



North Pacific Fishery Management Council

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Meeting Summary

242nd Plenary Session
North Pacific Fishery Management Council
February 4 - 9, 2019
Benson Hotel, Portland, Oregon

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Attachments

1) Time Log

2) Newsletter

The North Pacific Fishery Management Council met Wednesday, February 6, 2019 through Saturday, February 9, 2019, at the Benson Hotel, Portland, Oregon. The following Council, Council staff, SSC, and AP members attended the meetings.

Council Members

Balsiger, Jim	Hanson, Dave	Mezirow, Andy
Baker, Rachel (alt for Vincent-Lang)	Jensen, John	Moller, John (alt for Vincent-Lang)
Bush, Karla (alt for Vincent-Lang)	Laukitis, Buck	Peterson, Theresa
CAPT, Allison Caputo	Kinneen, Simon (Chair)	Tweit, Bill (Vice Chair)
Cross, Craig	Marx, Steve	LCDR Yvonne, Yang (alt for Caputo)
Down, Kenny	Merrill, Glenn (alt for Balsiger)	

Council Staff

Armstrong, Jim	Figus, Elizabeth	Marrinan, Sarah
Cleaver, Sara	Gleason, Shannon	McCracken, Jon
Cunningham, Sam	Henry, Anna	Schmidt, Nicole
Davis, Maria	Kircher, Peggy	Stram, Diana
Evans, Diana (DD)	La Belle, Sarah	Witherell, Dave (ED)
Fey, Mike (PSMFC)	MacLean, Steve	

Scientific and Statistical Committee

The SSC met from February 4 - 6, 2019 at the Benson Hotel, Portland, Oregon. The following members were present for all or part of the meetings (absent members are show in ~~strikeout~~)

Anderson, Chris	Harris, Brad	Mueter, Franz
Bishop, Amy	Hollowed, Anne (Co-Chair)	Quinn, Terry
Down, Mike	Hunt, George	Reedy, Kate
Dressel, Sherri (Vice-Chair)	Kruse, Gordon (Co-Chair)	Renner, Heather
Felthoven, Ren	Lowry, Dayv	Stewart, Ian
Gasper, Jason	Munro, Andrew	Whitman, Alison
Hanselman, Dana		

Advisory Panel

The AP met Tuesday, February 5, through Friday, February 8, 2019 at the Benson Hotel, Portland, Oregon. The following members were present for all or part of the meetings (absent members are show in ~~strikeout~~):

Christiansen, Ruth	Kauffman, Jeff	Stevens, Ben
Cochran, Kurt	Kwachka, Alexus	Upton, Matt (Co-Vice Chair)
Donich, Daniel	Lowenberg, Craig	Vanderhoeven, Anne
Drobnica, Angel (Co-Vice Chair)	Nichols, Carina	Weiss, Ernie (Chair)
Gruver, John	O'Connor, Jamie	Wilt, Sinclair
Gudmundsson, Gretar	O'Donnell, Paddy	Velsko, Erik
Hayden, Natasha	Peterson, Joel	
Johnson, Jim	Scoblic, John	

B REPORTS

The following reports were given and discussed. Actions were deferred to staff tasking.

B1 Executive Director's Report – David Witherell

- S-K Grant Presentation – Clifford Cosgrove

B2 NMFS Management Report – Glenn Merrill

B3 AFSC Report – Dr. Bob Foy

B4 Central Arctic Ocean Agreement Presentation – Jean-Pierre Ple & Candace Nackman

B5 ADF&G Report – Jocelyn Runnebaum

B6 USCG Report – LCDR Yvonne Yang

B7 USFWS Report – No Report

B8 IPHC Report – Dr. Dave Wilson & Dr. Ian Stewart

B9 Protected Species Report – Council staff, Steve MacLean

C1 BSAI CRAB – ABC AND OFL SPECIFICATIONS

The Council heard a presentation from NPFMC staff, Dr. Diana Stram and Jim Armstrong, and ADF&G staff, Ben Daly and Katie Palof on Norton Sound red king crab specifications, the Crab Plan Team report, and progress with developing a rebuilding plan for St. Matthew blue king crab. Due to the government shutdown, the Council will revisit this action in a teleconference on March 8, 2019. The following preliminary final determination was taken:

Ms. Bush made the following motion which was seconded by Mr. Jensen:

The Council accepts the 2019 NSRKC SAFE report and adopts a preliminary final determination to set the OFL at 0.24 million pounds and the ABC at 0.19 million pounds as recommended by the SSC.

VOTE ON MOTION: Motion passed with no objection February 6, 2019, at 3:17 p.m.

C2 OBSERVER PROGRAM FEES - POSTPONED

This action was postponed until the April 2019 Council Meeting. No action was taken.

C3 FIXED GEAR CV ROCKFISH RETENTION

The Council heard a presentation from NPFMC staff, Jon McCracken. Due to the government shutdown, the Council recommended a preferred alternative which it will revisit at the April 2019 Council meeting. The following action was taken:

Dr. Balsiger made the following motion which was seconded by Mr. Tweit:

The Council recommends the following suite of alternatives. The preferred alternatives are shown in bold; new language underlined, and removed language in strikethrough.

Alternatives

Alternative 1: Status quo

Alternative 2: Require full retention of rockfish species by all fixed gear CVs (hook-and- line, pot, and jig) in the BSAI and GOA.

Alternative 3: Require full retention of rockfish species by hook-and-line CVs in the GOA.

Option under Alternatives 2 and 3: Require full retention of rockfish even if the species is on prohibited species status but prohibit these retained rockfish from entering commerce.

Option under Alternatives 2 and 3: Establish a maximum commerce allowance (MCA) of 10%, ~~or 15%~~, or 20%.

Suboption under Alternatives 2 and 3: Rockfish delivered above the MCA cannot enter commerce, with the exception of meal.

The Council recommends that the analysis be revised to include the revisions suggested by staff and the AP as practical. Also further clarify how NMFS manages rockfish on prohibited species status and under an MCA.

VOTE ON MOTION: Motion passed unanimously February 6, 2019, at 5:34 p.m.

C4 BSAI PACIFIC COD TRAWL CV ANALYSIS

The Council heard a presentation from NPFMC contractors, Darrell Brannan and Mike Downs. The following actions were taken:

Mr. Cross made the following motion which was seconded by Mr. Tweet:

The Council moves to bifurcate Alternatives 1, 2, 3, and 6 from Alternatives 4 and 5.

VOTE ON MOTION: Motion passed unanimously February 7, 2019, at 3:40 p.m.

Ms. Baker made the following motion which was seconded by Mr. Laukitis:

The Council recommends releasing the analysis for public review with Alternatives 1, 2, 3, and 6 (renumber Alternative 6 as Alternative 4). Changes to the purpose and need statement are noted below. Deleted text is in strikethrough; new text is in bold and underline.

*During development of Amendment 80 to the Bering Sea and Aleutian Islands Fishery Management Plan and associated rule making, the Council was silent on the ability of catcher processors defined in Amendment 80 to act as motherships in limited access fisheries. Recent increases of Amendment 80 catcher processors acting as motherships has resulted in an increase in the amount of Pacific cod delivered to Amendment 80 catcher processors, an increase in the number of catcher vessels delivering Pacific cod to motherships, and a decrease in the amount of Pacific cod delivered to shoreside processing facilities. **One American Fisheries Act catcher processor has consistently operated as mothership in the directed BSAI Pacific cod fishery.** The Council is concerned about the*

impacts of the recent increases and potential for future growth in offshore deliveries of Pacific cod to Amendment 80 vessels or other vessels operating as motherships, and the potential impacts those increases could have on shoreside processors, communities, and participating catcher vessels. The Council intends to address the activity of vessels acting as motherships.

In addition, there are both AFA and non-AFA licenses endorsed to fish in the BSAI trawl cod fishery including exempt and non-exempt AFA vessels. Information shows a large number of AFA endorsed vessels are not participating, but whose catch history contributes to the AFA Pacific cod sideboard in the Bering Sea trawl cod fishery. Despite a high level of latency, the pace of the fishery has increased shortening the season, resulting in decreased ability to maximize the value of the fishery and negatively impacting fishery participants. Additional entrants could exacerbate these issues and threaten the viability of the fishery. The Council is considering options to improve the prosecution of the fishery, with the intent of promoting safety and increasing the value of the fishery.

Mr. Tweit made the following amendment which was seconded by Mr. Cross:

(Add a new option 3 under Alternative 2)

Option 3: A80 catcher/processors that don't qualify under Option 1 can continue to mothership in the AI if they have taken directed cod deliveries from catcher vessels participating in the AI non-CDQ Pacific cod trawl fishery between 2008 – 2017 in at least three years.

VOTE ON AMENDMENT: Amendment failed 5/6 (Ms. Baker, Mr. Down, Mr. Jensen, Mr. Mezirow, Ms. Peterson, and Mr. Kinneen voting in opposition) February 7, 2019, at 4:17 p.m.

VOTE ON MAIN MOTION: Motion passed unanimously February 7, 2019, at 4:20 p.m.

Mr. Cross made the following motion which was seconded by Mr. Mezirow:

The BSAI trawl catcher vessel Pacific cod fishery is facing multiple issues simultaneously that are negatively impacting the sustained viability and rational prosecution of the fishery for all its participants. These factors include: decreasing Pacific cod TACs, an increase in the number of participating LLP licenses, the potential for additional new participants, a race among existing participants (often in unsafe conditions), and an increasingly shortened season. The Council initiates action to address the numerous concerns being encountered by the fishery and consider adopting the following purpose and need statement and analytic process:

Purpose and Need Statement

Over the last several years, total allowable catch for Pacific cod in the Bering Sea-Aleutian Island has steadily decreased. At the same time, the number of LLP licenses used by trawl catcher vessels to participate in the BSAI non-CDQ trawl Pacific cod fishery has increased. The pace of the fishery has contributed to an increasingly compressed season, resulting in decreased ability to maximize the value of the fishery and negatively impacting all fishery participants (catcher vessels, motherships, shoreside processors, and communities). This race for fish also discourages fishing practices that can minimize bycatch. The potential for continued re-entry of additional entrants could exacerbate these unfavorable conditions and threaten the sustained viability of the fishery. The Council is considering the development of management tools to improve the prosecution of the fishery, including the development of a cooperative-based program, with the intent of promoting safety and increasing the value of the fishery.

To address the Purpose and Need Statement, the Council should develop a scoping document that could be incorporated into a comprehensive BSAI cod trawl catcher vessel management program that includes:

- Allocation of BSAI Pacific cod quota share to BSAI LLP licenses
- Establishing trawl catcher vessel cooperative(s) for Pacific cod
- Recognition of historical AFA cooperative-based cod harvest arrangements since the implementation of pollock cooperatives under the AFA
- Recognition of historical harvest of AFA cod exempt boats
- Recognition of historical harvest of non-AFA boats
- Protections for harvesters, processors, and communities
- Use caps, transfer requirements, and other administrative requirements that apply to quota programs.
- Establishing sideboards to protect limited access GOA and BSAI fisheries
- Consideration of management changes on catcher vessel crew
- Implications for bycatch management

The Council establishes a control date of February 7th 2019, that may be used as a reference date for any future management action to address trawl catcher vessel participation in the BSAI Pacific cod fishery.

Ms. Peterson made the following amendment which was seconded by Mr. Laukitis:

(Add the following language to the last bulleted item **in bold**)

- Implications for bycatch management, **including halibut savings to benefit the health of halibut resource.**

VOTE ON AMENDMENT: Amendment passed 9/2 (Mr. Cross and Mr. Marx voting in opposition) February 7, 2019, at 4:54 p.m.

VOTE ON AMENDED MAIN MOTION: Motion passed unanimously February 7, 2019, at 5:04 p.m.

C5 IFQ MEDICAL LEASE, BENEFICIARY DESIGNATION PROVISIONS

The Council heard a presentation from NMFS contractor, Darrell Brannan. Due to the government shutdown, the Council made a preliminary final determination and will make a final recommendation at the April 2019 Council meeting. The following action was taken:

Dr. Balsiger made the following motion which was seconded by Ms. Peterson:

The Council recommends the following purpose and need statement and suite of alternatives. The preferred alternatives are shown in **bold**.

Purpose and Need Statement:

The Individual Fishing Quota (IFQ) Program was designed to ensure that the sablefish and halibut fisheries are predominately owner-operated where the quota share (QS) holders fish the annual IFQ. Transfers (leases) of IFQ derived from catcher vessel QS have generally been

prohibited. Two transfer provisions, the medical transfer provision and the beneficiary transfer provision, were implemented after the original program to allow 1) QS holders to retain their QS during a temporary medical hardship and 2) a surviving spouse or designated beneficiary to temporarily transfer QS after the QS holder's death. NMFS has identified problems administering these provisions and would like the Council to clarify their intent. The medical transfer provision would benefit from a broader definition of a certified medical professional and a revision to allow the provision to be used for any medical reason within a set of years. The beneficiary transfer provision would benefit from a clarification on who has the authority to transfer IFQ from a decedent's QS and a definition of immediate family member. NMFS and IFQ fishermen would benefit from clarification of the Council's intent for the program and if necessary adjusting the regulations to better reflect the program's objectives.

The Council recommends the following suite of alternatives for the proposed action to modify the IFQ medical and beneficiary transfer provisions.

Alternative 1: Status Quo

Alternative 2: Modify the medical transfer provision.

Element 1: Define "Certified Medical Professional"

Option 1: Replace the current definition with a single, broader definition of certified medical professional, such as "Health care provider." Health care provider could be defined as:

An eligible health care provider is an individual authorized to provide health care services by the State where he or she practices and performs within the scope of their specialty to diagnose and treat medical conditions as defined by applicable Federal, state, or local laws and regulations. A health care provider outside the U.S. and its territories licensed to practice medicine is included in this definition.

Option 2: Define a Certified Medical Professional as all or a sub-set of those individuals defined in the Social Security Act Sections 1861(r) and 1861(s).

Suboption: Option 1 and Option 2 would be limited to U.S. medical professionals.

Option 3: The Council directs staff to review definitions of "immediate family member" that could be used for the medical transfer provision which are more restrictive than those used for designated beneficiary provision regulations.

Element 2: Revise federal regulations to allow the medical transfer provision to be used for any medical reason for:

Option 1: 2 of 5 most recent years

Option 2: 3 of 7 most recent years

Note: Only transfers after implementation of new rule would count towards the limit.

Suboptions apply to either Option 1 or 2:

Suboption 1: Establish a limit on the number of times (based on two options to define years) the medical transfer provision may be used (range of 5 to 10 times).

Suboption 2: Define most recent year as one year (365 days) from the date the medical transfer application was approved by NMFS.

Option 3: To allow QS holders to transfer 100% of IFQ associated with QS held under eligible medical transfer to designee for two years; in the third time a medical transfer is used out of 7 years, the QS holder can transfer 80% of IFQ (by area by species) to designee; in the fourth time, the QS holder can transfer 60% of IFQ; after the fourth transfer, medical transfers would not be allowed during that 7 year period.

Alternative 3: Modify the beneficiary transfer provision.

Element 1: At 50 CFR 679.41(k) modify all references to surviving spouse and immediate family member by adding “estate.”

Element 2: Define “immediate family member” in regulations at 50 CFR 679 as follows:

Option 1: US Office of Personnel Management definition

Option 2: Federal Family Medical Leave Act definition

VOTE ON MOTION: Motion passed unanimously February 8, 2019, at 9:35 a.m.

D1 BSAI CRAB PARTIAL DELIVERIES

The Council heard a presentation from NPFMC staff, Sarah Marrinan. The following actions were taken:

Mr. Down made the following motion which was seconded by Mr. Jensen:

The Council adopts the following purpose and need statement and draft alternatives for BSAI crab partial deliveries and moves the action to initial review.

Draft Purpose and Need

The purpose of this action is to allow vessels participating in the Bering Sea and Aleutian Islands Crab Rationalization (CR) Program to make partial deliveries of crab and then continue fishing before fully offloading all harvested crab. This action would be to remove Federal regulations that prohibit the continuation of a fishing trip subsequent to a partial offload of crab in the CR program. The need for this action is to provide operational flexibility to vessels to conduct their business in the safest and economically efficient manner when emergencies or special circumstances arise, while also ensuring proper catch accounting.

Draft Alternatives

Alternative 1 (No Action) – Status quo is maintained. Vessels are prohibited from resuming fishing for CR crab on board a vessel once a landing has commenced and until all CR crab are landed, unless fishing in the Western Aleutian Islands golden king crab fishery.

Alternative 2 – Remove the prohibition on resuming fishing for CR crab on board a vessel once a landing has commenced and until all CR crab are landed. This will allow vessels to make partial deliveries of CR crab and then continue fishing before fully offloading all harvested crab.

Option: In the event of a partial offload within a fishing trip, only entire tank crab contents may be offloaded. (Any tank started for offload must be fully offloaded.)

Mr. Laukitis made the following amendment which was seconded by Mr. Tweit:

(Insert the following language in the purpose and need statement **in bold**).

Draft Purpose and Need

The purpose of this action is to allow vessels participating in the Bering Sea and Aleutian Islands Crab Rationalization (CR) Program to make partial deliveries of crab and then continue fishing before fully offloading all harvested crab. This action would be to remove Federal regulations that prohibit the continuation of a fishing trip subsequent to a partial offload of crab in the CR program. The need for this action is to provide operational flexibility to vessels to conduct their business in the safest and economically efficient manner **and** when emergencies or special circumstances arise, while also ensuring proper catch accounting.

VOTE ON AMENDMENT: Amendment passed with no objection February 8, 2019, at 12:05 p.m.

VOTE ON AMENDED MOTION: Motion passed unanimously February 8, 2019, at 12:06 p.m.

D2 BSAI CRAB eLOGBOOK

The Council heard a presentation from NPFMC staff, Sarah Marrinan. The following actions were taken:

Mr. Down made the following motion which was seconded by Mr. Marx:

The Council directs staff to conduct a cost analysis examining the 3rd party development and implementation of BSAI crab eLogbooks, to replace the paper logbooks currently used in the Crab Rationalization Program.

Mr. Merrill made the following amendment which was seconded by Ms. Bush:

(Add the following language in **bold** and delete the following language in ~~strikethrough~~)

The Council directs staff to conduct a cost analysis examining the **costs for Pacific States to 3rd party** development and implementation of BSAI crab eLogbooks, to replace the paper logbooks currently used in the Crab Rationalization Program.

VOTE ON AMENDMENT: Amendment passed with no objection February 8, 2019, at 2:18 p.m.

VOTE ON AMENDED MOTION: Motion passed unanimously February 8, 2019, at 2:20 p.m.

D5 GROUND FISH FMPs MANAGEMENT POLICY & OBJECTIVES

The Council heard a presentation from NPFMC staff, Jim Armstrong. The following action was taken:

Mr. Merrill made the following amendment which was seconded by Mr. Cross:

The Council moves to change the cycle for comprehensive review of the groundfish management objectives to every three years.

VOTE ON MOTION: Motion passed with no objection February 8, 2019, at 3:40 p.m.

D3 BSAI HALIBUT ABM

The Council heard a presentation from NPFMC staff, Dr. Diana Stram. The following actions were taken:

Ms. Baker made the following motion which was seconded by Ms. Peterson:

The Council directs staff to analyze the performance of the alternatives, options, and elements used to specify the five stakeholder scenarios in addition to scenarios developed by staff to display a reasonable range of the effects of the alternatives. Sector-specific scenarios should be expanded to the gear level (trawl or non-trawl) and sector-level apportionments should be proportional to the status quo.

The Council recommends the following revisions and clarifications to the alternatives; additions are in bold/underline and deletions are in strikethrough.

Apportionment:

The analysis should clearly demonstrate the effects of the alternatives on the resulting allocations to the Amendment 80, BSAI trawl limited access, non-trawl, and CDQ sectors. Allow the CDQ PSC cap to vary with abundance in the same manner as the trawl sector.

Indices:

Base the indices on the timeframe 1998 – 2018 and standardize the primary index to the most recent year.

Option 1: standardize secondary index to the most recent year.

Option 2: do not standardize the primary index and use the average index value of the previous two years.

Alternatives:

Alternative 1: No action

Alternative 2: Single index used to set trawl and/or non-trawl halibut PSC limit.

Option 1: NMFS EBS bottom trawl survey index.

Option 2: IPHC Area 4 setline survey index.

Alternative 3: Primary and secondary indices are used to set trawl and/or non-trawl PSC limit.

Option 1: Primary index is EBS trawl survey, secondary index is Area 4 setline survey.

Option 2: Primary index is Area 4 setline survey, secondary index is EBS trawl survey.

The secondary index modifies the PSC limit after the primary index is applied when the secondary index is in a “high state” or a “low state” (as defined by Element 4 breakpoint options). The extent to which the secondary index influences the PSC limit above or below these breakpoints is determined by selection of options under Element 5.

For each alternative above, the PSC limit will be proportional to the primary index in a 1:1 fashion (e.g., when the index goes up 10%, the PSC limit goes up 10%) prior to modifications by the secondary index and prior to the application of Elements 2 and 3 (floors and ceilings).

Alternative 4: Use two indices (EBS trawl survey and Area 4 setline survey) to set the non-trawl PSC limit in the form of a look-up table. Both indices should be standardized to the mean (1998–2018).

Options for dimensions of the look-up table: a) 3x3, b) 5x5, c) 7x7, d) 10x10

The following elements and options are exclusive to Alternatives 2 – **3** 4.

Element 1 – Starting point for PSC limit (must be selected)

Option 1. 2016 PSC limit (3,515 mt)

Option 2. 2016 use (2,354 mt)

Option 3. 2017 use (1,958 mt)

Element 2 – Maximum PSC limit (ceiling) (must be selected)

Option 1. 2016 PSC limit (3,515 mt)

Option 2. 2015 PSC limit (4,426 mt)

Element 3 – Minimum PSC limit (floor) (must be selected)

Option 1. 2016 use (2,354 mt)

Option 2. ½ of 2016 PSC limit (1,758 mt)

Option 3. ½ of 2016 PSC use (1,177 mt)

Option 4. 1,000 mt

Element 4 – Breakpoint for secondary index (Alternative 3 only)

Option 1. Index is 25% below or above average

Option 2. Index is above or below average

Element 5 – Magnitude of the response for the primary or secondary index (Alternative 3 only optional) Up to 2 options may be chosen

Option 1. Up faster than 1:1

Option 2. Up slower than 1:1

Option 3. Down faster than 1:1

Option 4. Down slower than 1:1

Element 6: PSC limit responsiveness to abundance changes. (optional)

This option would limit the annual rate of change of PSC limits. This element could be applied to limit the amount of change of the PSC limit on an annual basis.

Option 1: PSC limit varies no more than 5% per year

Option 2: PSC limit varies no more than 15% per year

Option 3: PSC limit varies no more than 25% per year

Suboption: This element could be applied to limit the amount of change between the current PSC limits and the implementation of this action.

Element 7: Breakpoints.

Specify breakpoints in a lookup table with a maximum of 12 breakpoints defined in each dimension, resulting in a maximum 11X11 lookup table. Each index may be standardized using one of the following options:

Option 1: standardize to the average of 1998-2018

Option 2: standardize to the current year

Additional comments:

Council recommends that the SSC review the proposed (staff and stakeholder) scenarios to provide guidance if additional scenarios should be included in the analysis.

Mr. Merrill made the following amendment which was seconded by Mr. Mezirow:

(Insert the following option under Element 5 **in bold**)

Element 5 – Magnitude of the response for the primary or secondary index (~~Alternative 3 only optional~~) Up to 2 options may be chosen

Option 1. Up faster than 1:1

Option 2. Up slower than 1:1

Option 3. Down faster than 1:1

Option 4. Down slower than 1:1

Option 5. 1:1

Mr. Cross made the following amendment to the amendment which was seconded by Mr. Mezirow:

(Delete the following language in ~~strike through~~ and **bold** under Element 5)

Element 5 – Magnitude of the response for the primary or secondary index (~~Alternative 3 only optional~~) Up to 2 options may be chosen

Option 1. Up faster than 1:1

Option 2. Up slower than 1:1

Option 3. Down faster than 1:1

Option 4. Down slower than 1:1

Option 5. 1:1

VOTE ON AMENDMENT to the AMENDMENT: Amendment to the amendment passed with no objection February 9, 2019, at 1:30 p.m.

VOTE ON AMENDMENT: Amendment passed with no objection February 9, 2019, at 1:31 p.m.

Mr. Laukitis made the following amendment which was seconded by Mr. Down:

(Delete the following language in ~~strike through~~ and add the following language in **bold** under Element 1 Option 3)

Element 1 – Starting point for PSC limit (must be selected)

Option 1. 2016 PSC limit (3,515 mt)

Option 2. 2016 use (2,354 mt)

Option 3. ~~2017 use (1,958 mt)~~ **(1950 mt)**

VOTE ON AMENDMENT: Amendment failed 2/9 (Mr. Merrill, Ms. Baker, Mr. Cross, Mr. Down, Mr. Jensen, Mr. Marx, Mr. Mezirow, Ms. Peterson, and Mr. Kinneen voting in opposition) February 9, 2019, at 1:45 p.m.

VOTE ON AMENDED MAIN MOTION: Motion passed unanimously February 9, 2019, at 1:59 p.m.

D4 ECONOMIC DATA REPORTS – POSTPONED

This action was postponed until the April 2019 Council Meeting. No action was taken.

E1 STAFF TASKING

The Council discussed the relative priority and scheduling of new and previously tasked projects, including changes to the April and June agendas resulting from the Federal government shutdown and postponement of items from the February 2019 meeting. Executive Director, David Witherell, presented a list of items for discussion at staff tasking taken from the B reports and the Council took the following action:

Mr. Cross made the following motion which was seconded by Mr. Down:

The Council initiate a discussion paper to consider some form of rationalization or cooperative management structure of the BSAI Pacific cod pot catcher vessel greater than or equal to 60 feet length overall.

VOTE ON MOTION: Motion passed with one objection (Ms. Peterson voting in opposition) February 9, 2019 4:08 p.m.

Appointments

Committees

- The Council Chair appointed Forrest Braden to the Charter Halibut Management Committee
- The Council Chair appointed Jeff Berger to the Cook Inlet Salmon Committee
- The Council Chair appointed Mellisa Heflin to the Community Engagement Committee

THE COUNCIL ADJOURNED ON SATURDAY FEBRUARY 9, 2019 AT 4:30 P.M.



North Pacific Fishery Management Council

Simon Kinneen, Chair | David Witherell, Executive Director
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TIME LOG Meeting held in Portland, Oregon Benson Hotel February 6 – 9, 2019

Wednesday February 6, 2019

2/6/2019 8:09 AM Call to Order
2/6/2019 8:12 AM Approval of Minutes and Agenda

B1 REPORTS

2/6/2019 8:15 AM **B1 Executive Director's Report** – David Witherell
2/6/2019 8:22 AM S-K Grant Presentation – Clifford Cosgrove
2/6/2019 8:46 AM **B4 Central Arctic Ocean Agreement Presentation** – Jean-Pierre
Ple and Candace Nackman
2/6/2019 9:17 AM B1 ED Report Continued
2/6/2019 9:38 AM **B2 NMFS Management Report** – Glenn Merrill
2/6/2019 10:00 AM Break
2/6/2019 10:22 AM **B3 Alaska Fisheries Science Center Report** – Dr. Bob Foy
2/6/2019 10:55 AM **B5 ADF&G Report** - Jocelyn Runnebaum
2/6/2019 11:07 AM **B6 USCG Report** – – LCDR Yvonne Yang
2/6/2019 11:23 AM **B8 IPHC Report** – Dr. Dave Wilson and Ian Stewart
2/6/2019 11:53 AM **B9 Protected Species Report** – Steve MacLean
2/6/2019 1155: PM Lunch Break
2/6/2019 1:19 PM **B Public Testimony**
2/6/2019 1:19 PM Linda Behnken
2/6/2019 1:30 PM Gerry Merrigan

C1 BSAI CRAB – ABC and OFL SPECIFICATIONS

2/6/2019 1:39 PM **C1 Presentation** – Council staff, Jim Armstrong and Dr. Diana
Stram, and ADF&G staff, Ben Daly and Katie Palof
2/6/2019 2:49 PM C1 SSC Report – Gordon Kruse
2/6/2019 3:02 PM AP Report – Matt Upton
2/6/2019 3:03 PM **C1 Public Testimony**
2/6/2019 3:04 PM Adam Bockmann
2/6/2019 3:15 PM **C1 Ms. Bush Preliminary Motion**

C2 OBSERVER PROGRAM FEES - POSTPONED

C3 FIXED GEAR CV ROCKFISH RETENTION

2/6/2019 3:35 PM	C3 Presentation – Council Staff, Jon McCracken
2/6/2019 4:37 PM	AP Report – Angel Drobnica
2/6/2019 4:43 PM	C3 Public Comment
2/6/2019 4:43 PM	Stephen Rhoads
2/6/2019 4:51 PM	Linda Behnken
2/6/2019 5:02 PM	Julie Bonney
2/6/2019 5:12 PM	Break
2/6/2019 5:18 PM	C3 Mr. Balsiger Motion
2/6/2019 5:40 PM	Recess

Thursday February 7, 2019

C4 BSAI PACIFIC COD TRAWL CV ANALYSIS

2/7/2019 8:04 AM	Call to Order
2/7/2019 8:04 AM	C4 Presentation – Darrell Brannan and Dr. Mike Downs
2/7/2019 9:50 AM	Break
2/7/2019 10:19 AM	C4 SSC Presentation – Gordon Kruse
2/7/2019 10:28 AM	Break
2/7/2019 10:28 AM	C4 AP Report – Angel Drobnica
2/7/2019 10:44 AM	C4 Public Testimony
2/7/2019 10:45 AM	Mike Guy
2/7/2019 10:48 AM	Brent Paine
2/7/2019 11:11 AM	Mark Cooper
2/7/2019 11:18 AM	Bob Breskovich
2/7/2019 11:20 AM	Mike Storey
2/7/2019 11:26 AM	Paul Gronholdt
2/7/2019 11:30 AM	Kurt Jastad and Dan Martin
2/7/2019 11:45 AM	Chris Cooper
2/7/2019 11:49 AM	Robert Smith
2/7/2019 12:00 PM	Lunch Break
2/7/2019 1:04 PM	SSC Report – All except C1 and C4
2/7/2019 1:27 PM	C4 Public Testimony Continued
2/7/2019 1:27 PM	Nicole Kimball
2/7/2019 1:43 PM	Clem Tillion
2/7/2019 1:51 PM	Phil Powell
2/7/2019 1:59 PM	Todd Loomis
2/7/2019 2:05 PM	Justin Johnson
2/7/2019 2:09 PM	Jim Kasper
2/7/2019 2:13 PM	Dennis Robinson
2/7/2019 2:20 PM	Matt Upton
2/7/2019 2:24 PM	Heather Mann
2/7/2019 2:30 PM	Tom Enlow
2/7/2019 2:36 PM	Steve Miner

2/7/2019 2:41 PM	Joe Plesha
2/7/2019 2:45 PM	Rebecca Skinner
2/7/2019 2:49 PM	Julianne Curry
2/7/2019 2:51 PM	Don Ashley
2/7/2019 2:53 PM	Jeff Lackey
2/7/2019 3:00 PM	Break
2/7/2019 3:40 PM	C4 Ms. Baker Motion – BSAI Cod Mothership Limitation
2/7/2019 4:31 PM	C4 Mr. Cross Motion – BSAI Pcod Trawl CV Scoping Document
2/7/2019 5:04 PM	Recess

Friday February 8, 2019

2/8/2019 8:04 AM	Call to Order
2/8/2019 8:06 AM	D3 Public Testimony Out of Order
2/8/2019 8:06 AM	Mark Fina
2/8/2019 8:16 AM	Ruth Christiansen

C5 IFQ MEDICAL LEASE, BENEFICIARY DESIGNATION PROVISIONS

2/8/2019 8:21 AM	C5 Presentation – Darrell Brannan, Brannan & Associates
2/8/2019 9:09 AM	AP Report – Matt Upton
2/8/2019 9:17 AM	C5 Public Testimony
2/8/2019 9:18 AM	Linda Behnken
2/8/2019 9:27 AM	Clem Tillion
2/8/2019 9:35 AM	C5 Mr. Balsiger Motion
2/8/2019 9:50 AM	Break

D1 BSAI CRAB PARTIAL DELIVERIES

2/8/2019 10:15 AM	D1 Presentation – Council staff, Sarah Marrinan
2/8/2019 11:08 AM	AP Report – Ernie Weiss
2/8/2019 11:13 AM	D1 Public Testimony
2/8/2019 11:14 AM	Lance Farr
2/8/2019 11:23 AM	Jamie Goen and Jim Stone
2/8/2019 11:37 AM	Jake Jacobsen
2/8/2019 11:46 AM	D1 Mr. Down Motion
2/8/2019 12:00 PM	Lunch Break

D2 BSAI CRAB eLOGBOOK

2/8/2019 1:39 PM	D2 Presentation – Council staff, Sarah Marrinan
2/8/2019 2:01 PM	AP Report – Ernie Weiss
2/8/2019 2:02 PM	D2 Public Testimony
2/8/2019 2:02 PM	Jamie Goen
2/8/2019 2:10 PM	D2 Mr. Down Motion

D4 ECONOMIC DATA REPORTS - POSTPONED

D5 GROUND FISH FMPs MANAGEMENT POLICY AND OBJECTIVES

2/8/2019 2:25 PM	D5 Presentation - Council staff, Jim Armstrong
2/8/2019 3:32 PM	Break
2/8/2019 3:36 PM	D5 Mr. Merrill Motion
2/8/2019 3:40 PM	D3 Public Testimony Out of Order – Bob Alverson
2/8/2019 3:48 PM	Recess

Saturday February 9, 2019

D3 BSAI HALIBUT ABM – Receive Halibut Stakeholder Committee Report

2/9/2019 8:07 AM	Call to Order
2/9/2019 8:09 AM	D3 Committee Report – Council staff, Dr. Diana Stram
2/9/2019 9:43 AM	AP Report – Angel Drobnica
2/9/2019 9:55 AM	Break
2/9/2019 10:14 AM	D3 Public Comment
2/9/2019 10:14 AM	Chris Woodley
2/9/2019 10:29 AM	Chad See
2/9/2019 10:39 AM	Heather McCarty
2/9/2019 11:11 AM	Simeon Swetzof and Mateo Paz-Jordan
2/9/2019 11:25 AM	Linda Behnken
2/9/2019 11:32 AM	Ricardo Mercurief
2/9/2019 11:37 AM	Arne Fuglvog
2/9/2019 11:50 PM	Lunch Break
2/9/2019 12:54 PM	D3 Ms. Baker Motion
2/9/2019 1:59 PM	Break

E1 STAFF TASKING

2/9/2019 2:18 PM	Finance Committee Update and Scheduling – David Witherell
2/9/2019 2:24 PM	Update on 3 Meeting Outlook – David Witherell
2/9/2019 2:32 PM	AP Report – Angel Drobnica
2/9/2019 2:37 PM	E1 Public Comment
2/9/2019 2:37 PM	Dr. Lauren Divine
2/9/2019 2:48 PM	Craig Lowenberg and Lance Farr
2/9/2019 2:59 PM	Julie Bonney, Heather Mann, Shannon Carroll, Don Ashley, and Stoian Iankov
2/9/2019 3:14 PM	Rebecca Skinner
2/9/2019 3:25 PM	Break
2/9/2019 4:00 PM	E1 Mr. Cross Motion – Pot CV Cod
2/9/2019 4:30 PM	Meeting Adjourned

February 2019 Newsletter

Call for Nominations: FMAC

At their February 2019 meeting, the Council received word of vacancies on the Fishery Monitoring Advisory Committee (FMAC; formerly the Observer Advisory Committee). The FMAC convenes industry members, agency representatives, observers, and observer/EM coverage providers to advise the Council on issues related to all types of monitoring in Alaskan fisheries. There are currently two vacant seats on the FMAC, one for an industry representative of the pot CV fishery and one for an active observer. The Council Chair may, however, appoint two active observers to share the FMAC seat.



A nominations period to fill these vacancies is open until noon on March 29th. New membership will be announced at the April 2019 Council meeting, in Anchorage. New members are expected to begin attending FMAC meetings starting in May 2019, in Seattle. Please submit a letter of interest to Council staff member Elizabeth Figus (elizabeth.figus@noaa.gov; 907-271-2801).

BSAI Crab Management

The Council reviewed the BSAI Crab Plan Team's (CPT) report and the 2019 Norton Sound red king crab (NSRKC) stock assessment. The Council made a preliminary determination to approve the NSRKC SAFE report chapter as well as the SSC recommendation that 2019 OFL be set at 0.24 million lb. (0.11 thousand t) and that ABC be set at 0.19 million lb. (0.09 thousand t), using a buffer of 20%. The 20% buffer was recommended due to uncertainty about important stock dynamics that were identified in the SAFE and CPT reports. Due to the Federal government shutdown, which prevented the February Council meeting from being noticed in the Federal Register, the Council will revisit this action in a [teleconference meeting on March 8th](#), and take final action.



Crab Plan Team in Nome gets a demonstration of winter ice crabbing through the ice.

The CPT met in Nome, Alaska, in January 2019, with an abbreviated agenda due to the Federal shutdown. Agenda items not covered in January have been deferred to the May 2019 CPT meeting. The CPT was, however, able to meet with several organizations while in Nome, as well as observe how ice fishing occurs for the fishery. The Team was grateful to the community of Nome for their hospitality.

The Council also received a presentation that summarized plans for developing a rebuilding plan for Saint Matthew blue king crab (SMBKC), which was declared overfished in October 2018. Additional information for the rebuilding plan, as well as the fall 2019 stock assessment, will be discussed at the CPT in May, including bycatch in crab and groundfish fisheries, potential area closures, and a productivity analysis of appropriate B_{MSY} and recruitment in order to recommend alternatives for the rebuilding plan and scenarios for the final assessment. The Council will review and recommend alternatives for the rebuilding plan in June.

Staff contact for the CPT is Jim Armstrong and for SMBKC rebuilding is Diana Stram.

Fixed Gear CV Rockfish Retention

At the February 2019 meeting, the Council conducted a public review of the draft Regulatory Impact Review (RIR) that would require full retention of all rockfish species for fixed gear catcher vessels (CVs) in the Bering Sea/Aleutian Islands (BSAI) and Gulf of Alaska (GOA). Requiring full retention of rockfish by fixed gear CVs would improve identification of species catch composition when CVs are subject to electronic monitoring, improve data collection by providing more accurate estimates of total catch, reduce incentives to discard rockfish, may reduce waste, reduce overall enforcement burden, and provide more consistency in regulations.



The Council selected a preferred alternative and scheduled final action for the April 2019 meeting. The preferred alternative would require full retention of rockfish species by all fixed gear CVs (hook-and-line, pot, and jig) in the BSAI and GOA. Also included as part of the preferred alternative are two options and a suboption. The first option would require full retention of rockfish even if the rockfish species is on prohibited species status, but would prohibit these retained rockfish from entering commerce. The second option would establish a maximum commerce allowance (MCA) of 10%, 15%, or 20%. At this time, the Council has not selected the preferred value of the MCA. The purpose of the MCA is to constrain vessels from increasing rockfish incidental catch under a full retention regulation, while allowing vessel operators to sell most of the rockfish catch that is truly incidental. The Council also added a new suboption which would allow rockfish catch in excess of the MCA to be processed into fish meal.

The Council further requested staff include in the analysis, to the extent practicable, the following:

- The anticipated poundage of rockfish overage to be delivered by area or by port under all three MCA options.
- Differences in processors' ability to discard or dispose of rockfish by region, over the MCA.

- Clarification of the management considerations for Demersal Shelf Rockfish east of 144 degrees W. longitude.

Staff contact is Jon McCracken.

BSAI Trawl CV Pacific cod

The Council completed an initial review of a proposed action evaluating management measures that limit certain Amendment 80 and American Fisheries Act (AFA) catcher/processors acting as motherships when receiving Bering Sea and Aleutian Islands (BSAI) non-community development quota (CDQ) Pacific cod deliveries from trawl catcher vessels. Also included in the initial review document was a vessel latency alternative that would prohibit the use of License Limitation Program (LLP) licenses in the BSAI trawl Pacific cod fishery that do not meet specific BSAI Pacific cod landings criteria, and consideration of allocating the BSAI non-CDQ Pacific cod trawl catcher vessel allocation among the AFA and non-AFA catcher vessels to facilitate the management of the fishery through cooperatives.



At this meeting, the Council **bifurcated** Alternatives 1, 2, 3, and 6 (the actions that constrain when a catcher/processor can act as a mothership) from Alternatives 4 and 5 (trawl CV management structure actions), and released the catcher/processor acting as mothership limitation portion for public review. The Council modified the purpose and need statement to reflect the bifurcation of the alternatives. They noted that bifurcating the catcher/processor action mothership limitations from the trawl CV management actions was necessary to control offshore processing activity to protect critical revenue streams and economic development in coastal Alaska communities, and trawl CV management alternatives do not capture the full scope of the issues currently faced by the BSAI cod participants. The Council also clarified that the control date identified in the initial review document continues to apply to the bifurcated analysis to limit catcher/processors acting as a mothership, and noted that staff should address the SSC comments to the extent practicable.

In a separate motion, the Council **initiated an action** to address the numerous concerns being encountered by the BSAI trawl catcher vessel Pacific cod fishery, which supersedes the previous trawl CV management actions (Alternatives 4 and 5) that were evaluated in the initial review document. The Council adopted a purpose and need statement, and requested staff prepare a scoping document that could be incorporated into a comprehensive BSAI Pacific cod trawl CV management program. The document should address:

- Allocation of BSAI Pacific cod quota share to BSAI LLP licenses.
- Establishing trawl catcher vessel cooperative(s) for Pacific cod.

- Recognition of historical AFA cooperative-based Pacific cod harvest arrangements since the implementation of pollock cooperatives under the AFA.
- Recognition of historical harvest of AFA Pacific cod sideboard exempt vessels.
- Recognition of historical harvest of non-AFA vessels.
- Protections for harvesters, processors, and communities.
- Use caps, transfer requirements, and other administrative requirements that apply to quota programs.
- Establishing sideboards to protect limited access GOA and BSAI fisheries.
- Consideration of management changes on catcher vessel crew.
- Implications for bycatch management, including halibut savings to benefit the health of the halibut resource.

The Council established a control date of February 7, 2019, that may be used as a reference date for any future management action to address trawl catcher vessel participation in the BSAI Pacific cod fishery.

Staff contact is Jon McCracken.

IFQ Medical & Beneficiary Transfer Provisions

The Council **reaffirmed** its preliminary preferred alternatives and options after reviewing the Public Review draft of proposed changes to the medical transfer and designated beneficiary transfer provisions of the halibut and sablefish IFQ programs. While this agenda item had originally been scheduled for final action at this meeting, the Federal government shutdown prevented the February Council meeting from being noticed in the Federal Register. As such, the Council made a preliminary final determination and will make a final recommendation at the April 2019 meeting.

Proposed changes to the medical transfer provision included redefining a certified medical professional that may sign a medical transfer form. The proposed definition is a broader definition than is currently in regulation and includes health care providers that are authorized to practice medicine within their specialty by the state or country in which he or she practices. The new definition also allows a health care provider outside of the U.S. to sign a medical transfer form as long as they are operating within the medical specialty they are licensed to perform by their country. A second change would limit the number of times a QS holder could use the medical transfer provision to 3 of the 7 most recent years for **any** medical condition that prevents the QS holder from fishing that calendar year. The current regulations limit medical transfers to 2 of the 5 most recent years for the **same** medical condition.



Two changes to the designated beneficiary transfer provision were also selected as part of the preliminary final determination. The first would add “estate” to the list of persons that could hold QS for up to three years

after the death of the QS holder. The second would define an immediate family member at 50 CFR 679 using the U.S. Office of Personnel Management definition.

Finally, the Council requested that staff provide additional information on the implementation and management issues that would be associated with selecting Alternative 2 (medical transfer), Element 2, Option 3. That option would allow QS holders to transfer varying (decreasing) percentages of their quota depending on how many years they had used the provision during the 7 most recent years. The Council also requested information on the additional costs that would be associated with implementing and managing that option.

Staff contact is Sam Cunningham.

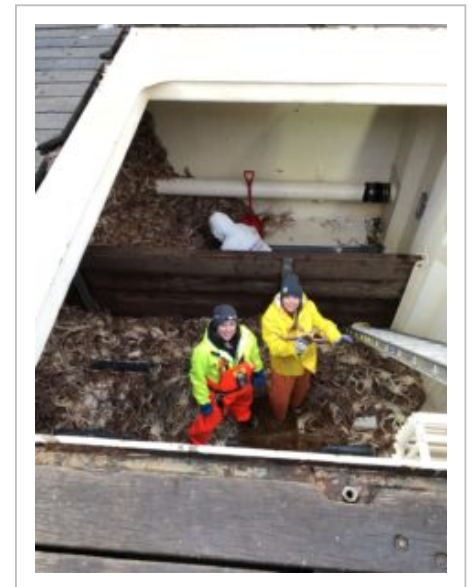
Partial Deliveries in BSAI Crab Rationalization Fisheries

At the February 2019 meeting, the Council initiated an analysis to allow vessels participating in the Bering Sea and Aleutian Islands (BSAI) Crab Rationalization (CR) Program to make partial deliveries of crab and then continue fishing before fully offloading all harvested crab. The action would be to remove Federal regulations that prohibit the continuation of a fishing trip subsequent to a partial offload of crab in the CR program.

The Council reviewed a discussion paper describing the proposal, which highlighted that flexibility afforded under this action would not be expected to be used often, due to the harvesters' economic incentives of limiting crab deadloss and conducting efficient deliveries. The intent to provide operational flexibility to vessels to conduct their business in the safest and economically efficient manner and when emergencies or special circumstances arise. The discussion paper highlighted some of the ways partial deliveries of crab mid-trip could complicate monitoring and accounting.

The Council chose to move this action forward by identifying the purpose and need and one action alternative (removing this prohibition) for consideration in an Initial Review Analysis. Staff will also consider an option which would require any tank started for offload to be fully offloaded, as well as further investigating the expected ability of the fleet to keep catch from different partial rounds of fishing in separate tanks.

Staff contact is Sarah Marrinan.



BSAI Crab eLogbooks

At the February 2019 meeting, the Council received a short discussion paper on the regulatory process required to allow crab harvesters to switch over to electronic logbooks (elogbooks). NMFS requires daily fishing logbooks (logbooks) for vessels 60 ft length overall or greater that participate in the Crab Rationalization Program fisheries in the Bering Sea and Aleutian Islands (BSAI). The logbooks that the crab vessel operators fill out are paper, as opposed to the eLogbooks used by the catcher processors participating in the hook-and-line Pacific cod fishery, American Fisheries Act (AFA) pollock, or Amendment 80 fisheries.



The Pacific Northwest Crab Industry Advisory Committee (PNCIAC) had requested the Council and NMFS develop and authorize eLogbooks for the BSAI king, Tanner and snow crab fisheries. While much of this work was incomplete due to the government shutdown, a short discussion paper described the reasons for this request, the authority for logbooks, the use of the logbook data in the BSAI crab fisheries, and a preliminary discussion on the costs and benefits of developing and implementing this eLogbook system.

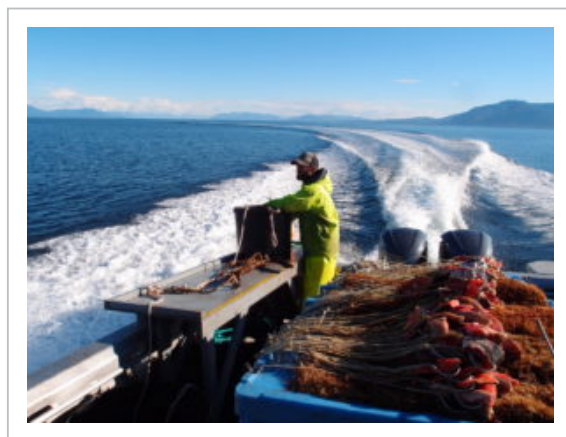
After a presentation, testimony and discussion, the Council directed staff to conduct a cost analysis examining the costs for Pacific States Marine Fisheries Commission to develop and implement BSAI crab eLogbooks, to replace the paper logbooks currently used in the Crab Rationalization Program. This additional information is intended to help the crab industry understand if a more efficient logbook system would be worth the costs of the development, implementation, and support.

Staff contact is Sarah Marrinan.

Halibut ABM Stakeholder Committee Report

The Council received a report from the Halibut abundance-based management (ABM) Stakeholder Committee and revised alternatives for the forthcoming halibut ABM PSC limit analysis.

The Committee met on February 4th to review scenarios submitted by stakeholders for consideration in the forthcoming halibut ABM PSC limit analysis. There was considerable discussion at the Committee and with the Council regarding scenarios that proposed Elements and options outside the range of the current alternative set. The Council eventually moved to include all of the concepts from the 5 submitted stakeholder proposals for analytical review, and modified the alternatives by including additional Elements and options as necessary. The Council requested that the analysis include these five scenarios, as well as additional ones developed by staff for contrast. The Council's motion with the revised set of



Caption here

Alternatives for analysis is posted on the [Council's February agenda](#).

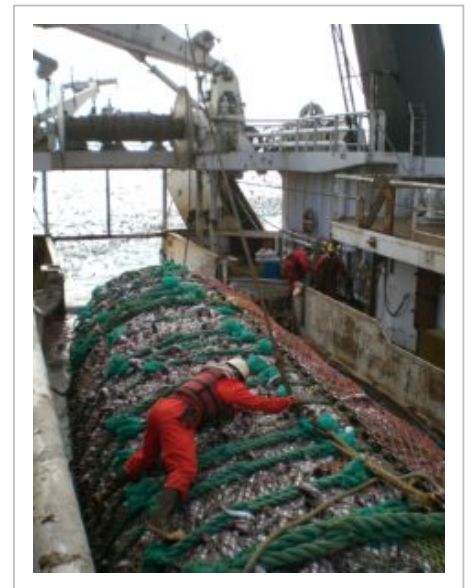
The Committee also discussed a process for providing analysts feedback on some measurable objectives and associated performance metrics for the analysis. Stakeholders should provide feedback to analysts on the performance metrics by Wednesday, February 20th.

The BSAI halibut ABM PSC analysis is scheduled for initial review in October 2019. An update to the SSC in April will contain the following: progress, assumptions and proposed outputs from the halibut operating model for use in evaluating trade-offs among alternatives; and a full list of the recommended scenarios for the analysis. Staff contact is Diana Stram.

Groundfish Management Objectives

The Council conducted a comprehensive review of the Programmatic Groundfish Management Policy, highlighting Council activities in 2018 that were relevant to priorities and objectives established in the Policy. The Management Policy was added to the Groundfish FMPs in 2004 through a programmatic SEIS and established the Council's ongoing vision for management of these fisheries within an ecosystem-based management perspective.

Looking back on its accomplishments in 2018, the Council recognized the reclassification of squid to the ecosystem component category, regular USCG and NIOSH reports, specification of ABC below maxABC, a wide range of bycatch reduction measures, protected species reports, the 5-year EFH review, cooperative reports, community outreach, and improvements to the observer program, among many other issues, to be consistent with priorities and objectives in the policy. It was noted that Council actions that result in regulatory or FMP amendments usually take several Council meetings from the point of initiation to final action, and Council meeting agendas include many non-action items that parallel or directly fulfill the Policy. Additionally, a number of major Council initiatives outside of the Groundfish FMPs, such as the Arctic FMP and the AI and BS FEPs, both fulfill and improve on the EBFM approach described in the Policy.



The Council determined that the policy continues to appropriately characterize management priorities and objectives and chose not to initiate any FMP amendments to modify the policy. For future reviews, the Council will continue to monitor Council actions relative to policy objectives through the programmatic workplan, which is provided at every Council meeting. Comprehensive reviews of the policy will be done on a three-year cycle in order to align the reviews with the multi-year lifespan of major Council actions.

Staff contact is Jim Armstrong.

Staff Tasking

The Council discussed the relative priority and scheduling of new and previously tasked projects, including changes to the April and June agendas resulting from the Federal government shutdown and postponement of items from the February 2019 meeting (see revised [3 meeting outlook](#)). The Council also discussed the following issues:

- The Council tasked staff with developing a discussion paper to consider some form of rationalization or cooperative management structure for the Bering Sea Pacific cod pot catcher vessel fishery greater than or equal to 60 ft LOA. The Council also clarified that while tasked, this paper should not be prioritized over existing tasking.
- The State of Alaska also noticed stakeholders that it will be developing State positions on management structure in the BSAI and GOA fisheries, and encouraged stakeholders to contact ADFG with specific questions, concerns, or requests.

The Council also directed staff to develop and send several letters:

- A Council comment letter on proposed regulations governing Council member recusal.
- A follow-up Council comment letter to Senator Sullivan on MSA reauthorization.
- A letter to NMFS and the State Department indicating the Council's support for the Central Arctic Ocean Agreement, and Council interest in staying engaged with the development of exploratory fishing efforts whenever that should occur.
- A letter to the IPHC requesting additional information on the January 2019 agreement to account for under 26 inch (U26) halibut beginning in 2020, what that will entail and how it will involve NMFS and the Council.

Council comments on committees:

- The Council's Finance Committee approved the Executive Director's proposed budget for the upcoming 5-year grant proposal.
- The Council announced the following upcoming committee agendas:
 - Ecosystem Committee: meet in April to review: 1) a briefing on the Alaska Ocean Acidification Network, 2) an update on Bering Sea FEP planning, 3) habitat and EFH updates, 4) northern fur seal research updates from NMFS and co-managers, if available, and 5) a workplan for the Ecosystem Committee.
 - Community Engagement Committee: meet on March 20th for an inaugural meeting to discuss how the committee will organize and operate.
 - Enforcement Committee: meet in April to review: 1) sablefish discards discussion paper, and 2) review the Trawl Electronic Monitoring Committee's cooperative research plan for 2019.
 - IFQ Committee: meet in April primarily to review: 1) sablefish discards discussion paper, 2) CQE in 3A initial review, and 3) IFQ eligibility criteria discussion paper.

- The Council is planning an evening workshop in April to evaluate whale depredation in sablefish fisheries, and opportunities for cooperative research.
- The Council issued a [call for nominations](#) for pot fishery and active observer representation on the Fishery Monitoring Advisory Committee.
- The Council appointed new members to three Committees.

Appointments to Committees:

- The Council Chair appointed Forrest Braden to the [Charter Halibut Management Committee](#).
- The Council Chair appointed Jeff Berger to the [Cook Inlet Salmon Committee](#).
- The Council Chair appointed Mellisa Heflin to the [Community Engagement Committee](#).

A full list of Council committee membership can be found [here](#).

Saltonstall-Kennedy Grant Program

The Council received an overview of the S-K Grant Program, its process, and recent program changes, and during the meeting there was an evening session to get feedback from fishing community constituents. Each year, the S-K Grant Program awards approximately \$10 million to fisheries research and development projects (up to \$300,000 per project). These projects are selected based on criteria used to determine how well they address the needs of fishing communities, demonstrate direct benefits to U.S. fishing industries (including both commercial and recreational fisheries), and involve fishing community participation. The Program is currently undertaking efforts to improve its communications and how the results found by the awarded S-K projects are being disseminated with and utilized by the fishing industry. If you were unable to attend the presentations or the feedback session and have questions or would like to provide feedback, please email the NOAA Fisheries S-K National Program Manager, Cliff Cosgrove at clifford.cosgrove@noaa.gov.

SSC Workshop

The Council's SSC held a workshop focused on the current status of coupled biophysical models and their utility in informing fishery management in the eastern Bering Sea and the GOA. Due to the government shut-down, the workshop primarily focused on physics, nutrient, and plankton models, although some instances were noted when models were utilized to inform fishery management.

The presentations and background material for the workshop is posted [online](#), and the SSC [minutes](#) provide a detailed description of the workshop and recommendations. The SSC noted substantial improvements to the models since the SSC's last review in 2014, and noted that this research represents a pathway to incorporate ecosystem considerations into stock assessments and other fishery research.

Upcoming Meetings

Council Meeting

Teleconference only: March 8, 9am-1pm Recommend harvest specifications for Norton Sound Red King Crab. (646) 749-3122, access code: 447-247-853

Committees and Plan Teams

- Scallop Plan Team: February 20, Kodiak, AK
- Trawl EM Committee meeting: March 4-5, teleconference and tentatively at AFSC, Seattle, WA
- Cook Inlet Salmon Committee: March 6 and April 2, Anchorage, AK
- Community Engagement Committee: March 20, Anchorage, AK
- Fishery Monitoring Advisory Committee subgroup: March 27, teleconference
- IFQ Committee: April 1, Anchorage, AK
- Ecosystem Committee: April 1, Anchorage, AK
- Fishery Monitoring Advisory Committee: April 2, Anchorage, AK
- Enforcement Committee: April 2, Anchorage, AK
- Salmon bycatch genetics workshop: April 15-16, AFSC, Seattle, WA
- Crab Plan Team – April 29 – May 3, Anchorage, AK
- Fishery Monitoring Advisory Committee – May 20-21 (tentative), AFSC, Seattle, WA

Other upcoming meetings

- [Lowell Wakefield Fisheries Symposium](#) on Cooperative Research, May 7-10, Anchorage, AK

Whale Depredation Workshop

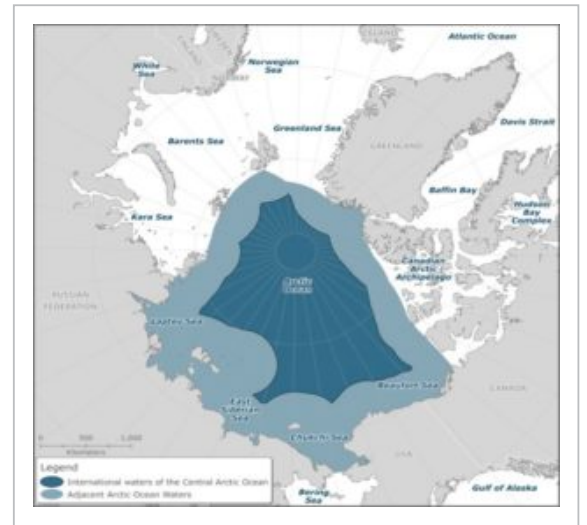
The Council has scheduled an evening session on Monday, April 1st during the April Council meeting, to convene fishery participants and stock assessment scientists around the issue of whale depredation on sablefish. Depredation of sablefish from hook-and-line gear by sperm and killer whales occurs throughout Alaska and affects both fishermen's returns and the precision of stock assessments. This workshop will provide an opportunity for fishery participants to interact with stock assessment scientists, understanding how depredation is accounted for in the assessment and scoping cooperative research efforts that could enhance estimates in a scientific and actionable manner. Staff contact is Sam Cunningham.

Central Arctic Ocean Agreement

The Council received a presentation from Jean-Pierre Plé (NFS Office of International Affairs and Seafood Inspection) and Candace Nachman (NMFS Office of Policy) on development of an international agreement to prevent the start of commercial fishing in the Central Arctic Ocean (CAO) for at least 16 years while scientists study the effects of climate change on the CAO and its ability to sustain commercial fisheries. The agreement was signed by 10 participants at a meeting in Greenland in 2018, and is designed to prevent unregulated

fishing in the high-seas portion of the CAO as part of a long-term strategy to safeguard the health of the CAO ecosystem and promote the sustainable use of fish stocks.

Dr. Plé provided an overview of the agreement and the expected schedule for the U.S. to ratify the agreement. Ratification can occur by executive action and does not require advice and consent of the Senate. A meeting of the signatories to the agreement is being hosted by Canada in May 2019, additional information about ratification and implementation of the agreement, as well as the text of the agreement, will be available once the agreement is ratified by all participant nations. He extended to the Council the opportunity to comment on exploratory fisheries strategies for the CAO, following on from a Council discussion paper in February 2018 wherein exploratory fishing protocols for various RFMOs and international agreements were summarized.



Map of Central Arctic Ocean

The Council, during staff tasking, directed the Executive Director to prepare a letter expressing the Council’s appreciation for the presentation and signaling the Council’s interest in remaining informed of the development of the agreement and requirements for exploratory fishing in the agreement area. Staff contact is Steve MacLean.

Research Priorities

The Council’s Scientific and Statistical Committee discussed the current process for review and approval of five-year research priorities and the potential for further improvements. In recognition that the MSA mandate on five-year research priorities does not require annual review as the Council has previously done, the SSC recommended that comprehensive review of research priorities be conducted three years. The review would include continuing to develop a “top ten” list of research priorities that are highlighted in order to reflect their relevance to existing Council needs, as well as a thorough vetting of critical ongoing monitoring needs and longer-term strategic research needs. The SSC recognized that the comprehensive review would likely require significant time on the SSC agenda, and so while it could start the review cycle in June 2019, this timing might also need to be adjusted depending on other issues on the SSC’s agenda.