



UNITED STATES DEPARTMENT OF COMMERCE
National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration
National Marine Fisheries Service
P.O. Box 21668
Juneau, Alaska 99802-1668

January 27, 2019

Agenda B-2: NMFS Management Report

Status of Actions Report Online

Updated daily at: <https://www.fisheries.noaa.gov/sites/default/files/akro/amendments.pdf>

Progress on Rulemaking

Highlights on progress since the October 2019 meeting include:

- Final Rule to implement Amendment 120 (BSAI) 108 (GOA) Limiting CPs acting as motherships taking directed non-CDQ Pacific cod deliveries from trawl CVs published on December 20, 2019. Effective date: **January 20, 2020.**
- Final rule to implement Amendment 118 (BSAI) Halibut Retention in BSAI IFQ Pot Gear published on January 8, 2020. Effective date: **February 7, 2020.**
- Comment period for the 2020 and 2021 proposed harvest specifications for the BSAI and GOA ended on **January 02, 2020.** The final harvest specifications are expected to publish in early 2020.
- **Attachment 1** provides additional detail.

Charter Halibut Annual Registration Implementation

Although NMFS is currently accepting registration applications, the new software system that allows the RAM Division to process the annual CHP registrations and transfers is still under development. Any applications received by RAM will be held in safekeeping until development and testing is completed. NMFS is much aware of the February 1st opening of the sport fishery so that is our target for having everything in place.

Please contact NMFS/AKR/Restricted Access Management (RAM) staff if you intend to start fishing on or near February 1 or with any questions you have regarding this new requirement. RAM Staff can be reached at 1-800-304-4846 (option 2) or by email at: ram.alaska@noaa.gov

Cost Recovery Reports

Reports on NMFS Cost Recovery are posted under NPFMC agenda item B-2 NMFS Management Report.



Halibut Deck Sorting Coordination with Industry

At the December 2019 Council meeting, NMFS was asked to bring forward a plan for communicating with industry under a regulated deck sorting program. This plan, found as **Attachment 3** to this report, describes the 2020 observer sampling protocols, a plan for incorporating potential future observer sampling protocol changes, and a NMFS/industry communication plan.

In 2020, observer sampling protocols will include sampling approaches used during the 2018 and 2019 deck sorting exempted fishing permits (EFPs). The two approaches ensure that the data needs of the fleet and the agency are met, while reducing the potential for bias in the data collection based on lessons learned during the EFPs. Future sampling changes will be presented through the Fishery Monitory and Advisory Committee each May and finalized in the fall (consistent with the schedule for sampling changes for other participants).

NMFS plans to continue engagement with industry representatives on the implementation of the regulated deck sorting program.

Trawl Electronic Monitoring EFP

The Trawl EM EFP (#2019-03), issued on January 6, 2020, was developed specifically to evaluate the potential use of EM as a monitoring tool for compliance with fishery management regulations in the pollock pelagic trawl catcher vessels (CVs) in the BS and GOA. The results of the EFP could provide valuable operational and cost information in evaluating their efficacy for the future implementation of such a program.

This project has been developed in cooperation with, and has been reviewed by, fishery scientists at the AFSC, and has been recommended by the Council. The Council has been actively pursuing the development and implementation of EM technology in lieu of onboard observers for at-sea fishery monitoring for several years.

Staff Changes

We have had no staff changes since October 2019. SF is in the process of filling several Fishery Management Specialist positions in the Ecosystem and Catch Share Branches and two supervisory positions within the SF division. The two supervisory positions will fill vacancies due to an upcoming retirement and a new Monitoring Branch supervisor.

Attachment 1 -- Status of Regulatory Actions

Changes since December 2019 are noted in **Bold Red** EOC = End of Comment Period

Action Status	Lead Council, SF, and GCAK Staff	Date of Council Final Action	Start Regional Review	Received by GCAK	Transmittal Date of Action to NMFS HQ for Review	Notice of Availability (FMP) Published in Federal Register	Proposed Rule Published in Federal Register	Final Rule or Notice of Approval Published in Federal Register
FMP Amendments								
Amendment 109 (GOA) Modifications to GOA Pollock and Pacific Cod Seasonal Allocation	Cunningham Krieger	June 2019	PR: 10/29/19	PR: 11/12/19				
Amendment 118 (BSAI) -- Allow halibut Retention in BSAI IFQ Pot Gear Approved: November 18, 2019	Cleaver Warpinski M. Watson	October 2018	PR: 05/29/19 FR: 11/05/19	PR: 06/05/19 FR: 11/06/19R:	PR: 08/09/19 FR: 11/13/19	Aug 21, 2019 84 FR 43570 EOC: 10/21/19	Oct 3, 2019 84 FR 52842 EOC: 11/04/19	Jan 8, 2020 85 FR 840 Effective: 02/07/20
Amendments 120 (BSAI) and 108 (GOA) -- Limit CPs acting as motherships in BSAI trawl Pacific cod fishery Approved: November 19, 2019	McCracken Mansfield Fortenbery	April 2019	PR: 05/28/19 FR: 10/30/19	PR: 05/30/19 FR: 10/31/19	PR: 07/23/19 FR: 11/14/19	Aug 21, 2019 84 FR 43576 EOC: 10/21/19	Sep 27, 2019 84 FR 51092 EOC: 10/28/19	Dec 20, 2019 84 FR 70064 Effective: 01/20/20
Amendments 119 (BSAI) and 107 (GOA) -- Require retention of rockfish by catcher vessels using hook-and-line, pot, or jig gear Approved: November 19, 2019	McCracken Keaton Fortenbery	April 2019	PR: 07/08/19 FR: 12/12/19	PR: 07/11/19 FR: 12/12/19	PR: 08/16/19 FR: 1/07/20	Aug 22, 2019 84 FR 43783 EOC: 10/21/19	Oct 2, 2019 84 FR 52442 EOC: 11/1/19	

Regulatory Amendments								
Halibut Deck Sorting on Non-Pollock Trawl Catcher/ Processors and Motherships	N/A Krieger Meyer	N/A	PR: 12/16/18 FR: 6/27/19	PR: 2/05/19 FR: 7/10/19	PR: 3/18/19 FR: 8/21/19	N/A	Apr 16, 2019 84 FR 15566 EOC: 5/16/19	Oct 15, 2019 84 FR 55044 Effective: 11/14/19
Halibut Deck Sorting on Non-Pollock Trawl Catcher/ Processors and Motherships; Correcting Amendment	N/A Krieger Meyer	N/A	FR: 11/21/19	FR: 11/21/19	FR:11/22/19	N/A	N/A	Dec 9, 2019 84 FR 67183 Effective: 12/9/19
Halibut Deck Sorting on Non-Pollock Trawl Catcher/ Processors and Motherships; Notice of OMB Effectiveness	N/A Krieger Meyer	N/A	FR: 12/27/20	FR: 12/31/19	FR: 01/07/20	N/A	N/A	January 28, 2020 85 FR XXXX Effective: 1/28/20
IFQ Beneficiary and Medical Transfer Provisions	Cunningham Warpinski Meyer	April 2019	PR: 7/24/19 FR: 12/15/19	PR: 8/06/19 FR: 12/19/19	PR: 9/20/19 FR: 1/15/2020	N/A	Oct 24, 2019 84 FR 56991 EOC: 11/25/19	
2020 and 2021 BSAI Groundfish Harvest Specifications	MacLean Whitney	December 2019	PR: 10/17/19 FR: 12/20/19	PR: 10/17/19 FR: 12/20/19	PR: 11/04/19	N/A	Dec 3, 2019 84 FR 66129 EOC: 1/02/20	
Gulf of Alaska 2020 and 2021 Harvest Specifications	Cleaver Davis	December 2019	PR: 10/16/19 FR: 12/18/19	PR: 10/17/19 FR: 12/18/19	PR: 11/05/19	N/A	Dec 3, 2019 84 FR 66109 EOC: 01/02/20	
CQE Fish-up in Area 3A	Cleaver Duncan	June 2019	PR:12/20/19	PR: 1/10/20		N/A		
Adjust the Partial Coverage Observer Fee	Evans A Miller	October 2019	PR: 12/30/19	PR: 1/02/20		N/A		
Notices								
ANPR; BSAI Pacific Cod Pot Catcher/Processor License Limitation Program Adjustment Control Date	Iverson	October 2019	11/18/19	11/18/19	11/21/19	N/A	N/A	December 10, 2019 84 FR 67421 Effective 12/10/19
Observer Program Fee Notice of Standard Ex-Vessel Prices for 2020	A Miller	NA	12/05/19	12/05/19	12/10/19	N/A	N/A	December 16, 2019 84 FR 68409 Effective 1/1/20
2019 IFQ Program Cost recovery fee notice	Iverson	NA	12/11/19	12/12/19	12/16/19	N/A	N/A	December 20, 2019 84 FR 70153 Effective 12/20/19
2019 Cost Recovery Fee Notice for the Central Gulf of Alaska Rockfish Program	Iverson	NA	1/15/20	1/15/20	1/15/20	N/A	N/A	January 22, 2020 85 FR 3647 Effective 1/22/20

Attachment 2 -- Inseason Management Report

Catch during 2020 is through January 18, 2020 and is compared to catch during 2019 through January 19, 2019. All catch amounts are in metric tons. Additional information is available from [daily catch reports and information bulletins](#).

Bering Sea and Aleutian Islands

Bering Sea Pollock

The 2020 Bering Sea pollock TAC is 1,425,000 mt compared to 1,397,000 mt in 2019. For 2020, NMFS reallocated 1,900 mt of CDQ pollock TAC from the Aleutian Islands to CDQ pollock in the Bering Sea. For the non-CDQ allocation in the Aleutian Islands, the 2nd year of the experimental fishing permit (EFP) is in place to provide information on methods to reduce bycatch of Pacific ocean perch in the pollock directed fishery. NMFS will assess the potential for a reallocation of the projected unused Aleutian Islands non-CDQ pollock directed fishing allocation based on the activity of the EFP.

Directed fishing opened by regulations at noon, A.l.t., January 20, 2020. Pollock catch is preliminary and not ready for reporting.

Bering Sea	2020 A season allocation	2020 A season catch	Percent taken
Inshore	277,886	0	0%
C/P	222,309	0	0%
Mothership	55,577	0	0%
CDQ ¹	64,980	0	0%
Total ¹	620,752	0	0%

¹Includes reallocation of 1,900 mt from the Aleutian Islands CDQ allocation.

Salmon in the Bering Sea Pollock Fisheries

NMFS estimates of salmon PSC is preliminary and not ready for reporting. NMFS has determined that 2019 was not a low Chinook salmon abundance year, based on the State of Alaska's estimate that Chinook salmon abundance in western Alaska is greater than 250,000 Chinook salmon. Therefore, in 2020, the Chinook salmon PSC limit is 60,000 Chinook salmon, allocated to each sector as specified in 50 CFR 679.21(f)(3)(iii)(A).

BSAI Pacific cod by Sector

The 2020 Pacific cod TAC is 141,799 mt in the Bering Sea and 13,796 mt in the Aleutian Islands compared to the 2019 Bering Sea TAC of 166,475 mt and Aleutian Islands TAC of 14,214 mt. In 2020, NMFS prohibited directed fishing for three sectors pot C/Ps, pot CVs \geq 60 feet, and pot and hook-and-line CVs less than 60 feet. In 2019, more vessels participated in these three sectors compared to 2019.

BSAI Sector	2020				2019			
	A season allocation ¹	Catch Jan 18	A season closed	# of vessels Jan 18	A season allocation ¹	Catch Jan 19	A season closed ²	# of vessels Jan 19
CDQ	16,648	986	n/a	3	11,702	1,354	n/a	4
Hook-and-line C/P	34,347	4,024	n/a	12	39,912	6,179	n/a	15
Pot C/P	1,058	979	Jan 12	5	1,229	1,295	Jan 15	4
Pot CV \geq 60 ft	5,924	5,269	Jan 15	38	6,884	6,373	Jan 15	34
Hook-and-line/Pot CVs < 60 ft	3,433	3,017	Jan 19	36	3,214	2,770	Jan 12	31
Jig	500	0	n/a	0	1,355	0	n/a	0
Trawl CV	22,723	0	n/a	0	26,388	0	n/a	0
AFA C/P	2,397	0	n/a	0	2,783	0	n/a	0
Amendment 80 C/P	13,964	0	n/a	0	16,216	0	n/a	0
Total	100,994	14,275		94	109,683	17,971		88

¹In 2020, NMFS reallocated 667 mt, and in 2019 NMFS reallocated 1,200 mt of the A season jig allocation to the hook-and-line or pot gear less than 60 ft length annual allocation.

²Trawl CV A season closure is for the Bering Sea Limitation 21,388 mt in 2019.

Pacific cod directed fishing - trawl CVs

On January 22, 2020, the industry reported that all trawl CVs directed fishing for non-CDQ Pacific cod in the BSAI agreed to a voluntary stand down starting that evening until February 2020. This is in response to low Pacific cod and high halibut catch rates reported by the CVs during the first two days of the fishery. The industry will continue to monitor catch rates and consider further action as needed. NMFS estimates of Pacific cod catch and halibut PSC are preliminary and not ready for reporting.

Blackspotted and Roughey Rockfish

For 2020, the maximum species specific catch recommended in the Western Aleutian Islands is 48 mt. All sectors are requested to avoid blackspotted/roughey rockfish. A [weekly report](#) is available to monitor total catch of blackspotted/roughey rockfish in the Western Aleutian Islands.

Gulf of Alaska

For all sectors, NMFS prohibiting directed fishing for GOA Pacific cod on January 1, 2020. This is necessary because a biological assessment of stock condition for GOA Pacific cod projects that the spawning biomass will be below 20 percent of the projected unfished spawning biomass in 2020 and is issued pursuant to 50 CFR 679.20(d)(4). This harvest control regulation was implemented by a final rule for Steller sea lion protection measures (see 68 FR 203, 01/02/2003).

In 2020, the sector allocations still apply. NMFS will monitor incidental catch by sector. If the incidental catch reaches a sector allocation, NMFS will either reallocate projected unused Pacific cod from other sectors or prohibit retention of Pacific cod for that sector.

Pacific cod - Western GOA

Sector	2020				2019			
	A season allocation	Catch Jan 18	A season closed	# of vessels Jan 18	A season allocation	Catch Jan 19	A season closed	# of vessels Jan 19
Hook-and-line C/P	218	0	Jan 20	0	568	0	n/a	0
Hook-and-line CV	14	0	Jan 20	0	37	0	Jan 1	0
Jig	44	0	Jan 20	0	81	0	n/a	0
Pot CV/CP	397	0	Jan 20	0	1,031	719	Jan 26	13
Trawl CV	555	0	Jan 20	0	1,443	0	n/a	0
Trawl C/P	18	0	Jan 20	0	47	0	Jan 20	0
Total	1,246				3,206	719		13

Pacific cod - Central GOA

Sector	2020				2019			
	A season allocation	Catch Jan 18	A season closed	# of vessels Jan 18	A season allocation	Catch Jan 19	A season closed	# of vessels Jan 19
Hook-and-line C/P	155	0	Jan 20	0	234	0	n/a	0
Hook-and-line CV <50 ft	351	0	Jan 20	0	530	Conf	n/a	0
Hook-and-line CV >=50 ft	211	0	Jan 20	0	319	Conf	n/a	0
Jig	23	0	Jan 20	0	35	Conf	n/a	0
Pot CV/CP	672	0	Jan 20	0	1,015	632	Jan 27	10
Trawl CV	796	0	Jan 20	0	1,203	0	Jan 20	0
Trawl C/P	75	0	Jan 20	0	114	0	Jan 20	0
Total	2,283	0			3,450	632		10

Pollock

For Area 610, NMFS closed directed fishing on January 20, 2020 because the TAC amount does not support a directed fishery.

For Areas 620 and 630, on January 23, 2020, the industry reported that all CVs directed fishing for pollock agreed to a voluntary stand down until February 2, 2020. This is in response to high Chinook salmon rates reported by the CVs during the first two days of the fishery. The industry will continue to monitor catch rates and consider further action as needed.

2019 Seasons	610	620	630	640
A season allocation	517	18,727	5,783	5,554 (annual)
A season catch	0	0	0	0
A season closure	January 20	n/a	n/a	n/a
B season allocation	517	22,222	2,318	n/a

Salmon PSC Limits in the GOA

NMFS estimates of salmon PSC is preliminary and not ready for reporting.

Chinook Salmon	2020 Limit	2020 PSC (% Limit)	2019 PSC (% Limit)
Total	n/a	0	0
Western GOA pollock	6,684	0	0
Central GOA pollock	18,316	0	0
Western/Central trawl CV	2,700	0	0
Western/Central trawl C/P ¹	4,080	0	0

¹Includes incentive buffer for 2020 Western/Central trawl C/P limit (480 Chinook).

Non-Chinook Salmon	2020 PSC (Rate)	2018 PSC (Rate)
Total	0	0

Halibut Mortality Data

In 2020 relative to 2019, the total halibut mortality is lower in the BSAI and GOA.

Area, Gear, and Sector	2020			2019		
	Halibut mortality	Groundfish	Rate	Halibut mortality	Groundfish	Rate
BSAI Total	5	6,183	0.08%	8	8,764	0.09%
Amendment 80	0	0	0	0	0	0
BSAI trawl limited access	0	0	0	0	0	0
Non-trawl Pacific cod	5	6,183	0.08%	8	8,764	0.09%
Non-trawl Other	0	0	0	0	0	0
CDQ	0			0	0	0
GOA Total	0	0	0	4	97	4.01%
Trawl, Deep-water	0	0	0	0	0	0
Trawl, Shallow-water	0	0	0	0	0	0
Hook-and-line CP	0	0	0	0	0	0
Hook-and-line CV	0	0	0	4	97	4.01%

Attachment 3 -- Halibut Deck Sorting Communication Plan

Deck Sorted Halibut Sampling in 2020

In 2020, observer sampling protocols will include sampling approaches used during the 2018 and 2019 deck sorting exempted fishing permits (EFPs). The two approaches ensure that the data needs of the fleet and the agency are met, while reducing the potential for bias in the data collection based on lessons learned during the EFPs.

Observers will determine which sampling approach to use based on their assessment of the amount of halibut in the catch. The specific instructions for data collection are included in the 2020 Observer Sampling Manual beginning on page 5-38.

For low-halibut abundance hauls, observers will use collection methods similar to those from the 2018 EFP. Observers will still choose a random halibut for which to assess viability and will measure all halibut up until reaching that fish. If the randomly chosen halibut is reached, then only the length data for that fish will be entered into the database. If the randomly chosen halibut is not reached, observers will use the measurements from the discarded halibut to estimate discard weight only, reducing the chances of using a trip average to determine discard weight.

For high-halibut abundance hauls, observers may use a “1 in 10” sampling approach, measuring and assessing fewer halibut than under moderate-halibut abundance hauls. This approach will allow for more rapid halibut discard.

This multiple option sampling approach was discussed with representatives of the EFP on November 14, 2019 during one of the regularly scheduled meetings between EFP representatives and NMFS staff [Fisheries Monitoring and Analysis (FMA), Alaska Regional Office (AKR), and Office of Law Enforcement (OLE)]. One EFP representative provided information that estimated the frequency of occurrence for low halibut abundance hauls (first five sampling approach) to be around 6%.

Communication Plan

NMFS plans to continue engagement with industry representatives on the implementation of the regulated deck sorting program through the following pathways:

AKR and FMA staff are available to meet periodically (quarterly or every 2 months) with industry representatives to discuss deck sorting implementation issues but does not have the staff resources to maintain the current bi-weekly EFP meeting schedule given existing workload and additional obligations on complex EFPs ongoing in 2020/2021. If there are critical (emergency) issues that arise during the course of a year that could affect multiple vessels, staff will meet with industry participants on an *ad hoc* basis as needed.

The agenda for these discussions will be primarily based on the issues that industry representatives wish to discuss with AKR and FMA staff.

FMA and AKR staff can answer questions and explain how the regulations are implemented through the Observer Program.

For any regulatory questions, the primary agency point of contact for this program is Dr. Joseph Krieger (joseph.krieger@noaa.gov). For observer sampling questions, the primary agency point of contact for this program is Jennifer Ferdinand (jennifer.ferdinand@noaa.gov). For any enforcement related questions, the primary agency contact for this program is Jaclyn Smith (jaclyn.smith@noaa.gov).

Future Sampling Changes

FMA gathers information about recommended sampling changes throughout the year. In addition to making recommendations directly to the Observer Program, at this time we would anticipate adding an agenda item to the May FMAC meeting to discuss potential sampling changes for the next calendar year. These proposed sampling changes can be revisited during the regularly scheduled fall meeting (usually in September) as necessary. Sampling changes would be finalized in the fall (consistent with the schedule for sampling changes that FMA makes for other participants). A summary of deck sorting sampling changes can be provided to the Council in December as part of the NMFS annual reporting summary.