

AGENDA D-2  
DECEMBER 2011

MEMORANDUM

TO: Council, SSC and AP Members

FROM: Chris Oliver   
Executive Director

DATE: November 29, 2011

SUBJECT: Staff Tasking

ESTIMATED TIME  
4 HOURS

**ACTION REQUIRED**

Review tasking and committees and provide direction.

**BACKGROUND**

Committees and Tasking

The list of Council committees is attached as Item D-2(a). An updated work plan for implementing the programmatic groundfish management policy is attached as Item D-2(b). Item D-2(c) is the three meeting outlook and Item D-2(d) provides a summary of current projects and tasking. On the updated 3-meeting outlook, I have moved the Northern Bering Sea Research plan discussion paper to April, per the Rural Community Outreach Committee's recommendation from October. The Council may wish to discuss priorities for completing ongoing projects, as well as any new tasks assigned during the course of this meeting. In particular, the Council may want to provide guidance on relative priority of those projects yet to be initiated.

Comment Letters

Several comment letters (attached) have been received relative to Staff Tasking:

- A letter from MCA requesting additional discussion of issues in the Pribilof Islands blue king crab rebuilding analysis.
- Letters from WWF and Greenpeace requesting habitat conservation measures for Bering Sea canyons.
- A letter from Mr. Robert Snell requesting fish-up of halibut IFQ in Area 4B.
- A letter from Mr. Ludger Dochtermann requesting 100% observer coverage on all GOA trawl vessels in 2012.

Pribilof Blue King Crab Rebuilding Analysis

With the Council's concurrence, we intend to adjust slightly the alternatives for the Pribilof Islands blue king crab rebuilding analysis, based on a recent re-examination of the bycatch data using the Catch-in-Areas database. As described below, the effect would be to drop the rocksole fishery from the additional closure areas under consideration.

For the Pribilof Islands blue king crab rebuilding plan, the alternative closure configurations apply only to selected fisheries. The Council motion specified that any fishery will be exempt from the action if their contribution to the bycatch of PIBKC between 2003-2010 was below one of two threshold criteria:

- Option a) contribution less than 5% of the ABC
- Option b) contribution less than 10% of the ABC

Previous analyses had indicated that the fisheries which were *not* exempt from option a (i.e. these fisheries are included in the closure action as their bycatch was greater than 5% of the ABC over the time frame) included the following: yellowfin sole trawl, rocksole trawl, other flatfish trawl, Pacific cod pot and Pacific cod hook and line. The only fishery where bycatch was above the 10% threshold as well was the rocksole trawl fishery. Additional Council discussions in June 2011 and October 2011 specifically indicated that the fisheries to which the closures would apply should be those which have had historic bycatch above these thresholds within the Pribilof Islands District itself rather than in Area 513 (the previous delineation for OFL catch of PIBKC). This is to be consistent with the stock boundary as defined in state regulation. Based on observed catches of flathead sole outside of the PI District, it was indicated to the Council in June 2011 that this fishery no longer met the threshold criteria and was subsequently dropped from closure consideration.

Based on current analyses defining bycatch within the PI District (only) using the Catch-in-Areas database, the rocksole fishery does not have any PSC associated with catch inside of the PI District boundary. The attached Figure 1 shows the distribution of the blue king crab bycatch by this fishery to the east of the district boundary (within NMFS reporting area 513). Therefore this fishery would also not meet the criteria for consideration of area closures.

The current suite of alternatives (with the striking of rocksole, as indicated) is attached as Item D-2(e). Final action on the rebuilding plan is scheduled for February 2012, so we are seeking the Council's concurrence at this meeting.