

North Pacific Fishery Management Council

News and Notes



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Seattle Meeting

During its 186th meeting, held in downtown Seattle, the Council focused on potential modifications to the BSAI crab rationalization program and alternatives to minimize salmon bycatch. Attendees were treated to a reception sponsored by Washington based fishing industry organizations. Longtime industry representative Thorn Smith was presented with the Bob Mace Distinguished Service Award for his tireless efforts to substantially reduce the incidental catch of seabirds in longline fisheries. The Council also recognized the service of Council member Lenny Corin (USFWS) who is retiring.

AP and SSC Officers

The Council's Advisory Panel unanimously re-elected Tom Enlow from Unisea as Chairman and John Henderschedt of Premier Pacific Seafoods and Joe Childers of United Fishermen of Alaska as co-Vice Chairmen. The Council's Scientific and Statistical Committee also re-elected their officers from last year, with Pat Livingston from the Alaska Fisheries Science Center serving as the Chair and Dr. Keith Criddle of the University of Alaska Fairbanks serving as Vice Chair.

Data Collection

The Council received a brief report from its social and economic data collection committee, which held its first meeting during the week of the Council meeting. The committee's general purpose is to create a nexus between agency, Council staff, and industry and other stakeholders to understand data needs in fishery management and plan appropriate collection of those data. After receiving the committee's report, the Council suggested that the committee continue to assist in the delineation of a data collection program that meets the needs of fishery managers with minimal burden and that avoids redundancies with existing data collection in the fisheries. Staff contact is Mark Fina.

Trawl LLP Recency

The Council completed initial review of a regulatory amendment which examines alternatives to remove latent trawl CV and CP licenses from the BSAI and GOA groundfish fisheries. In general, the amendment proposes two alternative approaches to remove area endorsements (BS, AI, WG, and CG) from latent trawl CV and CP licenses. In order to retain the area endorsement, the license must meet specified landings criteria. In addition, one component of the package proposes to create a limited number of new AI endorsements for use on non-AFA trawl CVs in the Aleutian Islands.

The Council recommended that the analysis be released for public review, with several revisions and additional options. One new option would allow trawl CV licenses to retain both their WG and CG endorsements if they have a significant number of landings (20, 30, or 40 landings) in at least one of the Gulf areas in recent years (2005, 2006, or 2007). A second new option would link together all trawl licenses that are stacked on a single vessel at the time of implementation of the rulemaking for this proposed amendment; thus, the stacked licenses specified under this amendment would not be severable in the future.

The Council also removed two options related to AI endorsements. It removed an option that would exempt all AI endorsements from this action and an option that would exempt up to 14 licenses from the requirement to hold an AI endorsement, as selected annually by the Aleut Corporation. Two options to create a limited number of new AI endorsements for non-AFA trawl CV licenses that meet specified landings criteria remain in the package. The Council added a related option that would make any new AI endorsements created under these options severable and transferable, such that any non-AFA trawl CV LLP with a trawl CV designation and the appropriate (<60' or ≥60') MLOA could use these endorsements. The existing LLP program does not allow an endorsement to be severed from the overall license.

Final action on this amendment is tentatively scheduled for the April Council meeting. The February 2008 Council motion on this issue is posted on the Council website. Staff contact is Nicole Kimball.

Observer Program

The Council completed initial review of a regulatory amendment package which examines alternatives to revise Federal regulations relevant to several administrative and procedural requirements applicable to the North Pacific Groundfish Observer Program. The Council recommended that the analysis be released for public review, with the addition of a new option under Issue 4, Alternative 2. The new option would change the definition of 'fishing day' in Federal regulations from the current midnight to midnight 24-hour period to a noon to noon 24-hour period. Like Alternative 2, this option would require an observer to be onboard for all gear retrievals during the 24-hour period in order to count as a day of observer coverage.

An Observer Advisory Committee meeting is scheduled for March 17 at the AFSC in Seattle. The primary purpose of the meeting is to provide the Council with recommendations on this regulatory package prior to final action, which is currently scheduled for the April Council meeting. The current suite of alternatives under consideration is on the Council website. Staff contact is Nicole Kimball.

BSAI Pacific Cod

The Council has rescheduled its review of proposed alternatives to apportion BSAI cod allocations between the BS and AI management areas for October 2008. For reasons described in a February 2007 discussion paper (posted on the Council website), these alternatives were tabled until further resolution of management solutions and stock differentiation of BS and AI P. cod were achieved. The SSC and AP reviewed new biological research conducted in the past year and recommended that a comprehensive summary of relevant information related to stock structure be prepared for review by the BSAI Groundfish Plan Team in September and SSC in October 2008. While the SSC and Council could decide to set separate BS and AI quotas for P. cod as part of the annual specification process each December, such a decision has management implications for a number of other Council decisions (e.g., apportionments of P. cod sector allocations to each management area, removal of latent trawl catcher vessel and catcher processor licenses in the BSAI; and Steller sea lion mitigation measures). The staff contact on proposed alternatives is Jon McCracken; questions regarding the biology of BSAI Pacific cod may be directed to Jane DiCosimo.

Upcoming meetings

Scallop Plan Team meeting: February 21-22, Captain Cook Hotel, Anchorage. Info to be posted on the Council website.

Non-Target Species Committee: April 23, 2008 (T), AFSC

Crab Plan Team meeting: May 6-8, AFSC, Seattle, WA

Steller Sea Lion Mitigation Committee: March 10-14, 2008 – Hawthorne Inn, Anchorage; May 12-16, 2008 Alaska Sea Life Center, Seward

Observer Committee: March 17, 2008 8:30 - 4:30 at the AFSC

Pacific Northwest Crab Industry Advisory Committee: February 28, 9-1pm, Leif Erikson Hall, 2247 NW 57th St. Seattle, WA

Crab Advisory Committee: March 2nd, 8:30 am to 5 pm in the King Salmon Room at the Anchorage Hilton

Steller Sea Lion Protection Measures

The Council was briefed on the status of the ongoing FMP-level consultation and the work the Council's SSL Mitigation Committee (SSLMC) is completing to finalize its recommendations for changes in SSL protection measures. The SSLMC met in early January 2008 to complete identification of information needed to evaluate the proposals for revising SSL protection measures. NMFS is preparing data packages for each proposal to inform the Committee's recommendations to the Council. The SSLMC will meet March 10-14, 2008 to review the final SSL Recovery Plan, scheduled to be released in early March, and to develop an initial set of recommendations. The SSLMC intends to complete its work May 12-16 when it reviews the draft *status quo* Biological Opinion (BiOp) and finalizes its recommended changes to SSL protection measures; those recommendations will be informed by both the final SSL Recovery Plan and the draft BiOp.

Some implications of this schedule to the Council process include 1) Council review of the SSLMC's initial recommendations and review of the final SSL Recovery Plan at its April 2008 meeting, and 2) Council review of the draft *status quo* BiOp and the SSLMC's revised recommendations at the June 2008 meeting. The Council is scheduled to select a preliminary preferred alternative for changes in SSL protection measures in June 2008; that decision will formulate the "proposed action" that will be evaluated in the EIS and will be the subject of a revised "action" BiOp. Staff contact is Bill Wilson.

Seabird Deterrence

A preliminary analysis of alternatives for exempting vessels from seabird deterrence regulations in IPHA Area 4E was presented to the Council, AP, and SSC. The presentation included a spatial statistical analysis of available short-tailed albatross (STAL) distribution data in the BSAI region. Alternatives examined in the analysis include an exemption from seabird deterrence in a portion of Area 4E where STAL are not likely to occur. Staff intends to conduct additional analyses to better define such an area. The SSC provided suggestions for improving the analysis. Initial review of the analysis is tentatively scheduled for the April or June 2008 meeting. Staff contact is Bill Wilson.

Arctic FMP

At its June 2007 meeting, the Council directed staff to begin preparing a draft Arctic Fishery Management Plan (FMP) and draft amendments to the scallop and crab FMPs that terminate their geographic coverage at Bering Strait. Staff will develop an accompanying analysis that considers the following options for the Arctic FMP: close the entire Arctic region to all commercial fishing, or close the entire Arctic region to commercial fishing except for the small red king crab fishery that has previously occurred in the southern Chukchi Sea.

The Council's June motion was used to develop a problem statement and a set of alternatives for analysis. A preliminary draft EA/RIR/IRFA was presented at the February 2008 meeting. The analysis considers the following alternatives:

Alternative 1: Status quo. Maintain existing management authorities in the Arctic EEZ.

Alternative 2: Adopt an Arctic FMP that closes the entire Arctic Management Area to commercial fishing. Amend the scallop and crab FMPs to terminate their geographic coverage at Bering Strait. [Note: The Arctic Management Area is all Alaskan EEZ marine waters north of Bering Strait, in the Chukchi and Beaufort Seas, bounded on the west by the US/Russia maritime border and on the east by the US/Canada maritime boundary.]

Alternative 3: Adopt an Arctic FMP that closes the entire Arctic Management Area to commercial fishing. Amend the scallop and crab FMPs to terminate their geographic coverage at Bering Strait. An historic red king crab fishery in the Chukchi Sea would be exempt from the Arctic FMP.

Alternative 4: Adopt an Arctic FMP that closes the entire Arctic Management Area to commercial fishing. Amend the scallop FMP to terminate its geographic coverage at Bering Strait. The Arctic FMP would cover the area north of Pt. Hope for crab and north of Bering Strait for groundfish and scallops.

[Note that alternatives 2, 3 and 4 would not change halibut or salmon management.]

The Council's Ecosystem Committee reviewed the alternatives and preliminary analysis and recommended the FMP development process proceed as scheduled and that it receive high priority in staffing considerations. The SSC also reviewed the preliminary analysis and suggested some revisions, changes, and enhancements which staff will incorporate into the next draft. Staff will continue work on the draft EA/RIR/IRFA and accompanying FMP text and present this package for initial review at the June 2008 meeting with a progress report in April. Staff contact is Bill Wilson.

Aleutian Islands Fishery Ecosystem Plan

An overview of the AI FEP was published as a glossy brochure in late December, and is available in hard copy through the Council office or on the website. The Council's Ecosystem Committee reviewed a discussion paper about further implementation of the AI FEP at the February meeting, and will continue to discuss the issue in April. Staff contact is Diana Evans.

Qayassiq Walrus Commission

The Council reviewed a recent request from the Qayassiq Walrus Commission to change walrus protection areas near Round Island, The Twins, Cape Peirce, and other areas in the Bristol Bay region. The Commission believes that fishing activities are affecting walrus that haul out in this area. The Council has already placed restrictions on trawling in the Bristol Bay area, and specifically has closed zones around several walrus haulouts, the Council tasked staff to provide to the Commission the current regulations that restrict fishing in this area, and to work with the Commission to understand their concerns in more detail. Staff will report back to the Council at their April 2008 meeting. Staff contact is Bill Wilson.

GOA P. Cod Jig Fishery Management

At its December 2007 meeting, the Council requested that staff work with the State of Alaska and NOAA General Counsel to explore possible options for revising management of the Gulf of Alaska Pacific cod jig fishery to minimize the amount of stranded quota.

Possible solutions include:

1. Separate State and federal allocations- manage accounting by seasonal structure.
2. State managed jig Pacific cod fishery- federal management authority goes to the State of Alaska to manage a state gear specific fishery

At its February 2008 meeting, the Council reviewed a letter from NMFS that provided guidance on legal issues associated with State management of the Pacific cod jig fishery in Federal waters of the Gulf of Alaska. Given the importance of the Pacific cod resource to numerous fisheries in Federal waters and Federal oversight of Steller sea lion protection measures, NMFS does not believe that legal justification exists to remove the jig gear fishery from the FMP. State management in Federal waters would occur under delegated authority, and management would need to be consistent with provisions in the Magnuson-Stevens Act. Given these considerations, NMFS suggested that the Council and State of Alaska may wish to consider an alternative that would allow for Federal management of the jig gear fishery in State and Federal waters under a single TAC allocation, which would remove the need for a separate State managed guideline harvest level for jig gear. An option to exempt some or all jig gear vessels from LLP requirements could be considered.

An evaluation of options for revising management of the jig gear fishery will be included in the analysis of the proposed GOA Pacific cod sector allocations. Initial review of both the sector split and fixed gear recency actions that were originally scheduled for the April meeting will likely be postponed until the June 2008 Council meeting in Kodiak. Staff contact is Jeannie Heltzel.

BSAI Crab Management

At its February 2008 meeting the Council took up several issues related to the rationalization program for the Bering Sea and Aleutian Islands crab fisheries, including work of its advisory committee, the crab economic data collection program, active participation requirements for holders of captain/crew shares (C shares), terms of the NOAA Fisheries loan program (which is intended to facilitate purchase of shares), technical amendments to the arbitration program, and renewal of the cooling off provision and rights of first refusal for processing shares that are linked to the community of St. George.

The Council received a **report from its Crab Advisory Committee** that outlined the recent work of the committee. In response, the Council retasked the committee, directing it to concentrate its work on five specific areas of the program. The committee is first asked to review current management of the Aleutian Island golden king crab fisheries and develop a range of alternatives to address problems (including unharvested TACs) that might not be addressed by the Council's recent action to exempt custom processing of IPQ from the processor share use caps. Alternatives should promote the full harvest of the TACs, maximize the value of golden king crab, provide for protection of communities and regions, maintain a sufficient number of processors to ensure competition, and recognize historic dependency on the resource by processors and communities. The full motion is posted on the Council's website.

The Council also asked the committee to continue to develop proposals to provide access to share holdings for crewmembers. For any crew proposal, the committee was asked to explore effects of the proposal on communities, vessel owners, and processors. The committee was also asked to continue the development of measures for emergency exemption from regionalization. The discussion should include potential solutions to implementation issues that arise under the existing proposal and applicability of the exemption to various regions. The committee was also asked to review and possible revision of the community right of first refusal and industry initiated improvements to the binding arbitration process.

The Council also discussed its intention to continue the development of its **purpose and need statement and alternatives to revise the 90/10 A share/B share split** program at the April 2008 meeting. The Council asked staff to post strawman elements and options on the Council's website to inform the public of the status of the current alternatives and aid in providing public comment at the April meeting.

The Council received a report from NOAA Fisheries staff concerning the status of its **review of data quality for data submitted under the crab economic data reporting (EDR)**. After hearing the report, the Council requested staff to fully complete its metadata (i.e., data describing the data and its quality), complete a public review of those metadata (including holding meetings with the industry and public to discuss the

metadata), and report back to the Council on the output of that process.

The Council completed an initial review of an analysis of alternatives to revise **active participation requirements for the acquisition and use of C shares**. The Council made changes to some of the options under consideration and directed staff to release the document for public review and action at its April 2008 meeting. For the options under consideration, a person must meet active participation requirements to receive annual IFQ allocations and retain C share quota share holdings. Specifically, a C share holder who does not fish in a crab fishery for three consecutive crab seasons would not receive annual IFQ allocation. An option, if adopted, would revoke C share quota shares if a person did not fish for either 4 or 5 consecutive crab seasons. The Council limited the applicability of a provision that would allow persons to meet active participation requirements by fishing in non-crab Alaska fisheries to persons who received an initial allocation of C shares. The Council also elected to consider an option that would exempt from active participation requirements persons who received an initial allocation of C shares and were over 60 years of age at the time of implementation. Options under consideration could broaden eligibility to purchase C shares for transition period (of 5 to 7 years from implementation) to include persons who received an initial allocation of C shares and persons who were active in the fisheries prior to implementation of the rationalization program. The full motion is posted on the Council's website.

The Council also provided NOAA Fisheries Financial Services Division with its **recommendations for provisions defining the agency's loan program**. That program can be used by eligible fishermen to make share purchases. The Council recommended that captains and crew meeting active participation requirements would be eligible for loan funds to be used to acquire shares. The Council also suggested limits on the amount of shares that a person could hold after acquiring shares using loan funding to ensure that loan funds are available to persons in most need of assistance in financing.

The Council reviewed an analysis of **modifications to the binding arbitration program**. The Council recommended that staff release the analysis for final review and action at its April 2008 meeting. The analysis considers three proposed amendments. The first would revise the requirement for market reports and non-binding price formulas in the event that a fishery is not likely to open. The second would move back the due date for the market report and non-binding formula for the golden king crab fisheries to ensure that data from the most recent year are available to the analyst producing those reports. The third amendment would provide flexibility to the arbitration organizations to provide a market report and supplements to ensure that those reports provide useful and up to date information to fishery participants.

(BSAI Crab Management, cont.)

The Council also reviewed an analysis of an action to **renew the cooling off period requirement and the rights of first refusal for all processing shares issued based on processing history in St. George**. The two year cooling off period, during which these shares were required to be processed in St. George, expired last year; however, no shares have been processed in St. George to date. NOAA Fisheries granted processors holding these St. George based processing shares an exemption to the cooling off requirement, allowing them to process those landings elsewhere, based on evidence that the St. George harbor could not be accessed for processing because of break wall and related harbor damage. The proposed action would renew the cooling off period requirements for either one or two years (starting in October of 2009). By its terms, the right of first refusal, held by Aleutian Pribilof Island Community Development Association on behalf of St. George, expires if the shares are processed outside of the community for three consecutive seasons. This action would also restart the provision that would lapse the right of first refusal, requiring that the shares be processed outside of the community of St. George for three consecutive seasons (after October 2009) for the right of first refusal to lapse. The Council revised the alternatives to suspend the cooling off period extension and the extension of the right of first refusal in the event the community organization representing St. George (the Aleutian Pribilof Island Community Development Association) is able to reach an agreement with the holder of the PQS that addresses the organization's concerns with the cooling off period and the rights of first refusal. Staff contact is Mark Fina.

NPRB seeks Nominations

The North Pacific Research Board is seeking nominations for its Advisory Panel. The Advisory Panel represents user groups and other interested parties from the various regions within the Board's purview. Advisory Panel members advise the Board on accomplishing its overall mission of fielding a high caliber, comprehensive research program that will improve our understanding of the North Pacific, Bering Sea, and Arctic Ocean ecosystems and their fisheries, and help to sustain and enhance the living marine resources. The Board believes it is important to incorporate meaningful community involvement throughout its science program from planning to oversight and review. The Advisory Panel has a significant advice-giving role, with active involvement in setting research priorities and defining questions, though it does not participate in reviewing research proposals. Advisory Panel members serve two-year terms and the Board covers travel, food and lodging for panel members.

Nominations and self-nominations may be submitted to the Board by email to cpautzke@nprb.org, or by regular mail to: Clarence Pautzke, Executive Director, North Pacific Research Board, 1007 West 3rd Avenue, Suite 100, Anchorage, Alaska 99501. Deadline for nominations is **Monday, March 3, 2008**. Please include a brief 1-2 page resume and full contact information, including email address. Please visit the Board's web site at www.nprb.org for more information about the Board and its activities.

Stakeholder participation and community outreach

The Council adopted seven principles for outreach, communication, and stakeholder participation. The principles will be reflected in the Council's Statement of Organization Practices and Procedures, and are as follows:

- Use an open and clearly defined decision-making process.
- Make key information readily available and understandable.
- Actively conduct outreach and solicit stakeholder input.
- Involve stakeholders early and throughout the decision-making process.
- Foster responsive, interactive communication between stakeholders and decision makers.
- Use formal and informal participation measures.
- Include all stakeholder interests.

The Council reviewed two discussion papers related to outreach. The first addresses the Council's groundfish management policy workplan priority to 'increase Alaska Native and community consultation', and outlines a protocol for improving formal and informal consultation with Alaska Natives and communities, and documenting participation. The second discussion paper assessed the recommendations from the GAO report on improving stakeholder participation in developing quota-based programs, comparing the recommendations against current Council practice and suggesting improvements. The discussion papers, and the identified improvements and approaches, will continue to be worked on by Council staff, and will be reviewed by the Council in June 2008. Staff contact is Nicole Kimball.

Central Gulf Rockfish Pilot Program

The Council reviewed an outline of a proposed review of the Central Gulf of Alaska rockfish pilot program. In development of the program, the Council scheduled a review of the program after the first year of fishing. Since the first year of fishing under the program ended in December of 2007, staff is planning for delivery of the requested review to the Council in June of 2008. The planned review is intended to be comprehensive, yet very brief (i.e., 25 to 30 pages). Some issues may warrant little attention, if they appear to be non-controversial and of little importance. In these instances, the review will briefly summarize effects. Issues that are likely to be worthy of additional attention will be examined in more detail. Staff contact is Mark Fina.

BSAI Salmon Bycatch

The Council is in the process of refining the alternatives for analysis in the forthcoming salmon bycatch EIS. In conjunction with that process, the Council heard staff reports on the current suite of caps under consideration in the alternatives, on-going research on stock composition of Chinook salmon bycatch, on-going investigations into a methodological approach to evaluate run-size impacts by salmon species (and to set a cap accordingly), candidate area closures, monitoring and enforcement concerns with a cooperative-level cap, and further information on tradable cap systems.

Currently the Council is considering the following alternatives and options separately for Chinook and non-Chinook salmon species in the EIS:

- Alternative 1: Status Quo**
- Alternative 2: Hard cap**
- Alternative 3: Fixed closures**
- Alternative 4: Triggered closures**

Option 1 (applies to Alternatives 2 and 4):

Modify the PSC accounting period to begin at the start of the B season in one calendar year and continue through the A season of the following calendar year (if this option is not selected, the accounting period is the calendar year).

Option 2 (applies to Alternatives 3 and 4 only):

Exempt those vessels participating in a VRHS system from area closures.

Within Alternatives 2-4 there are several specific elements and options included regarding the cap formulations by species, the subdivision of caps to sector levels and cooperative level as well as a range of candidate closures. The Council took several actions in refining these elements and options at this meeting. The cap levels by species based upon historical bycatch and other considerations was established to be within the range 29,000-87,500 for Chinook and 60,000-500,000 for non-Chinook species.

An option to set caps relative to salmon returns is also under consideration in the analysis and information will be presented at a future meeting regarding cap levels resulting from this option. At the cooperative cap level additions were made to the options to clarify the years under consideration, to allow the transfer of salmon from other cooperatives and to provide a rollover provision included at both the sector level cap as well as at the cooperative level. The Council incorporated several candidate area closures based upon staff presentations, and noted that further closure considerations including industry proposed closures, will be considered at the April meeting. The Council also requested that staff further develop a discussion paper to investigate reducing bycatch through market mechanisms including, but not limited to, per salmon fees (likely administered by industry) or forced transfer of some increment of pollock for each salmon harvested. The Council further approved a new problem statement for the analysis.

At the April meeting, the Council will receive additional reports on area closures and preliminary analysis of specific elements and options of some of the alternatives to assist the Council in refining alternatives and beginning to identify a preliminary preferred alternative. The scoping period for the EIS closes on February 15th. For more information on submitting comments during the scoping period please see the Alaska Region NOAA Fisheries website. Following the end of the scoping period, a scoping report will be prepared by the Agency and presented to the Council in conjunction with refining alternatives in April. The Council and NMFS intend to invite ADF&G to be a cooperating agency for the EIS. The full Council motion including the new problem statement as well as additional staff discussion papers on the full suite of alternatives under consideration and additional information on the Salmon Bycatch EIS are available on the Council's website. Initial review of the EIS is scheduled for June 2008. Staff contact is Diana Stram.

NPFMC Tentative Meeting Dates for 2008-2009*

	February Week of/ Location	April Week of/ Location	June Week of/ Location	October Week of/ Location	December Week of/ Location
2008	4/Seattle Marriott Renaissance	March 31/ Anchorage Hilton	2/Kodiak	September 29/ Anchorage Sheraton	8/Anchorage Hilton
2009	2/Seattle	March 30/ Anchorage Hilton	June 1/Dutch Harbor	September 30/Anchorage Hilton (note: AP and SSC have a WEDNESDAY start, Council starts on Friday.)	7/Anchorage Hilton

*Meeting dates subject to change depending on availability of meeting space. Any changes will be published in the Council's newsletter.

Other Species

The Council reviewed an analysis to set biological catch specifications for the 'other species' complex in the GOA (squid, sculpins, sharks, and octopus). Currently, the Council sets TAC for this complex at a level to account for incidental catch, using a formula established in the FMP. Under the proposed action, the GOA 'other species' complex would be subject to the same harvest specifications process as the BSAI 'other species' complex. The Council would receive an annual stock assessment on the complex, and the Plan Team and the SSC would recommend an aggregate ABC and OFL, which would limit the Council's maximum permissible TAC (TAC may not be set greater than ABC). Final action is scheduled for April 2008. Staff contact is Diana Evans.

The Council has tasked its Non-Target Species Committee with considering possible priorities for breaking out different groups from the "other species" complexes in the BSAI and GOA groundfish FMPs. The need to set these priorities is to take quicker action for more vulnerable groups. The Council expressed concern that analyzing the current suite of alternatives (which addresses sharks, squids, sculpins, and octopuses in the GOA; sharks, skates, sculpins, and octopuses in the BSAI; and possibly grenadiers in the GOA and BSAI) in one analysis may result in an unmanageable decision making document. Management of these species groups (plus additional multiple sub-area, sub-allocation, and seasonal apportionments) poses numerous management and regulatory difficulties and may result in unintended consequences on fishing fleets. The proposed Council priorities for action include: 1) move BSAI and/or GOA squid into the forage fish category; 2) move BSAI and/or GOA octopus into the forage fish category or remove it from the FMPs and defer management to the State of Alaska; 3) delete Alternative 5 (add grenadiers to the TAC specification process); and 4) separate the proposed alternatives into distinct BSAI and GOA amendment packages. The committee is tentatively scheduled to meet on April 23 at the Alaska Fisheries Science Center in Seattle and report to the Council in June. One or two analyses could be scheduled for review as soon as the October 2008 meeting. Discussion papers by NMFS and Council staff on this issue are posted on the committee web page. Staff contact is Jane DiCosimo.

Dinglebar VMS Exemption

The Council has initiated an analysis to exempt lingcod dinglebar fishermen from the requirement to have an operating VMS onboard. Currently, all Federally-permitted vessels in the GOA with mobile bottom contact gear onboard, which includes dinglebar vessels, must carry a VMS. The objective of the requirement is to enhance enforcement of the GOA Coral Habitat Protection Area closures, in which Federally-permitted vessels are prohibited from anchoring or fishing with bottom contact gear.

The Council's problem statement cites that the dinglebar fishery and the protected corals may occur at different depths. Consequently, the cost of VMS to fishermen may not be justified, as the fishery is unlikely to occur in the closed areas. The Council proposed 3 alternatives for analysis: maintain status quo, redefine mobile bottom contact gear to exclude dinglebar gear, and exempt dinglebar fishermen from the VMS requirement. Initial review is scheduled for April 2008. Staff contact is Diana Evans.

Amendment 80 Post Harvest Transfers and Rollovers

The Council bifurcated the two proposed actions contained in Amendment 90 to consider each separately. For the first action, the Council selected unlimited post-harvest transfers (Alternative 2) as its preferred alternative. This action is intended to prevent harvest overages that could be covered by quota transfers, reducing enforcement costs and allowing for more complete harvest of the TAC. For the second action, the Council postponed a decision on rollovers of Amendment 80 limited access allocations to better assess the need for this action (as well as other options) for optimizing harvest of groundfish allocated to the Amendment 80 sector. In addition, the Council requested a discussion paper to review the criteria for establishing cooperatives in the Amendment 80 sector. The discussion paper should provide a qualitative discussion reviewing the goals of the existing cooperative formation standards, current conditions in the fishery, and the implications of modifying cooperative formation criteria. The paper is scheduled for review at the June 2008 meeting. A copy of the Amendment 80 post harvest transfers and rollovers motion is available on the Council website. Staff contact is Jon McCracken.

DRAFT NPFMC THREE-MEETING OUTLOOK - updated 2/15/08

March 31, 2008 Anchorage, AK	June 2, 2008 Kodiak, AK	September 29, 2008 Anchorage, AK
<p>Joint Meeting with BOF SSL Recovery Plan: Review Final Plan SSLMC Report on proposals SSL proposals 8&16: Discussion paper AI pollock EFP: Report Review proposed rule for ACL Guidelines (T) Permit Fees: Review and action as necessary</p> <p>GOA sideboards for BSAI crab vessels: Initial Review</p> <p>CGOA Rockfish EFP, Phase 2: Review</p> <p>Trawl LLP Recency: Final Action (T)</p> <p>Crab Cttee Report/Problem statement/alternatives BSAI Crab Arbitrator Immunity: Discussion paper BSAI Crab Arbitration Regulations: Final Action BSAI Crab 'C' Share active participation: Final Action St George protection measures: Final Action</p> <p>Charter Halibut Allocation/Reallocation: Initial Review Charter Halibut Logbook Program: SSC only</p> <p>Observer Program Reg. Package: Final Action (T) Salmon excluder EFP application: Review BSAI Salmon Bycatch EIS: Preliminary Review GOA Crab and Salmon Bycatch paper: SSC review Arctic FMP: Status report and action as necessary</p> <p>VMS Exemption for Dinglebar Gear: Initial Review</p> <p>4E Seabird Avoidance Measures: Initial Review (T)</p> <p>GOA OSpecies ABC/OFL Specifications: Final Action</p> <p>Scallop SAFE: Review and Approve</p>	<p>SSLMC Report and Recommendations SSL dEIS: Select Prelim. Preferred Alternative SSL draft status quo BiOp: Review and Comment</p> <p>GOA Rockfish Pilot Program Review: Report CGOA Rockfish EFP, Phase 1: Receive Report GOA fixed gear LLP recency: Initial Review GOA P cod sector split: Initial Review GOA sideboards for BSAI crab vessels: Final Action GOA sideboards re Am 80 PSC: Initial Review GOA sideboards re GOA rockfish: Initial Review GOA sideboards for AFA CVs: Initial Review</p> <p>BSAI Crab 90/10 Amendment: Action as necessary BSAI Crab Arbitrator Immunity: Initial Review</p> <p>Am 80 sector cooperative criteria: Discussion paper</p> <p>Halibut Subsistence Rural Definition: Initial/Final Action</p> <p>BSAI Salmon Bycatch EIS: Initial Review GOA Crab and Salmon Bycatch: Discussion paper Arctic FMP: Initial Review</p> <p>VMS Exemption for Dinglebar Gear: Final Action</p> <p>4E Seabird Avoidance Measures: Final Action (T) BSAI Crab OFL: Plan Team Report Other Species Mgmt: Committee Report; Action as nec. Research Priorities: Review and Adopt PSEIS Priorities: Review workplan Outreach/Stakeholder Participation: Report</p>	<p>Am 62/62: Status report/Final Action</p> <p>GOA fixed gear LLP recency: Final Action GOA P cod sector split: Final Action</p> <p>GOA sideboards re Am 80 PSC: Final Action GOA sideboards re GOA rockfish: Final Action GOA sideboards for AFA CVs: Final Action</p> <p>BSAI Crab/3-year review: Review BSAI Crab 90/10 Amendment: Initial Review BSAI Crab Arbitrator Immunity: Final Action</p> <p>Charter Halibut Allocation/Reallocation: Final Action</p> <p>CDQ Program: Update on Oversight Regulations</p> <p>Arctic FMP: Final Action P. Cod area split (BS/AI): Update & Action as necessary</p> <p>BSAI Crab SAFE: Review and Approve</p> <p>Groundfish Specifications: Initial Action</p>

AI - Aleutian Islands
 GOA - Gulf of Alaska
 SSL - Steller Sea Lion
 BOF - Board of Fisheries
 FEP - Fishery Ecosystem Plan
 CDQ - Community Development Quota
 VMS - Vessel Monitoring System
 NOI - Notice of Intent
 (T) Tentatively scheduled

TAC - Total Allowable Catch
 BSAI - Bering Sea and Aleutian Islands
 IFQ - Individual Fishing Quota
 GHL - Guideline Harvest Level
 EIS - Environmental Impact Statement
 LLP - License Limitation Program
 SAFE - Stock Assessment and Fishery Evaluation
 PSC - Prohibited Species Catch
 HAPC - Habitat Areas of Particular Concern

Future Meeting Dates and Locations

March 31 - , 2008 in Anchorage
 June 2 - , 2008 in Kodiak
 September 29 - , 2008 in Anchorage
 December 8 - , 2008 in Anchorage
 February 2 - , 2009 in Seattle
 March 30 - , 2009 in Anchorage