

Draft SSC Report February 2024



Balance of SSC Report

SSC Election of Officers

- The SSC re-elected Sherri Dressel and Franz Mueter as co-chairs for 2024
 - Dr. Dressel will lead the February, June and December meetings
 - Dr. Mueter will lead the April and October meetings
- The SSC re-elected Alison Whitman as vice chair for 2024

SSC Administrative Discussion

- The SSC welcomes new alternate member Fabio Caltabellotta (WDFW)
- Diana Evans (NPFMC) presented the SSC administrative updates
 - Updates on the Climate Resilience Proposal for IRA funding
 - Upcoming CCTF workshop at the June 2024 meeting in Kodiak
 - Updates on evaluation of information and staff capacity for addressing social and economic information
 - Reported options for the SSC review cycle given the Council's direction to not hold an in-person meeting in February 2025
- Robert Foy (NOAA-AFSC) provided brief updates for the AFSC
 - Use of IRA funds for survey modernization, marine mammal surveys, R&D of acoustics, opportunities to improve indigenous engagement and collaboration and socio-economic studies in the Arctic

C2 Bristol Bay Red King Crab Closures – Initial Review

- 2nd Initial analyses of effects of three alternatives: 1) no action, 2) closing the RKCSA to all groundfish gear, or 3) closing NMFS area 512 to Pacific cod pot fishing
- Potential benefits to BBRKC stock are challenging to quantify given available data
- Potential effects on groundfish fisheries are variable, depending on what alternatives and options are selected

C2 Bristol Bay Red King Crab Closures – Initial Review

- The SSC ***finds*** the document **sufficient** to allow the Council to understand the fishery and policy impacts of the alternatives and ***recommends*** the document be advanced to final action with the following revisions:
 - Replacing the CPUE model with a “proportional” model for PSC predictions to redistribute effort outside of closure areas that is more reflective of actual fleet behavior
 - Alternatively, if the CPUE model is retained, modify the existing model to adjust for CPUE in the area the vessel is displaced and thereby holding target catch constant

C2 Bristol Bay Red King Crab Closures – Initial Review

- The SSC *recommends* (cont.):
 - Inclusion of a table that is similar to the table in the presentation showing the qualitative effects across fishery and PSC species in a stoplight diagram (Figure 1)
 - Improve discussion of RKC predation by cod and provide consumption estimates if possible
 - clarify of the rationale behind the selection of the 50,000-ton threshold
 - explicitly consider the scenario under Alternative 3 that closes area 512 to pot gear and the RKCSA remains open, especially in terms of catch redirection from area 512 to the RKCSA.

C2 Bristol Bay Red King Crab Closures – Initial Review

- The SSC *recommends* (cont.):
 - Identify the communities and stakeholders engaged in or dependent on the BBRKC fishery that would be the beneficiaries of potential conservation aspects of the proposed action, were those benefits to occur
 - Include a brief qualitative characterization of the nature and degree of overlap between the relevant varying sets of potentially affected groundfish fishing communities and the set of potentially affected BBRKC fishing communities under different alternative combinations
 - Improve the characterization of shore-based and inshore floating processors including tendering activities

C3 Cook Inlet Salmon EEZ SAFE

Sockeye, Chinook, Pink, Chum and Coho salmon

- The SSC reviewed the inaugural SAFE for salmon fisheries of the Cook Inlet Exclusive Economic Zone (EEZ)
- The SSC **highlights** the challenge in adapting State of Alaska salmon management practices based on escapement and active inseason management to meet requirements under the MSA
- The SSC **highlights** that continued development of the Cook Inlet SAFE process should be viewed as representing an iterative process

C3 Cook Inlet Salmon EEZ SAFE

Sockeye, Chinook, Pink, Chum and Coho salmon

- The SSC **suggests** a workshop to facilitate iterative development of the SAFE, including expertise from the SAFE team, SSC, ADF&G, and the Pacific Council, who have extensively considered Federal management of salmon fisheries on the West Coast
- The SSC acknowledges the extensive work by SOA to estimate escapements, the age composition of returns to reconstruct brood tables, and stock-recruitment analyses.

C3 Cook Inlet Salmon EEZ SAFE

Sockeye, Chinook, Pink, Chum and Coho salmon

- The SSC ***recommends*** the following tier classifications
 - Tier 1: Kenai River late-run Sockeye salmon, Kasilof River Sockeye salmon
 - Tier 3 (stock aggregates): Chinook salmon, “other” Sockeye salmon, Chum salmon, Coho salmon, and Pink salmon
- The SSC acknowledges both the conservation concern for Chinook salmon and the high-quality data for the Kenai River Late-run stock

C3 Cook Inlet Salmon EEZ SAFE

Sockeye, Chinook, Pink, Chum and Coho salmon

- However, the SSC ***finds*** that at this point it is most appropriate that status determination be at the scale of the stock aggregate given limited harvest in the EEZ and considerations of data availability.
- The SSC ***finds*** that a Tier 3 designation is most appropriate for aggregate “other” Sockeye and aggregate Coho salmon, given lack of consistent escapement data and uncertainty about the proportion of total run represented by indicator stocks

C3 Cook Inlet Salmon EEZ SAFE

Sockeye, Chinook, Pink, Chum and Coho salmon

- The SSC **recommends** that OFL and MFMT calculations for Tier 1 stocks be based on the S_{MSY} , as opposed to the lower bound of the escapement goal range as proposed.
 - The SSC recommends implementation for 2024 OFL/ABC calculations
- The SSC **supports** the ARIMA model approach for generating preseason projections for run size and the harvest rate in State waters, and requests expanded description of retrospective model performance

C3 Cook Inlet Salmon EEZ SAFE

Sockeye, Chinook, Pink, Chum and Coho salmon

- The SSC appreciates the approach presented to scale the ABC buffer based on a comparison of past preseason OFL and postseason OFL estimates
 - The SSC **recommends** that the current metric (median symmetric accuracy) is inappropriate given that it is symmetric, while $ABC \leq OFL$, and encourages the SAFE team to explore alternative methods for the 2025 SAFE

C3 Cook Inlet Salmon EEZ SAFE

Sockeye, Chinook, Pink, Chum and Coho salmon

- The SSC **finds** that the Tier 3 methodology for specifying the preseason OFL based on maximum catch and the average generation time of the species is insufficiently conservative, while the cross-generation methodology is appropriate for postseason OFL determination
- The SSC has the following recommendations on Tier 3 methods for the 2024 SAFE
 - Basing preseason OFL on the current methodology
 - Changing buffers for 3 stocks as follows:
 - Change aggregate Chinook salmon buffer from 0.167 to 0.1
 - Change aggregate Pink salmon buffer from 0.9 to 0.5
 - Change aggregate Chum salmon buffer from 0.5 to 0.25

C3 Cook Inlet Salmon EEZ SAFE

Sockeye, Chinook, Pink, Chum and Coho salmon

- For the 2025 SAFE the SSC has the following **recommendations** Tier 3 methods
 - A separate process should be used to define the preseason OFL (based on either average or max catch across the time series), which will require consideration and proposal of new buffers for these stock aggregates
 - The postseason overfishing determination should be based on consideration of the average generation time of a species, consistent with the 2024 SAFE

C3 Cook Inlet Salmon EEZ SAFE

Sockeye, Chinook, Pink, Chum and Coho salmon

- For the 2025 SAFE the SSC has the following **recommendations** Tier 3 methods (CONTINUED):
 - To identify the representative catch level for OFL definition, the SAFE team should consider and justify:
 - whether average or maximum catch is most appropriate
 - the most appropriate portion of the recent catch history to use based on changes in fishery prosecution and stock productivity
- The SSC **recommends** that future SAFEs include scientific information on pertinent changes in economic, social, and community conditions, as a basis for evaluating the impact of these new management measures

D4 AFA Program Review Workplan

- The SSC reviewed the plan for the 2024 AFA seven year review
- The SSC *finds* the workplan reflects national NMFS guidance and the best practices the NPFMC has evolved through several iterations of LAPP program reviews
- The SSC discussed how to balance presentation of historic data and recent developments in reviews of mature LAPP programs

D4 AFA Program Review Workplan

- The SSC *recommends*
 - There is value in retaining historic data, and even presenting historic trends in new metrics (e.g., community metrics) amid focus on newer developments
 - Considering comprehensively contributions of AFA through CDQ group outcomes, including ownership shares
 - Suggested methods for representing community-level outcomes

D5 SCS8 case studies

- The SSC reviewed possible case studies to bring to the SCS8 National workshop in August 2024
- Overall workshop theme: ***Applying ABC Control Rules in a Changing Environment*** with three sub-themes:
 - Advances in science to inform ABC control rules in a dynamic environment
 - Adaptation of reference points, control rules, and rebuilding plans to changing environment
 - Application of social science to achieve management goals under dynamic conditions

D5 SCS8 case studies

- The SSC discussed possible objectives for case studies, including:
 - ‘showcasing’ approaches used in our region
 - advancing innovative tools and approaches
 - presenting current challenges in the Alaska region for feedback and discussion at a national level
- The SSC **suggests** there may be much benefit to focus on the latter and will explore options for a workshop format that would facilitate such discussions

D6 Small Sablefish Release - DMRs/Analytical

- The SSC received a summary of the history of the analyses provided in 2019, 2021 and the update in 2023
- The SSC discussed three aspects of the proposed work:
 - the range of DMRs to be used in the proposed simulation
 - the methods used in and results to be reported from the simulation
 - additional topics that may not be quantitatively addressed but should be discussed in the June analysis
- The SSC ***supports*** the proposed approach and appreciates the response to recommendations made in 2021, particularly to provide a simulation that applies the harvest control rule and recalculates reference points for each simulation to be consistent with calculation of the ABC as is done for stock assessments

D6 Small Sablefish Release - DMRs/Analytical

- The SSC **recommends** the following range of DMRs (for pot and hook-and-line combined) specifically *for this analysis*:
 - A lower bound of 12%
 - A base value of 20%
 - An upper bound of 35%.
- At this stage, the SSC does not recommend separate DMRs for pot and hook-and-line gear.
- The SSC recognizes the considerable uncertainties in actual DMRs and the need for dedicated research on this topic to provide quantitative estimates for each gear type and in the presence and absence of whale depredation.

D6 Small Sablefish Release - DMRs/Analytical

- The SSC ***supports*** the proposed simulation approach using different levels of DMR, different future recruitments and comparing spawning biomass and ABC over the next 50 years.
- The SSC ***recommends*** including recruitment variability/change in the simulations by resampling from historical recruitments and adding shifts from high to low and low to high in alternative simulation configurations.
- The SSC ***recommends*** using size-structured price information to approximate and compare gross landings revenue across simulation configurations.

D6 Small Sablefish Release - DMRs/Analytical

- The SSC ***recommends*** adding discussion of several critically important topics:
 - The assumption of constant relative fishing mortality among trawl and fixed-gear fleets
 - How discard mortality would be managed (at the fleet or individual level) and the implications for harvester's behavior
 - Potential data gaps in monitoring, accounting and enforcement and how stock assessment and management will proceed if data gaps cannot be addressed
 - Assumptions of fishery behavior and how it may change in response to differing incentives, prices and fishery conditions

D6 Small Sablefish Release - DMRs/Analytical

- The SSC ***recommends*** adding discussion of (continued):
 - Alternative future price structures
 - Social and economic impacts beyond gross landed revenue

D7 Research Priorities

- The SSC received a presentation with an overview of the 2023 - 2024 prioritization process and the ranked priorities selected by the Social Science PT, Scallop PT, Crab PT, Joint Groundfish PT, BS FEP Team.
- Public testimony - Cory Lescher (ABSC) Scott Goodman (Bering Sea Fisheries Research Foundation)
- Did not have discussion due to time limitations (moved to April)
- Next, the SSC Subgroup will review the PT, SSC and Public input on priorities and develop a candidate list for SSC review.
- In April 2024, SSC will propose any additional priorities, receive public testimony on prioritization, review and select final Top-10, provide feedback and discussion of process

D7 Research Priorities

- The SSC supports the Subgroup's plan for developing and ranking Research Priorities.

