

MEMORANDUM

TO: Council and SSC Members

FROM: Chris Oliver 
Executive Director

DATE: November 30, 2011

SUBJECT: Gulf of Alaska Pacific Cod A Season Opening Dates

ESTIMATED TIME 8 HOURS All D-1 Items
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ACTION REQUIRED

Review discussion paper on delaying the A season opening dates for Gulf of Alaska Pacific Cod fisheries

BACKGROUND

In February 2011, the Council requested a discussion paper on the potential effects of delaying the A season opening dates for Pacific cod in the Gulf of Alaska (GOA) for some or all gear type sectors in the Western and Central management areas. Current season opening dates are January 1 for fixed gear and January 20 for trawl gear, in both areas. This discussion paper describes Federal Pacific cod fisheries, including recent Council actions to remove latent license limitation program (LLP) licenses and to apportion the Federal Pacific cod total allowable catch (TAC) among participating sectors—Amendments 86, the GOA fixed gear LLP recency, and Amendment 83, the GOA Pacific cod sector split, respectively. The Pacific cod sector split is scheduled to go into effect January 1, 2012.

Also described in the discussion paper (attached as Item D-1(c)(1)) are the fisheries most likely to be affected by delaying the A season, including State waters Tanner crab and Pacific cod fisheries. A discussion of the possible rationale for an A season delay follows these background descriptions, which includes a draft purpose and need statement for Council consideration. The discussion also describes possible benefits certain fleets may realize from increased catch-per-unit-effort (CPUE), higher roe and milt value, and additional fishing opportunities in the State Tanner crab fishery. Delaying the A season, however, could create conflicts among participants, such as increased competition in certain fisheries or disruption to processing schedules. There could also be potential Steller sea lion (SSL) consultation issues that would arise from a delay of the A season.

At this meeting, the Council will review this discussion paper on delaying the A season opening dates and could initiate a full analysis of the effects of a delay, could take no action, or could reschedule the issue for further discussion. Should the Council wish to move forward with this action, it would be helpful to staff to provide additional guidance, a draft purpose and need statement that clearly identifies the Council's intent for this action, and more specific alternatives and options for analysis.