



NORTH PACIFIC FISHERY MANAGEMENT COUNCIL

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Action Memo

File Number:GF 16-004

Agenda Date6/6/2016

Agenda Number:C5

Dan Hull, Chairman
Chris Oliver, Executive Director

SUBJECT:
GOA Trawl Bycatch Management - Discussion paper

STAFF CONTACT: Sam Cunningham

ACTION REQUIRED:
Review staff paper on selected program elements.

BACKGROUND:

Since 2012, the Council has been engaged in the development of a revised management structure for the Gulf of Alaska (GOA) groundfish trawl fisheries. The Council first established a Purpose & Need Statement and a list of program Goals & Objectives in October 2012. The motivation for this action is to provide the fleet with a structure under which it can minimize prohibited species catch (PSC), better utilize the allowed amount of PSC to harvest more groundfish, create additional value from the resource, and provide stability for dependent GOA fishing communities.

The Council has established three action alternatives, in addition to the alternative to take no action (Alternative 1). Alternatives 2 and 3 define voluntary harvester-processor cooperative structures for the GOA trawl fishery. Alternative 4 includes two options for additional measures that are meant to address community stability and other unanticipated effects of the program that might arise in the future; as written, Alternative 4 could be paired with either Alternative 2 or Alternative 3. Alternative 2 would allocate groundfish and PSC access privileges to voluntary cooperatives based upon the fishing history associated with the Federal licenses that are enrolled in each cooperative. Alternative 3 would allocate only PSC to the cooperatives; allocation would be based on vessels' intent to participate in the GOA trawl fishery during the upcoming year, historical dependency on GOA trawl fisheries, and membership in a cooperative that signs onto an inter-cooperative bycatch management agreement.

This discussion paper is the second of two interim reports that the Council scheduled when it approved a work plan for building up to a Draft EIS. The first discussion paper was presented at the February 2016 Council meeting. Ideally, after reviewing this paper the Council will be able to take any actions necessary to establish a range of alternatives that is adequate for full analysis. This paper addresses the following topics: (1) a comparison of structural differences between the programs defined by Alternatives 2 and 3; (2) a high-level explanation of how the several allocation elements of Alternative 3 fit together, and identification of some areas that could benefit from minor clarifications; (3) an overview of program elements and issues related to community stability, as well as some preliminary discussion of how the selection of qualifying years might affect the fleet; (4) discussion of fleet and processing sector consolidation (status quo and potential future trends); (5) monitoring, enforcement, and observer coverage issues; and (6) issues related to the options to change the season dates for the directed pollock and Pacific cod trawl fisheries.

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Appendices to the document include:

1. The most current set of alternatives, as well as the Purpose & Need Statement and list of program Goals & Objectives;
2. An updated table comparing elements across the alternatives, organized by topic;
3. A set of descriptive data tables that will be used in the forthcoming EIS, but were not directly related to the body of this discussion paper;
4. A stakeholder proposal for the language of the Community Fisheries Association option (Alternative 4, Option 1), including a preamble explaining the stakeholders' perspective on the utility of a CFA.

A separate document is posted under Agenda Item C5 on the Council's electronic agenda. That document is an annotated outline for the social impact assessment that will eventually comprise an appendix to the EIS. Baseline information on the existing social and demographic conditions of the communities that are impacted by this action is also included. The contents of this document are briefly summarized in Section 3.6 of the main discussion paper for this agenda item.