaller CVs are not always required to maintain a logbook.
    - Logbooks that are maintained contain self reported data and may not be accurate.
    - Observer coverage on CVs is lower than the at-sea fleet.
        - Often no observer data for comparison.
- Actual weight or species composition onboard the vessel is not determined until offload.
- Current regulations under 50 CFR 679.20(e)(3)(i) help limit catch when a CV is fishing in areas with different fishing prohibitions.
    - Currently restricts CVs to most limiting MRA for the duration of the fishing trip.
- CV MRA enforcement is currently occurring during the offload and not instantaneously

CONSIDERATIONS UNDER ALTERNATIVES 3/4

NMFS has identified two issues and three possible paths for implementation of Alternatives 3 or 4.

Issue 1: Current regulations restrict a CP to the lowest MRA fished for the fishing trip. This may lead to increased regulatory discards in certain scenarios. Described in Section 4.2.

- *50 CFR 679.20(e)(3)(ii) For catcher/processors fishing in an area closed to directed fishing for a species or species group, the maximum retainable amount for that species or species group applies at any time for the duration of the fishing trip*

Issue 2: Possible increased harvest of Steller sea lion (SSL) prey species inside protection areas. Described in Section 4.3.

CONSIDERATIONS UNDER ALTERNATIVES 3/4

Path A: Alternative 3 or 4 is adopted without further regulatory changes. Current regulations *(50 CFR 679.20(e)(3)(ii))*, which require a CP to be restricted to the lowest MRA for the duration of fishing trip, would remain in place.

- Under Alternatives 3 and 4 a fishing trip would be offload to offload.
- Directed fishing prohibitions can occur during a trip for several reasons:
  - CPs often fish both inside and outside protection area during their voyage
  - NMFS closes directed fishing for a species mid-trip in the current fishing area.
- Either scenario would result in a CP being restricted to the lowest MRA (either from inside the protection area, or to areas outside the protection area, even if outside areas are open to directed fishing.
- Regulatory discards would increase, **and Council purpose and need statement would not be met.**
  - Example: CP fishes in area outside protection area where Pacific cod is open to directed fishing. CP then goes inside protection area where Pacific cod is closed to directed fishing and MRA is 20%.
    - Under *50 CFR 679.20(e)(3)(ii)*, the CP is now restricted to 20% Pacific cod for the entire fishing trip (offload-to-offload), regardless of area.
    - Failure to discard previously retained Pacific cod (over the 20% MRA) harvested from outside the protection area could put them in violation.
    - This example is described further in Section 5.3, under Scenario 3b (Table 5-5).

CONSIDERATIONS UNDER ALTERNATIVES 3/4

Path A, cont.: This approach is similar to the regulations in place for CVs, which are also currently restricted to the lowest MRA for duration of fishing trip:

50 CFR 679.20(e)(3)(i) For catcher vessels, the maximum retainable amount for vessels fishing during a fishing trip in areas closed to directed fishing is the lowest maximum retainable amount applicable in any area, and this maximum retainable amount must be applied at any time and to all areas for the duration of the fishing trip.

NMFS recommends leaving most of this provision in place.

- The definition of a fishing trip is already offload-to-offload for CVs.
- CV fishing trips are typically shorter than CP voyages.
- Difficult to enforce changing MRAs within the same fishing trip on CVs, due to:
  - Lower observer coverage.
  - Daily logbooks not required on some smaller CVs.
  - Difficult to verify which catch came from which area.
- NMFS does not foresee an issue with removing the instantaneous MRA provision in this regulation.

CONSIDERATIONS UNDER ALTERNATIVES 3/4

Path B: Alternative 3 or 4 is adopted, and regulation restricting a CP to the lowest MRA for the entire trip is removed. The CP would be restricted to the MRA of the area they are currently fishing, and would be able to use basis species caught from outside that area in their MRA calculations.

- Reduces number of calculations needed at end of trip. Basis species will still need to be recalculated under some circumstances.
- Could result in increased harvest of SSL prey species inside protection areas.
  - A CP could use basis species from outside the protection area to target more SSL prey species inside the protection area.
  - A CP could change behavior that results in targeting of SSL prey species inside protection areas more often than status quo.
  - More risk for adverse impacts to SSLs.
- Could result in more harvest of a species if a management action is taken to close a species to directed fishing while a CP is in the middle of a trip.
  - Provides additional opportunity to target the species that is now closed.
  - Inefficient way to control harvest after a fishery closure.

CONSIDERATIONS UNDER ALTERNATIVES 3/4

<u>Path C:</u> MRAs for CPs and motherships are calculated offload-to-offload each time a different directed fishing prohibition is in effect. If a CP or mothership retains a species when directed fishing is open and when directed fishing is closed during the same trip, then separate MRA calculations would be required at the time of offload.

- Path C1: Require separate MRA calculations for each circumstance for every species.
    - i.e. All catch harvested outside a protection area is kept separate from all catch harvested inside a protection area for the purposes of offload MRA calculations.
- Path C2: Require separate MRA calculation for each circumstance but only for species with a different directed fishing prohibition.
    - e.g. CP fishes outside (Pacific cod open) and inside (Pacific cod closed) a protection area in the same trip. The CP can use all basis species for the entire trip to calculate all MRAs in both areas, except that the Pacific cod MRA can only be calculated using the basis species harvested within the protection area.

Reminder: MRAs do not prevent catching fish only retention of fish closed to directed fishing

If this is a concern then the Council will need to develop other ideas to mitigate harvest from protection areas through additional future actions

- Close protection areas to all fishing.
- Prohibit targeting (topping off) of prey species in protection areas.
- Hard caps for prey species in protection areas.
- Use of IPAs to limit catch in protection areas for catch share programs.
- Other ideas?

CONSIDERATIONS UNDER ALTERNATIVES 3/4

Path B and C will still require multiple calculations because the basis species changes with any change to directed fishing.

- **No alternatives/option under consideration change the definition of a basis species.** Basis species = open to directed fishing only
- Any alternative/option will require tracking of what species are open or closed to directed fishing at any given time
- Path C is meant to control harvest inside protection areas or after an Inseason management closure by limiting retention after the closure
  - This is what occurs currently (Status Quo)
- **Policy Choice:** Should vessels be allowed to use more basis species (before and after closure) or less basis species (after closure only) for calculation of amount allowed for retention?
  - **Path B :** Use all basis species accumulated on the vessel when calculating MRAs for each trip regardless of fishery closures and protection areas.
  - **Path C:** Only use basis species accumulated after a change in directed fishing has occurred due to an inseason action or entering a protection area when calculating the MRA for the species that had a change in status.
  - Note: You cannot keep incidental catch of a species against itself. MRA is N/A in Table 10 /11 for same species as basis and incidental catch

CONSIDERATIONS UNDER ALTERNATIVES 3/4

Scenario describing Path B and Path C:

- Trip from May 1 - May 20. Target is Arrowtooth/Kamchatka Flounder. Sablefish is closed to directed fishing throughout the trip.
- On May 10th, Inseason closes Kamchatka flounder to directed fishing.
  - The vessel has retained 500 mt of Arrowtooth, 500 mt of Kamchatka prior to May 10
  - After May 10: The vessel retains 500 mt of Arrowtooth

How much Kamchatka and Sablefish can the vessel legally retain at offload?

- **Sablefish (1% MRA)** no change in directed fishing, therefore both path B and C2:
- Basis species = 1,500 mt
- May 1 – May 10: 500 mt of Arrowtooth and 500 mt of Kamchatka
- May 10 - May 20: 500 mt of Arrowtooth
- Total allowed sablefish (1% MRA) = 15 mt of sablefish
- **Kamchatcka (20% MRA)** Change in directed fishing mid trip
- **Path B** is catch prior to closure + calculation of MRA on total Arrowtooth for trip
- 500 mt + (1000 mt x 0.2) or 200 mt **Total allowed Kamchatka = 700 mt**
- **Path C** is catch prior to closure + calculation of MRA on Arrowtooth after closure
- 500 mt + (500 x 0.20) or 100 mt Total Allowed Kamchatka = 600 mt

ANNUAL / SEASONAL CALCULATION SEC 4.4

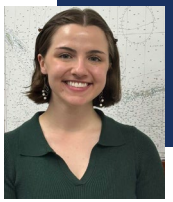
Could consider moving to an annual or seasonal MRA for pollock.

- May improve retention & utilization by smoothing short-term bycatch fluctuations.
    - Amendment 80 still has large pollock discards under offload-to-offload.
- Might further reduce regulatory discards.
- Eases compliance burdens and reduces conflicting regulations.
- Supports Alternative 5 by accommodating uncontrollable trip disruptions.
- Could consider a pilot program for Amendment 80 sector before broader implementation.
    - Quick analysis showed potential application and limited impacts overall.
- May need safeguards to maintain catch limits and monitor spatial impacts.
    - Incentive plan approach to prevent increase in bycatch.

SUMMARY OF MANAGEMENT CONSIDERATIONS

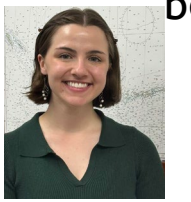
	Regulatory Complexity	Enforcement	Regulatory Discards
Alternative 1, No Action	Status quo conditions.	Status quo conditions.	Status quo conditions
Alternative 2, Options 1-6	Improves clarity in current regulations & reflects current operations/OLE guidance.	Clarifies regulations; easier for OLE to interpret and enforce.	Status quo conditions.
Alternative 2, Option 7	Removes conflicting regulatory requirements for PTR EM vessels that harvest above the MRA (simultaneous retention and discard prohibitions)	Removes regulatory bind; easier for vessels to remain in compliance.	May reduce discards for PTR EM vessels in regulatory bind, if vessel chooses to violate discard regs. rather than directed fishing regs. under status quo.
Alternative 3	Reduction in trip ending triggers decreases MRA calculation complexity for C/Ps and motherships.	Concerns surrounding OLE's ability to enforce area closures. Vessels targeting incidental species (i.e. topping off) inside protection areas are not in violation of any regulation under this Alt.	Likely to result in reductions in regulatory discards. Reduction in regulatory discards is viewed as economically & environmentally beneficial.
Alternative 4, Options 1 & 2	Likely simpler to calculate MRAs for C/Ps and motherships, & simpler to enforce MRAs for CVs. May reduce confusion for operators.	Concerns surrounding OLE's ability to enforce area closures. Vessels targeting incidental species (i.e. topping off) inside protection areas are not in violation of any regulation under this Alt.	Likely to result in reductions in regulatory discards. Reduction in regulatory discards is viewed as economically & environmentally beneficial.
Alternative 5	May require codifying parameters that constitute an emergency.	Exemptions due to weather may be difficult to define & enforce; will be examined at Enforcement Committee meeting.	May reduce discards in rare cases.

EXPECTED EFFECTS OF ALTERNATIVES



KEY ASSUMPTIONS

- Vessels seek to maximize efficiency and capacity before offload.
- Vessel hold capacity will place limits on the amount of retention of MRA species.
  - Vessels only have so much space to store processed or raw fish.
- Vessel seek to retain as much of valuable catch species as they legally can at any time during a trip
- Vessels are unlikely to increased retention of species with little to no economic value unless required to, resulting in no change in harvest or discards
  - E.g. Sharks, grenadier, jellyfish
- Relaxing regulations that require discard will allow more retention, potentially allowing vessels to maximize hold capacity earlier
  - Less time per trip
- Vessels will likely not risk topping-off on closed species until the end of the trip under current regulation.
  - Simply defined as period for MRA calculation.
- Less regulatory discard means more retention and may reduce amount of top off behavior at the end of the trip.



ALTERNATIVES 1 & 2

Alternative 1: No Action (Status quo).

- **With respect to Alt 2:** Regulation adjustments to improve clarity and reflect current practices to help avoid confusion on MRA calculations will remain unchanged.
- **With respect to Alt 3:** Vessels will continue to trigger multiple trips between offloads.
- **With respect to Alt 4:** Leave in place the existing MRA accounting periods, which applies at any time during a fishing trip for most MRAs.
- **With respect to Alt 5:** No exemptions would be implemented in MRA regulations in cases of medical, mechanical, or weather emergencies.

Alternative 2: This alternative would revise MRA regulations to clarify (1) the definition of a fishing trip, (2) calculations for MRAs, and (3) applications of MRAs. These changes would not alter how the MRA regulations are currently implemented, and would have no economic impact.

ALTERNATIVE 3

Alternative 3: Revise the triggers that end a fishing trip for C/Ps and motherships, from five to two triggers:

Three triggers would be removed:

1. The effective date of a different fishing prohibition in the area the vessel is fishing,
2. When a vessel enters or leaves an area with a different fishing prohibition, and
3. The end of a weekly reporting period.

Two triggers would remain:

1. When all fish or fish product is offloaded, and
2. If the vessel changes authorized gear type.*

*Though the practice of using multiple gear types is not common, keeping this trigger is necessary because there are often different fishing prohibitions for each gear type. Therefore, **this alternative would primarily lead to offload-to offload fishing trips.**

Instantaneous MRA provision would remain in place under this alternative.

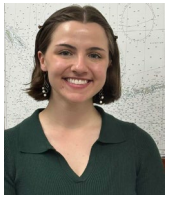
ALTERNATIVE 3, OVERALL ECONOMIC IMPACT

Overall economic impact expected to be positive:

- Provides additional operational flexibility via increased trip lengths, & fewer MRA calculation "restarts"
- Likely to reduce regulatory discards of valuable incidental species, which appear to occur most often during the start of a fishing trip
- Provides a strong economic incentive to harvest high valued species up to their MRA amounts, including through "topping off" on these species (targeting species closed to directed fishing)

Magnitude of impact is dependent on current utilization of MRAs, the difference between current trip lengths and days between offloads, and changes in the strategic behavior of vessels.

- Under Alternative 3, vessel operators could use the entire volume of basis species on board the vessel in their MRA calculations.
- If a vessel is currently able to harvest up to the MRA of all valuable species, for all fishing trips between offloads, then Alt. 3 would have no economic impact.
- If the length of trips under Alt 1 is constraining for vessels, the additional flexibility granted under Alt 3 may allow them to retain a higher volume of valuable incidental species.



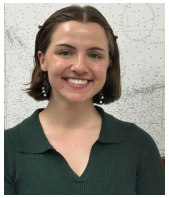
ALT 3: IMPACT OF EXTENDING TRIP LENGTHS

Provides additional operational flexibility by extending trip lengths, allowing vessels to have fewer "restarts" during a voyage.

Extending trip lengths alone could provide positive economic impacts for a vessel.

Scenario 1 (Table 5-2): High incidental catch volumes in later part of voyage

		Retained Basis Species Volume (trip total)	MRA	Incidental Catch Species Volume	Retained Incidental Catch	Discarded Incidental Catch
Status Quo: 2 trips	Trip A (Day 1)	10 mt	3 mt	0 mt	0 mt	0 mt
	Trip B (Day 2)	10 mt	3 mt	6 mt	3 mt	3 mt
	Voyage Total	20 mt	6 mt	6 mt	3 mt	3 mt
Alt. 3: 1 Trip	Trip A (Day 1)	10 mt	3 mt	0 mt	0 mt	0 mt
	Trip A (Day 2)	20 mt	6 mt	6 mt	6 mt	0 mt
	Voyage Total	20 mt	6 mt	6 mt	6 mt	0 mt



Impact of Alt 3 in Scenario 1:

- +3 mt of retained incidental catch
- -3 mt of discarded incidental catch
- -3 mt of unused MRA (total voyage MRA, minus retained incidental catch)

ALT 3: EX. OF DIFFERENCE IN TRIPS TRIGGERED

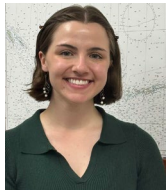
For an AM80 Vessel that is **1)** participating in multiple mgmt. programs as a C/P and mothership, **2)** spending 11 days at sea, and **3)** fishing in areas with different directed fishing prohibitions

Alternative 1, Status Quo: 12 trips triggered between offloads

Day	Days at Sea	Day 1	Day 2	Day 3	Day 4	Day 5	Day 6	Day 7	Day 8	Day 9	Day 10	Day 11
	Day of Week	Thu.	Fri.	Sat.	Sun.	Mon.	Tue.	Wed.	Thu.	Fri.	Sat.	Sun.
Directed Fishing Status in Area, by Species:	Pacific Cod:	Open	Closed	Open	Closed	Closed	Open	Open	Closed	Closed	Closed	Closed
	Atka Mackerel:	Open	Open	Open	Open	Open	Closed	Closed	Open	Open	Open	Open
Trips, by Management Program:	A80	Trip 1	Trip 2	Trip 1	Trip 3	Trip 3	Trip 4	Trip 4	Trip 3	Trip 3	Trip 3	Trip 5
	Open Access	Trip 1	No OA	Trip 1	No OA	No OA	No OA	No OA	Trip 2	Trip 2	Trip 2	Trip 3
	CDQ	No CDQ	No CDQ	Trip 1	No CDQ	No CDQ	Trip 2	Trip 2	Trip 3	Trip 3	No CDQ	Trip 4

Alternative 3, Reduced Trip Triggers: 3 trips triggered between offloads

Day	Days at Sea	Day 1	Day 2	Day 3	Day 4	Day 5	Day 6	Day 7	Day 8	Day 9	Day 10	Day 11
	Day of Week	Thu.	Fri.	Sat.	Sun.	Mon.	Tue.	Wed.	Thu.	Fri.	Sat.	Sun.
Directed Fishing Status in Area, by Species:	Pacific Cod:	Open	Closed	Open	Closed	Closed	Open	Open	Closed	Closed	Closed	Closed
	Atka Mackerel:	Open	Open	Open	Open	Open	Closed	Closed	Open	Open	Open	Open
Trips, by Management Program:	A80	Trip 1	Trip 1	Trip 1	Trip 1	Trip 1	Trip 1	Trip 1	Trip 1	Trip 1	Trip 1	Trip 1
	Open Access	Trip 1	Trip 1	Trip 1	Trip 1	Trip 1	Trip 1	Trip 1	Trip 1	Trip 1	Trip 1	Trip 1
	CDQ	Trip 1	Trip 1	Trip 1	Trip 1	Trip 1	Trip 1	Trip 1	Trip 1	Trip 1	Trip 1	Trip 1



Orange highlighted cells denote condition that triggered new trip calculations.

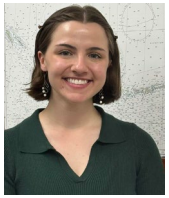
ALT 3: IMPACT ON TRIP LENGTHS

- Trip-ending trigger data does not exist. Can only approximate the proportion of trips that ended due to the weekly trip trigger, which ends all active trips at midnight each Saturday.
    - **52% of trips ended on Saturday in the last three years**
- Estimate additional operational flexibility by examining the difference between the average trip length, and the average number of days between offloads

Average Length, in Days, of Fishing Trips, Deployments, and Between Offloads.

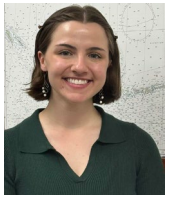
	AM80	AFA	Hook and Line CPs	Pot C/Ps	All C/Ps
Fishing Trip	3	3	5	6	**4**
Deployment (port to port)	10	10	19	12	**12**
Offload to Offload	17	18	23	15	**19**

Source: AKFIN, and NPFMC staff calculations. Data shown as three-year averages.



ALT 3: IMPACTS BY SCENARIO

- Analysis provides a series of scenarios to show the impacts of Alternative 3 under different conditions (Tables 5-2 through 5-5)
- Summary:
  - Table 5-3: Under Alternative 3, vessels may accumulate a larger volume of basis species per trip, and therefore may be able to catch and retain additional incidental catch species at the end of a trip.
    - Magnitude of impact is dependent on a vessels ability under Alternative 1 to harvest the full MRA, in each fishing trip (i.e. difference between current MRA utilization, and maximum possible MRA utilization).
  - Table 5-4 & 5-5: Under Alternative 3, vessels may use basis species caught in other areas towards MRA calculations in protection areas. The impact that this would have on vessels is dependent on the retained volume of the targeted species.
    - Table 5-4: This may have a positive impact for vessels, if the retained volume of a targeted species harvested outside protection areas is lower than the MRA for that species inside protection areas.
    - Table 5-5: In cases where the total retained volume of valuable incidental species harvested outside protection areas is higher than the MRA inside protection areas, vessels would be disincentivized from entering these areas. However, if vessels cannot avoid these areas, Alternative 3 may lead to increased regulatory discards under this scenario.



ALTERNATIVE 4: ECONOMIC IMPACTS

Alt. 4: Add Additional Species to an Offload-to-Offload Calculation

- This alterative would add additional species to an offload-to-offload MRA calculation period in BSAI and GOA for all sectors (BSAI pollock & BS Atka mackerel MRAs are calculated using an offload-to-offload period for non-AFA vessels)
  - Option 1: Add BSAI Pacific cod, GOA Pacific cod, GOA pollock, BS skates, Central GOA Rockfish Program, and GOA shallow-water flatfish
  - Option 2: Include all groundfish species, except BSAI pollock and BS Atka mackerel which are already offload to offload for non-AFA vessels
- Modifying the MRA management period to an offload-to-offload calculation in the BSAI and GOA allows vessels that would have otherwise been forced to discard valuable incidental caught groundfish over the MRA to now retain these incidental catch species as long as the were under the MRA at the time of offload

ALTERNATIVE 4: ECONOMIC IMPACTS

Alt. 4: Add Additional Species to an Offload-to-Offload Calculation

- Currently, vessels cannot exceed the MRA at any time during a fishing trip
  - The regulations appear to be most challenging at the beginning of the trip when the vessel does not have sufficient basis species to retain valuable incidental catch species and therefore must be discarded (regulatory discards)
- The purpose of the alternative to reduced regulatory discards by calculating retention of MRA species at the time of offload while at the same time not increase to catch of MRA species above the MRA
- <u>The overall economic impact of changing the MRA management period for all groundfish in the BSAI and GOA is expected to be positive under both Option 1 and Option 2</u>

ALTERNATIVE 4: ECONOMIC IMPACTS

- Alt 4, Option 1: BSAI Pacific cod
  - This species does have high retention rates due to the value of the species and is an IR/IU species. Nevertheless, some portion of the incidental caught cod is likely discarded due to MRA limits (BSAI cod has a 20% MRA for most basis species). Given the value of BSAI Pacific cod, sectors that are limited by the MRA would likely retain these regulatory discards under Alt 4 which would result in less regulatory discards and increased economic revenue

	Average 2020 through 2024							
Sector	Value[1] ($M)	Price per ton[2] ($)	Total incidental catch by target (mt)	Total targeted catch	Total discards (mt)	Total retained (mt)	Retained as % ot total catch	Total catch (mt)
A80	$32.11	$1,977	14,889	1,704	302	16,291	98.2%	16,593
AFA CP	$8.96	$1,719	4,182	765	689	4,258	86.1%	4,947
HAL CP	$134.84	$1,980	79	68,237	950	67,366	98.6%	68,316
Trawl CV	$19.74	$778	4,122	21,097	142	25,077	99.4%	25,219
HAL CV	$0.22	$918	1	195	5	191	97.6%	196
Pot	$17.09	$931	4	17,121	27	17,098	99.8%	17,125

Source: AKFIN; Source file: MRA_Target (2-3-25)

[1] Average (2020-2023) value for CPs is first wholesale and for CVs is exvessel

[2] Average (2020-2023) price per mt is first wholesale for CPs and exvessel for CVs

ALTERNATIVE 4: ECONOMIC IMPACTS

- Alt 4, Option 1: GOA Pacific cod
  - A80 and trawl CV sectors had the highest incidental catch of GOA Pacific cod. These two sectors had the highest Pacific cod discards too. It likely some portion of these discards were likely regulatory (GOA cod has a 20% MRA for nearly all basis species & GOA cod is an IR/IU species). Given the high price per ton for GOA Pacific cod, the sectors limited by the MRA would likely retain these regulatory discards under Alt 4 which would result in less regulatory discards and increased economic revenue

	Average 2020 through 2024							
Sector	Value[1] ($M)	Price per ton[2] ($)	Total incidental catch by target (mt)	Total targeted catch	Total discards (mt)	Total retained (mt)	Retained as % ot total catch	Total catch (mt)
A80	$0.74	$828	876	0	521	355	40.5%	876
AFA CP	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a
HAL CP	$3.36	$2,367	8	1,506	24	1,490	98.4%	1,514
Trawl CV	$4.12	$804	3,068	2,544	247	5,365	95.6%	5,612
HAL CV	$1.42	$906	8	1,723	40	1,691	97.7%	1,731
Pot	$2.79	$899	9	3,600	18	3,591	99.5%	3,609

Source: AKFIN; Source file: MRA_Target (2-3-25)

[1] Average (2020-2023) value for CPs is first w holesale and for CVs is exvessel

[2] Average (2020-2023) price per mt is first w holesale for CPs and exvessel for CVs

ALTERNATIVE 4: ECONOMIC IMPACTS

- Alt 4, Option 1: GOA Pollock
  - There were several target fisheries with incidentally caught pollock with rockfish having the highest (Table 5-11 on page 100). A80 and trawl CV had the highest amount of pollock discards. Since some portion of these discards are likely regulatory (GOA pollock has a 20% MRA for nearly all basis species and is an IR/IU species), Alt 4 would likely result in less regulatory discards and increased economic revenue

Sector	Average 2020 through 2024							
	Value[1] ($M)	Price per ton[2] ($)	Total incidental catch by target (mt)	Total targeted catch	Total discards (mt)	Total retained (mt)	Retained as % ot total catch	Total catch (mt)
A80	$0.56	$399	1,493	128	428	1,193	73.6%	1,621
AFA CP	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a
HAL CP	$0.01	$502	14	0	2	12	85.8%	14
Trawl CV	$34.71	$302	918	115,701	838	115,781	99.3%	116,619
HAL CV	$0.00	$112	11	0	7	4	36.4%	11
Pot	$0.00	$299	2	0	1	1	61.9%	2

Source: AKFIN; Source file: MRA_Target (2-3-25)

[1] Average (2020-2023) value for CPs is first w holesale and for CVs is exvessel

[2] Average (2020-2023) price per mt is first w holesale for CPs and exvessel for CVs

ALTERNATIVE 4: ECONOMIC IMPACTS

- Alt 4, Option 1: BSAI Skates
  - Retention of BSAI skates is low. Most of the incidental catch of skates is in the HAL C/P Pacific cod fishery (Table 5-13 on page 101). Given the value of skates for the HAL C/P sector ($281 per mt), it is likely some portion of these discards are regulatory (MRA for BSAI skates is 20%). Therefore, Alt 4 would likely result in less regulatory discards and increased economic revenue.

	Average 2020 through 2024							
Sector	Value[1] ($M)	Price per ton[2] ($)	Total incidental catch by target (mt)	Total targeted catch	Total discards (mt)	Total retained (mt)	Retained as % ot total catch	Total catch (mt)
A80	$0.71	$168	4087	0	2,699	1,388	34.0%	4,087
AFA CP	$0.17	$236	648	0	372	276	42.6%	648.0
HAL CP	$4.93	$281	18,552	0	9,231	9,321	50.2%	18,552
Trawl CV	$0.02	$33	556	0	263	293	52.7%	556
HAL CV	$0.00	$0	61	0	61	0	0.0%	61
Pot	$0.00	$0	0	0	0	0	100.0%	0

Source: AKFIN; Source file: MRA_Target (2-3-25)

[1] Average (2020-2023) value for CPs is first w holesale and for CVs is exvessel

[2] Average (2020-2023) price per mt is first w holesale for CPs and exvessel for CVs

ALTERNATIVE 4: ECONOMIC IMPACTS

- Alt 4, Option 1: GOA Shallow-water flatfish
  - This species is caught incidental in the pollock, arrowtooth flounder, and Pacific cod fisheries (Table 5-15 on page 103) while discards are limited to mostly the A80 and trawl CV sectors. Given the value of shallow-water flatfish for the A80 and trawl CV sectors ($704 per mt & $252 per mt), it is likely some portion of these discards are regulatory (the MRA for GOA shallow-water flatfish is 20% and is an IR/IU species). Therefore, Alt 4 would likely result in less regulatory discards and increased economic revenue.

	Average 2020 through 2024							
Sector	Value[1] ($M)	Price per ton[2] ($)	Total incidental catch by target (mt)	Total targeted catch	Total discards (mt)	Total retained (mt)	Retained as % ot total catch	Total catch (mt)
A80	$0.85	$704	62	906	130	838	86.6%	968
AFA CP	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a
HAL CP	$0.00	$0	3	0	3	0	0.0%	3
Trawl CV	$0.23	$252	826	476	377	925	71.0%	1,302
HAL CV	$0.00	$0	4	0	4	0	0.0%	4
Pot	$0.00	$0	5	0	5	0	0.0%	5

Source: AKFIN; Source file: MRA_Target (2-3-25)

[1] Average (2020-2023) value for CPs is first w holesale and for CVs is exvessel

[2] Average (2020-2023) price per mt is first w holesale for CPs and exvessel for CVs

ALTERNATIVE 4: ECONOMIC IMPACTS

- Alt 4, Option 1: CGOA Rockfish Program:
  - Under this alternative, CGOA Rockfish Program vessels would operate under an offload-to-offload MRA calculation period
  - The largest amount of incidental catch was pollock, arrowtooth, and other rockfish in the target rockfish fisheries during the 2020 through 2024 period (Table 5-17 on page 105)
    - Of these incidental caught species, it is likely some portion of the discards were regulatory as noted in Table 5-18 on page 105) (MRAs were 20%, 35%, and 15% for these species, respectively)
    - Given the ex-vessel value for these species as noted in Table 5-16 on page 104, as well as discards of other incidental caught species, it is likely these regulatory discards under instantaneous MRA calculation period would be retained under an offload-to-offload MRA calculation period which would increase economic returns and reduced regulatory discards

ALTERNATIVE 4: ECONOMIC IMPACTS

- Alt 4, Option 2 - the following species, when closed to directed fishing, would likely result in less regulatory discards and increased economic revenue under an offload-to-offload MRA calculation period (see 5-19 on page 107, Table 5-20 & 5-21 on page 108)
  - BSAI
    - Trawl gear - Greenland turbot, Pacific cod, sablefish, Alaska plaice, Kamchatka flounder, arrowtooth flounder, flathead sole, POP, & pollock
    - Fixed gear - Greenland turbot, Pacific cod, sablefish, pollock and skates for the HAL C/P sector
  - GOA
    - Trawl gear - sablefish, thornyhead rockfish, Pacific cod, Atka mackerel, rougheye rockfish, big skates, rex sole, and dusky rockfish shortraker rockfish
    - Fixed gear - sablefish, Pacific cod, demersal shelf rockfish, thornyhead rockfish, rougheye rockfish, and shortraker rockfish

ALTERNATIVE 4: ECONOMIC IMPACTS

- Alt 4, Option 2:
  - Capitalizing on offload-to-offload MRA calculation period is dependent on, but not limited to, prices of species, available buyer, accessibility to species, storage availability, ability to process the species, and the MRA limit
  - For most groundfish species, the risk of a "top off" fishery early in the fishing trip is not expected to affect most groundfish stocks relative to status quo since the alternative does not change the species TACs, gear types, and general location of the fisheries which the groundfish are caught
  - For some groundfish species, the risk of "top off" early in the fishing trip with low OFL, ABC, TAC relative to high total catch, high retention rates, and high ex-vessel price could increase risk of exceeding the ABC and TAC, and in some rare cases approach the OFL.
    - BSAI Greenland turbot, GOA big skates, GOA longnose skates, and GOA other skates (Table 5-22 on page 111 provides risk level)

ALTERNATIVE 5: ECONOMIC IMPACTS

- Alternative 5 would provide exemptions from MRA requirements in cases of medical, mechanical, or poor weather emergencies
  - Current regulations state the MRAs apply at any time during the duration of fishing trip, therefore if a vessel returns to port for a medical, mechanical, or a weather emergency and they are over the MRA limit, it is a violation.
  - Between 2021 and 2024, OLE documented 4 instances of medical or mechanical issues that forced an unexpected return to port which resulted in an MRA overage
  - Based on low rate of occurrence, OLE recommends assessing overages on a case-by-case basis.
    - If Alternative 4 is selected, and additional species go to offload-to-offload MRAs, the occurrence of overages due to medical/mechanical/weather issues could be exacerbated.
  - USCG Form CG-2692 could be utilized as a standard means of confirming an emergency for any adopted exemption
    - **An exemption made due to weather would be far more subjective and therefore difficult to enforce.**

SUMMARY OF ECONOMIC IMPACTS

	Economic Impacts
Alternative 1, No Action	Status quo conditions.
Alternative 2, Options 1-6	No impacts.
Alternative 2, Option 7	No impacts.
Alternative 3	Expected to be positive. Magnitude of impact varies & is reliant on changes in strategic vessel behavior.
Alternative 4, Options 1 & 2	Expected to be positive. Magnitude of impact varies & is reliant on changes in strategic vessel behavior.
Alternative 5	Neutral to positive. Vessels may avoid regulatory violations in rare cases.

SOCIAL IMPACT ASSESSMENT

This action may have limited beneficial social impacts

- **The RIR analysis indicates that the action alternatives do not create impacts, economic or social, on most of the impact categories or sectors of the fishing fleet, fishermen or communities with the exception that there may be effects on trips, time period, and days at sea.**
- These effects are largely due to a reduction in regulatory discards early in trips (Alternative 3 and 4) that may change fleet behavior and are thought to be generally beneficial.
- Allowing a trip to end early for weather, mechanical, or medical reasons (Alternative 5) is considered generally beneficial.
- The Social Impact Assessment (SIA) documents that analysts did consider the potential for social impacts and the guidance for conducting an SIA.

ENVIRONMENTAL IMPACTS

RESOURCE COMPONENTS ADDRESSED IN THE ANALYSIS

- **The alternatives do not change the MRA rates**
- The alternatives clarify MRA accounting responsibilities, potentially revise trip definitions, and clarify regulatory precedence.
- None of the alternatives address any allocation within the fishery, have direct effect on the target species stocks, or change any biological parameter used to manage the fishery.
- No effects are expected on habitat, seabirds, or the overall ecosystem.
- Environmental analysis is included on two resource components: 1) target and non-target (incidental) species, and 2) Steller sea lion prey availability.

EFFECTS ON STELLER SEA LION PREY

- Stellar sea lions rely on localized prey specific to where the action overlaps.
- **Alternatives 1, 2 and 5 will have no meaningful effect on Steller sea lions** as they contemplate administrative changes that do not impact timing, location or magnitude of groundfish harvest.
- **Alternatives 3 and 4 could affect the localized availability of prey in Steller sea lion protection areas.**
- A similar proposed rule was withdrawn in 2009, citing “Although the Council’s action provided relief from the ‘‘instantaneous’’ accounting interval, the Council determined that a relaxed interval would increase incentives to harvest incidental catch in Steller sea lion protection areas.
- To address this problem, the Council decided that a new fishing trip would begin or end any time a non-AFA trawl C/P would enter or leave a Steller sea lion protection area that was closed to directed fishing for Atka mackerel or Pacific cod.”

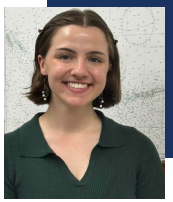
EFFECTS OF ALT 3 AND 4 ON SSL

- **Under Alternatives 3 and 4, incidental catch of prey species important to Stellar sea lions (i.e. pollock, Pacific cod, and Atka mackerel) could increase or decrease inside protection areas.**
- Extensive regulations have been implemented over the years to prevent localized depletion of prey for Steller sea lions
- Any action that increases the catch of these preferred prey species inside Steller sea lion protection areas does not meet the spirit or intent of these regulations.
- If the Council wished to proceed with either Alternative 3 or 4, it may wish to consider mechanisms that would de-incentivize “topping off” in protected areas
    - i.e. through a method similar to Path C in the management considerations section

SUMMARY OF ENVIRONMENTAL IMPACTS

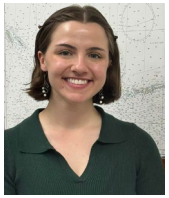
	Target & Non-target Species	Marine Mammals (SSL)
Alternative 1, No Action	Status quo conditions.	Status quo conditions.
Alternative 2, Options 1-6	No impacts.	No impacts.
Alternative 2, Option 7	No impacts.	No impacts.
Alternative 3	Potential for increased harvest of incidental catch species inside protection areas. Magnitude and distribution of impact dependent on changes in vessel behavior around protection areas.	Potential for increased harvest of SSL prey species in SSL protection areas. Magnitude and distribution of impact dependent on vessel behavior.
Alternative 4, Options 1 & 2	Limited potential & risk of approaching ABC and OFL for certain species. Risks mitigated by existing fishery mgmt. mechanisms; therefore not considered to be environmentally significant. Potential for increased harvest of incidental catch species inside protection areas. Magnitude and distribution of impact dependent on changes in vessel behavior around protection areas.	Potential for increased harvest of Pacific cod in SSL protection areas. Magnitude and distribution of impact is dependent on vessel behavior.
Alternative 5	No impacts.	No impacts.

ENFORCEMENT COMMITTEE REPORT



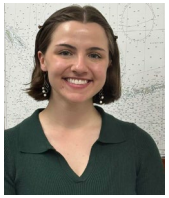
ENFORCEMENT COMMITTEE REPORT

- Alternative 2, Option 7:
  - The Committee noted that this option has a broader application than only POP direct fishing violations, which would delimit other MRA-controlled species harvests, and prevent regulatory binds and potential future enforcement actions for other species groups.
- Alternative 3:
  - The Committee noted that the offload trip-ending trigger only ends a fishing trip when *all* fish or fish product have been offloaded from the vessel. At times, vessels may offload only a portion of their catch. This issue of partial offloads could impact the enforceability of this Alternative. **The Committee recommended that the Council consider modifying the language of the offload trigger so that a new fishing trip would be triggered upon the offload of *any or all* fish or fish product.**
  - The Committee noted that Alternative 3 would prevent real-time at-sea enforcement, and eliminate the enforceability of time or area closures in real time. Enforcement officers would need to wait until offload to assess whether vessels exceeded an MRA.



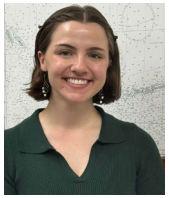
ENFORCEMENT COMMITTEE REPORT

- Alternatives 3 and 4, Regulatory Paths to Address NMFS-Identified Issues
  - The Committee expressed the desire to obtain better, and simpler, MRA enforcement compliance for vessels, and recognized that an offload-to-offload MRA application or calculation could achieve that.
  - **Path A:** The Committee expressed concern with the enforceability of SSL protection areas under Path A.
  - **Path C:** The Committee noted that, as Path C would move additional species to an offload-to-offload MRA application, real-time enforcement would no longer be achievable.
    - **Path C1:** The Committee noted that Path C1 would, in large, be similar to the current regulatory environment, but would remove the week-ending trip trigger and would move additional species to an offload-to-offload MRA application.
    - **Path C2:** The Committee noted that Path C2 may be complicated to track the division of catch, versus the status quo or under Path C1.
  - **Path D:** The Committee noted that many of the examples under Path D, other ideas to mitigate harvest from protection areas, appeared to be enforceable. The Committee discussed that individual TACs set by each protected area would slow or limit harvests in those protected areas. But a single TAC applicable to all protected areas may actually accelerate harvest in those protected areas that have more productive fishing.



ENFORCEMENT COMMITTEE REPORT

- Alternative 5:
  - The Committee recommended the continued usage of case-by-case discretion for medical and mechanical emergencies.
    - The Committee agreed that utilizing USCG Form CG-2692 could be used on a case-by-case basis to verify a medical or mechanical emergency has occurred, even without codifying the use of this form.
  - Codifying the threshold for a weather emergency to be used for this purpose was not recommended by the Committee.
- Annual or Seasonal MRAs, Section 4.4:
  - The Committee noted that any enforcement recommendations or consideration on annual or seasonal MRAs would require more discussion from the Council, or additional analyses.



THANK YOU TO ALL PREPARERS, CONTRIBUTORS, AND PERSONS CONSULTED

QUESTIONS?