

MEMORANDUM

TO: Council and SSC Members
FROM: Chris Oliver
Executive Director
DATE: November 28, 2011
SUBJECT: Bering Sea Habitat Conservation Area

ESTIMATED TIME 8 HOURS All D-1 Items
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ACTION REQUIRED

Review Nunivak Island-Etolin Straits-Kuskokwim Bay Habitat Conservation Area Boundary

BACKGROUND

In July 2007, the Council adopted Amendment 89 to the BSAI Groundfish FMP, which created a number of habitat conservation areas (HCAs) where bottom trawling is prohibited. One of these areas is the Nunivak Island-Etolin Strait-Kuskokwim Bay Habitat Conservation Area (Nunivak HCA, see map). A summary of Amendment 89 is attached as Item D-1(a)(1).

During the Council's consideration of Amendment 89, the boundaries for the Nunivak HCA were developed in close consultation with an industry and Association of Village Council Presidents (AVCP) working group. Communities and industry agreed on a southern boundary line for the habitat conservation area, which was subsequently established in regulation. The flatfish industry members committed to continued work with the AVCP communities in an ongoing process to communicate and share information on fishing activities and scientific information about the area.

As part of the Council's final motion adopting the closure, the Council agreed to review the boundary line developed for the Nunivak HCA in four years, and to consider whether further action is appropriate. The review of that boundary is the subject of this agenda item. At the June, 2011 Council meeting in Nome, AK, the Council heard testimony from industry and communities asking the Council to reschedule this topic to allow interested parties more time for discussion. The Council passed a motion to reschedule the matter to the December meeting.

At this meeting the Council will hear from representatives of industry and community organizations, and could initiate analysis of a new boundary or other protection measure, take no action, or again reschedule the issue to allow more time for discussion.