



B1 Executive Director's Report

December 2020

Action Memo

Kruse and Reedy to retire from SSC

Dr. Gordon Kruse is retiring from the SSC after serving 21+ years. He was a member from 1990-1992 while serving as a Senior Scientist at the Alaska Department of Fish and Game, and then from October 2002 through December 2020 while serving as a professor and professor emeritus at the University of Alaska. He has published over 100 peer-reviewed scientific articles and books, and has mentored many students who went on to become leaders in fisheries science and management. In February of this year, Gordon was awarded the first Terry Quinn II Distinguished Scientist Award, in recognition of his outstanding contributions in fishery science over the course of his career. We wish you the best in your SSC retirement!

Dr. Katherine Reedy is also retiring from the SSC after serving 10 years, having started in January 2011. She is chair of the Department of Anthropology at Idaho State University, and is an Aleutian sociocultural anthropologist who conducts ethnographic research primarily in the Alaska Peninsula and Aleutian Island chain. Thank you, Kate, for your long service on the SSC, and we wish you the best in your future endeavors!

SSC, AP, and PNCIAC Nominations

The Council will review nominations for SSC, AP, and PNCIAC during Executive Session and the Chair will announce these appointments at the end of the meeting.

Note that AP member Ernie Weiss has served three, 3-years terms (plus a partial term), and is thus not eligible for re-appointment. Thank you, Ernie, for your service and contributions to the AP as a member and former chair. Best wishes to you and I hope you stay involved in the Council process!

AP member Daniel Donich has resigned from the AP after serving for 5 years, effective after the December meeting. His term expired at the end of 2021. AP member Tory O'Connell Curran has not put in for reappointment.

Plan Team Nomination

The Alaska Department of Fish and Game has nominated Mr. Tyler Jackson to the Scallop Plan Team. Mr. Jackson is a Biometrician in the Division of Commercial Fisheries and is responsible for the statewide scallop stock assessment. A nomination letter and CV are **attached**. The SSC will provide a recommendation on this nomination.

New Staff

Ms. Arin Underwood is working for us temporarily through June 2021, primarily to help us manage all the technical aspects of our virtual meetings. She is rejoining us after spending November-December 2019 working on our historical documents project. Arin has an M.S. degree in Biology from the University of Tromsø, Arctic University of Norway and a B.S. from the University of Alaska. Welcome aboard Arin!

Recent Council and Staff activities

- On November 3, Ms. Diana Evans participated on the CCC NEPA subcommittee to provide recommendations to NMFS on development of operational guidelines to comply with the NEPA final rule.
- Ms. Kimball completed the New Fishery Management Council Member Training, held via webinar, October 20-22 and November 3-4, 2020.
- On November 4, Mr. Tweit provided a presentation entitled “Climate change and shifting fish distributions in the North Pacific” at a panel Challenges in Fishery Management, which was part of the training for new Fishery Management Council members.
- On November 17, Dr. Stram and I gave a presentation on bycatch at the United Fishermen of Alaska’s virtual seminar series.
- Dr. Stram recently published a paper as a co-author with Jordon Watson and Jim Harmon on the salmon and halibut donation program, titled “Mitigating Seafood Waste Through a Bycatch Donation Program”. The paper is available here:
<https://www.frontiersin.org/articles/10.3389/fmars.2020.576431/full>
- On November 21, Mr. Steve MacLean participated in Commonwealth North meeting and provided information on the Council’s Arctic fishing policy.

Committee Meetings

The Charter Halibut Management Committee met on October 27, 2020 to develop requests for ADF&G analysis of halibut harvests in 2021 under a range of management scenarios. A subsequent Committee meeting was held on November 30, 2020 to review the requested analysis and to develop Committee recommendations for charter halibut management measures in 2021. Those recommendations will be provided under C1 at this Council meeting.

The Joint Protocol Committee of the Council and Alaska Board of Fisheries met by webinar on November 5 to review the Cook Inlet salmon analysis. The meeting was chaired by Mr. Mezirow, and included Council representatives Ms. Campbell and Mr. Down. The meeting summary is attached.

The Local Knowledge, Traditional Knowledge, and Subsistence (LKTKS) Taskforce last met on November 9 and 10 to discuss its ongoing work related to identifying sources of LKTKS information, further develop its onramp recommendations, reach a consensus for a description of subsistence, discuss the Norton Sound Red King Crab case study, and create the initial outline for the LKTKS protocol. The report for this meeting will be available on the Taskforce’s webpage and the Ecosystem Committee’s eAgenda for its November meeting when it is completed. The Taskforce will next meet virtually in winter 2021 to continue its work, and will provide the Council an update in February 2021.

The Ecosystem Committee met on November 12, 2020 to receive an update on the Local Knowledge, Traditional Knowledge, and Subsistence information Task Force, consider upcoming Council ecosystem initiatives and committee agendas, and receive information about potential EFH consultation on a mining project in Norton Sound. A report of the meeting will be provided under agenda item E-1.

The Council has hosted stakeholder discussion to explore potential revisions to the Council’s Economic Data Reporting (EDR) programs. The discussions continue to generate ideas for improving the usability, efficiency, and consistency of existing EDR programs while minimizing their cost and burden to industry and the government. The four EDR workshops, organized by the EDR working group [Sarah Marrinan, Katie Latanich (contractor), Scott Miller, Steve Kasperski, and Brian Garber-Yonts] since the October Council meeting: Amendment 80 EDR on November 16; Crab EDR on November 17th; Amendment 91 Chinook salmon EDR on November 23rd; and a GOA trawl EDR on November 24th.

New Legislation H.R. 8632

On Tuesday, November 17, 2020 the House Natural Resources Committee held a remote legislative hearing titled “Ocean Climate Action: Solutions to the Climate Crisis”. The hearing focused on a number of bills including H.R. 8632, the “Ocean-Based Climate Solutions Act”, (Rep. Grijalva, D-Arizona), a bill introduced on November 20 to direct the Secretary of Commerce, acting through the Administrator of the National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration, to provide for ocean-based climate solutions to reduce carbon emissions and global warming; to make coastal communities more resilient; and to provide for the conservation and restoration of ocean and coastal habitats, biodiversity, and marine mammal and fish populations; and for other purposes. A summary of the bill prepared by the Pacific Council is here: <https://www.pcouncil.org/documents/2020/11/c-4-supplemental-attachment-5-staff-presentation-to-legislative-committee-ocean-based-climate-solutions-act.pdf/>

You can track the bills progress here: <https://www.congress.gov/bill/116th-congress/house-bill/8632?s=2&r=2>

While I have not had a chance to fully review and digest all 324 pages of the bill, there are some provisions that could impact fisheries, and in some cases, supersede the Council and NMFS existing management authorities. I have briefly highlighted a couple of sections in the following paragraphs:

Section 201 sets forth a policy on the protection of habitat: “It is the policy of the United States — (1) to prohibit any commercial extractive or destructive human activity in at least 30 percent of the ocean under United States jurisdiction by 2030. The 30 percent shall include existing areas in which commercial extractive and destructive human activities are and continue to be prohibited; and (2) to support the adoption and implementation of a global goal to protect at least 30 percent of land and 30 percent of ocean areas by 2030 under the Convention on Biological Diversity.” A high level (Secretary level) multi-agency taskforce “30x30 Interagency Task Force”, chaired by the Council on Environmental Quality, would prepare a plan and schedule to implement these closed areas. Former Council member Linda Behnken recently published a comment on this provision in The Hill: <https://thehill.com/opinion/energy-environment/526193-sustainable-fisheries-are-facing-a-moratorium>

Section 204 proposes additional protection of deep sea corals. “The Administrator shall designate as a Deep Sea Coral Marine Conservation Area any area where deep sea coral is found — (1) that is— (A) within the waters of the exclusive economic zone; or (B) on the Outer Continental Shelf; and (2) in which the Administrator or a Regional Fishery Management Council established under section 302 of the Magnuson-Stevens Fishery Conservation and Management Act (16 U.S.C. 1852) has prohibited the use of gear in contact with the ocean bottom, and towed from a vessel, which is moved through the water during fishing in order to capture fish, including otter trawls, beam trawls, hydraulic dredges, non-hydraulic dredges, and seines (with the exception of a purse seine).

(b) PROHIBITIONS.—Except as provided in subsection (c), the following activities are prohibited in a Deep Sea Coral Marine Conservation Area— (1) exploring for, developing, or producing oil, gas, or minerals; (2) using or attempting to use poisons, electrical charges, or explosives in the collection or harvest of any marine resource; (3) intentionally introducing or otherwise releasing any non-native species; (4) anchoring on any living or dead coral; and (5) drilling into, dredging, or otherwise altering the seafloor; (6) use of bottom trawl nets or other bottom tending fishing gear; and (7) deliberate dumping or discharge of noxious substances, materials that may cause eutrophication, or materials that artificially increase endemic pest outbreaks.”

Sections 406 provides for include coordination and consultation with the council on development of a grant program to develop innovative tools and approaches designed to increase the adaptive capacity of fishery management to the impacts of climate change. Section 407 includes regional council membership on a ‘Shifting Stocks Task Force’. The Task Force shall develop, in consultation with the Administrator

and the Regional Fishery Management Councils, science-based decision-making criteria to make jurisdiction, allocation, and fishery management decisions that minimize the risk of overfishing and maximize stock and ecosystem resilience to the effects of climate change. Additionally, the Task Force shall make recommendations to the Administrator and to the Regional Fishery Management Councils recommendations for the allocation and distribution of fishing privileges based on these criteria.

Section 408 puts “teeth” into the existing essential fish habitat provisions by requiring Federal agencies to avoid or mitigate impacts on EFH. [I am not sure how that would get applied to Federally managed fisheries, as every inch of the marine environment is EFH for some FMP species or life stage]. In the case of habitat areas of particular concern (HAPC), no Federal agency may authorize, fund, or undertake an action if such agency determines, in consultation with the Secretary, that such action would have an adverse effect on a habitat area of particular concern.

It is not clear what might become of this draft legislation. At the end of this year, the 116th Congress will end and with the beginning of the 117th Congress, everything starts over. Every bill that was introduced in the 116th Congress goes away and must be reintroduced to be considered. The legislation could be introduced in the new Congress, or pieces could potentially be implemented through other avenues such as by Executive Order. I suggest that the Council assign its Legislative Committee to track and review this legislation and inform the Council on potential impacts to the Councils authorities and management program.

Alaska SeaLife Center Ocean Leadership Awards

The Alaska SeaLife Center is requesting nominations for the 2021 Ocean Leadership Awards. These awards are given annually to individuals and organizations that have made significant contributions to the awareness and sustainability of the state’s marine resources. Awards will be presented at a virtual event in March 2021. Nominations for the 2021 Alaska Ocean Leadership Awards are open now through January 15, 2021. To make a nomination for any of these awards, visit their website:

https://www.alaskasealife.org/alaska_ocean_leadership_awards

Events this week

On Thursday December 3 from 12:30 - 4pm, the Council will be in **Executive Session** to discuss Plan Team, PNCIAC, AP and SSC appointments, and discuss other administrative matters.

Amendment 80 Report on Halibut Avoidance

Since 2015, the Amendment 80 cooperatives have voluntarily provided a report on halibut PSC avoidance plans and their performance under those plans, at each December meeting. Representatives from the cooperatives will provide a written summary of their halibut avoidance plans and performance, and will be available to answer questions.