

Council Motion

Agenda Item D5 – Central Gulf of Alaska Rockfish Program Reauthorization December 10, 2018

The Council initiates an analysis to reauthorize the Central Gulf of Alaska Rockfish Program and adopts the following purpose and need statement and suite of alternatives:

Purpose and Need Statement:

The Central Gulf of Alaska Rockfish Program (Rockfish Program) will sunset on December 31, 2021 and the Council must act if it intends to reauthorize the Rockfish Program. The purpose of this action is to reauthorize the Rockfish Program to retain the management, economic, safety, and conservation gains realized under the Rockfish Program to the extent practicable, consistent with the Magnuson-Stevens Act.

For both the onshore and offshore sectors, the Rockfish Program has improved safety at sea, controlled fleet capacity, enhanced NMFS' ability to conserve and manage species allocated under the Rockfish Program, increased vessel accountability, reduced sea floor contact, allowed full retention of allocated species, and reduced halibut and Chinook salmon bycatch. In addition, the rockfish fishery dependent communities in the Central Gulf of Alaska and the onshore processing sector have benefited from a more stable workforce, more onshore deliveries of rockfish, improved rockfish quality, and increased diversity of rockfish products. Central Gulf of Alaska fishermen, and the onshore processing sector have benefited from reduced conflicts with salmon processing. The offshore sector has benefited from greater spatial and temporal flexibility in prosecuting the fishery, resulting in lower bycatch, a more rational distribution of effort, and more stable markets.

The Council must act to continue the management, economic, safety, and conservation gains realized under the Rockfish Program. Otherwise, fisheries managed under the Rockfish Program will revert to effort-control management under the License Limitation Program (LLP).

Alternatives:

Alternative 1: No action (Revert management back to the LLP)

Alternative 2: Reauthorize the Rockfish Program with the existing management framework unless modified under this alternative. Include the NMFS recommended regulatory clarifications as described in the discussion paper (Items 1 through 5 on page 6 of the discussion paper).

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

Option 1: Remove sunset date

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

Element 2: Consider options to reallocate unharvested Rockfish Program Pacific cod from onshore cooperatives to fixed gear open access fisheries after the Rockfish Program fisheries close on November 15. (Item 6 on page 7).

Element 3: Exempt crab program sideboard limits for vessels when fishing in the Rockfish Program. (Item 7 on page 7).

Element 4: Require annual NMFS cost recovery reports in regulations. (Item 8 on page 7).

The Council directs staff to include a review of the performance of the entry-level longline fishery and step-up mechanism. (Item 9 on page 8).

The Council also directs staff to provide information about how the current three-day stand down requirement applies to vessels when transiting from the Bering Sea/Aleutian Islands to the Gulf of Alaska to participate in the Rockfish Program.

The Council requests that the analysts describe harvesting patterns in the rockfish program as part of its analysis.