

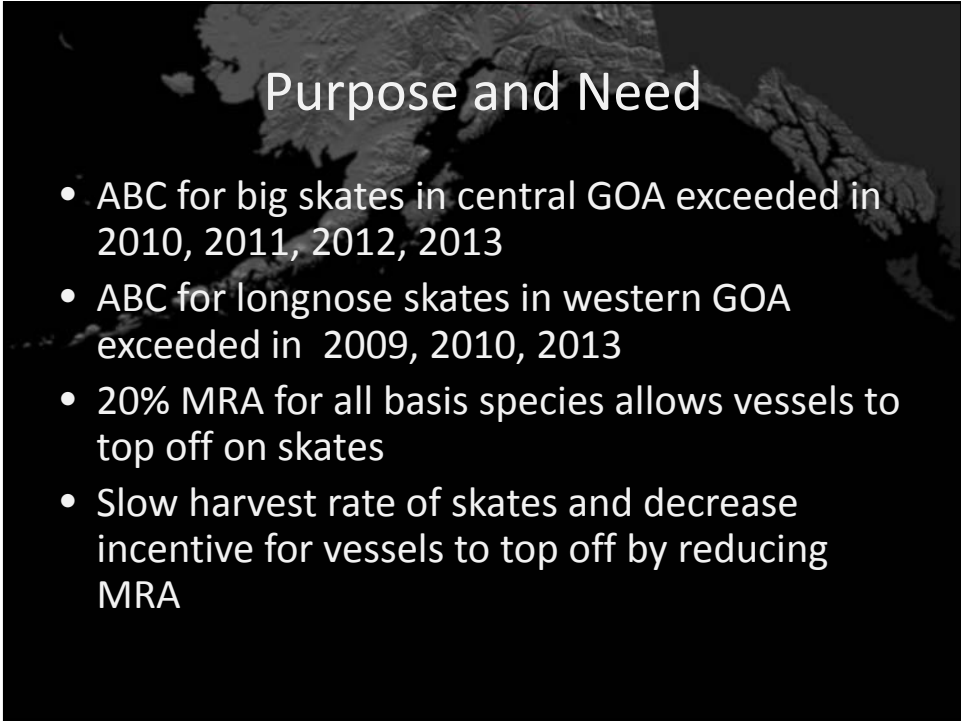
A grayscale map of Alaska is visible in the background of the slide. The map shows the state's outline and some internal geographical features like rivers and coastlines.

Revising Skate Maximum Retainable Amounts in the Gulf of Alaska Groundfish Fishery

Initial Review Draft
EA/RIR/IRFA

October 2014

Steve A. MacLean, Peggy Murphy, Josh Keaton, Mary Furuness, Ben Muse, Obren Davis

A grayscale map of Alaska is visible in the background of the slide. The map shows the state's outline and some internal geographical features like rivers and coastlines.

Purpose and Need

- ABC for big skates in central GOA exceeded in 2010, 2011, 2012, 2013
- ABC for longnose skates in western GOA exceeded in 2009, 2010, 2013
- 20% MRA for all basis species allows vessels to top off on skates
- Slow harvest rate of skates and decrease incentive for vessels to top off by reducing MRA

Big Skates

Year	OFL	Western GOA			Central GOA			Eastern GOA		
		ABC/TAC	Catch	%	ABC/TAC	Catch	%	ABC/TAC	Catch	%
2008	4,439	632	133	21%	2,065	1,241	60%	633	46	7%
2009	4,439	632	79	13%	2,065	1,903	92%	633	100	16%
2010	4,438	598	148	25%	2,049	2,215	108%	591	149	25%
2011	4,438	598	111	19%	2,049	2,105	103%	681	90	13%
2012	5,023	469	66	14%	1,793	1,894	106%	1,505	38	3%
2013	5,023	469	122	26%	1,793	2,302	128%	1,505	79	5%
2014*	5,016	589	70	12%	1,532	946	62%	1,641	63	4%

Longnose Skates

Year	OFL	Western GOA			Central GOA			Eastern GOA		
		ABC/TAC	Catch	%	ABC/TAC	Catch	%	ABC/TAC	Catch	%
2008	3,849	78	34	44%	2,041	966	47%	768	114	15%
2009	3,849	78	79	101%	2,041	1,096	54%	768	244	32%
2010	3,803	81	106	131%	2,009	851	42%	762	132	17%
2011	3,803	81	71	88%	2,009	892	44%	762	69	9%
2012	3,500	70	39	56%	1,879	793	42%	676	93	14%
2013	3,500	70	90	129%	1,879	1,260	67%	676	426	63%
2014*	3,835	107	13	12%	1,935	695	36%	834	262	31%

Alternatives

1. Maintain MRA for all basis species at 20%
2. Reduce MRA for all basis species to 15%
3. Reduce MRA for all basis species to 10%
4. Reduce MRA for all basis species to 5%

Maximum Retainable Amounts

- Tool to reduce or slow catch of groundfish when directed fishing closed
- Rate calculated as percentage relative to open species
- Establishes maximum amount that may be *retained*

Environmental Assessment

- Action limited in scope – Reduce skate MRAs
- No effects expected:
 - Physical environment (habitat)
 - Ecosystem or ecosystem component species
 - Marine mammals
 - Seabirds
- Potential for effects
 - Groundfish stocks
 - Skate stocks

Background 1:

- All skates managed in Tier 5 (OFL and ABC based on biomass and natural mortality rate estimates)
- Big skates: GOA OFL and ABC; ABC allocated among three areas in proportion to biomass estimates; Area TACs equal area ABCs
- Longnose skates: same
- Other skates (all other skate species): GOA-wide OFL, ABC, and TAC

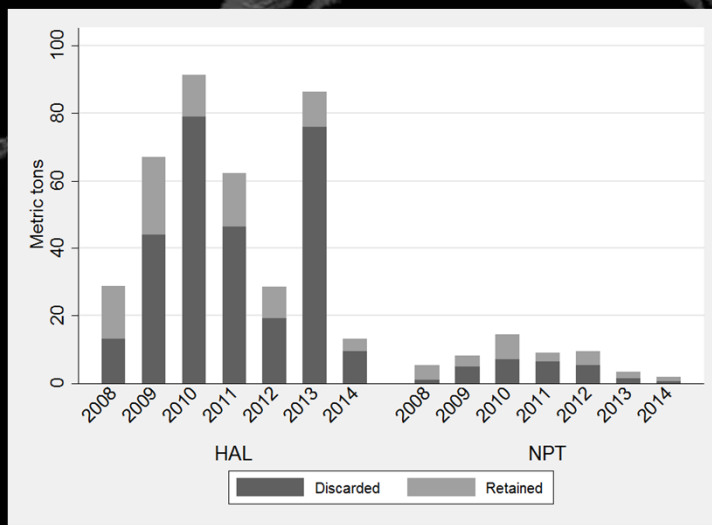
Background 2:

- No directed fishing for skates in GOA
- Groundfish MRA for all skate species together equal to 20% of basis species
- Big skate retention has been prohibited by the Regional Administrator in Central GOA for part of 2012, 2013, and 2014
- ABC exceeded in two area-species combinations:
 - Big skate ABC in CGOA exceeded in 2010-2013
 - Longnose skate ABC exceeded in WGOA in 2009, 2010, and 2013

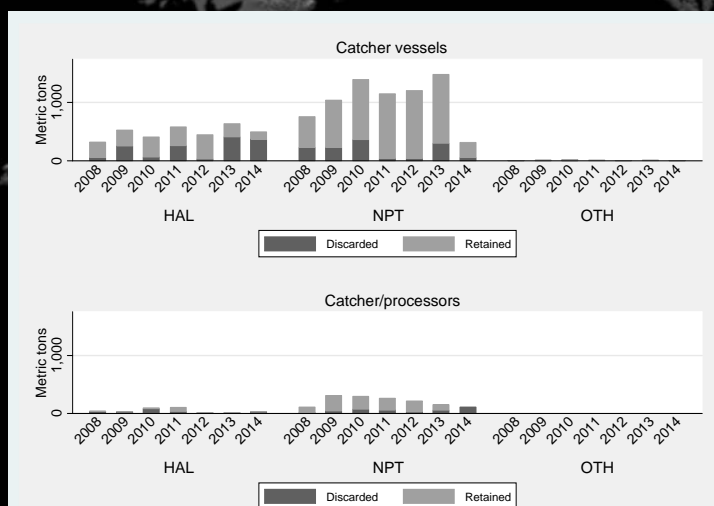
Problem:

- Current key issues are big skates in Central GOA and longnose skates in Western GOA
- Will a lower MRA help control skate catch (retained and discarded) in the key areas and keep catch under the ABC/TAC without prohibiting all skate retention?
- A tighter MRA will only help control retained catch, so large discarded catches make it less likely that tighter MRAs will be productive.

Longnose skate catch in the Western GOA are largely discarded:

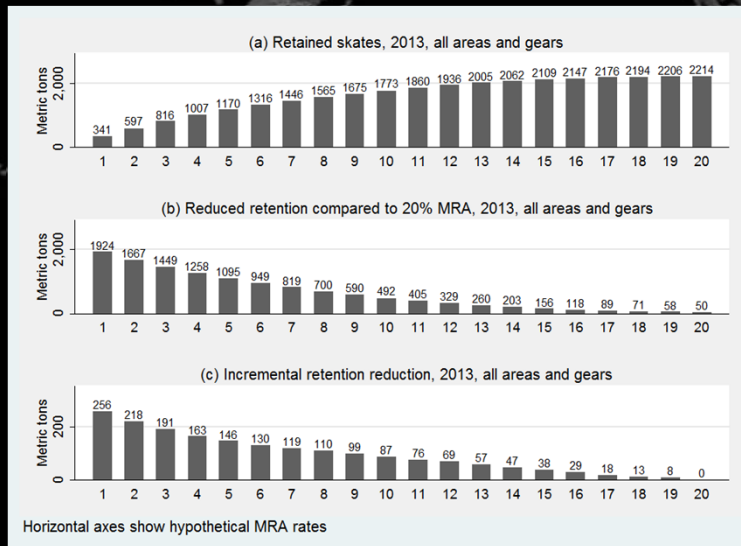


Big skate catch in the Central GOA are largely retained:



Includes retained and discarded skates

Impact of increasingly tight MRAs in Central GOA big skate fishery in 2013



Some things to think about 1:

- Current problem is focused on the trawl fishery for big skates in the Central GOA; that could change.
- The MRA does not precisely fit to this problem: MRA is a multi-species tool (big, longnose, other) applied throughout the GOA
- The 10% and 15% MRAs are likely to have little effect on big skate catch
- The 5% MRA may have an effect.

Some things to think about 2:

- Tighter MRAs only constrain vessels that were retaining skates in excess of the new MRA; vessels under the new MRA could expand production if the price were right
- Even vessels over new MRA could increase skate catch by increasing basis species catch (although the tighter the MRA, the less attractive this is)
- Tighter MRAs may increase regulatory discards



Table 4-3 Estimated rate of Central GOA big skate catch (retained and discarded) in relation to groundfish catch (retained and discarded) before and after (shaded cells) PSC closures

	Before Feb 5	Feb 5 to May 8	May 8 to August 3	August 3 to December 31
Hook-and-line cod				
2012	3.3%	3.1%	No catch	7.0%
2013	5.7%	2.8%	No catch	3.0%
2014	6.9%	5.9%	No Catch	NA
Hook-and-line IFQ				
2012	No Catch	0.5%	0.4%	1.4%
2013	No Catch	1.1%	1.5%	6.3%
2014	No Catch	2.6%	3.3%	NA
Non-Pelagic Trawl Arrowtooth flounder and deep-water flatfish				
2012	10.3%	8.0%	0.5%	3.5%
2013	8.6%	7.9%	0.8%	0.5%
2014	4.8%	0.0%	0.1%	NA
Non-Pelagic Trawl Shallow-water flatfish				
2012	0.0%	5.2%	6.19%	7.0%
2013	0.4%	2.2%	0.9%	3.0%
2014	0.0%	0.0%	0.2%	NA

Source: NMFS catch accounting system.