

FINAL D-2 President E.O. 13921
Council Motion
October 14, 2020

The North Pacific Council provides the following recommendations in response to the Secretary of Commerce's request to identify actions to reduce burdens on domestic fishing and increase production within sustainable fisheries as required under Section 4 of Executive Order 13921.

High priority – non-regulatory actions related to domestic production

NOAA groundfish surveys off Alaska and stock assessments

Prioritize internal NOAA funding to fund full suite of NOAA groundfish surveys in federal waters off Alaska for 2021 and beyond, and resulting stock assessments. This is a core data set for stock assessments, understanding climate effects, and ecosystem management, and should include the Northern Bering Sea as an annual survey for the near-term. Regular stock assessment surveys increase certainty about stock status which is the largest driver in increasing catch limits and therefore domestic production within sustainable fisheries.

NOAA funding for observer coverage and electronic monitoring

Prioritize internal NOAA funding to supplement the North Pacific Observer Program for observers and electronic monitoring. Actions that increase certainty and data in our management process serve to improve management of domestic seafood production and ability to meet optimum yield objectives in the Magnuson Stevens Act. While the North Pacific fishery participants have been the primary funders of monitoring costs for decades, supplemental funds toward both North Pacific observers and electronic monitoring are needed.

Council regulatory actions

Implement and regulate pelagic trawl electronic monitoring – potential to increase efficiency and reduce cost of monitoring, and improve bycatch accounting on pelagic trawl catcher vessels. Currently operating under an exempted fishing permit until information sufficient to support analysis and rulemaking.

Squid/sculpin processing restrictions – allow processing of incidental retained catch of these species to reduce discards and increase seafood value/production.

BSAI trawl CV Pacific cod LAPP – catch share program intended to create operational efficiencies, minimize bycatch, improve safety, and maximize value/production of BSAI Pacific cod.

BSAI pot cod CP action – may create efficiencies by limiting effort to historically dependent vessels as determined by eligibility criteria.

Continued evaluation to remove recordkeeping and reporting requirements or regulations that are no longer necessary - to simplify or reduce the burden of existing requirements.

Non-regulatory actions related to U.S. seafood competitiveness

Increase marketing funds, promotion of sustainable US seafood, and science-based consumption advice

Prioritize funding for domestic seafood marketing and promotion programs and engage with other agencies to encourage safe consumption of domestic seafood. This could take the form of NOAA (1) ensuring that any available S-K funding prioritizes fisheries marketing and promotion efforts in soliciting and approving applications; (2) undertaking assertive actions to communicate the sustainability of US fisheries, through its Fish Wise program and other public relations efforts; (3) consider the MAFAC recommendation to launch a National Seafood Council; and (4) urge the USDA/HHS to ensure their seafood consumption advice is based on recent scientific evidence.

Improve trade policy and foreign market access for domestic seafood

Dedicate staff and resources in NOAA and across the Administration to facilitate resolution of trade barriers and make exports of domestic seafood more competitive. This could take the form of ensuring that other agencies, including USTR and ITA, prioritize efforts to (a) address how US seafood competes against other seafood-producing nations and (b) secure more favorable trade terms (i.e., removal of tariffs on seafood exports or the assurance of reciprocity in trade relationships).

Allow refinance of fisheries buyback loans

To increase competitiveness of US fisheries, allow refinance of fisheries buyback loans. Many buyback loans have interest rates substantially above market rates, imposing additional costs and burdens on domestic fishermen.

NOAA policy

Allocation Reviews: Policy Directive 01-119 Remove policy directive. Allocation reviews can be undertaken at any time a Council deems necessary, and LAPP allocation reviews are already on a mandated schedule under the Magnuson Stevens Act. Effect of removal is to build efficiencies and save staff and Council time by undertaking allocation reviews only when warranted.

Approval of Council SOPPs: Procedural Directive 01-115-01 Eliminate the requirement for NMFS to formally approve the Council SOPP and publish it in the federal register every time it is amended. Removal of this regulation will save staff and Council administrative time.