



North Pacific Fishery Management Council

Simon Kinneen, Chair | David Witherell, Executive Director
1007 W. 3rd Avenue, Suite 400, Anchorage, AK 99501
Phone 907-271-2809 | www.npfmc.org

Meeting Summary

254th Plenary Session
North Pacific Fishery Management Council
April 5 -16, 2021
Webconference – Adobe Connect

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Attachments

- 1) Time Log
- 2) Newsletter

The time log is included as a reference attachment for names, dates and times of each agenda item, and the newsletter is included to provide details of the agenda items and the meeting as a whole.

All documents and information related to the meeting are accessible online at:

<https://meetings.npfmc.org/Meeting/Details/1945>

The North Pacific Fishery Management Council met on April 12th through April 16, 2021. The following Council members, Council staff, SSC, and AP members attended the meetings.

Council Members

Jim Balsiger/Glenn Merrill
National Marine Fisheries Service

Rachel Baker/Karla Bush (for Doug Vincent-Lang)
Alaska Department Fish and Game

Cora Campbell
Appointed

Craig Cross
Appointed

Kenny Down
Appointed

Holly Carroll (for Greg Siekaniec)
US Fish & Wildlife Service

Dave Hanson
Pacific States Marine Fisheries Commission

John Jensen
Appointed

Nicole Kimball
Appointed

Simon Kinneen, **Chair**
Appointed

Staci MacCorkle
US Dept of State

Steve Marx (for Curt Melcher)
Oregon Department of Fish & Wildlife

Andy Mezirow
Appointed

Bill Tweit (for Kelly Susewind), **Vice Chair**
Washington Department Fish & Wildlife

RADM Matthew Bell Jr/CAPT Brennell
United States Coast Guard

Council Staff

Armstrong, Jim
Cleaver, Sara
Cunningham, Sam
Davis, Maria
Evans, Diana (DD)
Fey, Mike (PSMFC)

Forristall, Angela (Sea Grant
Fellow)
Gleason, Shannon
Haapala, Kate
Henry, Anna
Hillary, Kaylah
La Belle, Sarah

MacLean, Steve
Marrinan, Sarah
McCracken, Jon
Schmidt, Nicole
Stram, Diana
Witherell, Dave (ED)

Scientific and Statistical Committee

The SSC met from April 5th to April 8th, 2021 via adobe connect in a virtual conference. The following members were present for all or part of the meetings:

Anne Hollowed, Co-Chair
NOAA Fisheries—AFSC

Milo Adkison
University of Alaska Fairbanks

Curry Cunningham
University of Alaska Fairbanks

Dana Hanselman
NOAA Fisheries—AFSC

Andrew Munro
Alaska Dept. of Fish and Game

Ian Stewart
Intl. Pacific Halibut Commission

Sherri Dressel, Co-Chair
Alaska Dept. of Fish and Game

Chris Anderson
University of Washington

Mike Downs
Wislow Research

Brad Harris
Alaska Pacific University

Matt Reimer
University of California, Davis

Patrick Sullivan
Cornell University

Alison Whitman, Vice Chair
Oregon Dept. of Fish and Wildlife

Amy Bishop
Alaska Sea Life Center

Jason Gasper
NOAA Fisheries – Alaska Region

George Hunt
University of Washington

Chris Siddon
ADF&G

Tien -Shui Tsou
WDF&W

Advisory Panel

The Advisory Panel met from April 6th to April 9th, 2021, via adobe connect in a virtual conference. The following members were present for all or part of the meetings:

Christiansen, Ruth (Co-Vice Chair)
Drobnica, Angel (Chair)
Gruver, John
Gudmundsson, Gretar
Johnson, Jim
Johnson, Mellisa
Kauffman, Jeff

Kavanaugh, Julie
Lowenberg, Craig
Mann, Heather
O'Donnell, Paddy
O'Neil, Megan
Peterson, Joel
Ritchie, Brian

Scoblic, John
Upton, Matt (Co-Vice Chair)
Vanderhoeven, Anne
Velsko, Erik
Wilson, Marissa
Wilt, Sinclair

A1 Call Meeting to Order

The Council approved the agenda without objection.

B Reports

The following reports were provided in writing and discussed. In addition, Sam Rauch, NMFS Assistant Administrator for Regulatory Programs gave an oral briefing on President Biden's E.O. 14008 Section 216(c). Gretchen Harrington from NMFS Alaska Region provided an oral report and presentation on the 2022 EFH 5-Year Review Plan. John Mosher and Christopher Hunt gave an oral report and presentation on the US Navy agenda item.

B1 Executive Director's Report – David Witherell

B2 NMFS Briefing on E.O. 14008, Section 216(c) – Sam Rauch

B3 NMFS Management Report – Dr. James Balsiger

- B3 EFH 5-year review – Gretchen Harrington

B4 NOAA GC Report – John Lepore

B5 ADFG Report – Kendall Henry

B6 USCG Report – CAPT Jason Brennell and LCDR Jedediah Raskie

B7 USFWS Report – Holly Carroll

B8 US Navy Report on Northern Edge – John Mosher and Christopher Hunt

B9 NIOSH Report – Samantha Case

B10 Cooperative Reports - The Council has developed several cooperative programs as components of larger catch share programs. These cooperative programs include American Fisheries Act Program, Amendment 80 Program, Central Gulf of Alaska Rockfish Program, and BSAI Crab Rationalization Program. As part of these programs, cooperatives have been required or requested to provide an annual written report detailing the use of the cooperative quota or addressing other specific areas of Council interest. The written reports and the voluntary presentations are a resource for the Council to track the effectiveness of the cooperatives and whether the cooperative programs are meeting their intended goals. [Link to Cooperative Reports](#).

D1 GOA Sablefish Pots 3-year review, IFQ Committee Report

Council Staff: Sara Cleaver

Other Presenters: Alicia Miller (NMFS Sustainable Fisheries)

Action Required:

1. Review GOA sablefish pots report
2. Receive IFQ committee report
3. Action as necessary

Summary: *The Council will review a report on the first 3-4 years of the sablefish pot fishery in the Gulf of Alaska. Pot gear was only allowed for fishing sablefish in the GOA beginning in 2017. The report includes fishery data as well as information gathered from fishery participants, managers, and stock assessment scientists. Based on the report, the Council may choose to evaluate changes to the fishery's regulations.*

Action for this item was taken under agenda item D4, the IFQ Committee Report.

D2 IFQ Access Opportunities

Council Staff: Anna Henry

Action Required:

1. Review expanded discussion paper
2. Review IFQ Committee minutes
3. Determine whether further action is warranted

Summary: *The Council is discussing the idea of creating a separate pool of IFQ quota share to facilitate access opportunities to the IFQ fishery for entry level crew and owner-operators.*

After staff presentations and public comment, the Council discussed and decided to take no further action on this agenda item at this time.

D3 RQE Funding Mechanism

Council Staff: Sarah Marrinan

Other Presenters: Angel Forristall (NPFMC/SeaGrant Fellow), Kurt Iverson (NMFS)

Action Required:

1. Review discussion paper
2. Determine any additional action

Summary: *The Council will consider the mechanics of a charter halibut stamp, which would be required to be purchased by charter operators for every angler that fishes for halibut with them. The point of this stamp would be to generate funds for a charter halibut Recreational Quota Entity which could buy halibut quota on behalf of charter anglers.*

After staff presentations and public comment, the following action was taken:

Mr. Mezirow made the following motion which was seconded by Mr. Cross:

The Council adopts the following purpose and need statement and alternatives for initial review.

Purpose and Need

In 2016 the Council took final action to create a Recreational Quota Entity (RQE), as a market-based solution to an ongoing allocation conflict between charter halibut guides and commercial halibut longline fishermen. This market-based solution authorizes commercial halibut quota share transfers between the RQE and a willing seller. Although the regulations to authorize formation of an RQE were implemented, the Council lacked the authority to regulate the funding mechanism for the RQE. Legislation has been proposed by the U.S. Congress, to grant the Council and NMFS the authority to develop and implement a fee collection mechanism for charter vessel operators that could be used by the RQE to fund administrative costs and purchase of halibut quota share as specified in the RQE program.

In anticipation of the potential enactment of this legislation, the Council would begin the analytical process to explore the administrative requirements necessary to implement a fee collection program for charter vessel operators.

Alternatives:

Alternative 1: No action (Status quo).

Alternative 2: Establish a fee collection program for Charter Vessel Operators to fund the recreational Quota Entity.

Describe the potential methods to collect a fee from charter vessel operators (e.g., halibut stamps) and mechanisms to subsequently distribute those funds to the RQE. Analysts should explore the range of potential fee collection methods currently used for North Pacific fisheries, including State of Alaska fisheries, and similar programs and provide information on likely administrative costs for collection and disbursement to the RQE.

VOTE ON MOTION: Motion passed with no objection on April 13, 2021, at 2:55 p.m.

D4 IFQ Committee Report

Council Staff: Sarah Marrinan
Other Presenters: Alicia Miller (NMFS, SF)

Action Required: 1. Review Committee Report
2. Action as necessary

***Summary:** The IFQ Committee met in late March to review items on the Council's agenda and provide recommendations. They also reviewed a list of new and pending IFQ proposals and discussed recommendations on prioritization.*

After staff presentations and public comment, the following action was taken:

Ms. Campbell made the following motion which was seconded by Mr. Jensen:

The Council adopts the following purpose and need statement and initiates analysis of a suite of IFQ actions with the following alternatives and elements.

Purpose and Need:

IFQ stakeholders, the IFQ Committee, and NMFS have identified regulatory revisions that could increase operational efficiency, reduce administrative burden, and clarify how harvesters can meet existing regulatory requirements. In addition, the Council is considering revisions to pot limits and gear tending restrictions also identified through the recent 3-year GOA sablefish pot review to determine whether they are serving their intended purpose.

The Community Quota Entity (CQE) program was modified in 2014 to include the Aleutian Islands. This allowed the community of Adak to form a CQE and purchase halibut and sablefish quota. Since the implementation of the Aleutian Islands CQE in 2014, Adak has faced challenges being able to harvest its IFQ. The Council is considering temporarily broadening who is eligible to harvest IFQ held by the Adak CQE to provide more opportunities for more fully harvesting its allocation.

Alternative 1: No action

Alternative 2: Revise IFQ program regulations to address the following regulatory clarifications

Element 1: Clarify that “slinky pots” are a legal gear for the IFQ fishery, and revise regulations to allow the use of biodegradable twine in the door latch or pot tunnel.

Element 2: Remove buoy configuration and flagpole requirements in regulation but retain “LP” marking requirement.

Element 3: Authorize jig gear as a legal gear type for the harvest of sablefish IFQ.

Element 4: Revise the pot gear configuration requirements to remove the 9-inch maximum width of tunnel opening so it does not apply when vessel has unfished halibut IFQ onboard.

Element 5: Pot Limits

Option 1: Change the Pot Limit for WY and/or SEO to

Suboption a) 180 pots per vessel

Suboption b) 300 pots per vessel

Element 6: Gear Retrieval requirements

Option 1: Remove the gear retrieval requirement

Option 2: Modify the gear retrieval requirement to 7 days for all GOA areas

Suboption: 3 days in SEO

Alternative 3: Remove Adak CQE residency requirement for a period of five years.

Note: Alternatives 2 and 3 are not mutually exclusive.

The Council supports NMFS initiating rule making under its authority to remove notary requirements for IFQ participants, and the requirement for sablefish pot fishermen to use pot tags. In addition, the Council requests NMFS OLE clarify that they have the discretion to waive gear tending requirements (i.e., documented mechanical breakdown or a severe weather event). The Council requests that NMFS update the Council on these issues under the NMFS management report at a future meeting.

VOTE ON MOTION: Motion passed unanimously on April 14, 2021, at 10:18 a.m.

C1 Scallop SAFE

Council Staff: Jim Armstrong

Other Presenter: Tyler Jackson (ADFG, Scallop Plan Team Co-Chair)

Action Required:

1. Specify OFL/ABC
2. Review Scallop Plan Team Report

Summary: *The Scallop Plan Team met virtually in February to discuss the status and appropriate harvest level for weathervane scallops off Alaska. The Council’s Scientific and Statistical Committee and the Council will review the Plan Team’s report and set appropriate harvest limits for the 2021/2022 scallop season.*

After staff presentations and public comment, the following action was taken:

Ms. Bush made the following motion which was seconded by Mr. Cross:

The Council approves the scallop SAFE report and adopts the OFL of 1.284 million pounds (582 t) and the ABC of 1.156 million pounds (524 t), as recommended by the SSC.

VOTE ON MOTION: Motion passed unanimously on April 14, 2021, at 10:54 a.m.

C2 BSAI Halibut ABM

Council Staff: Dr. Diana Stram and Anna Henry
Other Presenters: Dr. Jim Ianelli (AFSC), Dr. Mike Downs (Wislow Research Associates)

Action Required: 1. Initial Review Draft EIS – review; action as necessary

Summary: *The Council will review an analysis to modify halibut bycatch limits that apply to most trawl vessels that fish in the BSAI and process their catch onboard. The major change being considered is to switch from a fixed bycatch limit to one that fluctuates up and down every year, based on BSAI halibut abundance.*

After staff presentations and public comment, the following actions were taken:

Ms. Baker made the following motion which was seconded by Mr. Mezirow:

The Council recommends releasing the analysis for final action after incorporating the SSC comments to the extent practicable. The Council revises the alternatives as follows. Additions from the October 2020 Council motion are in **bold and underlined** font and deletions are in ~~strikethrough~~ font.

Alternative 1: No Action

Alternative 2: A 3X2 look-up table with PSC limits that range from current PSC limit to 20% below current limit. PSC limit is determined annually based on **the most recent** survey values ~~from the most recent year available.~~

| | | EBS shelf trawl survey index (t) | |
|--|--------------------------|----------------------------------|---------------------------------|
| | | Low < 150,000 | High ≥ 150,000 |
| IPHC setline survey index in Area 4ABCDE (WPUE) | High ≥ 11,000 | 1,571 mt (10% below current) | 1,745 mt (current limit) |
| | Medium 8,000 – 10,999 | 1,483 mt (15% below current) | 1,571 mt (10% below current) |
| | Low < 8,000 | 1,396 mt (20% below current) | 1,483 mt (15% below current) |

Alternative 3: A 4X2 look-up table with PSC limits that range from 15% above current PSC limit to 30% below current limit. PSC limit is determined annually based on **the most recent** survey values ~~from the most recent year available.~~

| | | EBS shelf trawl survey index (t) | |
|--|--------------------------|----------------------------------|---------------------------------|
| | | Low < 150,000 | High ≥ 150,000 |
| IPHC setline survey index in Area 4ABCDE (WPUE) | High ≥ 11,000 | 1,745 mt (current limit) | 2,007 mt (15% above current) |
| | Medium 8,000 – 10,999 | 1,396 mt (20% below current) | 1,745 mt (current limit) |
| | Low 6,000-7,999 | 1,309 mt (25% below current) | 1,396 mt (20% below current) |
| | Very Low < 6,000 | 1,222 mt (30% below current) | 1,309 mt (25% below current) |

Alternative 4: A 4X2 look-up table with PSC limits that range from current PSC limit to 45% below current limit. PSC limit is determined annually based on the most recent survey values from the most recent year available.

| | | EBS shelf trawl survey index (t) | |
|--|--------------------------|----------------------------------|---------------------------------|
| | | Low < 150,000 | High ≥ 150,000 |
| IPHC setline survey index in Area 4ABCDE (WPUE) | High ≥ 11,000 | 1,396 mt (20% below current) | 1,745 mt (current limit) |
| | Medium 8,000 – 10,999 | 1,222 mt (30% below current) | 1,396 mt (20% below current) |
| | Low 6,000-7,999 | 1,047 mt (40% below current) | 1,222 mt (30% below current) |
| | Very Low < 6,000 | 960 mt (45% below current) | 1,047 mt (40% below current) |

Options (May apply to all action alternatives):

Option 1: PSC limit is determined using a 3-year rolling average of survey index values instead of the most recent survey value.

Option 2: **In the first year of implementation, the** PSC limit varies no more than (suboptions: i: 10% or ii: 15%) **per year from the status quo limit (1,745 mt).**

Option 3: Establish an annual limit of (suboptions: i: 80% or ii: 90%) of the PSC limit generated by the look-up table. In 3 of 7 years, the A80 sector may exceed the annual limit up to the PSC limit generated by the look-up table. If the A80 sector has exceeded the annual limit in 3 of the past 7 years, then (suboptions: 80% or 90%) of the PSC limit generated by the look-up table **the annual limit** is a hard cap for that year.

~~Option 4 (mutually exclusive with Options 2 and 3): PSC unused in one year may roll to the following year to increase the PSC limit generated by the lookup table up to 20%. Any PSC savings in excess of 20% would stay in the water.~~

Mr. Merrill made the following amendment which was seconded by Mr. Jensen:

Under Alternative 4, option 3 replace the end of the last sentence with “the annual limit is a hard cap for the following year.”

If the A80 sector has exceeded the annual limit in 3 of the past 7 years, then ~~(suboptions: 80% or 90%) of the PSC limit generated by the look-up table~~ **the annual limit** is a hard cap for ~~that the~~ **following** year.

VOTE ON AMENDMENT: Amendment passed with no objection on April 15, 2021, at 2:34 p.m.

Mr. Tweit made the following amendment which was seconded by Mr. Cross:

Add the following after Alternative 4.

Alternative 5: A 4X2 look-up table with PSC limits, a performance standard with an annual limit and a requirement for a halibut avoidance plan to be provided annually to the Council. The PSC limits range from 5% above current PSC limit to 15% below current limit. PSC limit is determined annually based on the most recent survey values and the annual limit is (i: 80% or ii: 90%) of the PSC limit generated by the look-up table.

| | | EBS shelf trawl survey index (t) | |
|---|--------------------------|--|--|
| | | Low < 150,000 | High ≥ 150,000 |
| IPHC setline survey index in Area 4ABCDE (WPUE) | High ≥ 11,000 | 1,745 mt (current limit) i: 1,396 mt ii: 1,571 mt | 1,832 mt (+5% current limit) i: 1,466 mt ii: 1,649 mt |
| | Medium 8,000 – 10,999 | 1,658 mt (-5% current limit) i: 1,326 mt ii: 1,492 mt | 1,745 mt (current limit) i: 1,396 mt ii: 1,571 mt |
| | Low 6,000-7,999 | 1,571 mt (-10% current limit) i: 1,256 mt ii: 1,413 mt | 1,658 mt (-5% current limit) i: 1,326 mt ii: 1,492 mt |
| | Very Low < 6,000 | 1,483 mt (-15% current limit) i: 1,187 mt ii: 1,335 mt | 1,571 mt (-10% current limit) i: 1,256 mt ii: 1,413 mt |

Halibut Avoidance Plan:

The Amendment 80 sector will develop a halibut avoidance plan that describes the incentives for vessel operators to avoid halibut bycatch under any condition of groundfish and halibut abundance in all years; rewards for avoiding halibut bycatch, penalties for failing to avoid halibut bycatch; how the avoidance plan will promote lower halibut bycatch rates; and how vessel operators will manage halibut bycatch below the performance standard.

This halibut avoidance plan would be required as part of the annual cooperative application, or by November 1 for any vessel participating in the Amendment 80 limited access sector.

VOTE ON AMENDMENT: Amendment failed 4/7 (Ms. Baker, Ms. Campbell, Mr. Down, Mr. Jensen, Ms. Kimball, Mr. Mezirow, and Mr. Kinneen voting in opposition) on April 15, 2021, at 3:13 p.m.

VOTE ON AMENDED MAIN MOTION: Motion passed 10/1 (Mr. Cross voting in opposition) on April 15, 2021, at 3:36 p.m.

D5 Salmon Bycatch (a) BS/GOA Genetics Reports (b) Pollock IPA Reports

Council Staff: Dr. Diana Stram

Other Presenters: Dr. Wes Larson, Dr. Patrick Barry, Dr. Chris Kondzela, Chuck Guthrie (AFSC); Jim Harmon (SeaShare); John Gruver (UCB); Stephanie Madsen, Austin Eastabrooks (APA); James Mize (Golden Alaska)

Action Required:

1. Salmon genetics 2018-2019 review for EBS and GOA – review
2. 2019-2020 reports (IPA reports) – review
3. Update from SeaShare - review

***Summary:** The Council will receive informational reports about where salmon that were caught as bycatch in Alaska trawl fisheries were originally from. Also, fishing industry representatives will update on their efforts to make sure that salmon bycatch remains low, and there will be an update on the salmon donation program.*

After staff presentations and public comment, the following action was taken:

Ms. Bush made the following motion which was seconded by Mr. Jensen:

The Council requests an update on progress to process more recent Chinook salmon scales and to update the age-length key used in the BSAI Chinook salmon AEQ model.

VOTE ON MOTION: Motion passed unanimously on April 16, 2021, at 12:37 p.m.

D6 Economic Data Reports

Council Staff: Sarah Marrinan

Other Presenters: Katie Latanich (consultant) and Dr. Steve Kasperski (AFSC, SSPT Chair)

Action Required:

1. Review the EDR stakeholder workshop reports
2. Review SSPT report and recommendations on EDRs
3. Consider any revisions to ERD motion

Summary: Revisions are being considered to the Council's current Economic Data Reporting programs, which require vessel owners in some fisheries to report information of interest to the Council (for example, the number of crew employed on a vessel). At this meeting, the Council will hear feedback from public workshops and recommendations from the Council's Social Science Planning team and decide whether to change what information is collected.

After staff presentations and public comment, the following action was taken:

Ms. Kimball made the following motion which was seconded by Mr. Mezirow:

The Council approves the following changes to the alternatives and options for the Economic Data Reporting analysis as follows (deletions are stricken/new text is underlined):

Alternative 1: Status Quo

Alternative 2: Make revisions, where needed, in the EDR sections of the crab or groundfish FMPs and in the EDR regulations (options are not mutually exclusive):

~~Component~~ Option 1: Revise authorizations for third party data verification audits under the existing programs and reduce burdens associated with this process. Amend regulatory language in all EDR programs to authorize third party data verification audits in cases of noncompliance.

~~Component~~ Option 2: Revise requirements for aggregation of data across submitters and blind formatting in all EDR programs to make those data aggregation and confidentiality protections comparable to the requirements under other data collection programs.

~~Component 3: Remove the GOA trawl EDR requirements.~~

~~Component 4~~ Option 3. Revise EDR collection period to every (options: 2 years; 3 years; 5 years)

Alternative 3: Remove EDR requirements for (options are not mutually exclusive):

Option 1. GOA Trawl

Option 2. Crab

Option 3. BSAI Amendment 80

Option 4. BSAI Amendment 91

The Council also requests AFSC staff move forward to implement the small changes to the EDR identified in the stakeholder workshops, March 2021 SSPT report (e.g., p. 5, 9), and/or others in consultation with stakeholders, which do not require regulatory changes but serve the purposes of reducing regulatory burden and increasing clarity and quality of data collection. The Council requests an update of those changes prior to implementation in the NMFS management report.

VOTE ON MOTION: Motion passed unanimously on April 16, 2021, at 2:42 p.m.

D7 Research Priorities

Council Staff: Jim Armstrong

Action Required: 1. Review/approve SSC recommendations on research priorities

Summary: *The SSC will review a large list of ongoing and future research projects that could generate useful information for managing fisheries off Alaska. Based on the SSC's review, the Council will designate a small number of these projects as their research priorities for the next three years, which should help attract funding for the projects.*

After staff presentations and public comment, the following action was taken:

Mr. Tweit made the following motion which was seconded by Mr. Down:

The Council adopts the research priorities as provided by the SSC, with the addition of the following language to the last sentence of research priority 712: as well as an evaluation of alternative sources or proxies for biological data as EM use increases". The Council endorses the SSC suggestions for changes to the process for developing research priorities, including incorporation of SSPT and FEP research priorities into the master list. The Council directs staff to communicate the priorities to the Secretary of Commerce, the Alaska Fisheries Science Center, in accordance with MSA mandates. The Council further directs staff to communicate the priorities with funding agencies and universities typically notified of research priority updates.

Prior to providing the SSC with their requested broad overlook of emerging management issues, Council staff should review the overview with the Council.

VOTE ON MOTION: Motion passed unanimously on April 16, 2021, at 3:38 p.m.

E1 Staff Tasking

Council Staff: David Witherell, Diana Evans

Action Required:

1. Review Committees and Plan Teams
2. Provide direction on tasking priorities and scheduling

Summary: *The Council will listen to public testimony about existing and new management measures that the public may be interested in and will provide feedback to staff and the Council Chair about how to prioritize staff work on existing and new projects. The Council will specifically discuss the different aspects of returning to in-person meetings.*

The Council will also review its committee membership, identify agendas for any upcoming committee meetings, and discuss plans for returning to in-person meetings.

After staff presentations and public comment, the following actions were taken:

EFH

Mr. Tweit made the following motion which was seconded by Mr. Down:

The Council endorses the SSC suggestions for the EFH five-year review, in particular:

- Evaluating the Species Distribution Models and the Fishing Effects Model separately and sequentially.

- Responding to the SSC detailed comments, to the extent practicable.
- Review of the draft EFH research plan in time for the next research priority review cycle.
- Ensuring that the five-year review remains a transparent process with ample public input opportunity, and retains an iterative approach.

The Council intends to consider the utility of a HAPC nomination process after receiving the summary report for the five-year review.

VOTE ON MOTION: Motion passed unanimously on April 16, 2021, at 5:41 p.m.

IFQ Tasking

Ms. Campbell made the following motion which was seconded by Jensen:

Move that we remove the hired masters discussion paper and the IFQ QS transfers discussion paper from the batter's box.

VOTE ON MOTION: Motion passed unanimously on April 16, 2021, at 5:55 p.m.

OECM

Mr. Tweit made the following motion which was seconded by Mr. Down:

The Council requests the Ecosystem Committee work with Council and Agency staff to confirm criteria, based on the latest FAO guidance, for the identification and recording of Other Effective Area-Based Conservation Measures (OECMs) in North Pacific federal waters. The Council further requests that the Committee assess which conservation areas in Council waters qualify for OECM status based on these criteria; and identify potential additional actions which could be considered if there was interest in qualifying areas that may not meet existing criteria. The Council would appreciate receiving this information prior to the October meeting.

VOTE ON MOTION: Motion passed unanimously on April 16, 2021, at 5:59 p.m.

Greenland Turbot

Mr. Down made the following motion which was seconded by Mr. Jensen:

The Council requests staff initiate a discussion paper to consider identifying longline pots as legal gear for Bering Sea Greenland turbot.

VOTE ON MOTION: Motion passed unanimously on April 16, 2021, at 6:13 p.m.

The Council adjourned on Friday, April 16, 2021 at 6:42 P.M.



TIME LOG

NPFMC April Council Meeting – 253rd Plenary Session

Meeting held via web conference Adobe Connect

April 12 - 16, 2021

Monday, April 12, 2021

A & B REPORTS

| | |
|--------------------|--|
| 4/12/2021 8:00 AM | Call to Order |
| 4/12/2021 8:10 AM | B2 report on E.O. 14008 |
| 4/12/2021 8:33 AM | B2 Public Testimony |
| 4/12/2021 8:33 AM | Stephanie Madsen and Chris Barrows |
| 4/12/2021 8:40 AM | Sommers Cole |
| 4/12/2021 8:49 AM | Heather Bauscher |
| 4/12/2021 8:52 AM | Jim Martin |
| 4/12/2021 8:54 AM | Jon Warrenchuk |
| 4/12/2021 9:07 AM | Linda Behnken |
| 4/12/2021 9:18 AM | Theresa Peterson |
| 4/12/2021 9:22 AM | Lauren Divine |
| 4/12/2021 9:40 AM | Break |
| 4/12/2021 9:50 AM | B1 Executive Director's Report – David Witherell |
| 4/12/2021 9:59 AM | B3 NMFS Management Report – written |
| 4/12/2021 10:00 AM | B3 EFH Five-year Review – NMFS, Gretchen Harrington |
| 4/12/2021 10:38 AM | B4 NOAA GC Report – written |
| 4/12/2021 10:41 AM | B5 ADF&G Report - written |
| 4/12/2021 10:42 AM | B6 USCG Report - written |
| 4/12/2021 10:43 AM | B7 USFWS Report – written |
| 4/12/2021 10:45 AM | B8 US Navy Report – John Mosher and Christopher Hunt |
| 4/12/2021 11:06 AM | B9 NIOSH Report - written |
| 4/12/2021 11:19 AM | B Public Comment |
| 4/12/2021 11:19 AM | Chad See |
| 4/12/2021 11:37 AM | Jim Ayers |
| 4/12/2021 11:40 AM | Lunch Break |
| 4/12/2021 12:46 PM | Hannah Heimbuch |
| 4/12/2021 12:50 PM | Jon Warrenchuk |
| 4/12/2021 1:00 PM | Stephanie Madsen |
| 4/12/2021 1:13 PM | Jamie Goen |
| 4/12/2021 1:19 PM | Alexus Kwachka |
| 4/12/2021 1:25 PM | Mary Peltola |
| 4/12/2021 1:55 PM | AP Report in Full (except for C2) – Ruth Christiansen |

D1 GOA Sablefish Pots 3-year review, IFQ Committee Report

| | |
|-------------------|---|
| 4/12/2021 2:20 PM | D1 Presentation – NPFMC staff, Sara Cleaver |
| 4/12/2021 3:41 PM | D1 Public Testimony |
| 4/12/2021 3:41 PM | Paul Clampitt |
| 4/12/2021 3:43 PM | Bob Alverson |
| 4/12/2021 3:51 PM | Alexander Stubbs |
| 4/12/2021 3:59 PM | Dave Franklin |
| 4/12/2021 4:02 PM | Nick Johanson |
| 4/12/2021 4:08 PM | Linda Behnken |
| 4/12/2021 4:16 PM | Megan O’Neil |
| 4/12/2021 4:20 PM | Recess |

Tuesday, April 12, 2021

D2 IFQ Access Opportunities

| | |
|--------------------|--|
| 4/13/2021 8:02 AM | D2 Presentation – NPFMC staff, Anna Henry |
| 4/13/2021 8:40 AM | D2 Public Testimony |
| 4/13/2021 8:40 AM | Craig Evens |
| 4/13/2021 8:46 AM | Danielle Ringer |
| 4/13/2021 8:59 AM | Casey Knight |
| 4/13/2021 9:06 AM | Byron Pfundt |
| 4/13/2021 9:09 AM | Jeff Peterson |
| 4/13/2021 9:19 AM | Megan O’Neil and Joe Short |
| 4/13/2021 9:26 AM | Duncan Fields |
| 4/13/2021 9:42 AM | Darius Kasprzak |
| 4/13/2021 10:00 AM | Malcolm Milne |
| 4/13/2021 10:06 AM | Alexus Kwachka |
| 4/13/2021 10:14 AM | Theresa Peterson |
| 4/13/2021 10:27 AM | Natasha Hayden |
| 4/13/2021 10:39 AM | Linda Behnken |
| 4/13/2021 10:49 AM | Jerry Dahl |
| 4/13/2021 10:54 AM | Josh Wisniewski |
| 4/13/2021 10:59 AM | Scott Kandoll |
| 4/13/2021 11:03 AM | Hannah Heimbuch |
| 4/13/2021 11:10 AM | Break |
| 4/13/2021 11:21 AM | D2 Council Action |
| 4/13/2021 11:40 PM | Lunch Break |

D3 RQE Funding Mechanism

| | |
|--------------------|---|
| 4/13/2021 12:45 PM | D3 Presentation – NPFMC staff, Sarah Marrinan, SeaGrant Fellow Angela Forristall, and NMFS, Kurt Iverson |
| 4/13/2021 1:44 PM | Enforcement Committee Report – NPFMC staff, Jon McCracken |
| 4/13/2021 2:05 PM | D3 Public Testimony |
| 4/13/2021 2:06 PM | Jim Martin |

4/13/2021 2:09 PM Forrest Braden
4/13/2021 2:20 PM Break
4/13/2021 2:31 PM **D3 Mr. Mezirow Motion**

D4 IFQ Committee Report

4/13/2021 2:57 PM NPFMC staff, Sarah Marrinan
4/13/2021 3:13 PM **D4 Public Testimony**
4/13/2021 3:14 PM Paul Clampitt
4/13/2021 3:23 PM Nick Johanson
4/13/2021 3:24 PM Bernie Burkholder
4/13/2021 3:27 PM Ian Knuckey
4/13/2021 3:41 PM Layton Lockett
4/13/2021 3:49 PM Dave Fraser
4/13/2021 3:51 PM Tim McGuinness
4/13/2021 3:52 PM Linda Behnken
4/13/2021 4:00 PM Recess

Wednesday, April 14, 2021

4/14/2021 8:02 AM Call to order
4/14/2021 8:02 AM **SSC Report in Full** – AFSC, Dr. Anne Hollowed
4/14/2021 9:32 AM Break
4/14/2021 9:45 AM **D4 Ms. Campbell Motion**

C1 Scallop SAFE

4/14/2021 10:32 AM **C1 Presentation** – NPFMC staff, Jim Armstrong, NMFS, Scott Miller and Scallop PT Co-Chair, Tyler Jackson
4/14/2021 10:50 AM **C1 Ms. Bush Motion**

C2 BSAI Halibut ABM

4/14/2021 10:57 AM **C2 Presentation** – NPFMC staff, Dr. Diana Stram, Anna Henry, and Dr. Mike Downs of Northern Economics
4/14/2021 11:39 AM Lunch Break
4/14/2021 12:45 PM C2 Presentation Continued
4/14/2021 2:13 PM Break
4/14/2021 2:25 PM **C2 AP Report** – Matt Upton
4/14/2021 2:35 PM **C2 Public Testimony**
4/14/2021 2:35 PM Jim Martin
4/14/2021 2:38 PM Josh Wisniewski
4/14/2021 2:41 PM John Gauvin
4/14/2021 3:06 PM Representative Jonathan Kreiss-Tomkins
4/14/2021 3:15 PM Heather Bauscher
4/14/2021 3:20 PM Eric Jodan
4/14/2021 3:25 PM Jon Warrenchuk

| | |
|-------------------|------------------|
| 4/14/2021 3:31 PM | Katie Russell |
| 4/14/2021 3:35 PM | Marc Carrel |
| 4/14/2021 3:37 PM | Woody Cyr |
| 4/14/2021 3:40 PM | Karen Pletnikoff |
| 4/14/2021 3:46 PM | Chris Woodley |
| 4/14/2021 4:08 PM | Mark Guillory |
| 4/14/2021 4:08 PM | Recess |

Thursday, April 15, 2021

C2 BSAI Halibut ABM

| | |
|--------------------|--|
| 4/15/2021 8:00 AM | Call to order – C2 Public Testimony Continued |
| 4/15/2021 8:02 AM | Joel Jackson |
| 4/15/2021 8:10 AM | Mark Fina |
| 4/15/2021 8:30 AM | Alexus Kwachka |
| 4/15/2021 8:36 AM | Bob Alverson |
| 4/15/2021 8:43 AM | Paul Wilkins |
| 4/15/2021 8:54 AM | Forest Braden |
| 4/15/2021 9:00 AM | Todd Loomis |
| 4/15/2021 9:12 AM | Phyllis Swetzof |
| 4/15/2021 9:17 AM | Julie Raymond-Yakoubian |
| 4/15/2021 9:19 AM | James Ayers |
| 4/15/2021 9:23 AM | Mateo Paz-Soldan |
| 4/15/2021 9:30 AM | TJ Durnan |
| 4/15/2021 9:34 AM | Linda Behnken |
| 4/15/2021 9:43 AM | Natasha Hayden |
| 4/15/2021 10:04 AM | Sam Wright |
| 4/15/2021 10:07 AM | Dave Kubiak |
| 4/15/2021 10:11 AM | Linda Larson |
| 4/15/2021 10:29 AM | Arne Fuglvog |
| 4/15/2021 10:39 AM | Mary Beth Tooley and Jason Anderson |
| 4/15/2021 10:43 AM | Erik Velsko |
| 4/15/2021 10:48 AM | Becca Robbins Gisclair |
| 4/15/2021 10:56 AM | Darin VanderPol |
| 4/15/2021 11:04 AM | Lauren Divine |
| 4/15/2021 11:10 AM | Peter Thompson |
| 4/15/2021 11:13 AM | Heather McCarty |
| 4/15/2021 11:25 AM | Theresa Peterson |
| 4/15/2021 11:32 AM | Ryan Horwath |

C2 BSAI Halibut ABM

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|--------------------|---------------|
| 4/15/2021 11:37 PM | Lunch Break |
| 4/15/2021 12:37 PM | Jeff Kaufmann |
| 4/15/2021 12:41 PM | Chris Tran |
| 4/15/2021 12:46 PM | Karen Gillis |

| | |
|--------------------|-------------------------|
| 4/15/2021 12:53 PM | Angel Drobnica |
| 4/15/2021 12:56 PM | Peggy Parker |
| 4/15/2021 1:03 PM | Kavik Anderson |
| 4/15/2021 1:07 PM | Malcolm Milne |
| 4/15/2021 1:16 PM | Nancy Hillstrand |
| 4/15/2021 1:20 PM | Break |
| 4/15/2021 1:55 PM | Ms. Baker Motion |

D5 Salmon Bycatch (a) Chinook/Chum Genetics Reports (b) Pollock IPA Reports

| | |
|-------------------|---|
| 4/15/2021 3:39 PM | D5a Introduction, NPFMC staff, Dr. Diana Stram |
| 4/15/2021 3:45 PM | D5a Presentation on Bycatch Genetics – Dr. Wes Larson |
| 4/15/2021 4:10 PM | Recess |

Friday, April 15, 2021

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|--------------------|--|
| 4/16/2021 8:00 AM | Call to Order |
| 4/16/2021 8:05 AM | D5a Chum Genetics Presentation – Dr. Chris Kondzela |
| 4/16/2021 8:26 AM | D5a Chinook Genetics Presentation – Dr. Chuck Guthrie |
| 4/16/2021 8:54 AM | D5b CV IPA Report – John Gruver |
| 4/16/2021 9:01 AM | D5b CP IPA Report – Stephanie Madsen and Austin Estabrooks |
| 4/16/2021 9:28 AM | D5b MSSIP Report – James Mize |
| 4/16/2021 9:43 AM | D5b SeaShare Presentation – Dr. Jim Harmon |
| 4/16/2021 10:00 AM | Break |
| 4/16/2021 10:12 AM | D5 Public Testimony |
| 4/16/2021 10:12 AM | Heather Bauscher |
| 4/16/2021 10:20 AM | Eric Jordan |
| 4/16/2021 10:33 AM | Woody Cyr |
| 4/16/2021 10:36 AM | Brooke Woods |
| 4/16/2021 10:45 AM | Mary Peltola |
| 4/16/2021 10:54 AM | Julie Raymond Yakoubian |
| 4/16/2021 10:57 AM | Steve Martell |
| 4/16/2021 10:59 AM | Jesse Remund |
| 4/16/2021 11:02 AM | Lexi Hackett |
| 4/16/2021 11:06 AM | Melissa Johnson |
| 4/16/2021 11:11 AM | Jim Ayers |
| 4/16/2021 11:15 AM | Raychelle Daniel |
| 4/16/2021 11:20 AM | Karen Gillis |
| 4/16/2021 11:25 AM | Becca Robbins Gisclair |
| 4/16/2021 11:29 AM | Rose Fosdick |
| 4/16/2021 11:35 PM | Break |
| 4/16/2021 12:22 PM | D5 Continued - questions |
| 4/16/2021 12:27 PM | D5 Ms. Bush Motion |

D6 Economic Data Reports

| | |
|--------------------|---|
| 4/16/2021 12:40 PM | D6 Presentation EDR and SSPT – NPFMC staff, Sarah Marrinan |
|--------------------|---|

4/16/2021 12:53 PM **D6 EDR Summary of Themes** – Facilitator, Katie Latanich
4/16/2021 1:18 PM **D6 SSPT Report** – NMFS staff, Dr. Steve Kasperski
4/16/2021 2:25 PM **D6 Public Testimony**
4/16/2021 2:25 PM Jason Anderson
4/16/2021 2:27 PM Rebecca Skinner
4/16/2021 2:35 PM **D6 Ms. Kimball Motion**
4/16/2021 2:43 PM Break

D7 Research Priorities

4/16/2021 2:53 PM **D7 Presentation** – NPFMC staff, Jim Armstrong
4/16/2021 3:11 PM **D7 Public Testimony**
4/16/2021 3:12 PM Julie Raymond-Yakoubian
4/16/2021 3:16 PM Lauren Divine
4/16/2021 3:24 PM Megan Williams
4/16/2021 3:29 PM **D7 Mr. Tweit Motion**

E1 Staff Tasking

4/16/2021 3:44 PM **E Overview Presentation** – ED, David Witherell
4/16/2021 4:06 PM **E Public Testimony**
4/16/2021 4:07 PM Mike Alfieri
4/16/2021 4:10 PM Craig Lowenberg
4/16/2021 4:12 PM David Little
4/16/2021 4:16 PM Erik Velsko
4/16/2021 4:20 PM Alexis Kawchka
4/16/2021 4:29 PM Jon Warrenchuk
4/16/2021 4:32 PM Heather Mann
4/16/2021 4:37 PM Chad See
4/16/2021 4:40 PM Chris Woodley
4/16/2021 4:42 PM Kavik Anderson
4/16/2021 4:46 PM Hannah Heimbuch
4/16/2021 4:49 PM Theresa Peterson
4/16/2021 4:59 PM Arne Fuglvog
4/16/2021 5:01 PM Linda Behnken
4/16/2021 5:06 PM Julie Bonney
4/16/2021 5:10 PM Ruth Christiansen
4/16/2021 5:12 PM Julie Raymond-Yakoubian
4/16/2021 5:18 PM Rebecca Skinner and Paddy O'Donnell
4/16/2021 5:22 PM Heather McCarty
4/16/2021 5:26 PM Malcolm Milne
4/16/2021 5:40 PM **E1 Mr. Tweit Motion - EFH**
4/16/2021 5:50 PM **E1 Ms. Campbell Motion – IFQ Tasking**
4/16/2021 5:56 PM **E1 Mr. Tweit Motion – OECM**
4/16/2021 6:05 PM **E1 Mr. Down Motion – Greenland Turbot**
4/16/2021 6:14 PM E staff tasking continued
4/16/2021 6:42 PM Meeting Adjourned

April 2021 Newsletter

Appointments and Call for Nominations

Interim Advisory Panel appointment

Between the February and April Council meetings, the Council Chair appointed Marissa Wilson to the **Advisory Panel**, on an interim basis until the end of the calendar year, to fill the vacancy left by Jamie O'Connor's resignation.

Call for Nominations

The Council is soliciting nominations for the reconstituted **Community Engagement Committee (CEC)**. The Terms of Reference for that Committee. The committee will continue to develop tools and recommendations to facilitate improved communication and engagement between rural communities and tribes for the Council, but not conduct community engagement itself, nor provide fishery management policy advice to the Council. Staff will contact all existing CEC members who are interested in continuing on, however the Council is also interested in expanding the CEC to solicit up to an additional two members representative of small communities off the road system. Interested members of the public should send a letter of interest to Kate Haapala (kate.haapala@noaa.gov) by May 28, 2021. The timing of the first committee meeting is uncertain.

The Council is also accepting nominations for a pollock trawl CP representative on the Council's **Fishery Monitoring Advisory Committee (FMAC)** (formerly the Observer Advisory Committee). The FMAC convenes industry members, agency representatives, observers, and observer/EM coverage providers to advise the Council on issues related to all types of monitoring in Alaskan fisheries. Please submit a letter of interest to Kate Haapala (kate.haapala@noaa.gov) by April 30, 2021, as the next FMAC meeting will take place virtually on May 17th.

Written Public Comment Changes

The Council has approved a number of changes to the current written public comment procedures. The Council process should be a welcoming environment for all public, and the comment process should encourage people to be respectful when commenting. Input from written comments is exceedingly valuable to the Council process, to understand the diversity of perspectives on potential Council action. At the same time, there have recently been instances of profanity or threats being included among the comments. Without moderation to filter out inappropriate content, the comment section can quickly begin to read like a blog with comments on comments, and disrespectful dialogue. As a result, staff will implement the following changes:

- Post written comment policy on Council website and summarize on eAgenda
 - Clarify one comment per person per agenda item; however an individual can submit comments on behalf of their organization as well as on behalf of themselves

- Consistent with the **Department of Commerce policy**: no vulgar language, personal attacks, offensive terms targeting protected classes, promoting service or products, non-fisheries-related (off topic), unsupported accusations
- Allow staff to remove comments that are inconsistent with policy
- Allow staff to sort comments to the appropriate agenda item as practicable (comments that are not associated with an agenda item would go in staff tasking)
- Changes to commenting period
 - Open commenting later, once materials post online
 - Close commenting earlier (Wednesday or Thursday before the start of the meeting) to allow staff to review comments for adherence to the policy
- Do not display comments publicly until after comment deadline closes

Please email npfmc.admin@noaa.gov if you have questions.

Scallops

The Council reviewed the 2021 Alaska Weathervane Scallop SAFE report and specified scallop ABC for the 2021/2022 fishing year at 1.156 million pounds (524 t) of shucked scallop meats, a level equivalent to 90% of OFL, which is 1.284 million pounds (582 t). The federal specification of scallop OFL and ABC applies to all waters off Alaska, while guideline harvest levels (GHLs) for the State's scallop registration areas and districts are established by the Alaska Department of Fish and Game.

To reduce review time, the Scallop Plan Team prepared an abbreviated SAFE report this year while still providing the most recent information on stock status, scallop harvest, and socioeconomic conditions.

According to the Scallop SAFE report, total harvest off Alaska in the 2019/20 season was 246,900 lb (112 t) of shucked scallop meats, and preliminary harvest for the 2020/21 season is 226,130 lb (103 t). Guideline harvest levels were achieved in the Kodiak Northeast, Kodiak Shelikof, and Kodiak Southwest districts. COVID precautions limited air travel for scallop crew members and left scallop beds in Dutch Harbor unfished by the fleet.

Restaurant demand for scallops was greatly reduced in 2020 and scallop prices were down by 7%. These factors, and the travel restrictions that limited harvest, contributed to the lowest total first wholesale revenue historically at \$2.359 million. Port landings of scallops in Alaska were limited to Kodiak and Yakutat.

Since OFL and ABC have not changed for the scallop fishery for several years, the SSC discussed setting multi-year specifications, as is done for some stocks in the groundfish and crab SAFE reports. The Council cannot follow that model yet for scallops since the SAFE report must still be produced every year. To address this, the Council may consider an FMP amendment that would allow the scallop SAFE to be prepared less frequently and would facilitate multiyear specifications of scallop OFL/ABC.



Harvesting scallops; courtesy ADFG

BSAI Halibut Abundance-based Management of the Amendment 80 PSC Limit

The Council reviewed and made some adjustments to options for a proposed management measure to link the Pacific halibut prohibited species catch (PSC) limit for the Amendment 80 commercial groundfish trawl sector in the BSAI to halibut abundance. The objective of linking the PSC limit to abundance is to minimize halibut PSC to the extent practicable under the Magnuson-Stevens Fishery Conservation and Management Act (MSA) National Standard 9 and to achieve optimum yield in the BSAI groundfish fisheries on a continuing basis under MSA National Standard 1. The action should provide incentives for the Amendment 80 sector to minimize halibut mortality at all times. Achievement of the objectives could promote conservation of the halibut stock and may result in additional harvest opportunities for the directed halibut fishery. The Council reviewed a preliminary draft Environmental Impact Statement (DEIS) including a Social Impact Assessment (SIA).

The Council modified some of the options which apply to the action alternatives, but did not select a Preliminary Preferred Alternative (PPA) at this time, electing instead to make the determination of a Preferred Alternative at final action. There are four alternatives under consideration: a no action alternative (Alternative 1, that keeps the status quo Amendment 80 PSC limit at 1,745 t) and three action alternatives. Under Alternatives 2 through 4, the Amendment 80 sector halibut PSC limits would be prescribed annually based on look up tables where the level of the PSC limit (metric tons of halibut mortality) is determined based on halibut abundance using a combination of two survey index values: the EBS shelf trawl survey index and the IPHC setline survey index in Area 4ABCDE. The PSC limits in Alternatives 2 through 4 establish values that range, depending on halibut abundance, from 45 percent below the current limit to 15 percent above the current PSC limit.

Options that are applied to the action alternatives were modified by the Council and now include the following:

Option 1: PSC limit is determined using a 3-year rolling average of survey index values instead of the most recent survey value.

Option 2: In the first year of implementation, the PSC limit varies no more than (i: 10% or ii: 15%) from the status quo limit (1,745 mt).

Option 3: Establish an annual limit of (i: 80% or ii: 90%) of the PSC limit generated by the look-up table. In 3 of 7 years, the A80 sector may exceed the annual limit up to the PSC limit generated by the look-up table. If the A80 sector has exceeded the annual limit in 3 of the past 7 years, then the annual limit is a hard cap for the following year.

After extensive review and discussion, the Council recommended releasing the analysis for final action after addressing the SSC comments to the extent practicable. Some of SSC's major recommendations include the following: to use the closed loop halibut modeling effort for context only (rather than in a predictive capacity); to revise assessment of directed halibut catch impacts using a range of values between 0-1; to

provide some additional information on the spatial distribution of PSC historically by area within Area 4 and the historical and potential impacts on the directed halibut fisheries; and to provide additional information on halibut encounter rates in the A80 sector.

The DEIS will be revised and published over the summer. A 45-day comment period will be provided with a summary of public comments provided to the Council at final action. Final action is scheduled for December 2021. Staff contacts are Diana Stram and Anna Henry.

Sablefish Pots and IFQ Committee Report

The Council received reports reviewing the Gulf of Alaska sablefish pot fishery and recommendations from the IFQ committee. The GOA sablefish pot review summarized 3-4 years of fishery data as well as information gathered from speaking with fishery participants, managers, and stock assessment scientists. The review and subsequent testimony highlighted aspects of the fishery management that could be improved. The IFQ Committee considered prioritization of this and other IFQ-related issues.

 Collapsible black cod pots. (Photo by Alexander Stubbs)

After receiving the GOA sablefish pot review, Committee report and public testimony, the Council initiated an analysis to revise several regulatory components of the IFQ Program. The Council included two purpose and need statements as the basis for the analysis. The first highlights the need to increase operational efficiency and reduce administrative burden in the GOA sablefish fishery. The [motion](#) initiated analysis of alternatives and elements including requirements on biodegradable panels, pot gear configuration, gear retrieval, and pot limits. One element of the proposed analysis would also authorize jig gear as a legal gear type for harvesting sablefish IFQ.

This motion also included a separate (but not mutually exclusive) purpose and need statement and an action alternative to remove the Adak community quota entity (CQE) residency requirement for five years to provide more opportunity for the Adak CQE to fully harvest its allocation.

The Council identified the regulatory changes identified in the omnibus analysis as its priority with regards to IFQ program changes. In order to provide for as quick an implementation as possible, the Council may choose to bifurcate the omnibus analytical package at a future date if some actions prove complicated. While testimony highlighted interest in also prioritizing an action to allow release of small sablefish, the Council has chosen to prioritize the actions that seemed to be most straightforward before proceeding with further action on the small sablefish analysis.

The Council's motion also included a statement of support for NMFS under its authority to initiate rule making to remove the requirement for sablefish pot fishermen to use pot tags. The Council also requested NMFS Office of Law Enforcement clarify that they have the discretion to waive gear tending requirements in the case of a documented mechanical breakdown or a severe weather event.

Additionally, the Council discussed other IFQ items and took action to remove the hired masters discussion paper and the IFQ QS transfers discussion paper from the list of untasked/ unscheduled items on the three-meeting outlook. This means a new motion would be needed to re-initiate these or similar analyses.

Staff contacts are Sara Cleaver and Sarah Marrinan.

IFQ Access Opportunities

The Council reviewed an expanded discussion paper on an IFQ Access pool of halibut and sablefish quota share that would facilitate entry level opportunities for crew and owner-operators, and took no further action. The discussion paper outlined an access pool that would target entry level fishermen, defined as those owning less than 5,000 pounds of combined QS in 2019 values (QS:IFQ ratio). Participation in the access pool would be temporary, access pool QS units could not be sold, and fishing of the annual IFQ would be subject to observer and cost recovery fees. The QS in the access pool would be sourced from either: (1) newly created QS units equal to 1% of 2019 QS for halibut and sablefish in all IFQ areas, or (2) a deduction of 0.5% or 1% on all QS transfers. An entity such as a Regional Fishery Association or other existing or newly formed regional association would receive and distribute the access pool allocation based on criteria established by the entity and approved by the Council.

The Council recognized that barriers to entry and access in the IFQ program are difficult issues that were identified in the program review and have been challenging for the Council to address. However, the Council was concerned that the approach in the discussion paper would reallocate quota share from second generation participants who have worked hard to invest in the IFQ program under the current regulatory structure, and would provide no guarantee of a viable path to ownership for access pool recipients. Given the number of uncertain variables and outstanding issues at this stage, the Council determined it would require considerable staff resources to develop an access pool into a workable program. The Council encouraged stakeholders to work to refine a proposal that would have more broad-based support in the industry, focusing on alternative funding mechanisms, a feasibility study to assess potential paths to ownership, and to define eligibility criteria examples that would more specifically identify the targeted recipients.

Staff Contact: Anna Henry

Recreational Quota Entity Funding Mechanism

After reviewing a discussion paper outlining a stamp program as a potential funding mechanism for the recently-formed charter halibut recreational quota entity (RQE), the Council initiated an analysis to describe potential methods for the collection of fees from charter vessel operators and a mechanism to distribute those funds to the RQE. The RQE would be able to utilize funds to purchase additional halibut quota from willing sellers in the commercial sector, and the increased quota would loosen charter management restrictions such as bag limits, day of the week closures, and size restrictions for charter anglers. The Council requested that the analysis should explore a range of potential fee collection methods currently used for North Pacific fisheries and similar programs.

Legislation has been proposed by the U.S. Congress to grant the Council and NMFS the authority to develop and implement a fee collection mechanism for charter vessel operators that could be used by the RQE to fund administrative costs and purchase of halibut quota share as specified in the RQE program. In anticipation of the potential enactment of this legislation, the Council would begin the analytical process to explore the administrative requirements necessary to implement a fee collection program for charter vessel operators.

Salmon Genetics and Avoidance Plans

The Council received a number of status reports related to BSAI and GOA salmon bycatch, including genetic stock of origin reports for chum and Chinook encountered as bycatch in both the GOA and BSAI, eastern Bering Sea pollock fishery incentive plan agreement (IPA) reports, and an update from the SeaShare food donation program. These annual reports were provided for two years because the April 2020 Council meeting was cancelled.

Geneticists from the NMFS AFSC Auke Bay lab provided reports on the stock of origin of Chinook and chum salmon bycatch for the 2018-2019 Bering Sea pollock fishery, the GOA pollock fishery, GOA rockfish (and arrowtooth) catcher vessel trawl fishery and the GOA non-pollock catcher processor trawl fisheries. Results were presented at a finer scale spatial and temporal resolution than in past years. On average in the Bering Sea, the relative proportion of western Alaskan rivers represented in the bycatch increased from low levels in 2017 to contributions more consistent with previous years. There were proportional declines in the contribution from British Columbian stocks, from previous estimates. Chum bycatch continues to be dominated by Asian-origin fish. Age-specific stock composition results are lacking for Chinook but a backlog of scales for both Chinook and chum is being processed for ageing.

The Council requested prioritization for ageing backlogged Chinook scales in order to update the age-length key used in the BSAI Chinook adult equivalence (AEQ) model, and as soon as that information is available, requested an update of the model and the analysis of the impact of bycatch on Western Alaskan Chinook stocks. The Council looks forward to continued progress updates from the inter-agency Salmon Bycatch Workgroup on work to improve the efficiency of stock identification and other innovations to improve information available for management.

Per regulation, eastern Bering Sea pollock IPA representatives provide written annual reports on their measures to reduce and avoid Chinook and chum bycatch. The reports from all three sectors (inshore catcher vessel, catcher processor, and mothership) are posted online, and representatives gave verbal presentations to the Council. A voluntary update was provided by SeaShare, a non-profit food donation program which is authorized to accept salmon and halibut bycatch for hunger relief. This organization continues extensive efforts to provide fish to communities across Alaska. The Council appreciates ongoing work by the industry and the donation program.

Staff contact is Diana Stram.

Economic Data Reporting and the Social Science Planning Team

At this meeting the Council received reports and presentations on a series of stakeholder and SSPT meetings that have taken place to assist the Council in revisions to its EDR Programs, and made adjustments to its outstanding analysis. The Council had mostly recently reviewed its EDR revisions analytical package

Amendment 80 sector gross revenue and operating costs as reported with EDR data; Figure 9.4 from the SAFE Report: Economic Status of the Groundfish Fisheries Off of Alaska, 2019



at the Jan/Feb 2020 Council meeting, where they included an alternative to consider removing the EDR reporting requirements. At this meeting, in response to the SSPT recommendations as well as information provided through the workshops, the Council slightly amended its alternative set to break that alternative into options for the four specific programs (i.e., GOA trawl, Crab, BSAI Amendment 80, BSAI Amendment 91). This provides analysts more explicit direction to evaluate, by fishery, what information would be no longer available if an EDR was discontinued. This analysis will return to the Council with the possibility of final action, at which time the Council can speak to its intention for each EDR. The Council can also respond to the SSPT recommendation, and consider whether the EDR purpose and need statement originally created by the Council for each fishery is still relevant.

The Council has had two separate EDR actions listed on its three-meeting outlook; at this meeting, the Council stated that it considered its EDR “issue 2” (motion from April 2019) to be fulfilled by the SSPT and stakeholder workshops process. Content gathered during the discussions with stakeholders and SSPT will be informative for the outstanding EDR analysis, and analysts may fold in any issues highlighted in the “issue 2” motion to the extent helpful.

The SSPT also identified a number of smaller changes to BSAI crab and Amendment 80 forms that may reduce burden and increase clarity and quality of data collection derived from the EDRs. These modifications do not require regulatory changes. The Council requested AFSC staff consult stakeholders to address these issues and provide an update in the NMFS management report of any changes prior to implementation.

Staff contact is Sarah Marrinan.

Research Priorities

The Council adopted research priorities for 2022-2024 as recommended by the SSC, including their suggested process changes for future reviews that incorporate SSPT and FEP research priorities. The SSC’s recommendations updated the comprehensive list of projects maintained on the Council’s online [research priorities database](#) as well as the projects the SSC is recommending for the “Top Ten” projects in need of funding (Table below). The SSC will provide their overall process recommendations at the June 2021 Council meeting and as directed by the Council, staff will develop a graphic to improve transparency about the overall review process including points (onramps) for stakeholder input. In accordance with the MSA, the Council’s research priorities will be transmitted to the Secretary of Commerce and the Alaska Fishery Science Center, and will also be shared with a number of universities and funding entities in order to inspire progress on research in support of its management decisions.

The NPFMC’s research priorities cover a wide range of topics and are organized and managed within a publicly accessible database. Priority ranking of research topics is done to emphasize the correspondence of research to the Council’s time horizon of management concerns. The Top Ten list of Council research priorities identified at the April 2021 Council meeting is provided on the Council’s website (<https://www.npfmc.org/research-priorities/>).

Annual Community Engagement and Participation Overview



At the April 2021 Council meeting, the SSC received a presentation on a new report produced by the Alaska Fisheries Science Center – the Annual Community Engagement and Participation Overview (ACEPO). ACEPO is an annual report that provides social and economic information at the community level for those fishing communities which are substantially dependent on, or engaged in, the North Pacific Groundfish and Crab fisheries.

The SSC commended the authors on producing a community-level analysis that is guided by NPFMC management objectives and National Standard 8, and felt it would be useful resource for staff in the preparation of FMP and program review analyses as well as for the public. Because ACEPO will be updated annually, the SSC also recommended that future iterations incorporate highly engaged communities outside of Alaska and prioritize adding additional information would be useful resource for staff in the preparation of FMP and program review analyses as well as for the public.

Staff contact is: kate.haapala@noaa.gov

Staff Tasking

The Council discussed the relative priority and scheduling of previously tasked projects, and identified new tasking. The revised [3 meeting outlook](#) reflects this guidance. Council meetings, including Plan Team and Committee meetings, will be held virtually through September 2021 at least. The Council provided feedback about returning to in-person meetings, and staff will develop a more detailed proposal to discuss in June. Staff will include an option for remote testimony during the transition back to in-person, but members cannot participate remotely unless that group's meeting is entirely virtual. The Council is currently contemplating holding the first in-person meeting in October 2021.

The Council was briefed on staff progress on implementing the Council's community engagement Community Engagement Committee (CEC)'s recommendations as endorsed by the Council in February 2021. Responsibilities for a Rural Fisheries Community and Tribal Liaison role have been assigned to Dr. Kate Haapala, on Council staff. It is envisioned that in that role, she will also support the reconstituted CEC and work with NMFS to receive and understand the results of Tribal Consultation meetings as early in the process as possible. Staff will attend a virtual cultural awareness training program later this year, in advance of similar training for Council members.

The Council also heard the report of the Council's Executive Committee. The Committee approved revisions to the AP and SSC handbooks that were reviewed with those groups in February, and affirmed the current practice for recording Council meetings during virtual, and archiving recordings. Additionally, the Council approved a number of [changes](#) to the current written public comment policy.

The Council directed staff to write the following letters:

- To the U.S. Navy, thanking them for the presentation on the upcoming Northern Edge exercises in the Gulf of Alaska, and requesting a report later this year on how the exercises transpired.
- To the Federal Communications Commission (FCC) and the USCG, in favor of allowing AIS to be used to identify fishing gear locations.

The Council also provided the following additional direction:

- The Council **tasked** a discussion paper to consider identifying longline pots as legal gear for Bering Sea Greenland turbot.
- The Council **requested** the Ecosystem Committee to assess the FAO guidance on Other Effective Area-Based Conservation Measures (OECMs) and how the Alaska fishery conservation areas would qualify, or if they do not, what potential additional actions might be considered.
- The Council **endorsed** the SSC suggestions regarding the agency's approach to preparing the EFH 5-year review for 2022, including additional SSC review of various components as they are being developed. The Council also identified its intent to consider the utility of a HAPC nomination process after receiving the full 5-year review summary report (currently scheduled for June 2022).
- In response to comments raised by the SSC, the Council directed the Groundfish Plan Teams to include an agenda item in September to review spatial distribution data on blackspotted-rougheye rockfish, potential tools to augment the current maximum subarea species catch management, and to identify priority areas for further research.

The Council appreciates notification of collaborative efforts underway by industry participants to find solutions to avoid stranding Pacific cod in the Aleutian Islands, and to develop a proposal for access opportunities to the IFQ fisheries that address concerns raised at this meeting.

Finally, the Council discussed the work of upcoming Committees, and approved the revised Terms of Reference for the reconstituted CEC. The Council issued a call for nominations for members of a reconstituted CEC, and for a new member of the Fishery Monitoring Advisory Committee.

Northern Edge 2021 Exercises

Representatives from the U.S. Navy updated the Council on upcoming Northern Edge 2021 joint training exercise in the Gulf of Alaska, scheduled to occur May 3-14, and the Navy's marine species monitoring projects. The Council appreciated the presentations and looks forward to a report back on the results of the May 2021 training exercise and ongoing Chinook salmon research.

The Northern Edge exercise is a joint forces training involving Air Force, Navy, Marine Corps, Army, and the Coast Guard. The exercise is biennial, occurring in odd years, and last occurred in May 2019. The at-sea Navy events occur in the Temporary Maritime Activities Area (TMAA; see map). During the exercise, there are no restrictions on civilian navigation to fishing vessels. The TMAA is beyond 12 nautical miles from the coast, and most at-sea activities occur far offshore and avoid other vessel traffic. The exercise this year is expected to be similar in size to the Northern Edge 2019 exercise. Extensive mitigations that have been developed in coordination with NMFS include:

- Use of mitigation zones for sonar and weapons activities, with trained marine species lookouts
- Minimize use of live explosive during weapons training
- No use of explosive during training activities in the Portlock Bank area
- Coordinate with regulatory agencies for adaptive management
- Conduct population surveys and other Marine Species Monitoring projects.

Presenters also described the U.S. Navy's Marine Species Monitoring Program, and in particular, a research project on telemetry and genetic identification of Chinook salmon that overlap with U.S. Navy training area. The ongoing research identifies specific Chinook salmon populations in the training areas using genetic tissue samples, and through telemetry, provides data on Chinook salmon migration routes including on-shelf vs off-shelf migration while returning to river systems of origin (see insert).

Staff contact is Jon McCracken.



Essential Fish Habitat Review

EFH 5-year review

The Council and SSC reviewed the work plan for the 2022 Essential Fish Habitat 5-year review. The document described work to date and plans for completing the 5-year review. The report again laid out the Agency priorities for EFH review including EFH descriptions and maps, fishing effects, non-fishing effects, EFH conservation and enhancement, prey species updates, and research and information needs. The schedule calls for review of these components by the stock assessment authors between March and August 2021, groundfish and crab plan teams in September 2021, and final review by stock authors in January 2022. A summary report on these components will then be presented to the Council in June 2022. If the Council chooses to revise the FMPs based on this summary report, the requisite analyses will be conducted to present initial review to the Council in October 2022 and final review by the Council in December 2022.

The SSC appreciated the analysts' responsiveness to previous reviews but felt that additional review and oversight by the SSC and stock assessment authors was necessary. **The SSC requested a review of the SDM model results and an overview of discussion or recommendations from stock assessment authors at the October 2021 SSC meeting. The SSC also requested an additional review focused on the FE model at the February or April 2022 SSC meetings. Finally, the SSC considers consultation with the assessment authors to be a critical link in evaluation model configuration and output and is pleased that the stock assessment authors will have the opportunity to evaluate those models.**

The Council endorsed the SSC suggestions for the EFH review, specifically evaluating the SDM models and the FE model separately and sequentially, responding to the SSC comments, review of the draft EFH research plan, and ensuring the transparent and public review process.

The Council also noticed that they intend to consider the utility of a Habitat Areas of Particular Concern process after receiving the summary report for the 5-year review.

EFH Consultation Report

The Council received the annual overview of consultations on actions that may adversely affect EFH in Alaska. Ms. Gretchen Harrington, Assistant Regional Administrator for Habitat Conservation Division provided the overview. Every year NMFS AR receives notice of 100-200 non-fishing actions that may affect living marine resources. The Agency provides review for those activities that may adversely affect EFH, including

aquaculture sites, harbor improvements, navigation dredging, mining, forestry, oil and gas exploration, Naval training exercises, hydropower development, and transportation infrastructure projects. Specific projects that the agency is currently reviewing that may be of interest to the Council include mining activities near Nome, laying of fiber optic cable in the Eastern Aleutians, and scuttling of vessels offshore. The presentation also included a summary of tools for EFH consultations including the Alaska EFH web application, *ShoreZone* mapping system, the Nearshore Fish Atlas, and Non-Fishing Activities report.

Staff will continue to work with HCD to keep the Council updated on projects, as warranted. Staff contact is Steve MacLean.

Upcoming Meetings

Council Committees, Plan Teams, and Taskforces

The Council will be holding all meetings virtually through at least September 2021.

The following meetings are currently anticipated through the summer:

- **Partial Coverage Fishery Monitoring Advisory Committee (PCFMAC)** – April 19, 2021
- **Ecosystem Committee** – April 20, 2021
- **Bering Sea Fishery Ecosystem Plan Team** – May 3 and May 24-25, 2021
- **BSAI Crab Plan Team** – May 17-21, 2021
- **EM Trawl Committee** – May 21, 2021
- **Fishery Monitoring Advisory Committee (FMAC)** – May 17, 2021
- **Bering Sea Fishery Ecosystem Plan Climate Change Taskforce** – May 10 and 13, 2021

While not a Council-sponsored meeting, the Pacific Sablefish Transboundary Assessment Team (PSTAT) is organizing a workshop on **April 27-28, 2021**, for stakeholders from the US and Canada to learn more about their sablefish management strategy evaluation project and to provide feedback on the MSE goals and objectives. Please visit <https://www.pacificsablefishscience.org/> for more information.