



North Pacific Fishery Management Council

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Meeting Summary

248th Plenary Session
North Pacific Fishery Management Council
January 27 to February 1, 2020
Renaissance Hotel, Seattle, Washington

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Attachments

Timelog

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.

The North Pacific Fishery Management Council met January 27th to February 1, 2020 at the Renaissance Hotel in Seattle, Washington. The following Council, Council staff, SSC, and AP members attended the meetings.

Council Members

Jim Balsiger/Glenn Merrill <i>National Marine Fisheries Service</i>	Kimball, Nicole <i>Appointed</i>
Rachel Baker/Karla Bush (for Doug Vincent-Lang) <i>Alaska Department Fish and Game</i>	Kinneen, Simon, Chair <i>Appointed</i>
Cora Campbell <i>Appointed</i>	Steve Marx (for Curt Melcher) <i>Oregon Department of Fish & Wildlife</i>
Craig Cross <i>Appointed</i>	Andy Mezirow <i>Appointed</i>
Kenny Down <i>Appointed</i>	Bill Tweit (for Kelly Susewind), Vice Chair <i>Washington Department Fish & Wildlife</i>
Dave Hanson <i>Pacific States Marine Fisheries Commission</i>	RADM Matthew Bell Jr/CAPT Brennell <i>United States Coast Guard</i>
John Jensen <i>Appointed</i>	

Council Staff

Armstrong, Jim	Gleason, Shannon	McCracken, Jon
Cleaver, Sara	Haapala, Kate	Schmidt, Nicole
Cunningham, Sam	Henry, Anna	Stram, Diana
Davis, Maria	La Belle, Sarah	Witherell, Dave (ED)
Evans, Diana (DD)	MacLean, Steve	
Fey, Mike (PSMFC)	Marrinan, Sarah	

Scientific and Statistical Committee

The SSC met from January 27-28, 2020 at the Renaissance Hotel. The following members were present for all or part of the meetings.

Anne Hollowed, Co-Chair <i>NOAA Fisheries—AFSC</i>	Sherri Dressel, Co-Chair <i>Alaska Dept. of Fish and Game</i>	Alison Whitman, Vice Chair <i>Oregon Dept. of Fish and Wildlife</i>
Chris Anderson <i>University of Washington</i>	Amy Bishop <i>Alaska Sea Life Center</i>	Curry Cunningham <i>University of Alaska Fairbanks</i>
Mike Downs <i>Wislow Research</i>	Jason Gasper <i>NOAA Fisheries – Alaska Region</i>	Dana Hanselman <i>NOAA Fisheries—AFSC</i>
Brad Harris <i>Alaska Pacific University</i>	George Hunt <i>University of Washington</i>	Gordon Kruse <i>University of Alaska Fairbanks</i>
Dayv Lowry <i>Washington Dept. of Fish and Wildlife</i>	Franz Mueter <i>University of Alaska Fairbanks</i>	Andrew Munro <i>Alaska Dept. of Fish and Game</i>
Kate Reedy <i>Idaho State University Pocatello</i>	Matt Reimer <i>University of Alaska Anchorage</i>	Ian Stewart <i>Intl. Pacific Halibut Commission</i>

Advisory Panel

The Advisory Panel met Tuesday, January 28th, through Thursday, January 30, 2020, at the Renaissance Hotel in Seattle, Washington. The following members were present for all or part of the meetings (absent members are stricken):

Christiansen, Ruth (Co-Vice Chair)	Johnson, Jim	Peterson, Joel
Curran, Tori	Kauffman, Jeff	Scobic, John
Donich, Daniel	Kavanaugh, Julie	Stevens, Ben
Drobnica, Angel (Chair)	Lowenberg, Craig	Upton, Matt (Co-Vice Chair)
Gruver, John	Mann, Heather	Vanderhoeven, Anne
Gudmundsson, Gretar	O'Connor, Jamie	Velsko, Erik
Hayden, Natasha	O'Donnell, Paddy	Weiss, Ernie
		Wilt, Sinclair

A Call Meeting to Order/Oath of Office/ Election of Officers

The Council approved the agenda without objection.

B Reports

The following reports were given and discussed. Public testimony was heard, and actions were deferred to staff tasking.

B1 Executive Director's Report – David Witherell

B2 NMFS Management Report – Dr. Anne Marie Eich and Alicia Miller

B3 NOAA GC Report – Lauren Smoker

B4 AFSC Report – Dr. Bob Foy

- Coop Research Presentation – Paul McCluskey

B5 ADF&G Report – Kendall Henry

B6 USCG Report and Maritime Coverage – CAPT Jason Brennell & LT Drew Stafford

C1 Charter Halibut Annual Management Measures for Area 3A

Council Staff: Steve MacLean

Other Presenters: Sarah Webster (ADF&G)

SSC Report: The SSC did not take up this agenda item.

AP Report: Ruth Christiansen

Action Required:

1. Review Supplemental Analysis
2. Review Charter Halibut Management Committee Minutes
3. Recommend Management Measures for Area 3A

Summary: *In December 2019, the Charter Halibut Management Committee was not able to identify management measures for Area 3A that would meet the reference level of halibut removals specified at*

the IPHC interim meeting. The committee requested, and the Council authorized, an additional committee meeting to evaluate additional measures that may allow the charter fleet in Area 3A that could achieve the reference TCEY.

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

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

The Council recommends to the International Pacific Halibut Commission (IPHC) the following management measures for IPHC regulatory Area 3A.

- All allocations shown below include, unless otherwise specified: a daily bag limit of 2 halibut; an annual limit of 4 halibut per charter angler; Wednesdays closed to halibut retention all year; 1 trip per halibut charter vessel per day; and 1 trip per charter halibut permit per day.
- If the allocation is less than 2.014 MIb but greater than or equal to 1.695 MIb:
 - a daily bag limit of 2 halibut, with one fish of any size, and one fish less than or equal to 26 inches;
 - adjust the number of Tuesdays closed to halibut retention, such that the projected removals achieve the allocation (Table 1, page 15 of the Supplemental Analysis). The Tuesdays closed to halibut retention are specified in Table 22, pg. 38 of the December 3 analysis.
- If the allocation is less than 1.695 MIb, but greater than or equal to 1.588 MIb (proposed to achieve allocation for status quo TCEY = 1.66 MIb):
 - a daily bag limit of 2 halibut with one fish of any size and one fish less than or equal to 26 inches;
 - all Tuesdays closed to halibut retention;
 - adjust the number of Thursdays closed to halibut retention, to a maximum of four Thursday closures, such that the projected removals achieve the allocation (Table 5, page 19 of the January 23 Supplemental Analysis; Thursdays closed to halibut retention are specified in Table 4; page 18 of the Supplemental Analysis).
- If the allocation is less than 1.588 MIb (proposed to achieve allocation between 1.588 MIb and reference TCEY = 1.24 MIb):
 - All Tuesdays are closed to halibut retention;
 - a daily bag limit of 1 halibut, with a reverse (protected) slot limit. The upper limit of the reverse slot limit is fixed at 80 inches, and the lower end of the reverse slot limit is adjusted such that the projected removals achieve the allocation – beginning at 58 inches (Appendix Table A5-o, page 75, last column, of the Supplemental Analysis).

The Council also clarifies its recommendation for Area 2C management measures as specified in the clarifying notes in IPHC Proposal B-1 for the 2020 Annual IPHC Meeting (IPHC-2020-AM096-PropB1). The notes read as follows:

1. If the Area 2C catch limit is from 0.772 to 1.001 million pounds, it is the intention of the NPFMC to maintain an upper size limit of halibut at O80 and a lower size limit of halibut at or above U40. If possible under the catch limit, the U40 size limit will be adjusted upward until the catch limit is achieved (Table 6 of the analysis).
2. If the catch limit in Area 2C is from 0.658 to 0.771 million pounds, the NPFMC recommends maintaining the U40/O80 size limit, then progressively reducing the number of days when halibut may be retained by establishing closures on Wednesdays, beginning on 9 IPHC-2020-AM096-PropB1 Page 3 of 5 September and working consecutively toward the beginning of the season with a maximum of all Wednesdays closed (Table 10-A1 of the analysis).
3. If the catch limit in Area 2C is from 0.646 to 0.656 million pounds, the NPFMC recommends a U40/O80 size limit, an annual limit of 4 halibut for all charter anglers, and a closure of between fourteen and all Wednesdays, beginning on 9 September and working consecutively toward the beginning of the season (Table 14-A1 of the analysis).
4. If the catch limit in Area 2C is from 0.636 to 0.645 million pounds, the NPFMC recommends a U41/O80 size limit, an annual limit of 3 halibut for all charter anglers, and a closure of between fourteen and all Wednesdays, beginning on 9 September and working consecutively toward the beginning of the season (Table 16-A1 of the analysis). If the catch limit in Area 2C is from 0.615 to 0.636 million pounds, the NPFMC recommends a U40/O80 size limit, an annual limit of 3 halibut for all charter anglers, and a closure of between thirteen and all Wednesdays, beginning on 9 September and working consecutively toward the beginning of the season (Table 16-A1 of the analysis).
5. If the catch limit in Area 2C is less than 0.615 million pounds, the NPFMC recommends a closure of all Wednesdays for the entire season, an annual limit of 3 halibut for all charter anglers, and an adjustment of the lower size limit until the catch limit is achieved. The expected harvest under these measures with a lower size limit of U39 is 0.599 million pounds (Table 16-A1 of the analysis).

Dr. Balsiger made the following amendment which was seconded by Mr. Jensen:
(strike the following language)

2. If the catch limit in Area 2C is from 0.658 to 0.771 million pounds, the NPFMC recommends maintaining the U40/O80 size limit, then progressively reducing the number of days when halibut may be retained by establishing closures on Wednesdays, beginning on 9 ~~IPHC-2020-AM096-PropB1 Page 3 of 5~~ September and working consecutively toward the beginning of the season with a maximum of all Wednesdays closed (Table 10-A1 of the analysis).

VOTE ON AMENDMENT: Amendment passed with no objection January 29, 2020, at 3:58 p.m.

VOTE ON AMENDED MOTION: Motion passed with no objection January 29, 2020, at 4:04 p.m.

C2 Norton Sound Red King Crab

Council Staff: Jim Armstrong

Other Presenters: Dr. Martin Dorn (AFSC, Crab Plan Team Co-Chair)

SSC Report: Dr. Anne Hollowed & Dr. Sherri Dressel

AP Report: Matt Upton

Action Required:

1. Norton Sound Red King Crab – Specify OFL/ABC for 2020
2. Crab Plan Team Report for the January 2020 meeting - review

Summary: *The BSAI Crab Plan Team met January 14-17, 2020 in Kodiak to review the stock assessment for Norton Sound red king crab (NSRKC) and recommend OFL and ABC for 2020 for SSC and Council approval. The SSC will provide a response to draft model scenarios for the Aleutian Islands golden king crab assessment, which will be finalized at the May Crab Plan Team meeting, for SSC and Council review in June.*

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

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

The Council accepts the Norton Sound red king crab SAFE report and adopts the SSC's recommended OFL of 130 metric tons and ABC of 90 metric tons for Norton Sound red king crab.

VOTE ON MOTION: Motion passed unanimously on January 30, 2020, at 8:39 a.m.

C3 Central GOA Rockfish Reauthorization

Council Staff: Jon McCracken

Other Presenters: Stephanie Warpinski (NMFS)

SSC Report: SSC did not take up this agenda item

AP Report: Matt Upton

Action Required:

1. Review the preliminary final review draft of the EA/RIR/SIA.
2. Determine whether to take final action.
3. Select a Preferred Alternative, as appropriate.

Summary: *The Central Gulf of Alaska (CGOA) Rockfish Program (RP) is scheduled to sunset on December 31, 2021, without the Council taking positive action to reauthorize the program. The Council is scheduled to review those documents and determine if they are adequate to reaffirm or modify the Preliminary Preferred Alternative (PPA) and take final action. The current versions of the analysis include the new elements and sub-option approved at the December 2019 meeting that are not part of the PPA, because they had not been fully analyzed when the PPA was selected.*

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

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

The Council adopts Alternative 2 to reauthorize the Rockfish Program (RP) with the existing management framework and the following Elements **in bold** as the preferred alternative for final action. Changes to the Alternative are shown in underline for additions and in ~~strike through~~ for deletions.

Alternative 1: No Action

Alternative 2: Reauthorize the Rockfish Program.

Reauthorize the RP with the existing management framework unless modified under this alternative.

Element 1: Modify regulations at § 679.80(a)(2) to specify the duration of the program.

Option 1: Remove the sunset date.

Option 2: Replace with new sunset date (10-20 years).

Element 2: Allow NMFS to reallocate unharvested RP Pacific cod from RP cooperatives ~~to fixed gear open access fisheries~~ after the RP fisheries close on November 15 consistent with regulations at § 679.20(a)(12)(ii). ~~The Regional Administrator would consider a reallocation of the projected unused allocation first to the CV pot, jig, and hook and line sectors first, then to the combined CV and CP pot sectors, and then to all other CP sectors, taking into account the capability of a sector as determined by the Regional Administrator, to harvest the reallocated Pacific cod.~~

Element 3: Exempt vessels from crab program sideboard limits when fishing in the RP.

Element 4: Require annual NMFS cost recovery reports in regulations.

Element 5: Clarify regulations at § 679.5(r)(10) to specify that only shoreside processors receiving RP CQ must submit the Rockfish Ex-vessel Volume and Value Report.

Element 6: Remove the regulations in § 679.5(r)(6)(iii)(B) requiring that an annual RP cooperative report be submitted to NMFS. The Council ~~may requests~~ that the RP cooperatives continue to voluntarily provide annual reports to the Council.

Element 7: Revise § 679.5(r)(6)(iii)(D) to replace “any actions” with “any civil actions”.

Element 8: Revise § 679.81(i)(D)(3) to remove requirements for a Fishing Plan to be submitted with a cooperative application for CQ.

Element 9: Revise § 679.84(f)(1) to exempt shoreside processors under the RP from the requirement to provide an observer work station and observer communication described at § 679.28(g)(7)(vii) and (viii).

Element 10: Allow NMFS to reallocate unused rockfish ICAs to RP cooperatives.

Suboption: With a preference to reallocate to CV cooperatives first.

Element 11: Clarify regulations regarding accounting for inseason use caps to specify that any transfer of unused rockfish ICAs and CP CQ to CV cooperatives does not apply to CV ownership, cooperative, harvester CQ, or shoreside processor CQ use caps.

Element 12: Modify cooperative check-in times from 48 to 24 hours.

Element 13: Remove CP rockfish program sideboard limits in the WGOA rockfish fisheries in § 679.82(e)(4).

Element 14: Modify regulations at § 679.23(h)(1) by removing the 3-day stand down for CVs that fish for groundfish in the BSAI while pollock or Pacific cod is open to directed fishing in the BSAI from the GOA stand down if they check into the RP and fish in the CGOA RP.

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

The Council deems proposed regulations that clearly and directly flow from the provisions of this motion to be necessary and appropriate in accordance with section 303(c). The Council authorizes the Executive Director and the Chairman to review the draft proposed regulations when provided by NMFS to ensure that the proposed regulations to be submitted to the Secretary under section 303(c) are consistent with these instructions.

VOTE ON AMENDMENT: Amendment passed unanimously on January 30, 2020, at 11:56 a.m.

VOTE ON AMENDED MOTION: Motion passed unanimously 10/0 (Ms. Campbell recused from vote) on January 30, 2020, at 11:58 a.m.

C4 Changes to Economic Data Reporting

Council Staff: Sam Cunningham

Other Presenters: Scott Miller (NMFS)

SSC Report: Dr. Anne Hollowed

AP Report: Matt Upton

Action Required: 1. Initial Review Draft - review

***Summary:** The action Alternatives, analyzed in this RIR would potentially (1) revise authorizations for third party data verification audits, (2) eliminate blind data formatting, (3) standardize data aggregation procedures, and (4) remove the GOA Trawl EDR requirements. These potential actions are all amendments to mandatory annual census reporting requirements intended to improve the usability, efficiency, and consistency of the data collection programs and to minimize cost to industry and the Federal government.*

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

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

The Council releases the analysis for public review, with incorporation of SSC comments as practicable, and revises the purpose and need statement and set of alternatives as follows.

Purpose and Need

The current EDRs may provide valuable information for program evaluation and analysis of proposed conservation and management measures. However, after over ten years of operating the EDR programs, **the Council intends to review whether** some revisions are needed to improve the usability, efficiency, and consistency of the data collection programs **in its responsibility** and to minimize cost to industry and the Federal government. **This includes evaluation of whether the value of EDRs to management outweighs the cost to industry and NOAA, and/or whether annual submission of EDRs is necessary.** Several revisions could be made to EDRs, specifically on the use of third-party audits and “blind-data” protocols that could reduce the cost of the data collection program to the industry and government while still maintaining the integrity and confidentiality of the data collection program. Several provisions were implemented to provide a higher standard of confidentiality for proprietary business information reported in EDRs, above those that apply to all other confidential fisheries information. In practice, these provisions have proven to reduce the usability of the data for analysis and increase the cost of the data collection programs without providing additional practical protections. In addition, confidentiality requirements that apply to all data collections may provide sufficient protections for the EDR data.

The GOA Trawl EDR program implemented in 2015 was designed to collect baseline information to assess the impacts of a future catch share program. Data has been collected under this program for 4 years and another year of data will be submitted in June 2020. The Council should re-evaluate the purpose and need for the GOA trawl EDR, and make adjustments as necessary in either the purpose and need for the program or in the data collection program itself.

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.

Component 1: ~~Remove any requirements~~ **Revise authorizations** for third party data verification audits under the existing programs and reduce burdens associated with this process.

Option 1: Remove from regulations the authorization for third party data verification audits of EDR data.

Option 2: Amend regulatory language in all EDR programs to authorize third party data verification audits in cases of noncompliance.

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

Component 3: ~~Revise or remove~~ Remove the GOA trawl EDR requirements.

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

Alternative 3: Remove EDR requirements.

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

(Delete Option 1 under Component 1)

Component 1: ~~Remove any requirements~~ **Revise authorizations** for third party data verification audits under the existing programs and reduce burdens associated with this process.

Option 1: Remove from regulations the authorization for third party data verification audits of EDR data.

VOTE ON AMENDMENT: Amendment passed with no objection on January 30, 2020, at 3:50 p.m.

VOTE ON AMENDED MOTION: Motion passed unanimously on January 30, 2020, at 4 p.m.

C5 Sculpin/Squid Product types

Council Staff: Steve MacLean
Other Presenters: Megan Mackey (NMFS)
SSC Report: Dr. Anne Hollowed
AP Report: Ruth Christiansen

Action Required:

1. Initial Review Draft - review
2. Confirm preliminary preferred alternative

Summary: *This document analyzes alternatives to reconsider processing restrictions on squids and sculpins, two species recently added to the Ecosystem Component (EC) category in the Fishery Management Plans (FMPs) for groundfish in the Bering Sea and Aleutian Islands (BSAI) and Gulf of Alaska (GOA).*

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

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

The Council releases the analysis for public review, with changes as recommended by the SSC as practicable, and changes to the purpose and need statement identified below. The Council continues to recommend Alternative 2 as its preliminary preferred alternative, which is to maintain the designation of squid and sculpins in both the BSAI and GOA FMPs as a non-target 'Ecosystem Component Species', maintain the current maximum retainable amount, and allow for limited use and sale of incidentally caught squid and sculpins consistent with past practice.

Purpose and Need

Squid is defined in the ecosystem component (EC) category **in the FMPs for groundfish in the BSAI and GOA**. The Council, **in October 2019**, took action to recommend that sculpins be defined in EC category **in the BSAI and GOA** as well. There are no directed fisheries for squid or sculpins in either the BSAI or GOA. Incidental catch of squid is retained in some fisheries and often utilized to prevent waste. Typically, sculpins are not retained but can be in some circumstances.

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

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

VOTE ON MOTION: Motion passed unanimously on January 30, 2020, at 4:49 p.m.

D1 Partial Coverage Cost Efficiencies

Council Staff:	Dr. Kate Haapala
Other Presenters:	Jennifer Ferdinand (NMFS-AFSC), Jennifer Mondragon (NMFS-AKR)
SSC Report:	The SSC did not take up this agenda item.
AP Report:	Ruth Christiansen
Action Required:	1. Partial Coverage Cost Efficiencies Workplan - review 2. Receive PCFMAC Report

Summary: *At the October 2019 Council meeting, the Council recommended an increase in the observer fee percentage from 1.25 percent to 1.65 percent for the Partial Coverage Observer Program, and dovetailed that recommendation with continued development of mechanisms to improve cost efficiencies in the program as its highest priority moving forward.*

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

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

The Council adopts the following three priorities for continued and newly initiated work on cost efficiencies in the partial coverage observer program:

1. Ongoing support for the pelagic trawl electronic monitoring (EM) EFP
2. Integration of EM into the overall monitoring of fixed gear and evaluation of the baseline observer coverage needed to inform fixed gear EM to obtain average weight data for discards and biological samples. The evaluation should also explore existing data sources (e.g., surveys) that could provide information on average weight.

3. Evaluate different criteria to define the ‘zero selection’ pool to meet both data needs and improve cost efficiency. If possible, these changes would be incorporated in the draft 2021 ADP.

The Council recommends the changes to the observer analytical tasklist, including incorporation of the above tasks, as identified in the Partial Coverage Fishery Monitoring Advisory Committee January 2020 minutes.

VOTE ON MOTION: Motion passed unanimously on January 31, 2020, at 9:26 a.m.

D2 Standardized Bycatch Reporting Methodology in FMPs

Council Staff: Sara Cleaver

SSC Report: The SSC did not take up this agenda item.

AP Report: Ruth Christiansen

Action Required:

1. Review SBRM Report
2. Adopt or revise recommendations

Summary: *On January 19, 2017, the National Marine Fisheries Service (NMFS) published a final rule ([82 FR 6317](#)) establishing national guidance for compliance with this requirement. As required by 50 CFR 600.1610(b), Councils, in coordination with NMFS, must review their FMPs and make any necessary changes so all FMPs are consistent with the guidance by February 21, 2022. The SBRM final rule requires the Council to explain how the SBRMs meet the stated purpose in the rule based on specific considerations which Council must address when reviewing or establishing a SBRM. This report comprises the review of the SBRMs in the NPFMC’s FMPs (BSAI and GOA Groundfish, BSAI Crab, Scallops, Salmon, and Arctic) for consistency with the national guidance. The NMFS Alaska Regional Office will use this review, along with any other relevant information, to determine whether the SBRMs are fully consistent with the guidance, or if any FMP changes are necessary prior to the February 2022 deadline.*

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

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

- The Council determines that the Arctic, BSAI Groundfish, and GOA Groundfish FMPs are all in compliance with current SBRM guidance and that no amendments are necessary.
- The Council initiates an analysis to implement FMP amendments for the BSAI Crab FMP and the Scallop FMP. The amendments would explicitly identify a SBRM, explain how it meets the SBRM purpose, and address the four SBRM components, consistent with national guidance.
- In developing the amendment to the Salmon FMP to address Cook Inlet, the Council will ensure that the SBRM is explicitly identified in the FMP.

VOTE ON MOTION: Motion passed unanimously on January 31, 2020, at 10:45 a.m.

D3 Bering Sea Fishery Ecosystem Plan Action Modules

Council Staff: Dr. Diana Stram and Dr. Kate Haapala

SSC Report: Dr. Anne Hollowed

AP Report: Ruth Christiansen

Action Required: Receive reports and review workplans for:
1. Climate Change Taskforce
2. Local Knowledge, Traditional Knowledge, and Subsistence Taskforce

***Summary:** The Council adopted the Bering Sea FEP at its December 2018 meeting, which establishes a framework for the Council's continued progress towards ecosystem-based fishery management (EBFM) of the Bering Sea fisheries and relies and builds upon the Council's existing processes, advisory groups, and management practices. At that time, the Council began the process of using the BS FEP framework and its Action modules to focus the Council's existing policy of and progress with EBFM.*

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

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

LK/TK/Subsistence Taskforce

The Council adopts:

Goal 1: To create processes and protocols through which the Council can identify, analyze, and consistently incorporate TK and LK, and the social science of TK and LK, into Council decision making processes to support the use of best available scientific information in Ecosystem-based Fishery Management (EBFM).

And modifies Goal 2 to read:

Goal 2: To create a protocol and develop recommendations through which the Council can define and incorporate subsistence information into analyses and decision making.

The council requests the staff update the Taskforce's workplan to include the Council's established purpose of the Taskforce, the Taskforce's objectives 1-5, the Taskforce's ground rules, and the expected work products as identified below.

The council tasks the group with the following associated actions and products:

- Create a glossary of terms to be included in the Taskforce's workplan.
- Identify potential "onramps," or points of entry, within the Council process (e.g., public testimony or analyses) for the Taskforce's work.
- Develop a protocol outlining the best practices for soliciting LK and TK, and a protocol for the Council to identify, analyze, and incorporate TK and LK into Council decision-making documents as appropriate.

- Develop guidelines or protocols for Council staff for soliciting/identifying, analyzing, and using subsistence data and information in analyses.
- Prepare a final report for the Council.

Climate Change Taskforce

The Council adopts the SSC recommendation that the Climate Change Taskforce contribute to enhancing the annual Ecosystem Status Report and avoid redundancies with existing efforts. The council tasks the taskforce with development of a work plan focused on defining clear objectives and work products within the scope of their original charge.

VOTE ON MOTION: Motion passed with no objection on January 31, 2020, at 2:50 p.m.

D4 Halibut ABM

Council Staff: Dr. Diana Stram

SSC Report: The SSC did not take up this agenda item

AP Report: Matt Upton

Action Required: 1. Discuss Stakeholder ideas; refine alternatives as needed

Summary: *The Council continues to consider proposed management measures to index Pacific halibut PSC limits in the BSAI groundfish fisheries to halibut abundance. The Council took initial review of a preliminary draft EIS of the BSAI Halibut ABM analysis in October 2019 and intends to review a revised DEIS in June 2020. The Council may consider revisions to the suite of alternatives at this meeting, understanding that requesting additional analysis to be included in the June 2020 draft will be contingent upon the scope of the requested changes.*

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

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

The Council recommends focusing this action on the Amendment 80 sector and reducing the number of Alternatives for specifying a control rule to establish BSAI halibut PSC limits for the Amendment 80 sector to the following Alternatives:

1. Alternative 1: status quo
2. Alternative 2.2
3. Alternative 2.4: modify starting point to 2,018 mt; modify responsiveness of the PSC limit to changes in the index at a rate of 1:1 above the starting point and at a rate of 2:1 below the starting point.
4. Alternative 3.3a: remove the secondary index (Elements 4 and 5) and use the 4ABCDE setline survey as the index.

New Element (may be applied to any Alternative)

Protect halibut stocks at low levels of abundance. When the coastwide spawning biomass falls below B30, multiply the PSC limit by B/B30.

VOTE ON MOTION: Motion passed unanimously on February 1, 2020, at 12:08 p.m.

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

The Council requests a discussion paper to evaluate the following approaches to establish halibut PSC limits for the Amendment 80 sector.

1. Establish halibut PSC limits for the Amendment 80 sector based on a 3x3 lookup table as shown below. The index values and PSC limit values shown in the table are intended to provide a basis for the initial evaluation of the lookup table approach.

		EBS shelf trawl survey index (metric tons)		
		<i>Low</i> <i>≤129,999</i>	<i>Medium</i> <i>130,000 – 159,999</i>	<i>High</i> <i>≥160,000</i>
IPHC setline survey index in Area 4ABCDE (WPUE)	<i>High</i> <i>≥11,000</i>	Medium 1,745 (current PSC limit)	High 2,207 - 2,325 (15% above current or 2015 PSC limit)	High 2,207 - 2,325 (15% above current or 2015 PSC limit)
	<i>Medium</i> <i>8,000 – 10,999</i>	Low 1,309 - 1,483 (15-25% below current)	Medium 1,745 (current PSC limit)	Medium 1,745 (current PSC limit)
	<i>Low</i> <i>≤7,999</i>	Very Low 1,047 - 1,222 (30-40% below current)	Low 1,309 - 1,483 (15-25% below current)	Low 1,309 - 1,483 (15-25% below current)

The discussion paper should:

- Analyze IPHC setline and EBS shelf trawl survey index data to evaluate suggested breakpoints for low, medium, and high abundance and provide information on other approaches to establish breakpoints.
- Describe the process for determining and implementing PSC limits shown in the table and using the lookup table within the Council and NMFS harvest specifications processes.
- Evaluate resulting PSC limits determined by the lookup table for the Amendment 80 sector and any impact on the Area 4 directed halibut fisheries, using 2008 through 2019.

2. A performance standard to create incentives to reduce halibut PSC mortality to the extent practicable. The annual PSC limit for the Amendment 80 sector is 1,745 mt.

If Amendment 80 the sector has maintained its PSC usage to less than (option 1: 80% or option 2: 90%) of its limit in three of the preceding five years, the sector will be permitted to use up to its full limit in the coming year. If the sector does not meet this performance standard, it shall be limited to (option 1: 80% or option 2: 90%) of its limit in the following year.

The performance standard threshold will not apply if the Area 4CDE directed halibut fishery catch limit is specified at 2 million net pounds or greater.

The discussion paper should:

- Describe the process for determining and implementing the performance standard mechanism within the Council and NMFS harvest specifications processes.
- Evaluate the impacts of implementing the performance standard on the Amendment 80 groundfish fisheries and the Area 4 directed halibut fisheries relative to PSC use and directed halibut fishery harvests from 2008 through 2019.

3. Adjust the halibut PSC limit down in years of low directed halibut fishery catch limits in Area 4CDE. The annual PSC limit for the Amendment 80 sector is 1,745 mt.

If the Area 4CDE directed halibut fishery catch limit is specified at less than 1 million net pounds, the 1,745 mt halibut PSC limit for the Amendment 80 sector will be reduced at a rate equal to 50 mt of halibut PSC for each 100,000 net pounds that the Area 4CDE catch limit is below 1 million net pounds. For each metric ton reduction in the halibut PSC limit under the above provision, 1,000 net pounds of directed halibut quota in Area 4CDE will be allocated to the CDQ groups in addition to the annual CDQ allocations, prorated among the groups in proportion to the established CDQ halibut allocations.

The discussion paper should:

- Describe the process for determining and implementing the PSC limit adjustment and allocation to CDQ groups within the Council and NMFS harvest specifications processes and the IPHC process to establish directed halibut fishery catch limits.
- Evaluate resulting halibut PSC limits for the Amendment 80 sector and impact on the Area 4 CDQ and IFQ directed halibut fishery catch limits when the Area 4CDE catch limit is below 1 million net pounds. For purposes of determining impacts on the Area 4 CDQ and IFQ fisheries, assume that 60 percent of halibut PSC is O26 halibut and a round pound of halibut is 75% of the dressed weight for purposes of converting gross pounds to net pounds.

VOTE ON MOTION: Motion passed unanimously on February 1, 2020, at 12:54 p.m.

D5 Crab e-Logbooks Cost Analysis

Council Staff: Sam Cunningham

Other Presenters: Megan Mackey (NMFS)

SSC Report: The SSC did not take up this agenda item

AP Report: Matt Upton

Action Required: Review report; Consider developing purpose and need statement to analyze regulatory amendment to allow eLogbooks for crab fisheries

Summary: *In response to an April 2018 request from the Pacific Northwest Crab Industry Advisory Committee (PNCIAC), the Council is assessing the benefits and costs of allowing the development of an electronic logbook (eLogbook) program in BSAI crab rationalization (CR) fisheries. The analysis of partial offloads concluded that the potential benefits of eLogbooks do not directly apply to the challenge of accounting for catch by area in a partial offload scenario. Given that conclusion, this report is focused on assessing the fiscal, operational, and management costs and benefits of an eLogbook program to determine whether it is an effective and appealing way to meet the goals of both CR industry participants and federal and state managers.*

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

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

The Council moves to postpone this agenda item indefinitely while industry investigates more cost-effective options.

VOTE ON MOTION: Motion passed with no objection on January 31, 2020, at 3:44 p.m.

D6 Social Science Planning Team

Council Staff: Sam Cunningham & Sarah Marrinan

Other Presenters: Dr. Stephen Kasperski (AFSC)

SSC Report: The SSC did not take up this agenda item

AP Report: No AP Report

Action Required:

1. Review November 2019 interim meeting minutes
2. Update on EDR framework development

Summary: *The Council's Social Science Planning Team (SSPT) held an interim teleconference on November 6, 2019. The first agenda topic was the ongoing development of a revised framework for economic data reporting (EDR) and how such a framework could be operationalized in the medium- to long-term, as well as the steps necessary to continue progress at the SSPT Annual Meeting (May 2020) and execute an EDR Workshop later in 2020. The second topic was an update on AFSC staff's progress toward a social and economic data gap analysis, including efforts to reformat the analysis based on SSPT input provided during the May 2019 Annual Meeting.*

**No public testimony was received, nor was action taken by the Council under this agenda item, however a related motion was made by the Council under agenda item E Staff Tasking.*

E Staff Tasking

After staff presentations, including an overview of upcoming meeting items by Executive Director David Witherell, a report from the Ecosystem Committee by Steve MacLean, and public comment, the Council discussed the relative priority and scheduling of previously tasked projects, as well as tasking issues.

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

The Council acknowledges and appreciates the work of the SSPT to date and provides the following direction:

The SSPT shall focus its immediate work on recommending revisions to the current Economic Data Reporting requirements with the primary objectives to improve utility to inform Council decision documents and data quality.

VOTE ON MOTION: Motion passed with no objection on February 1, 2020, at 3:50 p.m.

The Council directed staff to develop the following letters:

- Send comment letter on Humpback Whale Critical Habitat
- Letter to Chris Oliver on surveys, noting that the base area is now bigger, and we are not achieving base survey efforts.

THE COUNCIL ADJOURNED ON SATURDAY FEBRUARY 1, 2020 AT 4:08 P.M.



North Pacific Fishery Management Council

Simon Kinneen, Chair | David Witherell, Executive Director
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TIME LOG Meeting held in Seattle, Washington Renaissance Hotel January 29 – February 1, 2020

Wednesday January 29, 2019

1/29/2020 8:00 AM Call to Order
1/29/2020 8:02 AM Motion to Approve Agenda
1/29/2020 8:03 AM Moment of Silence for crew members lost on the F/V Scandies Rose
1/29/2020 8:05 AM Terrance Quinn Honorary Award for Dr. Gordon Kruse

B1 REPORTS

1/29/2020 8:10 AM **B1 Executive Director Report** – David Witherell
1/29/2020 8:11 AM Humpback Whale Critical Habitat Presentation – Dr. Lisa Manning & Jon Kurland
1/29/2020 9:11 AM **B1 Executive Director Report Continued**
1/29/2020 9:45 AM **B2 NMFS Report** – Dr. Anne Marie Eich & Alicia Miller
1/29/2020 9:54 AM Morning Break
1/29/2020 10:27 AM **B3 NOAA GC Report** – Lauren Smoker
1/29/2020 10:39 AM **B4 AFSC Annual Report** – Dr. Bob Foy
1/29/2020 11:24 AM B4 Coop Research Presentation - Paul McCluskey
1/29/2020 11:40 AM **B5 ADF&G Report** – Kendall Henry
1/29/2020 11:49 AM **B6 USCG Report and Maritime Coverage** – LT Drew Stafford & CAPT Jason Brenbell
1/29/2020 12:10 PM Lunch Break
1/29/2020 1:26 PM **B Public Testimony**
1/29/2020 1:29 PM Linda Behnken
1/29/2020 1:40 PM Mellisa Heflin
1/29/2020 1:49 PM Amy Doherty
1/29/2020 1:50 PM Gerry Merrigan
1/29/2020 1:55 PM Chris Woodley & Arne Fuglvog

C1 CHARTER HALIBUT ANNUAL MANAGEMENT MEASURES FOR AREA 3A

1/29/2020 2:20 PM **C1 CPT Report** – Sarah Webster
1/29/2020 2:45 PM Charter Halibut Report – Steve MacLean
1/29/2020 2:52 PM Break
1/29/2020 3:19 PM US State Department, Staci MacCorkle Introduction
1/29/2020 3:20 PM AP Report – Ruth Christiansen

1/29/2020 3:27 PM **C1 Public Testimony**
1/29/2020 3:28 PM Forrest Braden
1/29/2020 3:37 PM Daniel Donich
1/29/2020 3:47 PM **C1 Mr. Mezirow Motion**

C2 NORTON SOUND RED KING CRAB

1/29/2020 4:17 PM **C2 Presentation** – AFSC, Dr. Martin Dorn & NPFMC staff, Jim
Armstrong
1/29/2020 4:55 PM Recess

Thursday January 30, 2020

1/30/2020 8:00 AM **Call to Order**
1/30/2020 8:11 AM SSC Report – Anne Hollowed and Sheri Dressel
1/30/2020 8:20 AM AP Report – Matt Upton
1/30/2020 8:23 AM **C2 Public Testimony**
1/30/2020 8:27 AM Adam Bockmann
1/30/2020 8:34 AM **C2 Ms. Bush Motion**

C3 CENTRAL GOA ROCKFISH REAUTHORIZATION

1/30/2020 8:39 AM **C3 Presentation** – NMFS contractors, Darrell Brannan & Mike
Downs
1/30/2020 9:36 AM AP Report – Matt Upton
1/30/2020 9:43 AM **C3 Public Testimony**
1/30/2020 9:43 AM Annika Saltman and Chris Oliver
1/30/2020 9:53 AM Ernie Weiss & Paul Gronholdt
1/30/2020 10:00 AM Julie Kavanaugh
1/30/2020 10:07 AM Break
1/30/2020 10:32 AM Todd Loomis
1/30/2020 10:36 AM Don Ashley
1/30/2020 10:41 AM Hannah Heimbuch
1/30/2020 10:52 AM Rebecca Skinner & Paddy O'Donnell
1/30/2020 10:58 AM Julie Bonney
1/30/2020 11:10 AM Heather Mann
1/30/2020 11:22 AM **C3 Ms. Baker Motion**
1/30/2020 12:00 PM Lunch Break

C4 ECONOMIC DATA REPORT

1/30/2020 1:20 PM **C4 Presentation** – NPFMC staff, Sam Cunningham and NMFS staff,
Scott Miller
1/30/2020 2:25 PM SSC Report – Anne Hollowed
1/30/2020 2:33 PM AP Report – Matt Upton
1/30/2020 2:36 PM **C4 Public Testimony**
1/30/2020 2:36 PM Chris Woodley

1/30/2020 2:43 PM Heather Mann
1/30/2020 2:52 PM Kurt Cochran
1/30/2020 2:55 PM Break
1/30/2020 3:14 PM Jamie Goen
1/30/2020 3:17 PM Rebecca Skinner
1/30/2020 3:23 PM Julie Bonney
1/30/2020 3:30 PM **C4 Ms. Kimball Motion**

C5 SCULPIN/SQUID PRODUCT TYPES

1/30/2020 4:01 PM **C5 Presentation** – NPFMC staff, Steve MacLean
1/30/2020 4:38 PM SSC Report – Anne Hollowed
1/30/2020 4:39 PM AP Report – Ruth Christiansen
1/30/2020 4:40 PM **C5 Public Testimony**
1/30/2020 4:40 PM Christopher Oliver
1/30/2020 4:43 PM Brent Paine
1/30/2020 4:49 PM **C5 Ms. Kimball Motion**
1/30/2020 4:52 PM Recess

Friday January 31, 2020

1/31/2020 8:05 AM Call to Order

D1 PARTIAL COVERAGE COST EFFICIENCIES

1/31/2020 8:08 AM **D1 Presentation** – NMFS AFSC staff, Jennifer Ferdinand and NFMS
Regional office, Jennifer Mondragon
1/31/2020 8:33 AM PCFMAC Report – NPFMC staff, Kate Haapala
1/31/2020 8:41 AM AP Report – Ruth Christiansen
1/31/2020 8:43 AM **D1 Public Testimony**
1/31/2020 8:43 AM Bob Alverson
1/31/2020 8:52 AM Michael Lake
1/31/2020 9:00 AM Dan Falvey
1/31/2020 9:04 AM Julie Bonney
1/31/2020 9:08 AM **D1 Ms. Kimball Motion**

D2 STANDARDIZED BYCATCH REPORTING METHODOLOGY

1/31/2020 9:35 AM **D2 Presentation** – NPFMC staff, Sara Cleaver
1/31/2020 10:16 AM Break
1/31/2020 10:39 AM AP Report – Ruth Christiansen

D3 BERING SEA FISHERY ECOSYSTEM PLAN ACTION MODULES

1/31/2020 10:45 AM	D3 Presentation Local Knowledge, Traditional Knowledge, and Subsistence Taskforce – NPFMC staff, Dr. Kate Haapala
1/31/2020 11:21 AM	D3 FEP Climate Change Module – NPFMC staff, Dr. Diana Stram
1/31/2020 11:36 AM	SSC Report – Anne Hollowed
1/31/2020 11:59 AM	Lunch Break
1/31/2020 1:17 PM	Balance of SSC Report
1/31/2020 1:45 PM	D3 Ecosystem Report – NPFMC staff, Steve MacLean
1/31/2020 2:01 PM	AP Report – Matt Upton
1/31/2020 2:02 PM	D3 Public Testimony
1/31/2020 2:02 PM	Mellisa Johnson
1/31/2020 2:03 PM	Raychelle Daniel
1/31/2020 2:05 PM	Simeon Swetzof and Mateo Paz Soldan
1/31/2020 2:14 PM	Brenden Raymond
1/31/2020 2:19 PM	Mike Levine
1/31/2020 2:23 PM	Theresa Peterson and Natasha Hayden
1/31/2020 2:34 PM	Linda Behnken
1/31/2020 2:38 PM	Break
1/31/2020 2:44 PM	D3 Ms. Campbell Motion

D5 CRAB E-LOGBOOKS COST ANALYSIS

1/31/2020 4:02 PM	D5 Presentation – NMFS, Meghan Mackey and NPFMC staff, Sam Cunningham
1/31/2020 3:35 PM	D5 AP Report – Matt Upton
1/31/2020 3:03 PM	D4 Public Testimony
1/31/2020 3:03 PM	Natasha Hayden (out of order)
1/31/2020 3:07 PM	Break
1/31/2020 3:38 PM	Jamie Goen and Lance Farr
1/31/2020 3:43:46 PM	D5 Mr. Down Motion

D6 SOCIAL SCIENCE PLANNING TEAM

1/31/2020 3:48 PM	D6 Presentation – NMFS staff, Steve Kasperski
1/31/2020 4:51 PM	Recess

**No public testimony, AP report, or action taken by the Council for this agenda item.*

Saturday February 1, 2020

2/1/2020 8:06 AM	Call to Order
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D4 BSAI HALIBUT ABM

2/1/2020 8:07 AM	D4 ABM Update – NPFMC staff, Dr. Diana Stram
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2/1/2020 8:12 AM	AP Report – Matt Upton
2/1/2020 8:24 AM	D4 Public Testimony
2/1/2020 8:24 AM	Chris Woodley & Mark Fina
2/1/2020 9:12 AM	Bob Alverson
2/1/2020 9:19 AM	Jeff Kaufmann
2/1/2020 9:30 AM	Heather McCarty
2/1/2020 9:46 AM	Mateo Paz Soldan and Simeon Swetozof
2/1/2020 9:53 AM	Arne Fuglvog
2/1/2020 10:05 AM	Gerry Merrigan
2/1/2020 10:21 AM	Break
2/1/2020 10:40 AM	Linda Behnken
2/1/2020 10:53 AM	John Gauvin
2/1/2020 11:00 AM	Staff Questions
2/1/2020 11:12 AM	Break
2/1/2020 11:36 AM	D4 Ms. Baker Motion #1
2/1/2020 12:11 PM	D4 Ms. Baker Motion #2
2/1/2020 1:00 PM	Lunch Break

E1 STAFF TASKING

2/1/2020 2:01 PM	David Witherell
2/1/2020 2:06 PM	Ecosystem Committee Report – NPFMC staff, Steve MacLean
2/1/2020 2:30 PM	Tasking and Scheduling – David Witherell
2/1/2020 2:47 PM	E1 Public Testimony
2/1/2020 2:47 PM	Craig Lowenberg
2/1/2020 2:52 PM	Nikolai Silvertstol
2/1/2020 3:01 PM	Lance Farr
2/1/2020 3:04 PM	Duncan Fields
2/1/2020 3:09 PM	Jamie Goen
2/1/2020 3:11 PM	Heather McCarty & Mateo Paz Soldan
2/1/2020 3:13 PM	Rebecca Skinner
2/1/2020 3:17 PM	Break
2/1/2020 3:38 PM	Staff Tasking Discussions
2/1/2020 3:49 PM	E1 Mr. Cross Motion - SSPT
2/1/2020 4:08 PM	Meeting Adjourned

February 2020 Newsletter

Thank you, Seattle

The seafood industry hosted a reception at the Renaissance Marriott Hotel in downtown Seattle following the first day of the Council meeting. The Council and public were treated to delicious North Pacific seafood, including king crab, scallops, and pollock noodles. Many thanks to the businesses and groups involved in hosting the event, and thanks to the Alaska Scallop Association, Freezer Longline Coalition, Icicle Seafoods, Trident Seafoods, and Unisea for the seafood donations. A good time was had by all.

New Terry Quinn II Distinguished Scientist Award to Dr. Gordon Kruse

Dr. Terry Quinn II was a very active member of the North Pacific Council's Scientific and Statistical Committee from 1986 until his death in 2019. Terry was dedicated to the Council process of scientists, managers, and public working together to achieve sustainable management of the fisheries while balancing conservation, economic, and social concerns. He was well known for his expertise in population dynamics, knowledge and history of groundfish stock assessments, and his ability to develop practical and useful scientific advice and recommendations to the Council. As a professor at the University of Alaska, he provided guidance and encouragement to many students who have gone on to be successful scientists and fishery managers in the North Pacific.

In Terry's honor, the award will be bestowed by the Council on an individual who, over the course of many years, made outstanding contributions in fishery science or other related fields, and remained dedicated to ensuring that fishery science and management in the North Pacific are the best in the world.

At its January 2020 meeting in Seattle, the Council announced its selection of Dr. Gordon Kruse as the first recipient of this highly prestigious award. Dr. Kruse is a well-known and highly esteemed fishery researcher in Alaska, a professor emeritus and mentor to young professionals, a dedicated and longtime member of the Council's Scientific and Statistical Committee, and, as noted by Council Vice-Chair Bill Tweit, "exceptionally worthy of this special honor." Kruse was presented the award to a standing ovation from Council members and all present.

In accepting the award, Kruse thanked the Council for establishing an award that memorializes Terry Quinn's contributions to fishery science and management. Dr. Kruse commented, "I am very humbled to receive this



Dr. Gordon Kruse and Dr. Terry Quinn both served on the Council's Scientific and Statistical Committee

award that honors Terry. The Council has been a huge part of my professional career and I always try to make a positive difference in fisheries management. This means the world to me.”

Council Changes

New officers at the Advisory Panel and SSC

The Council’s Scientific and Statistical Committee (SSC) will be co-Chaired by Dr. Anne Hollowed and Dr. Sherri Dressel in 2020. The SSC Vice-Chair will be Alison Whitman.

The Council’s Advisory Panel will be Chaired by Angel Drobnica in 2020, with co-Vice-Chairs Matt Upton and Ruth Christiansen.



Co Chairs of the SSC, (L to R) Dr. Sherri Dressel and Dr. Anne Hollowed. Vice Chair, Allison Whitman

Text Updates during Council meeting

Responding to requests from the public, the administrative staff deployed a text update subscription service at the February Council meeting. Texts sent straight to your phone provided updates on what agenda item the Council was discussing, or where the AP was in their agenda before breaking for lunch. Sign up is as simple as texting the word “COUNCIL” to 81411, and participants can unsubscribe at any time. The response was favorable, and we intend to continue this feature for upcoming Council meetings. If you have any questions or are interested in the specifics, please contact maria.davis@noaa.gov.

NPFMC Office Move Update

For the last two months, the Council’s staff has been settling into the new office space. Even though the new office is just four blocks away, it has made a considerable positive impact and is a welcome improvement for Council business. The office suite is full of windows and the conference room is designed to be able to hold committee meetings onsite, using up-to-date audio and video technology. Internet, phones, and computers got a makeover as well, and the layout of the office suite means all staff are on the same floor, with open areas and workspaces meant to invite collaboration.

Our offices are always open to the public, and being out of the Federal Building, we no longer have TSA-style security barring access. If you are in the area, feel free to stop by and meet with the staff! North Pacific Research Board, Alaska Ocean Observing Systems, and Alaska Sea Grant are also located on the first floor of the same building. The Council staff plans to hold an open house in conjunction with the April Council meeting.

Our new address is **Suite 400, 1007 W 3rd Avenue, Anchorage, AK 99501**. Phone numbers, web, and email addresses all remain the same.

Charter Halibut Management Measures for Area 3A

At this meeting the Council reviewed a supplemental analysis from ADF&G of potential charter halibut management measures for implementation in Area 3A in 2020 and identified their recommended management measures for implementation in 2020.

In December 2019 the Charter Halibut Management Committee was not able to identify management measures for Area 3A that would meet the reference level of halibut removals specified at the IPHC interim meeting, but did identify [management measures for Area 2C](#) that the Council recommended for implementation. The committee held a teleconference on January 23 to evaluate additional measures for Area 3A that could achieve the reference TCEY. The Alaska Department of Fish and Game (ADF&G) conducted a supplemental analysis to evaluate additional management measures requested by the committee. The Committee and Council's recommended management measures include the status quo measures, unless otherwise specified: daily bag limit of 2 halibut, an annual limit of 4 halibut per charter angler, Wednesdays closed to halibut retention all year, 1 trip per halibut charter vessel per day, and 1 trip per charter halibut permit per day.



Showing off catch from a day of charter fishing.

If the allocation is less than 2.014 million pounds, but greater than 1.95 million pounds: a daily bag limit of 2 halibut with one fish of any size and one fish less than or equal to 26 inches, close Tuesdays to halibut retention, according to Table 1 on p 15 of the Supplemental Analysis, such that the projected removals achieve the allocation. The specific Tuesdays closed to retention are specified on Table 22, p.38 of the December 3 analysis.

If the allocation is less than 1.695 million pounds, but greater than or equal to 1.588 million pounds: a daily bag limit of 2 halibut with one fish of any size and one fish less than or equal to 26 inches, all Tuesdays closed to halibut retention, close Thursdays to halibut retention to a maximum of four Thursday closures according to Table 5, p. 19 of the Supplemental Analysis and specified on Table 4, p. 18 of the Supplemental Analysis, such that projected removals achieve the allocation.

If the allocation is less than 1.588 million pounds: all Tuesdays closed to halibut retention, a daily bag limit of one halibut with a reverse (protected) slot limit with the upper limit fixed at 80 inches and the lower limit starting at 58 inches and adjusted according to Appendix Table A5-0, p. 75 of the Supplemental Analysis such that projected removals achieve the allocation.

The [charter halibut management committee report](#) contains statements from Area 2C and Area 3A representatives that the restrictions placed on the charter fleet in both areas is likely to result in a number of charter businesses and other support businesses closing in fishing communities around the State. Council members acknowledged the "very real and severe economic challenges" that the proposed regulations for 2020 will create, and also acknowledged that additional challenges are likely to occur in the near future.

The Council also reviewed and approved suggested language to clarify the Council's intent in IPHC proposal IPHC-2020-AM096-PropB1 that described the Council's proposed management measures for Area 2C charter halibut fishing in 2020.

Norton Sound Red King Crab

At this meeting, the Council specified 2020 overfishing and acceptable biological catch levels for Norton Sound red king crab (NSRKC). Dr. Martin Dorn, Co-Chair of the Crab Plan Team (CPT), presented the SSC, AP, and Council with an overview of the 2020 stock assessment for NSRKC as well as other issues addressed at the January 2020 CPT meeting in Kodiak. For NSRKC, the SSC recommended a conservative approach for setting acceptable biological catch (ABC) in 2020, based on concerns identified by the CPT and in stakeholder testimony. Under the Council's harvest control rule for crab, ABC is calculated as a percent reduction, or "buffer", from the overfishing level (OFL), and the SSC increased the buffer from 20% to 30%, which is above the 25% buffer recommended by the CPT. Based on the recommendations of the SSC, the Council specified 2020 NSRKC OFL at 130 tonnes (287 thousand lbs) and ABC at 90 tonnes (201 thousand lbs).



Norton Sound Red King Crab Stock Status

The updated BSAI Crab SAFE chapter for NSRKC indicates that the 2020 biomass of mature male crab is 1660 tonnes, which is below B_{MSY} (2070 tonnes) but above the minimum stock size threshold (1040 tonnes), and, therefore, the stock not overfished. Additionally, because the 2019 total catch (40 tonnes) was below the OFL specified for 2019 (110 tonnes), overfishing did not occur.

The Crab Plan Team and SSC identified a range of concerns related to the NSRKC stock that contributed to the reduction in ABC. These include low fishery catch per unit effort, evidence of insufficient numbers of mature males, reproductive failures in 2019, and uncertainty in model inputs and model fit.

Other issues covered at the January CPT meeting and reviewed by the SSC, AP, and Council included modeling scenarios for the May 2020 stock assessment for Aleutian Islands golden king crab, an update on improvements for the State's crab catch estimation, the development of ecosystem and socio-economic profiles for crab fisheries, the finalization of a rebuilding plan for St. Matthew Is. blue king crab, the Council's Bering Sea Fishery Ecosystem Plan, a snow crab spatial model, the 2019 Crab Economic SAFE, an overview of the ADF&G crab observer program, BSAI crab research priorities, and a CPT workshop on the GMACS modeling framework.

Staff contact for the BSAI Crab Plan Team is Jim Armstrong.

CGOA Rockfish Reauthorization

At this meeting, the Council took final action to recommend reauthorization of the Rockfish Program (RP). The Council approved the existing management framework with several modifications designed to clarify regulations, eliminate unnecessary regulations, and improve efficiency within the program. The intent is for the new regulations to be implemented prior to the current RP expiring on December 31, 2021.

In reauthorizing the RP, the Council voted to remove the program's sunset date. By removing the sunset date altogether rather than establishing a new sunset date, the Council intends to provide a greater level of stability and predictability to the fishery. The Council will still be able to ensure that the program continues to function as intended, or make changes if necessary, through the mandated review process set out in the Magnuson-Stevens Act.

In addition to removing the sunset date, the Council recommended several modifications and clarifications to the existing RP. All of the elements defined under Alternative 2 were included in the preferred alternative or subsumed in another element. Each of the proposed changes are briefly described.

1. NMFS would be granted the authority to reallocate unharvested RP Pacific cod from RP cooperatives after the RP fisheries close on November 15 consistent with regulations at § 679.20(a)(12)(ii). Those regulations define the priority of the reallocation such that Pacific cod would first be allocated to catcher vessel sectors, the combined catcher vessel and catcher/processor pot sector, and finally other catcher/processor sectors. NMFS Inseason Management staff are provided flexibility under this change to reallocate Pacific cod where it is needed and can be harvested.
2. Vessels were exempted from Crab Rationalization Program sideboard limits when fishing in the RP. This recommendation would allow any vessel that is not allowed to catch Central Gulf of Alaska (CGOA) rockfish under the crab sideboards to catch rockfish if they have access to cooperative quota for that species.
3. Implement regulations that requires NMFS to provide an annual RP cost recovery report. NMFS has been voluntarily producing those reports for stakeholders.
4. Clarify and remove unnecessary regulations.
 679. Clarify regulations at § 679.5(r)(10) to specify that only shoreside processors receiving RP Cooperative Quota must submit the Rockfish Ex-vessel Volume and Value Report.
 680. Remove the regulations in § 679.5(r)(6)(iii)(B) requiring that an annual RP cooperative report be submitted to NMFS. The Council requests that the RP cooperatives continue to voluntarily provide annual reports to the Council.
 681. Revise § 679.81(i)(D)(3) to remove requirements for a Fishing Plan to be submitted with a cooperative application for CQ.
 682. Revise § 679.84(f)(1) to exempt shoreside processors under the RP from the requirement to provide an observer work station and observer communication described at § 679.28(g)(7)(vii) and (viii).
 683. Clarify regulations regarding accounting for inseason use caps to specify that any transfer of unused rockfish ICAs and CP CQ to CV cooperatives does not apply to CV ownership caps, cooperative, harvester CQ, or shoreside processor CQ use caps.
5. Modify cooperative check-in times from 48 to 24 hours. The development of the electronic check-in system means that the 24-hour notice requirement is now adequate.
6. Catcher/processor rockfish program sideboard limits in the WGOA rockfish fisheries defined at § 679.82(e)(4) were removed. These sideboards applied only during July and did not apply to the entire Amendment 80 fleet. Eliminating those sideboard limits does not change the amount of WGOA rockfish the Amendment 80 sector may harvest in July, but could generate operational efficiencies for the

catcher/processor sector by eliminating the need for Amendment 80 firms to fish two vessels in the GOA to take the entire Amendment 80 sideboard limit during July.

7. Modify regulations at § 679.23(h)(1) by removing the 3-day stand down for CVs that fish for groundfish in the BSAI while pollock or Pacific cod is open to directed fishing in the BSAI from the GOA stand down if they check into the RP and fish in the CGOA RP. This action does not change the stand down requirement for similarly situated vessels moving from the BSAI into limited access GOA fisheries.

Staff contact is Jon McCracken.

Economic Data Reporting

The Council conducted an initial review of alternatives that could improve the usability, efficiency, and consistency of existing economic data collection programs while minimizing their cost and burden to industry and the government. EDR programs are currently implemented in four fisheries: the Crab Rationalization program, Amendment 80, GOA trawl fisheries, and the BSAI pollock fishery. The data elements collected in each EDR vary. The Council modified the purpose and need statement to note that data collection costs include not only direct and indirect cost to submitters but also management costs that are paid by industry through cost recovery fees. The Council directed staff to revise the analysis and continue evaluating whether the value that EDR collections provide to managers outweighs costs, and whether *annual* data submissions are necessary to achieve the EDR programs' objectives.

The Council amended the language of one action alternative (Alternative 2) and added a second action alternative for consideration (Alternative 3). Alternative 2 is a package of revisions to EDRs that includes: (1) reducing the automatic requirement to have a third party audit EDR data, limiting the use of audits to cases of noncompliance and thus reducing costs; (2) modifying data confidentiality restrictions to make them the same as Federal fishery data regulations, making EDR data easier to include in analyses and better able to be identified to the submitter in cases of noncompliance; (3) ending the GOA trawl EDR collection that was implemented in 2015 in anticipation of a catch share program that has not transpired; and (4) a **new element** that would change the frequency of EDR collections from annual to every two, three, or five years. Alternative 3 would remove all requirements to submit EDR data, effectively ending the four EDR programs that currently exist.

Concurrent with this action, the Council and its Social Science Planning Team (SSPT) are engaging with fishery participants and formulating a broader strategy to assess and improve EDR collections. The Council's goal is for EDR collections to cover the most useful, policy-relevant economic data, not necessarily to collect as much data as possible. The Council aims to limit the burden on EDR submitters to the most appropriate level by, among other means, eliminating data collections that are duplicative or do not inform management decisions. This broader EDR track was also discussed under the Council's D6 agenda item (SSPT Interim Report). The issue will next be discussed at the SSPT's public in-person annual meeting in May (date TBD) and at a public EDR workshop. When available, information on the workshop will be posted at:

<https://www.npfmc.org/committees/social-science-planning-team/>.

Staff contact is Sam Cunningham.

Squids and Sculpins Processing

The Council reviewed the initial review draft of a Regulatory Impact Review (RIR) considering processing restrictions on squids and sculpins as part of the Ecosystem Component (EC) Category in the BSAI and GOA Groundfish FMPs. **The Council approved the analysis for public review and selected Alternative 2, the action alternative that will remove processing restrictions on squids and sculpins, as their preliminary preferred alternative.**

The analysis included the no action alternative that would retain processing restrictions for squids and sculpins in the EC category, and the action alternative that removes processing restrictions for squids and sculpins. Under both alternatives squids and sculpins will remain in the EC category, catch monitoring and recordkeeping remain required, and retention is limited by a 20% maximum retainable amount (MRA) for squids and sculpins.



The Council noted that when they recommended the amendments that moved squids to the EC category (Amendment 117 to the BSAI FMP and 106 to the GOA FMP), they did not intend to limit processing for squids. The action alternative matches the intention of the Council for those alternatives and corrects regulations to reflect their intention.

Staff contact is Steve MacLean.

Partial Coverage Observer Program Cost Efficiencies

At the January 2020 meeting, the Council considered different options to improve cost efficiencies in the partial coverage program and adopted priorities for continued and new work on cost efficiencies in the partial coverage program.

As background, in October 2019, the Council recommended an increase in the observer fee percentage from 1.25% to 1.65% for the partial coverage program, which supports the deployment of observers and electronic monitoring (EM) systems in the commercial groundfish and Pacific halibut fisheries under partial coverage monitoring throughout the Gulf of Alaska and the Bering Sea Aleutian Islands. In conjunction with the fee increase, the Council also emphasized the need to develop cost efficiencies for partial coverage monitoring program.



Staff provided a workplan identifying potential opportunities for continued and new work on cost efficiencies in the partial coverage program, and the Council adopted the following three priorities : 1) ongoing support for the pelagic trawl EM exempted fishing permit (EFP); 2) integration of EM into the overall monitoring of fixed gear, and an evaluation of the baseline observer coverage needed to inform fixed gear EM to obtain average weight data for discards and biological samples. This evaluation should also explore existing data sources, such as surveys, that could provide information on average weight; 3) re-evaluate the different criteria to define the zero selection pool to meet both data needs and improve cost efficiency. If possible, the Council requested these changes be incorporated into the draft 2021 ADP (which will be reviewed by the Council in October 2020).

The Council noted that the pelagic trawl EM EFP has the potential to achieve cost savings that could result in higher coverage rates on other observed (non-pelagic) trawl sectors, and significant industry and staff resources are already dedicated to the pelagic trawl EM EFP. Integrating the fixed gear EM program has the potential to lower the program-wide, per-day cost of the partial coverage program, but overall cost efficiencies will depend on whether EM integration achieves a higher selection rate with a lower daily cost. Finally, re-evaluating the definition for zero selection may achieve cost savings by considering characteristics other than vessel length, such as fishing patterns, and by analyzing the feasibility and logistics of using current year fishing effort to establish the zero selection pool for the following year.

Staff contact is Kate Haapala.

Standardized Bycatch Reporting Methodology

The Council reviewed the compliance of all of its FMPs with Standardized Bycatch Reporting Methodology requirements that are mandated in the Magnuson-Stevens Act (MSA), and tasked FMP amendment analyses for three FMPs.

The MSA requires FMPs to establish a standardized reporting methodology (SBRM) to assess the amount and type of bycatch occurring in the fishery and include conservation and management measures that minimize bycatch and minimize the mortality of bycatch which cannot be avoided. The national guidance included in the Final Rule defines SBRM as an “established, consistent procedure or procedures used to collect, record, and report bycatch data in a fishery.”

Regulations require that any FMP must identify the required procedure that constitutes the standardized reporting methodology for the fishery and explain how the procedure meets the purpose to collect, record, and report bycatch data. SBRMs could include one or more combination of data collection and reporting programs such as observer programs, electronic monitoring, and industry reports (e.g. landing reports or “fish tickets”).

The report evaluated each FMP in relation to national guidance set out in the [Final Rule](#) addressing SBRM requirements. The Council determined that the Arctic, BSAI Groundfish, and GOA Groundfish FMPs are all in compliance with current SBRM guidance and that no amendments are necessary for those FMPs. The Council initiated an analysis to implement FMP amendments for the BSAI Crab FMP and the Scallop FMP. The

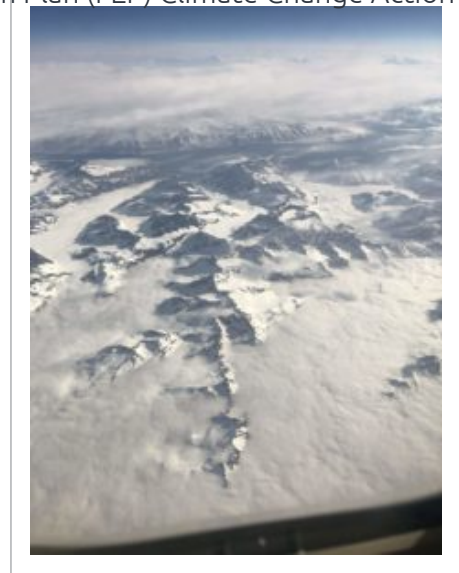


amendments would 1) explicitly identify a SBRM and explain how it meets the SBRM purpose, and 2) address the four SBRM components, consistent with national guidance. Additionally, in developing the amendment to the Salmon FMP to address Cook Inlet, the Council will ensure that the SBRM is explicitly identified in the FMP as part of that amendment. The Amendments that fulfill SBRM compliance for the Crab, Scallop, and Salmon FMPs would need to be completed prior to the February 2022 deadline.

Staff contact is Sara Cleaver.

FEP Climate Change Taskforce

The Council received a progress report on the Bering Sea Fishery Ecosystem Plan (FEP) Climate Change Action Module Taskforce. The Council nominated members at the October 2019 meeting and the taskforce held an organizational meeting via webex in January. The January meeting was abbreviated due to weather and much of the scoping for the action module was postponed to later in February. Preliminary revisions to the workplan and a meeting report were provided to the Council. The Council will receive a more detailed workplan and report from the taskforce in April, in conjunction with the FEP agenda item. The Climate Change Taskforce (CCTF) will be holding a 3-day web/video broadcast meeting February 26-28 with dual locations in Anchorage (Council office) and Seattle (Alaska Fishery Science Center). The agenda for the meeting and additional details will be posted to the Council's website.



Staff contact is Diana Stram.

Local and Traditional Knowledge and Subsistence Taskforce

At this meeting, the Council received a report from the Bering Sea Fishery Ecosystem Plan (BS FEP) LK, TK, and Subsistence Taskforce. The Taskforce was formed at the October 2019 meeting to work on the FEP Action Module to develop protocols for using Local Knowledge (LK), Traditional Knowledge (TK), and Subsistence information in the Council process. The Taskforce, which met for the first time in January 2020, reported on goals, objectives, and deliverables for the Taskforce's work. The Council adopted the following goals for the LK, TK, and Subsistence Taskforce:



1. To create processes and protocols through which the Council can identify, analyze, and consistently incorporate TK and LK, and the social science of TK and LK, into Council decision making processes to support the use of best available scientific information in Ecosystem-based Fishery Management (EBFM).
2. To create a protocol and develop recommendations through which the Council can define and incorporate subsistence information into analyses and decision making.

The Council requested staff to update Taskforce’s workplan to reflect discussions at this meeting, including the Council’s established purpose of the Taskforce, the Taskforce’s Objectives 1-5 as identified in the January 2020 report, and the Taskforce’s ground rules. The Council tasked the Taskforce with the following associated actions and products:

1. Create a glossary of terms to be included in the Taskforce’s workplan.
2. Identify potential “onramps,” or points of entry, within the Council process (e.g., public testimony or analyses) for the Taskforce’s work.
3. Develop a protocol outlining the best practices for soliciting LK and TK, and a protocol for the Council to identify, analyze, and incorporate TK and LK into Council decision-making documents as appropriate.
4. Develop guidelines or protocols for Council staff for soliciting/identifying, analyzing, and using subsistence data and information in analyses.
5. Prepare a final report for the Council.

The Council intends the LK, TK, and Subsistence Taskforce to create a clear set of directions for the Council regarding best practices for solicitation and consideration of LK, TK, and subsistence information and how it can be understood and incorporated into analyses. The intent is not data collection but rather best practice protocols that can be applied to improve ongoing Council decision making.

Staff contact is Kate Haapala.

Crab E-Logbooks

After the delivery of a report examining the costs for Pacific States Marine Fisheries Commission (PSMFC) to develop and implement BSAI crab electronic logbooks (eLogbooks), the Council chose to suspend agency consideration of developing a Crab Rationalization eLogbook while industry investigates more cost-effective options.

NMFS requires daily fishing logbooks for vessels 60 ft length overall or greater that participate in the Crab Rationalization Program fisheries in the BSAI. These are paper logbooks that are completed by hand. In April 2018 the Pacific Northwest Crab Industry Advisory Committee requested the Council and NMFS develop and authorize eLogbooks for the BSAI king, Tanner and snow crab fisheries in order to improve efficiency, timeliness and ease of reporting.



Stakeholders testified that Crab Rationalization Program participants have been pursuing third party options for development and implementation of an eLogbook program that they believe may be more cost-effective than the estimates provided by PSMFC. Moreover, an industry-led effort may allow for a reporting program with greater flexibility in design that could be tailored to the industry interests while still complying with Federal reporting requirements.

Staff contact is Sarah Marrinan.

Social Science Planning Team

The Council received a report on the interim meeting for the Social Science Planning Team (SSPT), which occurred by teleconference November 6, 2019. The Council had extensive discussion about the charge of the SSPT, the current work on strategizing revisions to the Economic Data Reporting (EDR) programs, and the SSPT's Data Gap Analysis. The Council directed the SSPT to focus its immediate efforts on the revisions to EDR requirements with the primary objectives of improving utility to inform Council decision documents and increasing data quality. In response, the SSPT intends to host a public EDR workshop in addition to its next in-person meeting. Meeting information will be posted at: <https://www.npfmc.org/committees/social-science-planning-team/>

Staff contact is Sarah Marrinan.

Economic SAFE Review

At this meeting, the SSC reviewed the Groundfish and Crab Economic SAFE reports as presented by the Alaska Fisheries Science Center's Economic and Social Science Research Division, and provided feedback for future iterations.

The Groundfish and Crab Economic SAFE reports contain detailed information about economic aspects of the groundfish and crab fisheries. The SSC appreciated the AFSC presentations on both reports. The Groundfish Economic SAFE has evolved over the last several years and is a useful reference, but the SSC noted that the Crab Economic SAFE still needs further development in the presentation and accessibility of information. The SSC also recognized that representation of community engagement is still evolving for Economic SAFEs. The SSC recommended that authors develop a consistent strategy for the presentation of different aspects and resolutions of fishing community engagement and dependency in various documents. Specific to the Crab Economic SAFE, the SSC looks forward to completion of the quota ownership decomposition effort, which will allow better tracking of who is capturing the ownership benefits of the crab program. The SSC is also looking forward to the local and traditional knowledge relevant to the Norton Sound red king crab fishery (NSRKC), which is an outstanding SSC request. Finally, the SSC noted that its previous request for the development of a quantitative baseline of annual community engagement and dependency for the NSRKC fishery has not yet been completed and looks forward to that information.

Staff contact is Jon McCracken.

Multi-Regional Social Accounting Matrix

The SSC heard a presentation from Dr. Chang Seung (NMFS AFSC) on the Multi-Regional Social Accounting Matrix (MRSAM), a tool for estimating economic impacts of fishery management actions, and requested further review as development continues. There are currently two versions of the MRSAM: a three-region model that analyzes impacts for Alaska, the West Coast and the rest of the US, and a 10-region model that estimates impacts for six Southwest Alaska communities, the rest of Alaska, the West Coast, the rest of the US, and a “region” representing at-sea catcher-processors and motherships operating in Southwest Alaska waters. Currently, a web application allowing users to apply the model to a given change in fisheries value and compute the resulting impacts only exists for the three-region model, however Dr. Seung discouraged use of this web tool because the three-region model uses input data from 2004 and is no longer current. The 10-region model was recently completed and a technical memo was available for review, however a web application for this model is still in development.



The SSC supported the MRSAM effort and its potential for quantitative estimation of impacts of Council management actions in a manner not possible at present. The SSC would like to thoroughly review the 10-region MRSAM before approving its use for analysis in future Council actions. Specifically, the SSC requested additional information on model assumptions, how the model will be maintained and updated to reflect the best available information and how current data streams may be applicable to this process, what types of Council actions would be most appropriate to implement MRSAM use, and implications of the divergence of the regional units commonly reported in Council analyses and the regional units output by the MRSAM. The SSC requested the authors undertake additional model validation exercises including a comparison of model predictions and actual outcomes from a previous event such as the 2009 Pacific cod price collapse as well as comparing MRSAM results with a similar, ongoing effort by ISER to empirically determine local Alaska multipliers.

Staff contact is Anna Henry

Northern Fur Seal Update

At this meeting, the SSC and Ecosystem Committee received a [presentation](#) from Dr. Jeremy Sterling (MML), Dr. Carey Kuhn (MML), and Dr. Elizabeth McHuron (U. Washington) providing an update and background information on a project to observe fine scale foraging patterns of northern fur seals in the Pribilof Islands region, and a project to develop a population level bioenergetic model for northern fur seals in the Bering Sea. The SSC was interested in the ability to address questions pertaining to interactions between northern fur seals and fisheries, and suggested several areas for future improvement.

In February, the SSC normally receives updates from the AFSC Marine Mammal Lab (MML) on marine mammals for which there is conservation concern or those with unusual or unexpected survey results. Because of scheduling conflicts, those updates were not available in February, but will be received by the SSC at the March/April Council meeting.

Staff Contact is Steve MacLean.

Staff Tasking

The Council discussed the relative priority and scheduling of previously tasked projects, as well as the following tasking issues.

- See revised [3 meeting outlook](#) for changes to scheduling, including for the BSAI Pacific cod trawl CV analysis, halibut ABM discussion paper and analysis, and other agenda items addressed by the Council at the meeting.

The Council directed staff to develop the following letters:

- To NMFS, commenting on the proposed rule setting critical habitat for humpback whales.
- To NMFS, conveying the Council's continued support for survey funding especially in response to changes in species distribution.

The Council provided the following additional direction:

- The Council clarified with staff that accountability measures were effectively undertaken by the Council and NMFS in December to respond to overages in the sablefish annual catch limit in 2019, although they were not explicitly labeled as accountability measures at the time.
- The Council requested a report from NMFS at the April meeting on the details of how cost recovery is assessed and used in the halibut/sablefish IFQ and Amendment 80 programs.

Regarding advisory groups:

- The Council asked the Community Engagement Committee to consider in their report the idea of tribal groups providing a report to the Council of their concerns especially with respect to changing environmental conditions, perhaps as a B report.
 - Chairs of the IFQ, FMAC, and Ecosystem Committees highlighted draft agenda topics for their upcoming [meetings](#).
 - The Council provided additional direction about upcoming tasking priority for the Social Science Planning Team.
-

Upcoming Meetings

Council Committees, Plan Teams, Taskforces

February

- Scallop Plan Team, February 19, Kodiak, AK
- Cook Inlet Salmon Committee, February 25-26, Anchorage, AK
- Bering Sea Fishery Ecosystem Plan Climate Change Action Module Taskforce, Feb 26-28, Anchorage, AK/Seattle, WA

March

- Bering Sea FEP Team, March 3-5, Seattle, WA
- IFQ Committee, March 30, Anchorage, AK
- Ecosystem Committee, March 31, Anchorage, AK

April

- Community Engagement Committee, April 20, Bethel, AK **Note location change**
- Bering Sea Fishery Ecosystem Plan LK/TK/Subsistence Action Module Taskforce, April TBD, Location TBD

May

- BSAI Crab Plan Team, May 4-8, Seattle, WA
- FMAC, May 19-20, Seattle WA
- Trawl EM Committee, May 20, Seattle, WA
- Social Science Planning Team, May (date and location TBD; may postpone to June)

June

- Enforcement Committee, June 2, Juneau, AK

Other meetings

- NMFS Sablefish apportionment workshop: February 20, Auke Bay Lab, Juneau, AK
- [NMFS National EM Workshop](#), Feb 12-13, Seattle, WA
- NMFS Deep Sea Coral Workshop, May 13-15, Juneau, AK

SSC Workshop: Research Priorities

The SSC held a workshop to discuss how it could improve the process of identifying and updating research priorities for the Council, concluding that it would be more effective to evaluate research needs within the context of a larger strategic plan. The SSC noted that the current research priority process is cumbersome and does not contribute to a clear sense of priorities among the various projects. Several NMFS scientists from the Alaska Fishery Science Center (AFSC) and on the Council's Groundfish and Crab Plan Teams actively participated in the discussion through presentations on a wide range of emerging and ongoing research needs. The SSC will continue to develop a plan for review that will include tactical approaches for achieving

strategic research goals and evaluating tradeoffs between competing research needs such as ongoing resource surveys and new research initiatives. A proposal for developing a clear strategic research plan will be reviewed when the SSC takes up its comprehensive review of research priorities at the April 2020 meeting.

Staff contact is Jim Armstrong.

Halibut Abundance-Based Management

The Council received input from stakeholders on suggested modifications to the current suite of alternatives being considered for halibut Abundance-based management (ABM) of PSC limits in the Bering Sea. After extensive consideration of proposed changes and simplifications to the alternative set the Council made several recommended changes.

The action will now focus exclusively on the Amendment 80 sector (BSAI non-pollock trawl catcher-processors). This sector is responsible for more than 60% of the annual halibut bycatch mortality in the Bering Sea. In limiting this action to the Amendment 80 sector, the Council acknowledged that while the trawl limited access catcher vessel sector is responsible for approximately 20% of the annual mortality, that mortality is primarily taken in the directed Pacific cod fishery and the Council has already initiated a separate action that would reduce their halibut PSC as part of a forthcoming rationalization package. The other two sectors, freezer longline and catcher vessel hook-and-line sectors contribute a relatively small proportion of the annual halibut PSC. The CDQ sector is also removed from this action at this time.

The alternatives for this action have been simplified to three stakeholder-submitted alternatives in addition to the status quo. This action will include only a single index of halibut abundance for each control rule (IPHC setline survey in 4ABCDE and the EBS trawl survey). An element that could be applied to any alternative to address low levels of halibut abundance was added to the set of alternatives. This element would reduce the PSC limit proportional to biomass (B/B30%) when the coastwide spawning stock biomass decreases below B30%. This corresponds to the harvest policy for Council-managed groundfish species as well as biological benchmarks identified by the IPHC. A new analysis will be provided to the Council for Initial Review in October.

While noting that the analysis for October is the priority, the Council also initiated a discussion paper to evaluate different approaches to halibut PSC limits for the Amendment 80 sector and how they meet the Council's objectives for ABM. There are three components to be considered in the paper, which is scheduled for review in June.

1. Establish halibut PSC limits for the Amendment 80 sector based on a 3×3 lookup table shown below.

		EBS shelf trawl survey index (metric tons)		
		<i>Low</i> ≤129,999	<i>Medium</i> 130,000 – 159,999	<i>High</i> ≥160,000
IPHC setline survey index in Area 4ABCDE (WPUE)	<i>High</i> ≥11,000	Medium 1,745 (current PSC limit)	High 2,207 - 2,325 (15% above current or 2015 PSC limit)	High 2,207 - 2,325 (15% above current or 2015 PSC limit)
	<i>Medium</i> 8,000 – 10,999	Low 1,309 - 1,483 (15-25% below current)	Medium 1,745 (current PSC limit)	Medium 1,745 (current PSC limit)
	<i>Low</i> ≤7,999	Very Low 1,047 - 1,222 (30-40% below current)	Low 1,309 - 1,483 (15-25% below current)	Low 1,309 - 1,483 (15-25% below current)

The halibut abundance index values and PSC limit values shown in the table are intended to provide a basis for the initial evaluation of the lookup table approach. The paper will analyze the IPHC setline and EBS trawl survey index data to evaluate the suggested breakpoints for high, medium and low abundance and provide information on other approaches to suggest breakpoints. Staff was directed to offer different breakpoints for consideration based on analysis, if needed. Additional requests include information on the process for setting PSC limits based on this approach and what PSC limits would have been historically if based upon this approach.

2. A performance standard to create incentives to reduce halibut PSC mortality to the extent practicable.

If the Amendment 80 sector has maintained its PSC usage to less than (option 1: 80% or option 2: 90%) of its limit in three of the preceding five years, the sector will be permitted to use up to its full limit in the coming year. If the sector does not meet this performance standard, it shall be limited to (option 1: 80% or option 2: 90%) of its limit in the following year. This performance standard threshold will not apply if the Area 4CDE directed halibut fishery catch limit is specified at 2 million net pounds or greater.

The discussion paper will describe the process for determining and implementing the performance standard mechanism within the Council and NMFS harvest specifications processes and evaluate the impacts of implementing the performance standard on the Amendment 80 groundfish fisheries and the Area 4 directed halibut fisheries relative to PSC use and directed halibut fishery harvests from 2008 through 2019.

3. Adjust the halibut PSC limit (of 1,745 mt) down in years of low directed halibut fishery catch limits in Area 4CDE.

If the Area 4CDE directed halibut fishery catch limit is specified at less than 1 million net pounds, the 1,745 mt halibut PSC limit for the Amendment 80 sector will be reduced at a rate equal to 50 mt of halibut PSC for each 100,000 net pounds that the Area 4CDE catch limit is below 1 million net pounds. For each metric ton reduction in the halibut PSC limit under the above provision, 1,000 net pounds of directed halibut quota in Area 4CDE will be allocated to the CDQ groups in addition to the annual CDQ allocations, prorated among the groups in proportion to the established CDQ halibut allocations.

The discussion paper will describe the process for determining and implementing the PSC limit adjustment and allocation to CDQ groups within the Council and NMFS harvest specifications processes and the IPHC process to establish directed halibut fishery catch limits. The paper will also evaluate the resulting halibut PSC limits for the Amendment 80 sector and impacts on the Area 4 CDQ and IFQ directed halibut fishery catch limits when the Area 4CDE catch limit is below 1 million net pounds.

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