



UNITED STATES DEPARTMENT OF COMMERCE
National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration
National Marine Fisheries Service
P.O. Box 21668
Juneau, Alaska 99802-1668

February 4, 2019

Agenda B-2: NMFS Management Report

Partial Government Shutdown

Due to a lapse in appropriations, NOAA Fisheries operations have been affected. Your patience and understanding are appreciated while operations return to business as usual. We are actively evaluating the backlog of work that accumulated and prioritizing projects, previously scheduled events, meetings, and travel.

Status of Actions Report Online

Updated daily at: <https://alaskafisheries.noaa.gov/sites/default/files/reports/amendments.pdf>

Progress on Rulemaking

Highlights on progress since the December 2018 meeting are provided below. **Attachment 1** provides additional detail.

Halibut Deck Sorting Exempted Fishing Permit (EFP) and Regulatory Amendment

EFP

On December 20, 2017, NMFS issued an exempted fishing permit (EFP) for a feasibility study to reduce halibut mortality on designated non-pelagic trawl catcher-processor vessels in the Bering Sea (Amendment 80, Community Development Quota, and trawl limited access programs). This EFP allows exemptions from certain regulations under 50 CFR part 679 to facilitate deck sorting of halibut to reduce halibut mortality. Fishing under EFP 2018-01 began in January 2018. The EFP expires on January 1, 2020.

Regulatory Amendment

In June 2018, NMFS staff presented a draft of the Regulatory Impact Review for this NMFS-led action. This action would allow halibut prohibited species catch (PSC) to be sorted on deck of trawl catcher processors (CPs) and motherships when operating in non-pollock groundfish fisheries off Alaska. Sorting on deck would reduce halibut discard mortality, potentially maximizing harvest of allocated groundfish species before reaching the halibut PSC limit. This action would establish regulatory requirements for catch handling and monitoring equipment necessary to ensure accurate accounting for halibut PSC sorted on deck.



NMFS has collaboratively worked with industry partners on the halibut deck sorting EFP and through that cooperation has developed catch handling and monitoring requirements that will be included in the proposed rule for this action. NMFS anticipates publishing a proposed rule in the first quarter of 2019 and a final rule with implementation of the regulations planned for the 2020 fishing year.

EFP Testing Methods to Minimize Bycatch of Pacific Ocean Perch in the Aleutian Islands Pollock Fishery

NMFS has approved an Exempted Fishing Permit (EFP 2019-02) authorizing the Aleut Corporation to test methods to minimize bycatch of Pacific ocean perch (POP) in the Aleutian Islands (AI) pollock fishery.

The AI pollock fishery is currently limited to a 5 percent maximum retainable (MRA) amount on POP per landing. This MRA limits the ability of the Aleut Corporation to achieve an economically viable AI pollock fishery, and current POP abundance levels put fishermen at risk when POP rates in excess of the 5 percent MRA are encountered and POP must be sorted and discarded with limited deck space during harsh winter weather.

On September 21, 2018, the Aleut Corporation submitted an application for an EFP for 2019 through 2020 to test alternative methods for limiting POP bycatch in the AI pollock fishery while being temporarily exempted from the 5 percent MRA.

The permit holders are required to submit to NMFS and the Council an interim report of the EFP results by November 30, 2019, and a final report by November 30, 2020. The report would include all data from this experimental fishery, including the catch and position data.

EFP Biological Sampling of Incidentally-Caught Red King Crab in the Bering Sea and Aleutian Islands Yellowfin and Rock Sole Fisheries

NMFS has approved an Exempted Fishing Permit (EFP 2019-01) authorizing Mr. Cory Lescher and Dr. Bradley Harris to investigate the accuracy of current red king crab PSC estimation methods and parameters that effect the survival of red king crab PSC in the Amendment 80 yellowfin and rock sole fisheries in the BSAI in 2019.

On September 20, 2018, Mr. Cory Lescher and Dr. Bradley Harris submitted an application for an EFP to conduct two concurrent studies on red king crab PSC on select Amendment 80 trawl vessels targeting yellowfin and rock sole in the BSAI in 2019.

The permit holders are required to submit to NMFS an interim report of the EFP results by September 30, 2019, and a final report by May 31, 2020. The EFP results will be presented to the NPFMC.

Cost Recovery Fee Percentages

On December 12, 2018, NMFS published a notice providing the 2018 standard ex-vessel prices and cost recovery fee percentages for the Halibut and Sablefish IFQ Programs

(<https://www.federalregister.gov/d/2018->

[26875?utm_campaign=subscription%20mailing%20list&utm_source=federalregister.gov&utm_medium=email](https://www.federalregister.gov/?utm_campaign=subscription%20mailing%20list&utm_source=federalregister.gov&utm_medium=email)).

The 2018 fee percentage of 2.8 percent is higher than the 2017 fee percentage of 2.2 percent. Although management costs for the IFQ Program fisheries dropped 1.9 percent from 2017 to 2018, the rise in fee percentage can be attributed to an estimated 22.4 percent decrease in the value of fisheries over the same period. IFQ cost recovery fees are due by January 31, 2019.

NMFS will publish a notice on February 5, 2019 providing the 2018 standard ex-vessel prices and cost recovery fee percentage for the Central Gulf of Alaska Rockfish Program. The fee percentage for the 2018 Rockfish Program is 2.86 percent. The fee percentage for 2018 is an increase from the 2017 fee percentage of 2.04 percent. Program costs for 2018 increased over costs accrued in 2017. The value of the fishery also increased by 10% in 2018, relative to the 2017 fishery value. The majority of the 2018 costs come from direct personnel and overhead costs, which has been consistent across all years of the program.

Cost recovery invoices were emailed to the co-op managers on January 29; NMFS also sent paper copies via USPS. The fee payments are due from each rockfish cooperative on or before February 15, 2019.

Observer Program Fees

Due to the lapse in appropriations, our annual Observer Fee invoice process for 2018 has been delayed. NOAA Fisheries is in the process of mailing out paper invoices, but electronic Observer Fee Invoices for 2018 landings are now available in eFish. By regulation, payments for observer fees accrued in 2018 are due by February 15, 2019.

To view invoices and submit payments, processors and Registered buyers may log into eFish at: <https://alaskafisheries.noaa.gov/webapps/efish/login>.

For assistance logging into your eFISH account, please call: 1.800.304.4846, option 4 or email eFISH.Alaska.Support@noaa.gov.

NOTE: Federal Processor Permits (FPP) and Registered Buyer (RB) permits for 2019 cannot be renewed until after Observer Fees are paid.

For questions about the observer fee billing process, contact Carl Greene at (907) 586-7003.

Attachment 1 -- Status of Regulatory Actions

Changes since December 2018 are noted in **Bold Red** EOC = End of Comment Period

Action Status	Lead Council, SF, and GCAK Staff	Date of Council Final Action	Start Regional Review	Received by GCAK	Transmittal Date of Action to NMFS HQ for Review	Notice of Availability (FMP) Published in Federal Register	Proposed Rule Published in Federal Register	Final Rule or Notice of Approval Published in Federal Register
FMP Amendments								
Amendment 118 Halibut Retention in BSAI IFQ Pot Gear	Cleaver Warpinski M. Watson	October 2018						
Regulatory Amendments								
Close directed fishing for AFA and CR Program sideboard limits that are not large enough to support a directed fishery in the BSAI or GOA. (Small Sideboards)	McCracken Davis Smoker	February 2018	PR: 05/02/18 FR: 10/27/18	PR: 05/07/18 FR: 11/01/18	PR: 07/26/18 FR: 12/13/2018	N/A	Aug 16, 2018 83 FR 40733 EOC: 09/17/18	
Halibut Deck Sorting on Non-Pollock Trawl Catcher/Processors and Motherships	Krieger Meyer	N/A	PR: 12/16/18			N/A		
Charter Halibut Permit annual renewal requirement	Marrinan Iverson Lepore	April 2018				N/A		
Mixing of halibut from guided and unguided fishing; regulation change	McCracken Iverson Lepore	April 2018	PR: 08/27/18	PR: 09/05/18	PR: 11/20/18	N/A		
2019-2020 BSAI Groundfish Harvest Specifications	Stram Whitney M. Watson	December 2018	PR: 10/22/18 FR: 12/18/18	PR: 10/24/18 FR: 12/20/18	PR: 11/13/18	N/A	Dec 6, 2018 83 FR 62815 EOC: 01/07/19	
Gulf of Alaska 2019 and 2020 Harvest Specifications for Groundfish	Armstrong Davis M. Watson	December 2018	PR: 10/17/18 FR: 12/20/18	PR: 10/17/18 FR: 12/21/18	PR: 11/09/18	N/A	Dec 6, 2018 83 FR 62794 EOC: 01/07/19	
Notices								
Cost Recovery Fee Notice for the Central Gulf of Alaska Rockfish Program for 2018	Iverson Lepore	N/A	01/29/2019	01/29/2019	01/30/2019	N/A	N/A	February 5, 2019

Inseason Management Report

Catch during 2019 is through January 26, 2019 and is compared to catch during 2018 through January 27, 2018. All catch amounts are in metric tons. Additional information from daily catch reports and information bulletins are available at: <https://alaskafisheries.noaa.gov/fisheries-catch-landings>

Bering Sea and Aleutian Islands

Bering Sea Pollock

The 2019 Bering Sea pollock TAC is 1,397,000 mt compared to 1,364,341 mt in 2018. NMFS is working to reallocate 1,900 mt of CDQ pollock TAC from the Aleutian Islands to CDQ pollock in the Bering Sea. The reallocation is not included in this table.

Bering Sea	2019 A season allocation	2019 A season catch	Percent taken
Inshore	272,425	17,676	6%
C/P	217,940	22,766	10%
Mothership	54,485	1,978	4%
CDQ	62,865	6,209	10%
Total	607,715	48,629	8%

Salmon in the Bering Sea Pollock Fisheries

For the preliminary counts (6 days of fishing) of salmon, both PSC and rates are higher in 2019 relative to 2018.

Species	Chinook				Non-Chinook			
	2019		2018		2019		2018	
Year	#	Rate ¹	#	Rate ¹	#	Rate ¹	#	Rate ¹
CDQ	255	4.08%	59	0.73%	6	0.10%	2	0.02%
Non-CDQ	2,440	5.71%	421	1.02%	61	0.14%	8	0.02%
Total	2,695	5.50%	480	0.97%	67	0.14%	10	0.02%

¹Rate is number of salmon per metric tons of groundfish.

Aleutian Islands Pacific cod

In 2019, fishing effort in the Aleutian Islands is low, and no closures are projected at this time. In 2018, directed fishing in the Aleutian Islands remained open all year for sectors open for directed fishing.

The 5,000 mt Aleutian Islands shoreplant set-aside is in place for 2019. The Aleutian Islands shoreplant landing requirement of 1,000 mt by February 28, 2019 has not been reached. NMFS will issue an information bulletin updating this information closer to February 28, 2019.

BSAI Pacific cod by Sector

BSAI Sector	2019				2018			
	A Season Allocation	Catch Jan 26	A season closed ²	# of vessels Jan 26	A Season allocation	Catch Jan 27	A season closed ²	# of vessels Jan 27
CDQ	11,702	1,513	n/a	14	13,086	2,086	n/a	14
Hook-and-line C/P	39,912	8,668	n/a	15	45,045	12,328	n/a	20
Pot C/P	1,229	1,295	Jan 20	4	1,387	1,373	Jan 20	4
Pot CV >= 60 ft	6,884	6,372	Jan 15	34	7,770	7,709	Jan 19	31
Hook-and-line/Pot CVs < 60 ft	3,214	2,841	Jan 19	31	5,027	4,789	Jan 23	23
Jig	1,355	0	n/a	0	129	0	n/a	0
Trawl CV	26,388	9,075	Feb 1	72	29,768	5,532	Feb 11	73
AFA C/P	2,783	212	n/a	13	3,140	190	n/a	16
Amendment 80 C/P	16,216	647	n/a	13	18,293	758	n/a	13
Total	109,683	30,623		196	123,645	34,765		194

¹In 2019 NMFS is working to reallocate 1,200 mt, and in 2018 NMFS reallocated 1,400 mt of the A season jig allocation to the hook-and-line or pot gear less than 60 ft length annual allocation.

²Trawl CV A season closure is for the Bering Sea Limitation 21,388 mt in 2019 and 24,768 mt in 2018.

Pacific cod target - trawl catcher vessels

In 2019, 54 trawl CVs targeting Pacific cod reported 8,982 mt of catch relative to 43 trawl CVs reporting 5,479 mt in 2018. The 5,000 mt AI shoreplant set aside is in place; therefore, the Bering Sea trawl A season limit also is in place at 21,388 mt. Directed fishing for the Bering Sea limit closed February 1, 2019 compared to February 11 in 2018.

BSAI Flatfish (includes CDQ)

The flatfish total catch is for 6 days of fishing in 2019 and 7 days of fishing in 2018.

Species	2019			2018		
	Catch	TAC ¹	% Taken	Catch	TAC ¹	% Taken
Alaska plaice	122	16,252	0.75%	363	16,100	2.25%
Arrowtooth flounder	71	14,000	0.51%	74	13,621	0.54%
Flathead sole	212	16,500	1.28%	302	14,500	2.08%
Greenland turbot	1	5,125	0.02%	3	5,125	0.06%
Kamchatka flounder	3	5,000	0.06%	4	5,000	0.08%
Other flatfish	59	4,000	1.48%	57	4,000	1.43%
Rock sole	896	49,100	1.82%	1,029	47,100	2.18%
Yellowfin sole	3,008	156,000	1.93%	2,941	154,000	1.91%
Total	4,372	265,977	1.64%	4,773	259,446	1.84%

¹TAC is the specified TAC from the final 2018/2019 harvest specifications.

Gulf of Alaska

Pacific cod - Western GOA

Sector	2019				2018			
	A season allocation	Catch Jan 26	A season closed	# of vessels Jan 26	A season allocation	Catch Jan 27	A season closed	# of vessels Jan 27
Hook-and-line C/P	568	0	n/a	0	607	0	n/a	0
Hook-and-line CV	36	0	Jan 1	0	39	0	Jan 1	0
Jig	80	8	n/a	3	51	0	n/a	0
Pot CV/CP	1,031	981	Jan 26	14	1,103	756	Feb 1	13
Trawl CV	1,443	139	n/a	11	1,543	93	n/a	10
Trawl C/P	47	0	Jan 20	0	50	0	Jan 20	0
Total	3,206	1,128		28	3,395	849		24

Pacific cod - Central GOA

Sector	2019				2018			
	A season allocation	Catch Jan 26	A season closed	# of vessels Jan 26	A season allocation	Catch Jan 27	A season closed	# of vessels Jan 27
Hook-and-line C/P	234	0	n/a	0	248	0	n/a	0
Hook-and-line CV <50 ft	530	112	n/a	16	562	0	n/a	0
Hook-and-line CV >=50 ft	319	85	n/a	<3	338	24	n/a	<3
Jig	35		n/a	0	37	0	Jan 1	0
Pot CV/CP	1,015	864	Jan 27	11	1,075	663	n/a	11
Trawl CV	1,203	0	Jan 20	0	1,274	0	Jan 20	0
Trawl C/P	114	0	Jan 20	0	121	0	Jan 20	0
Total	3,450	1,061		39	3,653	688		11

Pollock

Catch in areas 610 and 630 are low.

2019 Seasons	610	620	630	640
A season allocation	848	23,236	7,593	5,748 (annual)
A season catch	201	220	129	0
A season closure	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a
B season allocation	848	27,306	3,522	n/a

Salmon PSC Limits in the GOA

In 2019, Chinook salmon PSC is 1,799 salmon lower relative to 2018 for fisheries with PSC limits. These estimates are also preliminary.

Chinook Salmon	2019 Limit	2019 PSC (% Limit)	2018 PSC (% Limit)
Total	n/a	743	281
Western GOA pollock	6,684	4 (0%)	18 (0%)
Central GOA pollock	18,316	739 (4%)	98 (1%)
Western/Central trawl CV ¹	3,060	0	165 (5%)
Western/Central trawl CP ¹	4,080	0	0

¹Includes incentive buffers for 2018 and 2019 Western/Central trawl CV limit (360 Chinook), and Western/Central trawl CP limit (480 Chinook).

Non-Chinook Salmon	2019 PSC (Rate)	2018 PSC (Rate)
Total	0 (0%)	0 (0%)

Halibut Mortality Data

In 2019 relative to 2018, the total halibut mortality in the BSAI is 72 mt higher and in the GOA is 15 mt higher.

Area, Gear, and Sector	2019			2018		
	Halibut mortality	Groundfish	Rate	Halibut mortality	Groundfish	Rate
BSAI Total	207	80,210	0.26%	135	84,693	0.16%
Amendment 80	21	8,403	0.25%	37	7,487	0.49%
BSAI trawl limited access	175	53,771	0.33%	79	50,748	0.16%
Non-trawl Pacific cod	10	10,236	0.10%	15	15,414	0.10%
Non-trawl Other	0	0	0%	0	0	0%
CDQ	1	7,800	0.01%	4	11,044	0.04%
GOA Total	17	7,166	0.24%	2	691	0.29%
Trawl, Deep-water	0	0	0%	0	0	0%
Trawl, Shallow-water	3	6,906	0.04%	1	650	0.15%
Hook-and-line CP	0	0	0%	0	0	0%
Hook-and-line CV	14	260	5.38%	1	41	2.44%