

MEMORANDUM

TO: Council, SSC and AP Members
FROM: Chris Oliver *Chris*
Executive Director
DATE: May 29, 2013
SUBJECT: Bering Sea Canyons

ESTIMATED TIME
6 HOURS

ACTION REQUIRED

- (a) Review updated AFSC report
- (b) Discussion paper on fishing activities and management

BACKGROUND

In April 2012, the Council initiated two discussion papers in response to numerous proposals and public testimony regarding consideration of management measures to preserve representative portions of the highly productive shelf break zone in the Bering Sea, specifically the Pribilof and Zemchug canyons as candidates to provide EFH protection to deep-sea corals, sponge, and benthic habitat for fish and crab species. The discussion papers were structured to better understand the importance of these canyons as unique coral and sponge habitats for FMP-managed species, as well as to understand the current fishing activities in the canyons and the process for and future management actions.

The first discussion paper (C-7a) was compiled by the AFSC and reviews and summarizes existing and new information on the canyons, their habitat, and fish associations in those areas. The second paper (C-7b) provides an overview of fishing activity within the canyons, past actions for protection in the area, management measures influencing the spatial aspects of relative fishing activity in the Bering Sea, and the process for any potential future actions. These discussion papers were mailed to you on May 22nd. The Council motion from April 2012 is attached as Item C-(7)(1).

At this meeting the Council will review these discussion papers and take action as necessary.