

MEMORANDUM

TO: Council, SSC and AP Members  
FROM:   
Chris Oliver  
Executive Director

ESTIMATED TIME  
2 HOURS

DATE: February 1, 2011

SUBJECT: Aleutian Islands Pacific cod

**ACTION REQUIRED**

- (a) Review discussion paper on management implications of Bering Sea and Aleutian Islands Pacific cod ABC/TAC split; action as necessary

**BACKGROUND**

This discussion paper is intended to provide background information on the management implications of establishing separate Pacific cod sector allocations in the BS and AI, should the BSAI ABC and TAC be split into separate area ABC and TACs in a future specifications process. Currently, Pacific cod is managed on a BSAI-wide basis, and there are nine separate industry sector allocations established to divide the ITAC, in addition to the CDQ allocation. Should the BSAI ABC/TAC be split in the future, the Council stated its intent to consider how it would revise the current sector allocations in response. Absent recommendations from the Council, it is likely that NMFS would need to implement equal percentages of each sector's BSAI allocation in each area under current regulations (e.g., if a sector receives a 40% BSAI allocation, it would receive 40% of the BS ITAC and 40% of the AI ITAC. The CDQ Program would receive 10.7% of the BS TAC and 10.7% of the AI TAC.) This potential result has not been very favorable to date, as it does not reflect recent harvest patterns for each sector in the two areas.

The proposal to establish separate Pacific cod sector allocations between the Bering Sea (BS) and Aleutian Islands (AI) management areas was originally included as part of BSAI Amendment 85, but was removed from the amendment package prior to final action<sup>1</sup>, in order to allow the Council to evaluate this complex action on a separate timeframe. At its December 2008 meeting, the Council received a discussion paper on dividing BSAI Pacific cod sector allocations between the BS and AI, based on the alternatives that were originally evaluated in BSAI Amendment 85. During discussion, it was agreed that the upcoming release of the draft 2010 Steller sea lion Biological Opinion (BiOp) could significantly affect the proposed action; therefore, the Council opted to discuss the direction of the action after the Council received the BiOp and the final reasonable and prudent alternative (RPA). With the final BiOp and formal RPA released in December 2010, the Council scheduled another review of the discussion paper at this February 2011 meeting.

The paper provides a description of the problem statement and existing alternatives followed by an overview of past Council action on apportioning BSAI Pacific cod allocations. The discussion paper also includes a

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<sup>1</sup>Council final action was April 9, 2006. BSAI Amendment 85 was effective starting in 2008.

summary of the most recent estimate of the biomass distribution between the BS and AI, an overview of LLP area endorsements by sector, an update on the State water Aleutian Islands Pacific cod fishery, a brief description of the harvest distribution for Pacific cod between BS and AI by sector, a description of halibut PSC mortality in the BSAI Pacific cod fishery, an overview of Steller sea lion issues associated with proposed action, and finally, a description of the effects of the existing alternatives on the sectors. This paper has been updated to include harvest data through 2009.

The suite of alternatives originated with BSAI Amendment 85, and was last revised in February 2009. Note that the following alternatives only apply to the non-CDQ fisheries.

**ALTERNATIVE 1:** No action. A methodology to apportion the BSAI Pacific cod allocations to the jig, trawl, and fixed gear sectors between the BS and AI subareas would not be selected.

**ALTERNATIVE 2:** Sector allocations remain as BSAI (with BS and AI TACs)  
No allocation to a sector of a specific percentage of a sub-area. Sectors would have a BSAI allocation to fish in either sub-area (BS and AI) if the sub-area is open for directed fishing and TAC is available.

Option 2.1 Upon splitting the BSAI Pacific cod sector allocations between the Bering Sea and Aleutian Islands, separate BS and AI LLP area endorsements would be converted to BSAI area-wide endorsements for the Pacific cod fishery.

**ALTERNATIVE 3:** BS and AI sector allocations based on equal percentage from BSAI sector allocations

This alternative provides an allocation to a sector of equal percentage in both sub-areas. The allocation percentage of BSAI TAC a sector receives would result in that same percentage being applied to both the BS and AI sub-areas so that a sector would have the same percentage in both sub-areas.

Option 3.1 Upon splitting the BSAI Pacific cod sector allocations between the Bering Sea and Aleutian Islands, separate BS and AI LLP area endorsements would be converted to BSAI area-wide endorsements for the Pacific cod fishery.

**ALTERNATIVE 4:** BS and AI sector allocations based on a sector's historic harvest in the AI with remainder of sector's overall BSAI allocation to be caught in the BS. Sector's BSAI allocation is maintained and used in annual calculation.

Option 4.1 1995–2002

Option 4.2 1997–2003

Option 4.3 2000–2003

Option 4.4 2002–2003

Option 4.5 Upon splitting the BSAI Pacific cod sector allocations between the Bering Sea and Aleutian Islands, separate BS and AI LLP area endorsements would be converted to BSAI area-wide endorsements for the Pacific cod fishery.

The discussion paper was sent to you on January 8. At this meeting, the Council may determine whether to initiate an analysis to establish separate BS and AI sector allocations, should the BSAI Pacific cod ABC and TAC be split into separate areas in a future specifications process. If the analysis is initiated, the Council should determine whether the current problem statement and alternatives are sufficient for consideration. The Council may also determine not to take action at this time, or request further information prior to initiating a formal analysis.