



B1 Executive Director's Report

December 2019

Action Memo

Plan Team Nomination

The Alaska Department of Fish and Game has nominated Mr. Andrew Olson to replace Mr. Quinn Smith on the Scallop Plan Team. Mr. Olson is the Groundfish and Shellfish Program Coordinator for the Southeast Region. He has years of experience in shellfish research and management, and he currently provides oversight and evaluation of fisheries research and management activities within the Southeast and Yakutat management areas. A nomination letter and CV are **attached**. SSC will provide a recommendation on this nomination during the week.

Draft Comment Letters

Carry-Over and Phase-in Provisions - NMFS has requested the Councils and their SSCs review a draft Technical Memorandum titled "National Standard 1 Technical Guidance for Designing, Evaluating, and Implementing Carry-over and Phase-in Provisions within ABC Control Rules". When finalized, the draft tech memo is meant to support the implementation of carry-over and phase-in provisions, help Councils and NOAA understand what factors to consider when deciding whether or not to implement carry-over and phase-in, and provide examples of how these tools have been used in the past. This draft Tech Memo is part of a series of products being developed by the NS1 Working Group to support decision-making on key management issues related to the guidelines. Comments are due January 15, 2020. The SSC will provide its recommendations for revisions to the Tech memo at this meeting, and we can incorporate these recommendations into a Council comment letter.

Modernizing Recreational Fisheries - The NMFS Office of Science and Technology has developed a draft Report to Congress as required in Section 201 of the Modernizing Recreational Fisheries Management Act of 2018. This draft Report addresses improvements in data collection by state and nongovernmental organizations to facilitate greater incorporation of that data, and provides recommendations for facilitating greater incorporation of these data sources. NMFS is directed to produce this report "in consultation with the SSCs of the Councils and the Marine Fisheries Commissions." Thus, NMFS is seeking SSC, Council, and Commission review and feedback on the draft Report to Congress. Comments are due by December 31, 2019. I have drafted a short response letter, in coordination with ADF&G staff. The draft is **attached** for any additional comments and suggestions.

Humpback Whale Critical Habitat – At the October meeting, Mr. Maclean provided an overview of the proposed rule (PR) to identify Critical Habitat for three distinct population segments (DPS) of Humpback whales. Critical habitat has been proposed for waters off Alaska for two DPS: the Mexico DPS and the Western North Pacific DPS of humpback whales. Habitat features essential to the conservation of humpback whales were considered and evaluated, including prey, migratory corridors or conditions, and sound/soundscape. The critical habitat review team concluded that a migratory passage feature could not be identified. The team further determined that the best available data could not identify particular sound levels or describe a particular soundscape feature that is essential to the conservation of humpback whales.

The Team did identify prey as an essential biological feature. This prey feature was specifically defined as “*Prey species, primarily euphausiids and small pelagic schooling fishes of sufficient quality, abundance, and accessibility within humpback whale feeding areas to support feeding and population growth.*” The PR identified small pelagic fishes as northern anchovy, Pacific herring, Pacific sardine, and capelin. In the Aleutian Islands area, the PR noted that in addition to targeting euphausiids, humpback whales also consume multiple fish species occurring in this region, such as capelin, Atka mackerel, and walleye pollock.

The PR can be found here: <https://www.regulations.gov/docket?D=NOAA-NMFS-2019-0066>

Comments were originally due December 9, but I have heard that the comment deadline may be extended. A draft comment letter is **attached** for your review.

Recent Council and Staff activities

- On October 30, I discussed the NPFMC sustainable fisheries program at a meeting of the Genuine Alaska Pollock Producers.
- On November 18-21, Dr. Stram participated as a U.S. delegate at the United Nations Food and Agriculture International Symposium on Fisheries Sustainability: Strengthening the Science-Policy Nexus, held in Rome.
- On November 19, Council staff attended a cultural sensitivity training session in Anchorage.
- On November 22, Mr. Tweit provided testimony on behalf of the Council at the MSA listening sessions hosted by Congressman Huffman in Seattle.
- On November 25-26, I attended the IPHC interim meeting in Seattle. My presentation can be found on the IPHC meeting website.

CCC Meeting Report

Chairman Kinneen, Mr. Tweit, Dr. Balsiger, Ms. Evans and I attended the Council Coordination Committee meeting in Washington D.C. November 5-7. The meeting agenda and briefing materials can be found here: <http://www.fisherycouncils.org/ccc-meetings/november-2019-ccc-meeting>

A number of important topics were discussed including budgets, a legislative update, an update on Technical Workgroups for National Standard 1 guidelines, an update on NMFS’s next generation data acquisition plans, development on NOAA Fisheries Regional Strategic Plans, a proposal for continued council member and staff development, and updates from the CCC working groups.

Committee Meetings

The Community Engagement Committee will meet Monday December 2. A report from the meeting will be discussed under Agenda Item E-1.

The Halibut Charter Management Committee will meet on Tuesday, December 3 to recommend measures for the 2020 season. You will receive a report of the Committee meeting under Agenda Item C-3.

The Enforcement Committee will also meet on Tuesday, December 3. A report from the meeting will be discussed during applicable agenda items.

Alaska SeaLife Center Ocean Leadership Awards

The Alaska SeaLife Center is requesting nominations for the 2020 Ocean Leadership Awards. To make a nomination for any of these awards, visit their website www.alaskasealife.org or email oceanawards@alaskasealife.org. Nominations close December 10, 2019.

The winners will be announced at the Alaska SeaLife Center's Marine Gala which is scheduled for February 8, 2020, at the Dena'ina Center.

Events this week

On Wednesday evening from 5:30 - 7 pm, Dr. Ian Stewart will make a presentation on the updated IPHC Pacific halibut stock assessment.

Also, on Wednesday evening from 5:30 - 7 pm, Dr. Lisa Manning (NMFS) will host an informal meeting on the proposed rule to identify critical habitat for humpback whales.

On Thursday evening from 6 - 8:30 pm, Pacific Seafood Processors Association is sponsoring a Toast to the Coast event at the Anchorage Museum. This event is the primary winter fundraiser for Beans Café and The Children's Lunchbox in Anchorage. Ticket cost for this event is \$75. Please ask Nicole Kimball or Chris Barrows if you have questions about obtaining a ticket to attend, or buy them online at <https://myalaskatix.com/events/Toast-to-the-Coast--An-Event-to-End-Hunger--Presented-by-PSPA-for-Beans-Cafe-and-The-Childrens-Lunchbox-12--5-2019-54197>

On Friday from 3 - 5pm, the Council will be in **Executive Session** to review the financial audit, discuss Plan Team, AP and SSC appointments, and discuss other administrative matters.

On Friday evening from 6 - 9 pm, The fishing industry is hosting a reception at the Top of the World in the Hilton Hotel. This event will honor the retirement of longtime industry spokesman Glenn Reed, and promises to be an entertaining evening.

Amendment 80 Report on Halibut Avoidance

In 2015, the Council requested that Amendment 80 cooperatives report on halibut PSC avoidance plans and their performance under those plans. The cooperatives have provided voluntary follow-up reports each December. Representatives from the cooperatives will be here to provide a summary of their halibut avoidance plans and performance, and be available to answer questions.

BSAI Trawl Fisheries Plans to Control Sablefish Bycatch

In October, the Council requested that the AFA and Amendment 80 sectors (the trawl sectors that that contributed to the high incidental catch of Bering Sea sablefish during the 2019 fishing season) provide plans at the December meeting for addressing future incidental catches of sablefish above the ABC. Representatives from the sectors will be here to provide a summary of their sablefish bycatch control plans.