

# Central Gulf of Alaska Rockfish Program Review Workplan

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## 1. Introduction

This document is a proposed workplan for developing the required Central Gulf of Alaska Rockfish Program (Rockfish Program) review. The Magnuson-Stevens Fishery Conservation and Management Act of 2006 (MSA) requires Limited Access Privilege Program (LAPP) reviews to be conducted five years after implementation and then a minimum of every seven years. The last Rockfish Program review was presented to the Council at its October 2017 meeting. Since that review the Council reauthorized the Rockfish Program in 2021, prior to it expiring. The Rockfish Program does not have an expiration date since its reauthorization.

Workplans are intended to identify the proposed scope of the program review and serve as a starting point for dialogue between members of the public, policy makers, and the analysts. Workplans are typically presented to the Scientific and Statistical Committee (SSC), Advisory Panel (AP), and North Pacific Fishery Management Council (Council). After the Council receives input from its advisory bodies, the staff presentation, and public comment, the Council may choose to modify the workplan prior to work beginning on the program review. The intent of this approach is for input to be provided at a single Council meeting, so work on the program review can be conducted in an efficient manner and meet the MSA’s timeline and review requirements. Additional detail can be found in the March 27, 2023, Council staff discussion paper on program and allocation reviews.<sup>2</sup>

This workplan is presented in the following three sections. The first section describes the information sources considered when developing the scope of the proposed program review. Information sources include the September 2017 Rockfish Program review, the 2021 reauthorization Environmental Assessment/Regulatory Impact Review (EA/RIR), program review guidance developed by National Marine Fisheries Service (NMFS), and a general understanding of major changes that have occurred in the Gulf of Alaska trawl fisheries. Emphasis is placed on those fisheries allocated under the Rockfish Program, non-Rockfish Program fisheries that are subject to harvest limits “sideboarded”, and species that have Prohibited Species Catch (PSC) limits under the Rockfish Program. The second section reviews the proposed methods and data that will be used when developing the review. Finally, the third section is an annotated table of contents of the major issues that are proposed to be addressed.

For definition of acronyms and abbreviations, see online list: <https://www.npfmc.org/library/acronyms>

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<sup>2</sup> <https://meetings.npfmc.org/CommentReview/DownloadFile?p=56436ad5-c8d8-4383-b42d-7646f3811912.pdf&fileName=E%20Program%20and%20Allocation%20Review.pdf>

## 2. Sources for Defining the Scope of the Rockfish Program Review

Management of the Central Gulf of Alaska rockfish fisheries before 2007 was conducted under the License Limitation Program (LLP) and was a short 3-week fishery in July and directly conflicted with the region's pink salmon fishery. To address concerns regarding the pace of the fishery and the conflict with the pink salmon season the Rockfish Pilot Program (RPP) was implemented as a 5-year test program authorized by Congress from 2007-2011. The success of the RPP resulted in the Council implementing the Rockfish Program. The initial Rockfish Program was a 10-year program that was in place from 2012 through 2021. The Council reauthorized the Rockfish Program prior to the 2021 sunset date. The current Rockfish Program does not include a sunset date.

The Council's Purpose and Need Statement for reauthorizing the Rockfish Program stated the action was needed to *"retain the management, economic, safety, and conservation gains realized under the Rockfish Program ...[noting that] the Rockfish Program 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."*

In April 2017, NMFS produced a Catch Share Policy document that provides policy recommendations for guiding principles when conducting reviews of Limited Access Privilege Programs. NMFS Catch Share Policy guidance document provides a comprehensive approach to conducting regular reviews of Limited Access Privilege Programs. NMFS guidance was developed to ensure that the reviews meet statutory requirements, are coordinated with stakeholders, efficient, effective, and conducted using consistent standards across all management regions. NMFS guidance states that the review should compare and analyze the fishery before (baseline period) and after the program's implementation and should use the best available scientific information. Comparisons to the baseline have been made in the 2017 program review and will be included by reference or updated as appropriate.

## 3. Proposed Methods and Data for Developing the 2024 Program Review

NMFS has utilized experts within the agency<sup>3</sup> to develop an initial set of standard performance indicators that measure the performance of Limited Access Privilege Program, regardless of their design<sup>4</sup>. The standard performance measures identified in that report include information on catch and landings, effort, revenue, accumulation limits, and cost recovery. Limited Access Privilege Program reviews conducted by the NPFMC<sup>5</sup> provide examples of other issues that should be covered in a review. Each LAPP developed by the Council is unique and has specific issues that should be addressed based on the Council's Purpose and Need statement.

This review will use data provided by Alaska Fishery Information Network (AKFIN) staff to generate information addressing the standard performance measures identified by NMFS as well as those that are

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<sup>3</sup> Fishery economists, anthropologists, policy analysts, and resource managers.

<sup>4</sup> [https://www.st.nmfs.noaa.gov/Assets/economics/catch-shares/documents/Catch\\_Shares\\_Report\\_FINAL.pdf](https://www.st.nmfs.noaa.gov/Assets/economics/catch-shares/documents/Catch_Shares_Report_FINAL.pdf)

<sup>5</sup> Rockfish Pilot Program Review, Amendment 80 Program Review, American Fisheries Act Review, Central GOA of Rockfish Program Review, BSAI Crab Rationalization, and Halibut and Sablefish IFQ Program Review. Also included are community impact papers funded by BSAI communities and community impact studies of Limited Access Privilege Programs by NOAA staff as well as academic and private sector researchers.

specific to the Rockfish Program. Qualitative and quantitative information will be presented based on the Groundfish Economic SAFE, Rockfish Program reauthorization, Rockfish Cooperative reports and information reported for other issues. Readily available information will be supplemented, when necessary, by discussions with key informants.

The analysts will summarize the main trends and impacts in the fishery using data from 2003 through the most recent year available. Information from previous studies will be referenced or updated. This approach is intended to provide the Council, NMFS, industry, and the public with a comparison of changes in the fishery from management under the LLP, RPP, and the Rockfish Program.

The data anticipated to be used in this review includes:

- 1) Annual Rockfish Program Cooperative reports (2007-2022 or most recent available) which provide information on:
  - a) Cooperative goals and objectives
  - b) Cooperative management structure
  - c) Vessel and processor participation
  - d) Harvest of primary and secondary species
  - e) PSC utilization and avoidance measures
- 2) NMFS Restricted Access Management (RAM) data from (2003-2024) to provide information on:
  - a) LLP licenses (license number, ownership information, endorsements)
  - b) Permits (quota allocations assigned to LLP licenses)
  - c) Cooperative membership by vessel and LLP license.
  - d) Cooperative Quota Transfers (information on the quantity of an allocation transferred is available but not the wholesale or ex-vessel value)
- 3) Catch Accounting System (CAS) data collected by NMFS certified observers or electronic monitoring systems on catcher/processors (CP) and catcher vessels (CV). This data would be aggregated to meet confidentiality standards. CAS information will be incorporated from the previous program review in summary form and combined with annual data from 2003-2023.
  - a) Catch (location [West Yakutat, Central Gulf, Western Gulf], time-period, species, and amount)
  - b) Discards (amount and rate)
  - c) Prohibited species catch (PSC) and rates.
  - d) Production (amounts, products produced, and utilization rates)
- 4) AKFIN summary of Commercial Operator's Annual Reports (COAR from 2003- 2023) and fish ticket data.
  - a) Exvessel price and value
  - b) First Wholesale price and value
- 5) NMFS data on recoverable fees, cost recovery fee amounts, and cost recovery fee compliance.
- 6) Safety data will be provided and summarized by the National Institute for Occupational Safety and Health (NIOSH). NIOSH staff have been instrumental in providing data for the drafting of the safety sections of other program reviews conducted by the Council.

## 4. Proposed Table of Contents

### Executive Summary

The executive summary will include key findings of the Rockfish Program review. These will include significant changes in the fishery, regulatory issues of concern, and any issues that are identified that the Council may wish to consider in terms of future regulatory amendments.

#### *1. Introduction*

The introduction will summarize the requirements to prepare the program review, discuss the Council's stated goals and objectives for the Rockfish Program, and describe the other background issues as appropriate.

#### *2. History of the Central Gulf of Alaska Rockfish Fishery Management*

The 2021 Rockfish Program reauthorization and previous Rockfish Program reviews included a description of the management measures implemented at the creation of the program as well as changes to the program that had been implemented. Four recent actions<sup>6</sup> approved by the Council are in the process of being implemented and will be described; these amendments will likely be implemented before the program review is completed. Other information that applies to the program review will also be updated, summarized, and/or referenced. For example, the work being conducted to determine whether Electronic Monitoring is a viable option for the rockfish fisheries.

#### *3. Overview of Rockfish Program Cooperatives*

This section provides a brief overview of Rockfish Program cooperatives including membership, goals of the cooperative, and measures implemented by cooperatives to achieve their goals.

#### *4. TACs, Allocations, Harvests, Processing, and Transfers*

This section will provide a general overview of the fishery. It will include information on the TACs and catch for primary and secondary species allocated under the program, QS allocations to LLP licenses, allocations to cooperatives. Transfers of QS and cooperative quota between cooperatives will also be described. To the extent possible, a dashboard approach will be utilized in this section. Any relevant information on the biological trends in these fisheries will also be included in this section. That information will primarily be derived from the most recent GOA SAFE document.

The Rockfish Program includes a small entry level longline gear allocation that may be harvested by vessels using hook-and-line, troll, hand line, or jig gear. Pot gear is not included as a legal gear in this fishery. Entry level longline fishery vessels are not eligible to join cooperatives, are not allocated exclusive harvest privileges, and are not subject to cost recovery.

#### *5. Reductions in Sea Floor Contact*

A stated goal of the Rockfish Program is to maintain the reduced trawl gear impacts on the sea floor and the organisms that live there that were realized under the RPP. Previous analyses of the Rockfish Program provided information prepared by NMFS Habitat Division staff. Information that was prepared for the 2015 Essential Fish Habitat 5-year review was utilized and focused on the GOA Pacific ocean perch and Northern rockfish fisheries. The updated Fishing Effects model using data through August 2022 estimated the effects of commercial fishing activities on marine habitats in the GOA but has not to date considered gear-specific or sector-specific impacts of gear on benthic habitat. The information provided in this section will show general trends of impacts by commercial fishing activities on marine

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<sup>6</sup> The modifications include changing the Rockfish Program season start date from May 1st to April 1st, increase the processing cap from 30% to 40%, modify the harvesting cap to be based on 8% of Pacific ocean perch (was 8% of primary rockfish species [excluding Northern rockfish and dusky rockfish]), and removed the cap on the amount of cooperative quota a cooperative may hold.

habitats in the GOA based on all gear types and fisheries combined, unless more specific information becomes available.

#### *6. Prohibited Species Catch*

Halibut and Chinook salmon PSC limits established for the CV and CP sectors will be described in terms of limits over time and usage of the available limit. Avoiding PSC is one goal of the program. Information on salmon otolith collection, conducted within the program, will be described.

#### *7. Retention and Utilization*

Retention rates of primary and secondary species will be reported showing the retained and discarded catch. Changes in utilization rates of round fish by processors will also be discussed.

#### *8. Products and Markets*

An overview of rockfish products and markets will be described. Information in this section will consider how product forms have changed and whether higher valued products are being produced since the program was implemented. It will also provide information on the relative amounts of product forms produced as well as their first wholesale value. Data from market reports and discussion with industry will be utilized to provide current market data.

#### *9. Excessive Harvesting and Processing Limits*

LAPP programs are required, under the MSA, to consider provisions that prevent a person from acquiring an excessive share of the fisheries allocated. Management of limits and the ownership limits for CV and CP, cooperative limits, and harvest limits developed under the Rockfish Program will be included. A discussion will also be provided on how certain limits have changed to address changes in participation in these fisheries.

#### *10. Fishing Communities*

Kodiak will be the focus of this section since the Rockfish Program was designed to provide it protection by requiring deliveries within the community. Information will be presented on how labor and taxes are impacted. Because the City of Kodiak provides processors water and electric services, a discussion of how changes in the processing sector could impact the city's utility infrastructure will be included. Recent (since the last review) and potential future impacts on Kodiak resulting from changes in the processing and harvest sectors will be discussed. Other communities will also be considered in terms of harvesting and processing workers. This program review will update the quantitative information and the description of social impacts through 2023. In addition, this section will include information from the recently updated community profiles, the Annual Community Engagement and Participation Overview (ACEPO) report, and other information as appropriate.

#### *11. Sideboard Limits*

Under the Rockfish Program, catcher vessels are prohibited from fishing for the primary rockfish species in the West Yakutat District and Western GOA during July. Prohibiting fishing, as opposed to setting small sideboard limits, eased the management burden associated with catcher vessel sideboards and reduced the observer coverage and costs associated with sideboard fisheries. The Rockfish Program also prohibited catcher vessels from directed fishing in any target fishery in the deep-water complex in the month of July (except for Central GOA Rockfish). This limitation prohibits catcher vessels from directed fishing in the Arrowtooth flounder, deep water flatfish, and rex sole fisheries from July 1 through July 31.

CP cooperative sideboard limits under the Rockfish Program limit the amount of primary rockfish species a CP cooperative may use in the West Yakutat District and Western GOA fisheries during July. The effectiveness of sideboards will be reviewed in terms of how the cooperative structure has kept its members within the limits established. If any new sideboard issues have been identified since that last review, they will be discussed.

### *12. Fishing Vessel Safety*

NIOSH manages the Commercial Fishing Incident Database (CFID). CFID is a national surveillance system that contains information on work-related fatalities and vessel disasters in the U.S. fishing industry. One limitation is that these data sources do not include other safety measures, including nonfatal injuries, vessel system failures not resulting in abandonment, and search-and-rescue missions. NIOSH staff will be asked to query the CFID for incidents involving the Rockfish Program fleet from 2016 through the most recent year that data are available. Previous studies have found that there were no work-related fatalities in these fisheries.

### *13. Cost Recovery*

Section 303A(e) of the MSA mandates that NMFS collects fees to pay for the costs of management (including data collection and analysis, and enforcement activities) arising from the program. The cost recovery fee is charged as a percentage of the exvessel landings value of each allocated species. This section will update the table on management costs and cost recovery fees to provide information on costs being recovered and their amount. Much of the information included in this section will be derived from the annual cost recovery reports generated by NMFS.

### *14. Management, Monitoring, and Enforcement*

Information on biological, in-season management, and monitoring issues will be provided. Any new or unique enforcement or management issues that have been identified since the last review will be described. The monitoring issues will include work on the development of EM for the fishery and how the structure of the Rockfish Program helps facilitate that work.

### *15. Summary and Conclusions*

A summary of the major findings and any recommendations or conclusions resulting from the review will be provided in this section.