



Advisory Panel MINUTES

February 1 –3, 2021 via webconference

The Advisory Panel met Monday, February 1, through Wednesday, February 3, 2021, in a virtual teleconference. The following members were present for all or part of the meetings (absent members are ~~stricken~~):

Christiansen, Ruth (Co-VC)	Kavanaugh, Julie	Ritchie, Brian
Drobnica, Angel (Chair)	Lowenberg, Craig	Scoblic, John
Gruver, John	Mann, Heather	Upton, Matt (Co-Vice Chair)
Gudmundsson, Gretar	O'Connor, Jamie	Vanderhoeven, Anne
Johnson, Jim	O'Donnell, Paddy	Velsko, Erik
Johnson, Mellisa	O'Neil, Megan	Wilt, Sinclair
Kauffman, Jeff	Peterson, Joel	

The AP approved the minutes from the December 2020 meeting.

C1 BSAI PCod CP

The AP recommends the Council select Alternative 1 and take no further action.

Motion passed 19-1

Rationale in Favor:

- *The impetus for this action was driven by low cod TACs and reduced rollovers from other sectors. It was not driven by a sudden influx of new capacity entering the fishery. Five vessels participated each year in 2018, 2019 & 2020 (4 vessels would qualify under Alt. 2, Option 2). In the 2021 A-season, just 3 vessels participated. Without any intervention from the Council, the number of vessels participating has already been reduced by 40%.*
- *Cod dependent operators are being forced to make difficult decisions and modify their business plans in light of low TACs and reduced rollovers, but removing endorsements from some of the LLPs in the pot CP sector will not solve these problems.*
- *If cod TACs rebound, the purpose and need for this action would no longer be relevant and the 4 qualifying vessels (under Alt. 2, Option 2) would receive a substantial economic benefit from this action. If cod TACs continue to decrease, the fishery will still be condensed. One vessel could have easily prosecuted the entire fishery the last 3 years.*
- *The BSAI pot cod CP sector allocation under Amendment 85 was never intended to fully support vessels that did not participate in other fisheries. Instead, it has been utilized by some operators that ran out of opportunities in the crab or longline cod fisheries.*
- *There is currently nothing that prevents a coop from forming in this sector.*
- *At least one vessel that was actively participating in the fishery before this action was initiated would be excluded under Alt. 2, Option 2. By definition, this LLP should not be considered latent.*

- *The total net benefit of this action is limited. If Alternative 2 had been in place for 2020, it would have provided approximately one additional fishing day for each of the 4 qualifying vessels under Option 2. With further TAC reductions for 2021, the net benefit will be even less.*

C2 SBRM

The AP recommends the Council request that NMFS update the FMPs for Scallop, Salmon, and BSAI Crab for consistency with national guidance on Standardized Bycatch Reporting Methodology as outlined in the Council analysis and as required by the MSA.

Motion passed 20-0

Rationale:

- *This action is largely a housekeeping item to bring state bycatch monitoring and reporting requirements into the federal FMPs. Councils, in coordination with NMFS, must review their FMPs and make any necessary changes so all FMPs are consistent with the guidance by February 2022.*
- *This action will amend the FMPs for Scallop, Salmon, and BSAI Crab to incorporate state monitoring and reporting requirements for bycatch accounting into the federal FMPs to describe the SBRM requirements explicitly in the FMPs (the Council determined in Feb 2020 that the Arctic, BSAI Groundfish, and GOA Groundfish FMPs are all consistent with current SBRM guidance and that no amendments to those FMPs are necessary).*
- *The MSA requires that FMPs establish a standardized reporting methodology to assess the amount and type of bycatch occurring in the fishery, and include conservation and management measures that, to the extent practicable and in the following priority— (A) minimize bycatch, and (B) minimize the mortality of bycatch which cannot be avoided.*
- *The national guidance defines a standardized reporting methodology as “an established, consistent procedure or procedures used to collect, record, and report bycatch data in a fishery.” Regulations require that an FMP identify the required procedure that constitutes the standardized reporting methodology for the fishery and explain how the procedure meets the purpose to collect, record, and report bycatch data.*

C3 Small Sablefish

The Advisory Panel recommends the Council initiate another review draft of the IFQ Sablefish Release Allowance paper. This analysis should include the two additional elements listed below and the SSC’s recommendations.

PURPOSE AND NEED

Large year classes of sablefish result in significant catches of small sablefish in the IFQ fixed gear fisheries. Small sablefish have low commercial value and current regulations require IFQ holders to retain all sablefish. Available data suggest that survival rates for carefully released sablefish are high. Operational flexibility to carefully release sablefish may increase the value of the commercial harvest and allow small fish to contribute to the overall biomass.

ALTERNATIVES

Alternative 1, No Action

Under the No Action alternative, all regulations and FMP language related to a prohibition on discarding sablefish would remain intact. Those regulations include 50 CFR 679.7(d)(4)(ii) and 50 CFR

679.7(f)(11). Additionally, discarding is prohibited in both the BSAI and GOA Groundfish FMPs in the fourth provision under General Provisions section 3.7.1.7, prohibiting discarding of sablefish.

Alternative 2, Allow Voluntary Release of Sablefish in the IFQ Fishery

This alternative would eliminate the regulatory restrictions that prohibit release of sablefish caught by sablefish IFQ vessels as well as the FMP provision prohibiting discarding.

³Option 1: minimum retention size of 59 cm

Element 1: DMRs

Apply a DMR to discarded sablefish of:

- a) 5%
- b) 12%
- c) 16%
- d) 20%

Sub-option: Select different DMRs for pot gear and hook and line gear

Element 2: Catch Accounting

Option 1: Sablefish discards will be estimated using observer and EM data with a DMR applied annually as part of the specifications process.

Option 2: Sablefish discards will be estimated pre-season based on AFSC longline survey encounter rates of sub-three pound sablefish with the DMR applied annually as part of the specifications process.

Element 3: Discard Mortality Accounting

Sablefish discard mortality associated with the IFQ fishery will be accounted for in the stock assessment. The analysis should describe the potential implications of voluntary discards on the sablefish stock assessment and specifications process.

Element 4: Monitoring and Enforcement

The analysis should describe potential monitoring and enforcement provisions that could improve estimates of voluntary and regulatory discards.

Element 5: Include a scheduled program review ¹in (8, 10, 12) after an option of 3 or 5 years ²and have an annual update report

Element 6: Require careful release of all released sablefish (fish returned to the water immediately with minimum of injury)

Amendment¹ passed 19-1

Amendment² passed 17-3

Amendment³ to add Option 1 passed 18-2

Main Motion as amended passed 14-5

Rationale in Favor of Amendment 1:

- *The current analysis highlights several “red flags” (areas of concern) indicating that the action alternative may not have the desired outcome. If implemented, a review of the action after a shorter time frame than originally proposed would sooner identify whether allowing the release of small sablefish has had its intended effect when compared to any potential negative outcomes. Waiting until the originally proposed 8, 10, or 12 years could result in long-term damage to the stock and/or fishery.*

Rationale in Favor of Amendment 2:

- *In a time of quickly changing ocean conditions and changes in fish stocks, waiting 3 or 5 years for a full review to assess the impacts of small sablefish release may be too long and may result in detrimental impacts to the spawning stock biomass. For example, with GOA cod, which is only surveyed every two years, the TAC suddenly decreased by 80% in 2018. With biennial surveys done in the GOA, it is important to not have the sablefish stock or the sablefish fishery face a similar situation as with cod in the 2017 survey. Implementing an immediate annual reporting requirement in conjunction with a full review will help concerns and/or negative impacts from this action be identified early.*

Rationale in Favor of Amendment 3:

- *Given the interaction between the biological and economic trade-offs of sablefish size and price, inclusion of the option for a 59cm minimum retention limit (e.g., fishers engaging in voluntary discards would only do so for sablefish less than 59 cm) should be considered under this action. Further research and analysis will help to evaluate the demographic impacts of this highly size-selective retention selectivity and equilibrium catch under a harvest rate of F40, as well as the ability of the Alaska sablefish population to recover from historically low spawning biomass levels under this option. This type of analysis would encompass an Exponential or Logistic, knotted/spliced approach to the knife edge at 59 cm or 3 pound dressed weight. The current YPR analyses include the effects of Logistic, Exponential and Knife-Edge Selectivities under varying mortality rates. The current YPR analysis does not include the effects of a combination of Knife-Edge and Exponential selectivities or of the combination of Knife-Edge and Logistic selectivities, as would be the case under "Option 1". This is important to include in analyses as the Knife-Edge selectivity assumes all 3 pound and under fish would be released under varying mortality rates and demonstrates exponential retention selectivity results in less than 50% of all fish caught being retained and a landed catch that is highly skewed towards mature females. The combination of selectivities of "Option 1" may demonstrate different results.*

Rationale in Favor of Main Motion as Amended:

- *British Columbia, Washington, and the State of Alaska all have fishery regulations that either require the release of small sablefish or allow for the release of small sablefish. It is only in Alaska's federal waters that fixed gear fishermen are required to retain juvenile sablefish.*
- *The addition of proposed Element 5 is to ensure a scheduled program review to assess the efficacy of the action for prudent and responsible management. The addition of proposed Element 6 is a statement of intent to capture the goal of interested stakeholders to carefully release juvenile sablefish to help insure their viability and continued contribution to the resource as well as the viability of the fishery (allowing them to grow to a more marketable size and reach maturity before harvest).*
- *At the time of this recommendation, it is understood that the SSC recommended the analysis come back for an additional initial review with new analytical components incorporated, including an age-structured model and this motion is intended to be consistent with their recommendations.*
- *Available data suggest that survival rates for carefully released sablefish are high. Operational flexibility to carefully release sablefish provided under this action may increase the value of the commercial harvest and allow small fish to contribute to the overall biomass. Another initial review analysis with its added analytical components will provide the Council with greater insight to the fisheries effects of Alt. 2 (and minimum retention limit) in the directed sablefish fishery.*

- *This motion reflects public testimony received by directed sablefish fishery stakeholders regarding their desire for a program amendment that would allow for the careful release of juvenile sablefish.*

Rationale in Opposition to Main Motion as Amended:

- *Over the long-term, and in the absence of continuous (year after year) large incoming classes (sablefish recruitment is episodic), this action may not be as beneficial of a solution for the directed fishery as originally anticipated. The YPR analysis shows a disproportionate impact to SSB from this action under periods of low recruitment such that landings, fishery efficiency, and fishery value will be even further reduced overtime (due to reductions to ABC) beyond what would occur under status quo. As such, given the desire to address recent large sablefish year classes, a sunset provision should be included in this action if it is to move forward.*
- *This action will likely have negative impacts upon catch accounting given the significant uncertainty associated with determining discards, which is further exacerbated given the multiple strong year classes currently on the grounds. The analysis shows accounting for released fish under Alt.2 could be overestimated due to the survey sampling all sablefish habitat while fishermen target more productive grounds with larger fish. Conversely, there is question as to whether this method could also underestimate the amount of fish under 3 pounds being released due to the impacts of the increasing shift to pot gear not being able to be fully teased out. In 2020, 66% of 1-3 pound sablefish were harvested by pot gear, which has a higher rate of interaction with 3 and under fish than hook and line gear.*
- *Released sablefish estimates from the AFSC survey would be subject to a one year lag, which may misrepresent the age structure of the current year's biomass when computing OFL and maxABC. This is compounded in the BSAI where surveys occur bi-annually. Currently, where there is a buffer between the ABC and TAC, this possible underestimation may not be problematic. However, looking at the long term, if recruitment decreases, this uncertainty in accounting of released fish could have negative impacts.*
- *In addition to catch accounting concerns, this action will have detrimental impacts upon the sablefish stock assessment and will introduce greater levels of uncertainty at a time when the PTs, SSC, and Council are working to define and minimize sources of uncertainty. Alaska's globally recognized success for sustainable fisheries management can be largely attributed to its precautionary management, the foundation of which comes from its groundfish Tier system and harvest control rules. The Council's groundfish harvest control rules are not set-up to accommodate a voluntary discard program and this action will have negative consequences on the stock assessment process. While additional analytical components are being requested, it is not anticipated that they will provide greater clarity or alleviate concerns regarding these significant negative impacts, therefore, this action should not go forward.*
- *Under this proposed action, and especially with the addition of Option 1, the current observer program is not set up to sample as would be needed and any changes made to address sampling needs would likely drive up the cost of the observer program. The sablefish/halibut EM observer program does not have a shoreside sampling component and the analysis notes that in order to use EM data to estimate rates of released fish, a new shoreside sampling program would need to be created. As the directed sablefish fleet is spread out from the Eastern Gulf to the Bering Sea, it would be expensive to create an adequate sampling program for all regions, which could potentially drive the observer fee higher. The analysis also notes the human observer program is not currently set up to sample released fish and would need to be changed so that there would be higher rates of coverage to get adequate data on released fish (again possibly necessitating an increase in the observer fee).*

- *The inclusion of Option 1 could potentially result in increased handling of released fish compared (when compared to voluntary release without a size limit) such that discard handling mortality rate would also be increased.*

C4 Crab PSC Limits

The AP recommends the Council identify Alternative 2 as the PPA with the following revisions (in red) and move forward to final action.

Draft Purpose and Need

At present, most Bering Sea crab stocks are experiencing low productivity and small population sizes, leading to large reductions in directed harvest levels. These problems appear to be ongoing and lead the council to examine existing PSC limits to determine whether both directed harvest and bycatch measures are responsive to these adverse conditions.

This action would increase the linkage between controls on crab bycatch in groundfish fisheries and the harvest controls on the directed crab fishery by establishing explicit reductions in allowable bycatch levels when the directed fishery is closed. **The need for this action is to better help the crab stock grow to levels to again support a directed fishery.** This action is intended to ensure there is consistency in management measures between directed fisheries and bycatch in groundfish fisheries, making more explicit the balance of impacts to all the fisheries and communities that are affected by the status of depressed stocks.

Alternative 1: No Action

Alternative 2: Reduced PSC limits for BSAI trawl CDQ and non-CDQ groundfish fishing, **for the upcoming fishing year**, when the corresponding directed crab fishery is closed.

When no Crab Rationalization Program individual fishing quota (IFQ) is issued in a season for BBRKC, bairdi, or opilio, set the crab PSC limit for that stock at the lowest abundance-based level. As described in regulation at 50 CFR 679.21(e)(1), the PSC limits for the groundfish fisheries would be as follows under this alternative when the directed crab fishery is closed:

- Bairdi Zone 1 – **the lower of (1) 0.5% of total abundance minus 20,000 animals or (2) 730,000 animals**
- Bairdi Zone 2 – **the lower of (1) 1.2% of the total abundance minus 30,000 animals or (2) 2,070,000 animals**
- BBRKC Zone 1 - 32,000 red king crab
- Opilio - 4.350 million animals

The Council requests that the analysis include source numbers for the crab abundance estimates used to calculate the PSCs and clearly state whether they are from raw numbers.

Substitute Motion

The AP recommends that the Council take no further action on this agenda item and instead focus on a comprehensive review of crab bycatch across all gear types and fisheries, including the directed fishery. Further, the AP recommends that alternative bycatch reduction strategies be considered relative to using PSC limits (such as gear modifications, fishing strategies, etc). If it is determined that PSC limits are the appropriate method, the Council should consider applying PSC limits to the fisheries and gear types that have demonstrated they have significant interactions with crab species.

Substitute Motion failed 7-12

Main motion passed 14-6

Rationale in Favor of Main Motion:

- *This is a narrow, straightforward action to add a trigger into PSC management as another layer of conservation for crab stocks. This action signals support for revising crab PSC regulations for Bristol Bay red king crab (BBRKC), bairdi, and opilio to create stronger incentives to minimize crab bycatch. In particular, when a directed crab fishery is closed, managers should reduce the impacts on crab where possible to provide more opportunity for the stock to grow to a level to again support a directed fishery.*
- *The Purpose and Need statement highlights that this action creates incentives to minimize bycatch, thereby reducing impacts on the stock so it can more quickly grow to a level to again support a directed fishery balancing impacts to all of the fisheries and communities that interact with that stock. The revised language to the Purpose and Need clarifies the need for this action as a conservation measure to help the stock grow to a level to again support a directed fishery on larger males and consequently higher PSC limits for bycatch.*
- *The Council has been reviewing crab PSC limits through various discussion papers and documents for almost 10 years with little progress, starting out with all crab, then focusing on snow crab.*
- *Written comment by the Bering Sea Fisheries Research Foundation speaks to episodic, event-driven recruitment of crab. The impacts of the lightning strike events described in the Council analysis can have disproportionate effects on crab stocks due to their patchy spatial distribution and episodic recruitment. Any incentives, such as this action, to help move bycatch fisheries off of crab and reduce impacts, help the stock and directed crab fisheries.*
- *Public testimony flagged concerns over a mismatch in PSC limits using an example where the directed bairdi fishery was recently closed and yet the trawl PSC limit is at the highest possible amount.*
- *The revised language offered for Alternative 2 incorporates Council staff interpretation of the alternative as it applies to Tanner crab.*
- *This motion would help better meet National Standard 9 – Bycatch; Conservation and management measures shall, to the extent practicable, (a) minimize bycatch and (b) to the extent bycatch cannot be avoided, minimize the mortality of such bycatch.*
- *Current crab PSC limits and triggers are based on a 25 year old, industry negotiated compromise and does not consider the best, most current science, which is a requirement under the MSA.*
- *The sensitivity analysis (Appendix 4) from stock assessment authors showed that based on estimates of observed bycatch mortality, it would take magnitudes of bycatch 500-1000% higher to have an effect on the crab stocks. However, several components were not factored into that analysis: (1) this was a numbers exercise and did not take into account crab population level dynamics and episodic recruitment; (2) it does not factor in disproportionate impacts on crab at vulnerable life stages, such as molting or mating; and (3) unobserved mortality was not taken into account and has the potential to be significant given studies that show 95-99% of crab go under the footrope with some additional level of mortality and escape capture in the net (i.e., if we are only seeing 5% of the bycatch, the potential for crab mortality could be magnitudes higher).*
- *Directed crab fisheries recognize and appreciate the efforts sectors are currently taking to reduce crab bycatch. The Amendment 80 trawl sector has reduced their impact on crab by raising their trawl sweeps around 2011. The over and under 60' pot cod sectors have both actively worked in*

recent years to reduce bycatch through gear design research and through voluntary hotspot reporting in partnership with crabbers. The new halibut pot fishery developing in the Bering Sea is also part of the collaborative gear design research to reduce crab bycatch. These efforts are proving effective at reducing bycatch since that 2018 high. The directed crab fishery is also actively working to reduce their impacts on crab by working with the Alaska Department of Fish and Game and the Board of Fisheries to change fishing practices, including closure of the EBT fishery this year to reduce BBRKC bycatch. And the over 60' pot cod CV sector is actively pursuing a catch share plan in an effort to acquire additional tools to reduce bycatch

Rationale in Opposition to Main Motion:

- *The added language to the Purpose and Need statement alters the intent of the original action to add a trigger to crab PSC management beyond that of a narrow policy decision. NEPA requires a reasonable range of alternatives be considered that will meet the goals outlined in the Purpose and Need statement. The analysis does not show that the current range of alternatives will result in the growth of crab stocks. Therefore, the alternatives would need to be revised and/or expanded in order to be able to judge any measurable impacts against that specific newly added goal. The analysis shows minimal positive biological impacts between the no action and current action alternatives.*
- *The health of BS crab stocks, especially that of BBRKC, necessitates the Council take a broader look across all fisheries that interact with crab in order to determine what can be done to mitigate and minimize crab bycatch mortality. A more holistic approach is necessary to get at the root of the issues negatively impacting crab stock biomasses. Expanding an analysis to encompass all fisheries with crab bycatch (including the directed crab fishery) should result in a more meaningful approach that will ultimately result in significant positive measurable outcomes for crab populations.*
- *The current analysis clearly demonstrates that other sectors of the groundfish and crab industry have documented bycatch interactions that are multitudes larger than those seen in the trawl industry. But previous discussion papers/analyses on the issue of crab PSC over the course of the past 10 years have focused only on trawl gear, all of them demonstrating little meaningful effect and impact upon crab biomass and the directed crab fisheries. In spite of expected complexities, pivoting now to a comprehensive, holistic approach will ultimately provide more meaningful conservation improvements to crab stocks sooner rather than later, which is the ultimate goal. As such, given limited Council and NMFS resources, it is more appropriate to focus effort and expand this action to encompass other fisheries/areas that have more meaningful interactions with crab. If a holistic approach is not taken, it will be only the trawl fisheries with crab PSC limits that are shouldering the conservation burden when they are not the sector with the largest amount of crab interaction and bycatch/bycatch mortality*

C5 BSAI Crab

The AP acknowledges the receipt of the CPT report and SAFE document. The AP recommends the Council approve the 2021 OFL and ABC for NSRKC as recommended by the SSC.

Motion passes 19-0

Rationale:

- *The AP appreciates the effort and work-product provided by the CPT and SSC.*

D1 Community Engagement

The Advisory Panel recommends the Council adopt the recommendations of the Community Engagement Committee from the January 2021 meeting.

Motion passed 20-0

Rationale:

- *Acknowledging broad support for each of the recommendations made by the Community Engagement Committee without priority, the AP, in response to public comment received, notes that the Council and communities (especially those that are rural) would benefit from: 1) a Tribal and Rural Community Liaison position to assist with building effective two-way communication and outreach and 2) establishing the CEC as a standing committee to continue its work towards enhancing opportunities for building relationships and engagement in the Council process.*

D2 EFP Applications

The AP recommends the Alaska Seafood Cooperative (AKSC) EFP application be approved by NMFS.

Motion Passed 20-0

Rationale:

- *The EFP will help assess the performance of halibut excluders used in the Amendment 80 sector at reducing halibut catch reduction and impacts on target catch.*

D3 BS FEP/Taskforce

The Advisory Panel recommends the Council approve the Climate Change Task Force work plan.

Motion passed 20-0

Rationale:

- *Climate change is one of the biggest issues that fisheries, oceans, and communities are facing in Alaska and will likely continue to become a greater issue into the coming years, affecting future generations in all areas. Climate change impacts to rural Alaska Native communities includes shifts of different species within the ecosystem, erosion and possible relocations, and temperature changes. The Climate Change Task force has developed an excellent plan to help the Council and its bodies meet these challenges with some of the Council's objectives for this action module included in the work plan. Continued good work by the Task Force is supported.*

E Staff Tasking

AP Motion 1

The AP recommends that the Council request the Secretary:

1. Promulgate emergency regulations under the authority of Section 305(c) of the Magnuson-Stevens Act to allow the temporary transfer of halibut and sablefish IFQ for all quota shareholders for the 2021 fishing season; and

Use of this emergency regulation in 2021 to transfer QS will not be counted as one of the eligible years to utilize the IFQ medical transfer provision.

2. Promulgate emergency regulations to remove vessel use cap regulations under 50 CFR Section 679.42(h)(1) for IFQ halibut harvested in IPHC Regulatory Areas 4A, 4B, 4C, and 4D for the 2021 IFQ fishing season.

These actions do not modify other aspects of the IFQ Program.

Motion Passed 18-2

Rationale in Favor:

- *The 2020 emergency rule has reached its 180-day expiration but Covid-19 continues to pose management and operational issues in the halibut/sablefish IFQ program.*
- *At the end of the 2020 sablefish/halibut season, it was assumed that the continued need for an emergency rule to address Covid-19 would not be warranted; however, industry issues have not recovered and in some instances are worse. Governor Dunleavy has declared a Public Health Disaster Emergency Declaration that was effective 12:00am, January 15, 2021.*
- *Currently, in Western Alaska three of the largest processing plants are temporarily closed or severely limited in processing capacity due to Covid-19 outbreaks. As a result, fisheries that may take priority (e.g., pollock, cod and crab) will likely be delayed, which will in turn cause delays in the buying of halibut/sablefish IFQ species.*
- *Although vaccination has begun in earnest throughout the nation, we are still months away from a fully vaccinated fleet and processing sector. There is still a high risk of exposure and contraction of the virus. Travel to and from vessels still requires quarantine, which can cost vessel owners time and money in operational costs.*
- *A baseline for reference for lifting vessel use caps in Area 4 can be found in the May 15, 2020 Council motion during the May 2020 Special Council Meeting.*
- *The three criteria as specified by NMFS for emergency action have been met.*
- *There is broad industry support through written and public comment for these actions. Industry needs maximum flexibility in execution of harvest strategies under the current Covid environment.*

Rationale in Opposition:

- *Prior to any recommendation being made for support of an Emergency Rule request, information and details on how the three emergency rule criteria have been met is needed to best inform such a recommendation.*

AP Motion 2

The AP recommends that the Council task staff to explore the possibility of having a member of the SSC report out to the AP on issues where the scientific assessment of the SSC would assist AP understanding of the issues and deliberations.

Motions passed 19-1

Rationale in Favor:

- *Due to overlapping schedules and delayed availability of SSC minutes, the AP often doesn't get the benefit of SSC discussion and input on key agenda items. For these agenda items, there is often a general desire by AP Members to get feedback and input from the SSC.*
- *Relying on interpretation from non-SSC members creates challenges and may lead to misinterpretation of SSC conversation and/or recommendations.*
- *There was recognition by some members that per its handbook, the SSC does not report directly to the AP. However, the intent to explore options that would allow for increased access to and benefit of the SSC discussion to the AP on specific issues was supported.*

AP Motion 3

The AP recommends NMFS suspends the residency requirements applicable to the Adak CQE program for 2021.

Motion passed 20-0

Rationale:

- *Adak's CQE program had significant challenges during the 2020 season that resulted in only 7% of their quota being harvested. This was in large part due to vessel operators' unwillingness to carry Adak resident walk-on crew during the COVID 19 pandemic along with the logistical challenges of meeting quarantine guidelines and travel arrangements between Adak and the nearest processing plant in Dutch Harbor. An emergency exemption from the CQE resident requirements will likely be necessary to ensure the continued safety of the community while maintaining important economic benefits of the CQE program.*