



NORTH PACIFIC FISHERY MANAGEMENT COUNCIL

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Action Memo

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Dan Hull, Chairman
David Witherell, Executive Director

SUBJECT:

GOA pollock and Pacific cod seasonal allocations - Discussion paper

STAFF CONTACT: Sam Cunningham (NPFMC)

ACTION REQUIRED:

- Review discussion paper and initiate further analysis as necessary.
- If further action, develop purpose and need for action and clarify scope of options for Pacific cod season allocations.

BACKGROUND:

This discussion paper addresses a range of options to modify the seasonal allocations of total allowable catch (TAC) for pollock and Pacific cod in the Gulf of Alaska (GOA). Pollock and Pacific cod TAC is spread across seasons as a measure to mitigate the effect of groundfish fisheries on protected Steller sea lions. Annual pollock TAC for the trawl fishery in Areas 610, 620, and 630 is divided evenly into four seasons (A-D) with 25% of the quota available in each. The season's quota is then divided by area according to the seasonal distribution of the biomass. Annual Pacific cod TAC for all gear sectors is allocated first to the Western and Central GOA, and then divided into two seasons (A&B) at a 60%:40% ratio. Each area's seasonal Pacific cod TAC is then divided by gear sector.

The Council is exploring options that would shift more of the annual quota into the earlier part of the calendar year. For pollock, an option is included to increase the cap on the amount of unharvested TAC that NMFS can roll over from one season to the next (e.g., A to B, or C to D). Staff was directed to lay out how that would affect area- and sector-level quotas, as well as what effect the change might have on the value of the fishery, bycatch of prohibited species (halibut and Chinook salmon), and efficiency for harvesters, processors, and fishery managers.

Section 1 describes the options under consideration. That section also identifies two areas in need of clarification prior to future action: whether the Council intends to change the management of pollock in Area 640, and whether the Council intended for a Pacific cod TAC shift to apply to all gear sectors or only to trawl catcher vessels. Section 2 describes current GOA pollock and Pacific cod allocations and reports the percentage-changes in area and seasonal TAC distribution under the considered options. Extensive tables showing how allocations would change (or would have changed) under the options are included in Appendices 1 and 2. Section 3 provides a brief overview of harvesting and processing participation in these GOA fisheries, TAC utilization, and product values (annual and seasonal). Section 4 reports seasonal Chinook salmon and halibut PSC levels and rates during recent years. Section 5 describes the current status of ESA-listed Steller sea lion populations in Alaska and lays out the process for analysis and consultation required for changes to seasonal groundfish TAC allocations.