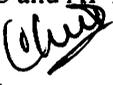


MEMORANDUM

TO: Council, SSC and AP Members
FROM: Chris Oliver 
Executive Director
DATE: May 31, 2011
SUBJECT: BSAI Crab draft SAFE report

ESTIMATED TIME 2 HOURS

ACTION REQUIRED

- (a) Review and approve catch specifications for 4 crab stocks
- (b) Review data for Pribilof Island blue king crab rebuilding plan

BACKGROUND

(a) Review and approve catch specifications for 4 crab stocks.

The Crab Plan Team met in Juneau, AK from May 9-13, 2011 to review draft BSAI Crab stock assessments and provide recommendations for OFL and ABC for 4 of the 10 stocks. There are 10 crab stocks in the BSAI Crab FMP and all 10 must have annually established OFLs. This year following approval of amendment 38 to the Crab FMP, to comply with Annual Catch Limit provisions, annual ABCs are recommended by the SSC. Six of the ten stocks will have OFLs and ABCs established following the summer survey information availability. Two of the ten stocks (Norton Sound red king crab and AI golden king crab) have OFL and ABC recommendations put forward at this time in order to have approved OFLs and ABCs prior to the summer fisheries for these stocks. The remaining two stocks (Adak red king crab and Pribilof Islands golden king crab) have OFLs recommended based on Tier 5 formulation (average catch) and OFLs and ABCs are recommended in the spring. The draft sections of the SAFE report introduction contain the OFL and ABC recommendations for these stocks. This was mailed to you on May 16th and is attached as Item C-2(a)(1). Recommendations and discussions of the other 6 stocks are included in the CPT Report. The Crab Plan Team Report is attached as Item C-2(a)(2). Now that final recommendations are made by the SSC in the fall it is no longer necessary to produce a draft SAFE report in the spring, thus only those sections for the stock recommendations at this meeting are contained here. There will be a single SAFE report produced in the fall which includes these sections rather than a draft in the Spring and a final in the Fall.

(b) Review data for Pribilof Island blue king crab rebuilding plan

The Council reviewed the public review draft EA/RIR/IRFA for a revised rebuilding plan for the Pribilof Islands blue king crab (PIBKC) stock at the April 2011 Council meeting. The Council's motion from April 2011 is attached as Item C-2(b)(1). The Council did not take final action at that time as modifications were made to the alternatives that were outside the scope of the original analysis. The Council also requested to review bycatch data from the entire Pribilof District prior to final action to

evaluate whether bycatch from the entire district versus area 513 only changes the fisheries to which closures apply under the alternatives.

The PIBKC stock remains overfished. The purpose of this proposed action is to reduce the risk of overfishing the PIBKC stock by developing an amended rebuilding plan for this stock in compliance with the Magnuson-Stevens Act and the national standard guidelines.

Five alternatives are considered in this analysis. Four of the alternatives consider time and area closures to better protect the PIBKC stock. The fifth alternative considers trigger caps and associated time and area closures in groundfish fisheries which have contributed historically to bycatch of this stock. Alternatives 2-5 retain all of the current protection measures in place for the PIBKC stock and apply additional measures as described in the specific alternatives and options. Analysis of the impacts of these closure configurations on the rebuilding potential for the PIBKC stock shows limited effect on rebuilding between the ranges of alternative closures. However, the trigger cap and/or closures may protect against any additional catch of this depleted stock and prevent overfishing on an annual basis.

Closures are proposed to apply to either the Pacific cod pot fishery or to the combined groundfish fisheries which have contributed to bycatch of PIBKC (from 2003-2010) above two different threshold criteria (>5% of the ABC and > 10% of the ABC). While an ABC has not yet been established for this stock, in anticipation of an on-going amendment to establish an ABC (and ACL) for all crab stocks, one was inferred for this analysis consistent with the Council's recommended ABC control rule. The fisheries which meet the threshold criteria are the trawl fisheries for rock sole, flathead sole, yellowfin sole and other flatfish as well as the Pacific cod hook and line and pot fisheries.

The Council requested that staff compile bycatch data from the whole Pribilof District (as opposed to NMFS Area 513 only) by fishery for presentation to the Council at this meeting. Tables of bycatch data compiled in area 513 (only, extrapolated PSC) and observed in the entire Pribilof District are attached as Item C-2(b)(2). There were no additional fisheries over the specified threshold values when evaluating using data from the entire district but the flathead sole fishery no longer met the threshold for consideration. The Council will review these data from the entire Pribilof District by fishery and make any necessary analytical modifications for the analysis at this meeting.

In April the Council also moved to include a sub-option for the trigger cap alternative under Option 5d to analyse an allocation by gear type of non-pelagic trawl (40%), Hook and Line (20%) and Pot (40%). The Council requested that staff explore using the annual specifications process for gear allocation of a cap and to discuss the implications of a different, non-allocated cap whereby closures occur on a threshold basis (50%, 75%, 90% of the cap) and apply only to the gear type which has contributed the most in-season towards the bycatch at each threshold. This analysis will be included in the revised public review draft available in September 2011 (for final action in October 2011). Staff will provide further discussion of the implications of these allocation schemes during presentation at this meeting should the Council wish to make any modifications prior to final action.