# PUBLIC TESTIMONY SIGN-UP SHEET

**Agenda Item:** STAFF Tacking

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<th>NAME (Please Print)</th>
<th>TESTIFYING ON BEHALF OF:</th>
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NOTE to persons providing oral or written testimony to the Council: Section 307(1)(l) of the Magnuson-Stevens Fishery Conservation and Management Act prohibits any person "to knowingly and willfully submit to a Council, the Secretary, or the Governor of a State false information (including, but not limited to, false information regarding the capacity and extent to which a United State fish processor, on an annual basis, will process a portion of the optimum yield of a fishery that will be harvested by fishing vessels of the United States) regarding any matter that the Council, Secretary, or Governor is considering in the course of carrying out this Act.

Revised July 31, 2017
Request to Address All Crab PSCs

Jamie Goen, Lance Farr, Lou Forristall

See Alaska Bering Sea Crabbers comment letter under Agenda Item E1 (staff tasking) for more details.
Help Alaska’s crab fishery, an important, iconic fishery for Alaska and the US, remain a viable and productive fishery.

The Ask

• Request Council action to address the mismatch in crab prohibited species catch (PSC) limits and minimize bycatch in a meaningful way using incentives.

• Revise the formula and approach for PSC management of all crab building from available Council documents on this topic since 2010.

• Provide more clarity and transparency on the source numbers used in the formula to calculate the PSC limits.
What’s the Problem?

- Current crab PSC management using abundance-based limits and closed areas may not be minimizing bycatch in other fisheries to the extent practicable, particularly in cases where the directed crab fisheries are closed.
Additional Snow Crab PSC work by ABSC

- December 2018 (NPFMC Initial Review - Draft EA) – ABSC Data Request to NPFMC
  - Better understand bycatch through spatial data on:
    - effort (tow duration)
    - trawl sector (pelagic and bottom)
    - And snow crab abundance (sex and size)
- Council provided additional data through reports in spring and summer 2019
- ABSC work over summer 2019 to map by year (instead of aggregate years) and in a different format to better understand data and patterns.
  - Looked at low (2016), mid (2014), and high (2018) bottom trawl bycatch years.
  - See ABSC report and maps attached to E1 comment letter.
2018 PSC (High-PSC Year)
2018 Survey CPUE and Trawl Fishery Effort
2018 Opilio Abundance by size and sex based on CPUE from NMFS trawl survey.
2018 Directed Fishery Maps from ADFG

http://www.adfg.alaska.gov/static/fishing/PDFs/commercial/bering_aleutian/part2_industry_tac_meeting.pdf
Takeaways from ABSC snow crab work

- Spatial maps by year were informative.
- The COBLZ captures most of the snow crab population and trawl bycatch in years reviewed (2014, 2016, and 2018).
- The overlap of bottom trawl tow time and snow crab CPUE from the NMFS trawl survey appears to be a solid predictor of snow crab bycatch.
- Mature males and females tend to have higher CPUE estimates near areas of high bottom trawl bycatch.
- Additionally, both mature males and females are typically present in areas of high bottom trawl effort, but some years trawlers appear to encounter comparatively more males (2016) and more females (2018).
- The spatial management in this fishery still seems to be appropriate.
What now?

• Following the Council’s PSC work on all crab from 2010-2014, the Council then focused on just snow crab through 2019 with the intent to use it as a template for other crab PSCs.
  – Status: *Per Council direction in April 2019, industry working informally outside the Council process to review data and develop recommendations to bring to Council. Industry meetings started in Nov 2019.*

• Since then, the directed bairdi fishery closed this year and red king crab is trending towards closing.

• To help those stocks grow to levels to support a directed fishery, under an abundance-based PSC management system, the PSC should be at the lowest levels and they are not.

• This indicates *a mismatch in the approach, formula, and incentives in the current crab PSC management. It is not minimizing bycatch in a meaningful way.*
A path forward

Use all of this great work that has already been done

GOAL: Create stronger incentives to minimize bycatch. In particular, when a directed fishery is closed or close to closing. This would reduce impacts on crab stocks to provide more opportunity for the stock to grow to levels to again support a directed fishery.

First step as a conservation measure & more immediate action, lower PSC limits to their lowest level available in regulation when a directed crab fishery is closed.

Separately, work on a longer-term solution to review and revise the formula and approach for PSC management for all crab building from available Council documents on this topic since 2010.

Idea and components to consider for PSC management:
- Using raw survey or stock assessment model estimates,
- Using numbers versus weight of crab,
- Using a percent of abundance to establish PSC (like opilio) or a stairstep approach (like bairdi and red king crab) or a different approach altogether (like encounter rates),
- Considering the use and utility of closed areas (for example, does the Red King Crab Savings Area adequately protect BBRKC when the crab move in response to temperature changes?),
- Considering the effect on crab at sensitive life stages or shell conditions (like soft shell crab which have higher mortality if encountered with fishing gear),
- Counting bycatch throughout a stock’s range toward the PSC,
- Considering where industry can best self-manage through communication inseason to avoid hotspots,
- Reviewing bycatch monitoring and accounting methods to ensure they are effective for estimating bycatch.
## Adjusted Interim Management Procedure

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- Depends on total TCEY
## Mitigating for U26 non-directed discards in AK

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Snow Crab PSC Limits, PSC, and Bycatch
(in number of crab)

- PSC Limit
- Trawl in COBLZ
- All Trawl
- All Bycatch in COBLZ
- Total Bycatch

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