



C2 Snow Crab Rebuilding

December 2022

Action Memo

Council Staff: Jon McCracken and Sarah Rheinsmith

Action Required: 1. Initial Review of EA
2. Consider selection of a preliminary preferred alternative

Background

The Council was notified that Eastern Bering Sea Snow Crab was overfished on October 19, 2021. Upon notification that a stock or stock complex is overfished, the Council must prepare and implement a fishery management plan amendment or proposed regulations within two years of notification. The plan must specify a time to rebuild, which should not exceed 10 years unless this cannot be accomplished in the absence of all fishing mortality. The Council in June 2022 approved a purpose and need statement and proposed alternatives for the rebuilding plan. During the October 2022 Council meeting, the SSC reviewed the EBS snow crab rebuilding projections and selected a preferred projection scenario that draws on recruitment and mortality from 1982-2017.

At this meeting, the Council will review an initial review analysis of a draft environmental assessment for an amendment to the BSAI Crab Fishery Management Plan, to rebuild the Eastern Bering Sea snow crab stock in compliance with section 304(e)(3) of the Magnuson-Stevens Fishery Conservation and Management Act. The impacts of the alternatives considered on EBS snow crab stock, fishery participants, habitat, and other components of the human environment are described in the analysis, and the Council may consider selecting a preliminary preferred alternative.

As part of the June 2022 snow crab rebuilding agenda item, the Council also put out a request for information (RFI) to the public for feedback that could inform future management actions related to Eastern Bering Sea (EBS) snow crab (which supplemented a previous Council request for information relating to Bristol Bay red king crab (BBRKC)). The request highlighted three specific areas of interest, but the request was open-ended and non-exclusive. Public responses on both crab requests were provided prior to and as oral testimony during the October 2022 Council meeting. A brief [orientation](#) to the written responses was prepared by staff, and seventeen written comments were received by the September 23 deadline; they can be viewed on a dedicated web page on the [NPFMC meetings portal](#).