



December 6, 2022

Agenda B-2: NMFS Management Report

Status of Actions Report Online

Updated daily at: <https://www.fisheries.noaa.gov/sites/default/files/akro/amendments.pdf>

Progress on Rulemaking

Highlights on progress since the June 2022 meeting include:

- Comment period for proposed Economic Data Reporting (EDR) Revisions (KTC Amendment 52) closed on **December 5, 2022**. A final rule is expected to be published in early 2023.
- The NOA for BSAI FMP Amendment 123 to implement Halibut Abundance-Based Management was published on **November 9, 2022**. The proposed rule to implement BSAI Amendment 123 (Halibut Abundance-Based Management) is expected to be published on **December 9, 2022** with comments invited for a 45 days through **January 23, 2023**. The NOA for the FEIS for this action is also expected to be published on **December 9, 2022**.
- Proposed rule to implement IFQ Omnibus (BSAI Amendment 124 and GOA Amendment 112) published on **November 23, 2022**. Comments are invited through **January 3, 2023**.
- Proposed GOA harvest specifications published on **December 2, 2022** with comments invited through **January 3, 2023**.
- Proposed BSAI harvest specifications are expected to publish the first week of December 2022 with comments invited through the first week of January.
- **Attachment 1** provides additional detail.

Due to unexpected changes to staffing resources in the Sustainable Fisheries Division since October 2022, the earliest possible implementation of the recent Council final action recommending Trawl Electronic Monitoring would be January 2025.

Inseason Management Report

Mary Furuness and Steve Whitney will provide the comprehensive end-of-year report.

Endangered Species Act Consultations on the GOA and BSAI Groundfish Fisheries

NOAA Fisheries has reinitiated ESA Section 7 consultations to evaluate the effects of the GOA and BSAI groundfish fisheries on ESA-listed species and critical habitats. The proposed scope of the consultations will include all groundfish fisheries managed under the GOA and BSAI groundfish FMPs, including State of Alaska parallel groundfish fisheries.

The consultations will focus on the effects of the current fishery management regime (i.e. status quo) and NMFS will use the best scientific information available in the analyses. NMFS will keep stakeholders informed throughout the consultation process.



NOAA Fisheries has determined that allowing the groundfish fisheries to continue to operate during this reinitiation period will not violate ESA section 7(a)(2) or 7(d). These consultations will be a significant undertaking and will require considerable Alaska Region NOAA Fisheries staff time and resources.

National Standard Guidelines

NMFS is aware that some national standard guidelines have not been reviewed in more than a decade. As such, and given the ties to other priorities such as climate resilience and equity, NMFS is considering initiating review of guidance for National Standards 4, 8, and 9 which outline the principles related to allocations, communities, and bycatch. Work to revise national standards are significant undertakings for the agency, and will require opportunities for the interested public, stakeholders, and Regional Fishery Management Council to provide input. NMFS is currently considering an Advanced Notice of Proposed Rulemaking (ANPR) to gather initial input to inform next steps the agency might take.

Cost Recovery Fee Percentages

On November 30, 2022, NMFS published a notice providing the cost recovery fee percentages for the American Fisheries Act (AFA), Aleutian Islands Pollock (AIP), Amendment 80 (A80), and Community Development Quota (CDQ) Programs.

The fee percentage for the Amendment 80 program dropped from 1.43% to 0.87%; the decrease was a function of substantially higher fishery ex-vessel value (48.9%) and lower management and enforcement costs (-9.2%) for 2022 relative to 2021.

The fee percentage for the CDQ program increased marginally from 0.83% to 0.85%. Both value and costs were slightly higher (1.1% and 3.3%, respectively) for 2022 relative to 2021.

The AFA Inshore sector percentage increased from 0.25% to 0.32%. Fishery ex-vessel value decreased (-13.6%) and management costs increased (9.8%) resulting in an increase in the fee percentage.

There were no pollock harvests in the Aleutian Islands Pollock program in 2022, therefore the fee percentage is 0%.

GAF Report

NMFS finalized the 2022 annual report on the use of Guided Angler Fish (GAF) in the charter halibut sector. The halibut Catch Sharing Plan authorizes annual transfers of commercial halibut individual fishing quota (IFQ) as GAF to qualified charter halibut permit holders for harvest by charter vessel anglers in Areas 2C and 3A. Using GAF, charter operators may offer charter anglers the opportunity to harvest up to two halibut of any size per day. NMFS issues GAF in numbers of halibut, based on a conversion factor from the average weight of GAF harvested in the respective area in the previous year. For this report, new length-weight relationships adopted by the International Pacific Halibut Commission (IPHC) in 2022 specific to each IPHC Regulatory Area were used for the first time. Previous GAF reports used a single standard length-weight relationship for these areas.

GAF use continued its long-term increasing trend in use, with 139,569 pounds of IFQ transferred to 79 different Charter Halibut Permit (CHP) holders in 2022. The lease prices for GAF increased substantially in 2022, averaging \$6.13 per pound of IFQ, compared to \$5.20 in 2021. GAF use continues to be more common in Area 2C, where the majority of GAF permits are issued. However, self-leases of GAF, where a CHP holder transfers their own IFQ to GAF, are a more common arrangement in Area 3A. GAF Annual reports are available at: <https://www.fisheries.noaa.gov/resource/document/guided-angler-fish-gaf-program-annual-reports>.

2023 Annual Deployment Plan for Observers and Electronic Monitoring

The final 2023 Annual Deployment Plan (ADP) for Observers and Electronic Monitoring (EM) in the Groundfish and Halibut Fisheries off Alaska is posted under the B-2 Agenda Item.

The North Pacific Observer Program is the largest observer program in the country and covers vessels in both partial coverage and full coverage. In the full coverage component of the program, every trip is monitored by 1 or 2 observers and the vast majority of groundfish harvest is covered by this portion of the program. In 2023, NMFS expects to monitor 2,520 trips, consisting of an estimated 14,586 days, in the full coverage component of the program, and 1,090 trips and 5,355 days in the partial coverage component. The ADP mainly focuses on the partial coverage component of the program and specifies the scientific deployment design and selection rate—the portion of trips that are sampled by observers and EM.

The 2023 budget for EM and observer deployment in the partial coverage component of the program 2023 is \$5.9M, which can maintain the fixed-gear EM program and funds at-sea monitoring by observers through 2025, assuming constant fishing effort. The fixed-gear EM pool will consist of 179 vessels approved by NMFS. This includes 9 new vessels that requested to be added to this pool for 2023 and all were approved by NMFS. The trawl EM pool is composed of all vessels fishing under an Exempted Fishing Permit (EFP) to evaluate the efficacy of EM on pollock catcher vessels using pelagic trawl gear in the Bering Sea and Gulf of Alaska. In 2023, 79 vessels are expected to participate in this pool.

The selection rates (rounded to the nearest whole number) for partial coverage strata in 2023 are—

- No Selection – 0%
- Hook-and-line – 18%
- Pot – 17%
- Trawl vessels not participating in Trawl EM – 23%
- Fixed-Gear EM – 30%
- Trawl EM – all vessels 100% at-sea coverage with EM; plus 33% shoreside monitoring in the GOA and 100% shoreside monitoring in the BSAI.

Tribal Engagement Update

Outreach: NMFS Alaska region is in the process of hiring a tribal liaison that will greatly increase our capacity to conduct effective and meaningful outreach with our tribal partners. We are hopeful that this person will onboard early in the new year. In addition to increasing staffing capacity, NMFS SF has issued its second tribal engagement newsletter that is specific to items that will be

covered at this Council meeting. The newsletter was sent out on November 10 and is posted on the [NMFS webpage](#).

Consultations: NMFS has not engaged in formal tribal consultation since the June 2022 Council meeting. NMFS is in the process of scheduling one additional consultation in early January in response to a letter received from a coalition of tribes on a suite of tribal concerns. NMFS's response to that letter can be found [here](#).

For further information on NMFS Sustainable Fisheries tribal engagement activities please contact Kelly Cates at kelly.cates@noaa.gov.

Department of the Interior-NOAA Consultations

NOAA participated in the Department of the Interior's (DOI) three virtual listening sessions and government to government consultations on fisheries issues. Two hybrid in person and virtual events were held in Bethel on October 5th and in Fairbanks on October 7th. Over 100 people participated in each hybrid event. One virtual event was held for Nome on November 21, and 21 people attended.

DOI participants included (but not limited to):

- Bryan Newland, Assistant Secretary of the Interior for Indian Affairs.
- Shannon A. Esteoz, Assistant Secretary for Fish and Wildlife, and Parks
- Laura Daniel-Davis, Principal Deputy Assistant Secretary - Land and Mineral Management
- Raina Thiele, Senior Advisor for Alaska Affairs and Strategic Priorities
- Sara Boario, Alaska Regional Director, US Fish and Wildlife Service
- Steve Cohn, State Director Bureau of Land Management

NOAA participants included (but not limited to):

- Dr. Richard W. Spinrad, Ph.D., Under Secretary of Commerce for Oceans and Atmosphere and NOAA Administrator
- Janet Coit, Assistant Administrator, NOAA Fisheries and Acting Assistant Secretary for Oceans and Atmosphere
- Kelly A. Kryc, Ph.D., Deputy Assistant Secretary for International Fisheries, Office of the Under Secretary for Oceans and Atmosphere
- Zachary L. Penney, Ph.D., Senior Advisor, Office of the Under Secretary of Commerce for Oceans and Atmosphere
- Jon Kurland, Regional Administrator, NOAA Fisheries Alaska Region
- Gretchen Harrington, Assistant Regional Administrator, Habitat Conservation Division, NOAA Fisheries Alaska Region

Alaska Native participants included (but not limited to):

- Kuskokwim River Inter-Tribal Fish Commission
- Calista Corporation
- Native Village of Ouzinkie
- Alaska Tribal Sovereignty Services
- Kwethluk, Incorporated
- Ketchikan Indian Community
- Native Village of Scammon Bay
- Native Village of Kwinhagak
- Native Village of Napaimute
- Chuathbaluk Traditional Council

- Association of Village Council Presidents
- Native Village of Paimiut
- Tanana Chiefs Conference
- Native Village of Nighmute
- Yukon River Drainage Fisheries Association
- Central Council of Tlingit and Haida Indian Tribes of Alaska
- Doyon, Limited
- Grayling IRA Tribal Council
- Nenana Native Village
- Beaver Village Council
- Northway Village Council
- Chickaloon Village Traditional Council
- Tamamta/ Igiugig Village Council
- Anvik Tribal Council
- Huslia Tribal Council
- Kawerak, Inc
- Aleutian Pribilof Islands Association

DOI identified six questions for input from Alaska Native participants:

1. How can federal agencies better cooperate with Alaska Native Tribes, Alaska Native Consortia, Alaska Native Organizations, Alaska Native Corporations, and subsistence users to better protect and restore fisheries that Alaska Native communities depend on?
2. How has bycatch impacted fish populations and fish availability for Alaska Native communities?
 - a. What are your suggestions for how the federal government can better address the impacts of bycatch?
3. How has climate change impacted fisheries decline?
4. How can the process for federal fisheries disaster declarations be improved to better account for Alaska Native subsistence needs?
5. How can federal agencies better facilitate Tribal co-management of fisheries resources?

DOI requested written comments through December 5, 2022. DOI plans to produce a written report for these consultations, however DOI does not make the written comments it receives from consultations available to the public.

Update on the Convention on the Conservation and Management of Pollock Resources in the Central Bering Sea (Doughnut Hole Convention)

The Annual Conference for the Central Bering Sea Pollock (Doughnut Hole) Convention was held virtually on November 14-25, 2022. The annual report will be provided to the Council as soon as it is available.

Update on the ESA Status Review for Sunflower Sea Stars

The sunflower sea star Status Review Report and ESA-listing recommendation resulting from the August 2021 petition from the Center for Biological Diversity are anticipated to be published in January 2023. The petition and NMFS's 90-day finding are available at [this website](#). Additional details are available in this [webstory](#). [See this link for more information on how NMFS evaluates listing petitions.](#)

Personnel Changes

New Staff--

Dr. Richard Brenner will be joining the Sustainable Fisheries team in January 2023 as supervisor of the Ecosystems Branch. Rich has a Ph.D. in Biological Sciences from the University of Alaska Fairbanks and has been a fishery biologist at the Alaska Department of Fish and Game (ADF&G) for more than 15 years. He has worked in the Office of Chief Fisheries Scientist for Salmon and, most recently, served as the program manager of the Research and Data Services group within ADF&G's Division of Commercial Fisheries where he supervised stock assessment biometricians and participated in the State's fisheries regulatory process. We are excited to have him join the SF team.

Retirements and transfers--

Doug Mecum is retiring at the end of December after more than 17 years as Deputy Regional Administrator for NMFS Alaska Region, following his successful 22-year career with ADF&G where he rose to be the director of the Division of Commercial Fisheries. He has represented both ADF&G and NMFS on the North Pacific Fishery Management Council and contributed behind the scenes to many Council actions over the years as well as innumerable state fishery management measures. Doug is currently the longest serving Deputy in NMFS and his tenure has been marked by an unwavering commitment to continuous improvement. Doug's legacy in the agency will be his mixture of convictions and humility – the certitude that better ways can be found to do our work and the willingness to put aside his own ego and entrust others to help lead the way forward. Happy retirement Doug!

Rebecca (Becky) Campbell is retiring in December after working as an Administrative Assistant with SF since 1992. One of Becky's many strengths has been her knowledge of the complex rulemaking procedures and her willingness to get work done to ensure that numerous high-profile documents got completed on time. Becky has been an incredibly valuable member of the SF team and we wish her well in her retirement.

Jennifer Watson has accepted a position with the Environmental Protection Agency as their Coaching Officer. Jennifer started working for NMFS over 20 years ago with the Observer Program in Anchorage and Dutch Harbor before moving to Juneau to join Sustainable Fisheries. During her career, Jennifer was instrumental in the development and implementation of fishery monitoring programs in Alaska -- including at-sea scales, catch monitoring plans in processing plants, and Electronic Monitoring video systems. Jennifer is also a certified coach and helped create and build the NOAA coaching program. We are sad to see her go but excited for her new position in her dream job.

Recruitments--

NOAA Fisheries Alaska Region is advertising the following job opportunity from December 5-19, 2022. The position of **Deputy Regional Administrator (Supervisory Program Manager)** to be located in the Alaska Regional Office in Juneau, AK. Applicants can apply online:

- NMFS AKRO-23-11746403-DE: <https://www.usajobs.gov/job/692526600>
- NMFS AKRO-23-11746404-ST: <https://www.usajobs.gov/job/692527000>