

Council Motion

E1 Staff Tasking; Squid and Sculpins to Ecosystem Component Species

October 9, 2019

The Council adopts the following purpose and need statement and initiates an analysis with the following alternatives. The Council also recommends Alternative 2 as its preliminary preferred alternative, to continue to designate squid and sculpins in both the BSAI and GOA FMPs as a non-target 'Ecosystem Component Species', establish a maximum retainable amount (MRA), and allow for limited use and sale of incidentally caught squid and sculpins consistent with past practice.

Purpose and Need

Squid is defined in the ecosystem component (EC) category. The Council took action to recommend that sculpins be defined in EC category as well. There are no directed fisheries for squid or sculpins in either the BSAI or GOA. Incidental catch of squid is retained in some fisheries and often utilized to prevent waste. Typically, sculpins are not retained but can be in some circumstances.

The Council's June 2017 action to reclassify the squid complex into the ecosystem component in the BSAI and GOA groundfish FMPs was based on the best available scientific information and was consistent with the revised National Standard 1 guidelines. However, the federal rulemaking to implement the Council's action incorrectly prohibited any use or sale of incidentally caught squid unless processed into fish meal. The June 2017 Council action and supporting analyses indicated: 1) retention of squids would continue at or slightly above current levels, and 2) past production types would continue to be allowed including whole bait and whole fish/food fish. The purpose of this action is to align regulations with the long-standing use of squid, the permissible use of squid based on the Council's June 2017 analysis and preferred alternative, and the permissible use of squid under the EC category.

The Council's recent recommendation to establish sculpins in the EC category would limit the use of sculpins consistent with existing regulations for all other EC category species (50 CFR 679.20(i)). The Council does not wish to increase the time required to move sculpins into the EC category by modifying that action, but intends to review the disposition of sculpins consistent with squids and the flexibility provided by the EC category.

Alternatives

Alternative 1: Squids and sculpins in both the BSAI and GOA FMPs are designated as non-target "ecosystem component species" with prohibition on the use of squids and sculpins other than as fishmeal.

Establishment of OFL, ABC, and TACs are not required. Directed fishing for squids and sculpins is prohibited, and the squids and sculpins maximum retainable amount when directed

fishing for other fisheries is 20%. The sale, barter, trade, or processing of squids and sculpins is prohibited, except as fishmeal. Recordkeeping and reporting to monitor and report catch and discards of squids and sculpins annually is required.

Alternative 2: Squids and sculpins in both the BSAI and GOA FMPs are designated as non-target “ecosystem component species”.

Establishment of OFL, ABC, and TACs are not required. Directed fishing for squids and sculpins are prohibited, and the squids and sculpins maximum retainable amount when directed fishing for other fisheries is 20%. There is no prohibition on the sale, barter, trade, or processing of incidental, retained squids or sculpins. Recordkeeping and reporting to monitor and report catch and discards of squids and sculpins annually is required.