



North Pacific Fishery Management Council

Simon Kinneen, Chair | David Witherell, Executive Director
1007 W. 3rd Avenue, Suite 400, Anchorage, AK 99501
Phone 907-271-2809 | www.npfmc.org

Meeting Summary

258th Plenary Session
North Pacific Fishery Management Council
February 7-10, 2022
Webconference – Adobe Connect

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Attachments

- 1) Time Log
- 2) Newsletter

The time log is included as a reference attachment for names, dates and times of each agenda item, and the newsletter is included to provide details of the agenda items and the meeting as a whole. All documents and information related to the meeting are accessible online at:

<https://meetings.npfmc.org/Meeting/Details/2753>

The North Pacific Fishery Management Council met February 7-10, 2022 via adobe connect in a virtual conference. The following Council members, Council staff, SSC, and AP members attended the meetings.

Council Members

Doug Mecum/Glenn Merrill
National Marine Fisheries Service

Rachel Baker/Karla Bush (for Doug Vincent-Lang)
Alaska Department Fish and Game

Cora Campbell
Appointed

Kenny Down
Appointed

Peter Fasbender (for Greg Siekaniec)
US Fish & Wildlife Service

Dave Hanson
Pacific States Marine Fisheries Commission

John Jensen
Appointed

Nicole Kimball
Appointed

Simon Kinneen, **Chair**
Appointed

Steve Marx (for Curt Melcher)
Oregon Department of Fish & Wildlife

David Moore
U.S. Department of State

RADM Nathan Moore/CAPT Brennell
United States Coast Guard

Andy Mezirow
Appointed

Bill Tweit (for Kelly Susewind), **Vice Chair**
Washington Department Fish & Wildlife

Anne Vanderhoeven
Appointed

Council Staff

Cleaver, Sara
Cunningham, Sam
Davis, Maria
Evans, Diana (DD)
Fey, Mike (PSMFC)
Gleason, Shannon

Haapala, Kate
Henry, Anna
Hillary, Kaylah
La Belle, Sarah
Marrinan, Sarah
McCracken, Jon

Rheinsmith, Sarah
Schmidt, Nicole
Stram, Diana
Witherell, Dave (ED)

Scientific and Statistical Committee

The SSC met January 31 – February 4, 2022, via adobe connect in a virtual conference. The following members were present for all or part of the meetings.

Sherri Dressel, Co-Chair
Alaska Dept. of Fish and Game

Kathryn Meyer
Washington Dept. of Fish and Wildlife

Curry Cunningham
University of Alaska Fairbanks

Dana Hanselman
NOAA Fisheries—AFSC

Andrew Munro
Alaska Dept. of Fish and Game

Kailin Kroetz
Arizona State University

Franz Mueter, Co-Chair
University of Alaska Fairbanks

Ian Stewart
Intl. Pacific Halibut Commission

Mike Downs
Wislow Research

Brad Harris
Alaska Pacific University

Chris Anderson
University of Washington

Patrick Sullivan
Cornell University

Alison Whitman, Vice Chair
Oregon Dept. of Fish and Wildlife

Amy Bishop
Alaska Sea Life Center

Jason Gasper
NOAA Fisheries – Alaska Region

George Hunt
University of Washington

Chris Siddon
ADF&G

Robert Foy
Alaska Fishery Science Center

Advisory Panel

The Advisory Panel met February 1-3, 2022, via adobe connect in a virtual conference. The following members were present for all or part of the meetings (absent members are ~~stricken~~):

Briggie, Tamara
Christiansen, Ruth (Co-Vice Chair)
Drobnica, Angel (Chair)
Gudmundsson, Gretar
Johnson, Jim
Johnson, Mellisa

Kauffman, Jeff
Kavanaugh, Julie
Mann, Heather
Mitchell, Lauren
O'Donnell, Paddy
O'Neil, Megan

Ritchie, Brian
~~Upton, Matt~~ (Co-Vice Chair)
Wilkins, Paul
Wilt, Sinclair
~~Zagorski, Suzie~~

A1 Call Meeting to Order

The Council approved the agenda without objection.

B Reports

The following reports were provided in writing and discussed. In addition, Jamie Goen (ABSC), Kyle Antonelis (NRC), and Scott Goodman (BSFRF) gave an update on the BREP Grant Project under the Executive Director's Report. Under the NMFS Management Report, Dr. Robert Foy gave a presentation on the AFSC State of the Science Center report. Under the USCG report, LCDR Jed Raskie and LCDR John Suckow gave presentations on Operation North Pacific and the Foreign Military Activity in the Arctic. Under the IPHC agenda item, Dr. David Wilson, Dr. Basia Hutniczak, and Dr. Ian Stewart gave a presentation on the Outcomes of the 98th Session of the IPHC Annual Meeting (AMO98).

B1 Executive Director's Report – David Witherell

- BREP Grant Project Update - Jamie Goen, Kyle Antonelis, Scott Goodman

B2 NMFS Management Report – Doug Mecum

- B2 AFSC State of the Science Center report – Dr. Robert Foy

B3 NOAA GC Report – Molly Watson and Demian Schane

B4 ADFG Report – Karla Bush and Kendall Henry

B5 USCG Report – CAPT Jason Brennell and LCDR Jedediah Raskie

- B5 USCG Arctic Activity – LCDR Jed Raskie
- B5 USCG Operation NPG – LCDR John Suckow

B6 USFWS Report – Peter Fasbender

B7 IPHC Report – Dr. David Wilson, Dr. Basia Hutniczak and Dr. Ian Stewart

B9 SSC Report – Dr. Sherri Dressel (SSC Co-Chair)

B10 AP Report – Ruth Christiansen (AP Co-Vice Chair)

C1 Economic Data Report (EDR) amendments

Council Staff: Sarah Marrinan

Other Presenters: Scott Miller (NMFS)

Action Required:

1. Review the Final Analysis for EDR Amendments
2. Select a preferred alternative

Summary: *The Council will consider changes to a program that requires participants in certain fisheries to report things like fuel prices, crew pay, and license or lease costs. The Council may decide to discontinue the program if the amount of time and effort it takes to collect the information is more than the benefits to the program.*

After staff presentations and public comment, the following actions were taken:

Ms. Kimball made the following motion which was seconded by Ms. Vanderhoeven:

The Council recommends the following final preferred alternatives:

Alternative 2: Make revisions, where needed, in the EDR sections of the crab or groundfish FMPs and in the EDR regulations:

Option 1: Remove requirements for third party data verification audits under the existing programs and reduce burdens associated with this process.

Option 2: Revise requirements for aggregation of data across submitters and blind formatting in the crab data collection program to make those data aggregation and confidentiality protections comparable to the requirements under other data collection programs.

Alternative 3, Option 1: Remove EDR requirements for GOA Trawl.

The Council reiterates its April 2021 request for AFSC staff to implement changes to the EDR identified in the stakeholder workshops, March 2021 SSPT report, and/or others in consultation with stakeholders, with the expectation that changes should take effect prior to the 2023 data submissions. The Council requests an update of those changes in a future AFSC/NMFS management report.

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

(Add the following language in the last paragraph **in bold**)

The Council reiterates its April 2021 request for AFSC staff to implement changes to the EDR identified in the stakeholder workshops, March 2021 SSPT report, and/or others in consultation with stakeholders, with the expectation that changes should take effect prior to the 2023 data submissions. The Council requests an update of those changes in a future AFSC/NMFS management report. **That update should include a comprehensive listing of the recommended changes from the workshops, SSPT report and consultations, and contain the rationale for the treatment of each of the recommended changes, describing whether the EDRs were modified to incorporate them or if they were not implemented.**

VOTE ON AMENDMENT: Amendment passed with no objection on February 8, 2022, at 8:18 a.m.

Mr. Tweit made the following deeming amendment which was seconded by Ms. Kimball:

The Council deems proposed regulations that clearly and directly flow from the provisions of this motion to be necessary and appropriate in accordance with section 303(c).

The Council authorizes the Executive Director and the Chairman to review the draft proposed regulations when provided by NMFS to ensure that the proposed regulations to be submitted to the Secretary under section 303(c) are consistent with these instructions.

VOTE ON AMENDMENT: Amendment passed with no objection on February 8, 2022, at 8:23 a.m.

VOTE ON AMENDED MAIN MOTION: Motion passed unanimously on February 8, 2022, at 8:35 a.m.

D1 Allocation Review of Halibut Catch Share Plan for Areas 2C/3A

Council Staff: Sarah Marrinan

Other Presenters: Kurt Iverson (NMFS) and Mike Fey (AKFIN)

Action Required:

1. Review the Catch Sharing Plan Allocation Review
2. Determine if further action is warranted

Summary: *Annually, the Catch Sharing Plan, (CSP) divides up the amount of halibut in area 2C and 3A available to the charter and commercial fisheries. The Council will review a document that describes elements of the CSP and decide if the program and the way the halibut is divided among the fisheries, is working the way it is supposed to.*

After staff presentations and public comment, the following actions were taken:

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

The Council accepts the Allocation Review of the Halibut Catch Charing Plan for Area 2C/3A allocation review as complete and final with the addition of information to the extent practicable recommended by the SSC.

VOTE ON MOTION: Motion passed unanimously on February 9, 2022, at 9:10 a.m.

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

The Council adopts the following Purpose and Need and set of alternatives for Initial Review.

The Council is concerned about the impacts of charter management measures in the Halibut Catch Sharing Plan on the charter sector, particularly at times of lower abundance. The measures imposed on the halibut charter fleet have reduced demand for charter trips and the socioeconomic well-being of some charter operators and coastal communities. The CSP did not anticipate the current and continued low halibut abundance levels for the foreseeable future and recent changes in catch limits across management areas. These changes have increased uncertainty related to annual allocations for the charter sector, contrary to the goals of the halibut catch sharing plan.

The preferred mechanism for dealing with allocations in this Catch Sharing Plan is compensated reallocation via the Recreational Quota Entity Without an operational, RQE funding mechanism the Council intends to review the catch sharing plan allocations as a possible way to alleviate this problem.

Alternatives

Alternative 1: Status quo

Alternative 2: Revise the halibut catch sharing plan sector allocations.

Option 1: In Area 2C, revise the charter allocation as follows:

- In Tier 1: from 0 to 4,999,999 lb, increase the charter allocation by (sub option 1% to 5%) of the annual combined catch limit
- In Tier 2: Adjust the allocation and length of the stair-step according to percentage shifts in Tiers 1 and 3

- In Tier 3: Decrease the charter allocation by (sub option 1% to 3%) of the annual combined catch limit

Option 2: In Area 3A, revise the charter allocation as follows:

- In Tier 1: From 0 to 9,999,999 lb, increase the charter allocation by (sub option 1% to 5%) of the annual combined catch limit
- In Tier 2: Adjust the allocation and length of the stair-step according to percentage shifts in Tiers 1 and 3
- In Tier 3: Decrease the charter allocation by (sub option 1% to 3%) of the annual combined catch limit
- In Tier 4: Adjust the length of the stair-step according to percentage shifts in Tier 3 at combined catch limits of up to 25 Mlb: allocation to the charter sector remains at 3.5 Mlb
- Tier 5 Remains the same

The analysis of both options should maintain the current approach for the transition between tiers to ensure stable allocations for the charter sector (i.e., establishing a fixed charter allocation to avoid a “cliff” drop in charter allocations).

Current halibut CSP allocations:

Table 7 Area 2C CSP allocations to the charter and commercial halibut fisheries relative to the annual Combined Catch Limit (CCL)

Area 2C annual CCL for halibut in net lb.	Charter halibut fishery CSP allocation (% of annual CCL or net lb.)	Commercial halibut fishery CSP allocation (% of annual CCL or net lb.)
0 to 4,999,999	18.30%	81.70%
5,000,000 to 5,755,000	915,000 lb.	Area 2C CCL minus 915,000 lb.
5,755,001 and up	15.90%	84.10%

Table 9 Area 3A CSP allocations to the charter and commercial halibut fisheries relative to the annual Combined Catch Limit (CCL)

Area 3A annual CCL for halibut in net lb.	Charter halibut fishery CSP allocation (% of annual CCL or net lb.)	Commercial halibut fishery CSP allocation (% of annual CCL or net lb.)
0 to 9,999,999	18.90%	81.10%
10,000,000 to 10,800,000	1,890,000 lb.	Area 3A CCL minus 1,890,000 lb.
10,800,001 to 20,000,000	17.50%	82.50%
20,000,001 to 25,000,000	3,500,000 lb.	Area 3A CCL minus 3,500,000 lb.
25,000,001 and up	14.00%	86.00%

Example of alternative halibut CSP allocations – increase the charter allocation in step 1 by 3% of CCL, decrease the charter allocation in step 3 by 1% of CCL:

For Area 2C:

Area 2C annual CCL for halibut in net lb.	Charter halibut fishery CSP allocation (% of annual CCL or net lb.)	Commercial halibut fishery CSP allocation (% of annual CCL or net lb.)
0 to 4,999,999	21.3%	78.7%
5,000,000 to 7,148,000	1,065,000 lb.	2C CCL minus 1,065,000 lb.
7,148,001 and up	14.9%	85.1%

For Area 3A:

Area 3A annual CCL for halibut in net lb.	Charter halibut fishery CSP allocation (% of annual CCL or net lb.)	Commercial halibut fishery CSP allocation (% of annual CCL or net lb.)
0 to 9,999,999	21.9%	78.1%
10,000,000 to 13,273,000	2,190,000 lb.	3A CCL minus 2,190,000 lb.
13,273,001 to 21,212,000	16.5%	83.5%
21,212,001 to 25,000,000	3,500,000	3A CCL minus 3,500,000 lb.
25,000,001 and up	14.0%	86.0%

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

(Add the following language to the end of the main motion)

The Council will schedule review of these CSP allocations and consider alternatives for altering these allocations once an RQE holds more than (suboptions 0.5%, 0.75% and 1%) of the quota share allocations in either Area 2C or 3A. This review would be in addition to the regularly scheduled review of the CSP.

The Council requests that this analysis explore approaches for transitioning changes the Council may make as a result of this action in allocations from the current CSP levels to compensated reallocations by the RQE.

Ms. Kimball made the following substitute amendment which was seconded by Mr. Jensen:

(add the following language to the end of the purpose and need statement – **in bold**)

The preferred mechanism for dealing with allocations in this Catch Sharing Plan is compensated reallocation via the Recreational Quota Entity. Without an operational RQE funding mechanism the Council intends to review the catch sharing plan allocations as a possible way to alleviate this problem, **while balancing impacts to the commercial sector and dependent communities. Should the RQE become authorized by Congress and the Council take final action on the RQE funding mechanism, the Council intends to table or refine this action.**

Mr. Merrill made the following amendment to the substitute amendment which was seconded by Mr. Tweit:

(add the following language in red and delete the following language in strikethrough)

The preferred mechanism for dealing with allocations in this Catch Sharing Plan is compensated reallocation via the Recreational Quota Entity. Without an operational RQE funding mechanism the Council intends to review the catch sharing plan allocations as a possible way to alleviate this problem, **while balancing impacts to the commercial sector and dependent communities. Should the RQE fee funding mechanism become law, become authorized by Congress and the Council take final action on the RQE funding mechanism, the Council intends to table or refine this action.**

VOTE ON AMENDMENT TO SUBSTITUTE AMENDMENT: Amendment passed unanimously on February 9, 2022, at 10:44 a.m.

VOTE ON SUBSTITUTE AMENDMENT: Substitute amendment passed unanimously on February 9, 2022, at 10:49 a.m.

Ms. Campbell made the following amendment which was seconded by Mr. Jensen:

(Under Alternative 2, strike Option 1 in its entirety)

Alternative 2: Revise the halibut catch sharing plan sector allocations.

Option 1: In Area 2C, revise the charter allocation as follows:

- In Tier 1: from 0 to 4,999,999 lb, increase the charter allocation by ~~(sub option 1% to 5%)~~ of the annual combined catch limit
- In Tier 2: Adjust the allocation and length of the stair step according to percentage shifts in Tiers 1 and 3
- In Tier 3: Decrease the charter allocation by ~~(sub option 1% to 3%)~~ of the annual combined catch limit

VOTE ON AMENDMENT: Amendment failed 4/7 (Ms. Baker, Ms. Kimball, Mr. Merrill, Mr. Mezirow, Mr. Tweit, Ms. Vanderhoeven, Mr. Kinneen voting in opposition) on February 9, 2022, at 11:07 a.m.

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

(Add the following language to the end of the main motion)

The analysis should explore methods of implementing charter measures for more than one year through either the existing Council/IPHC process or through domestic regulations.

VOTE ON AMENDMENT: Amendment passed with no objection on February 9, 2022, at 11:17 a.m.

VOTE ON AMENDED MAIN MOTION: Motion passed 8/3 (Ms. Campbell, Mr. Down, and Mr. Jensen voting in opposition) on February 9, 2022, at 11:39 a.m.

C2 BSAI Crab – Harvest Specs/SAFE report for NSRKC, CPT Report

Council Staff: Dr. Diana Stram and Sarah Rheinsmith
Other Presenters: Katie Palof (ADFG), Dr. Mike Litzow (AFSC)

Action Required: 1. Norton Sound Red King Crab – OFL and ABC for 2022
2. Review Crab Plan Team Report

Summary: *A team of technical experts (the Crab Plan Team) met in January to discuss the status and appropriate harvest level for Norton Sound red king crab as well as to review scientific information on Alaska crab stocks. The Council’s Scientific and Statistical Committee and the Council will review the report and recommendations of the Plan Team and will set harvest limits based on that information.*

After staff presentations and public comment, the following actions were taken:

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

The Council accepts the Norton Sound red king crab SAFE report and adopts the SSC’s recommended total catch OFL of 0.30 thousand metric tons (0.67 million pounds) and ABC of 0.18 thousand metric tons (0.40 million pounds) for Norton Sound red king crab.

VOTE ON MOTION: Motion passed unanimously on February 9, 2022, at 3:27 p.m.

C3 Snow Crab Rebuilding Plan

Council Staff: Jon McCracken and Dr. Diana Stram

Action Required: Review progress report on snow crab rebuilding

Summary: *Snow crab was reported overfished in October 2021, and by law, a rebuilding plan must be in place within two years. The Crab Plan Team met in January and will meet in May and are making recommendations and estimating time frames for rebuilding the stock. At this meeting, the Council will hear an update.*

No action was taken on this agenda item.

D2 Greenland Turbot with longline pots

Council Staff: Sam Cunningham
Other Presenters: Dr. Kelly Cates (NMFS AKRO SF)

Action Required: 1. Review discussion paper on allowing longline pot gear in the Bering Sea Greenland turbot directed fishery
2. Consider whether to initiate analysis of alternatives with a purpose and need statement or request additional information prior to defining alternatives.

Summary: *The Council will review a paper that considers the authorization of longline pot gear for fishing Greenland turbot in the Bering Sea. Greenland turbot is currently fished with trawl and hook-and-line gear; killer whales are known to take turbot catch from hook-and-line gear.*

After staff presentations and public comment, the following action was taken:

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

The Council requests staff to initiate an initial review analysis to authorize the use of longline pots in the directed BS fixed gear Greenland turbot fishery incorporating the following purpose and need statement and alternatives.

Purpose and Need

Whale depredation is precluding directed fishing for Greenland turbot by commercial hook-and-line (HAL) gear vessels in the Bering Sea. Participation in this fishery has been a significant source of income for a number of HAL CP vessels that primarily target Pacific cod. The importance of turbot fishing increased for these vessels as Pacific cod TACs in the Bering Sea saw major declines between 2012 and 2021. Although single pot gear is currently authorized for Greenland turbot, single pots have not been deployed because of their inefficiency in the depth and location where the fishery occurs. A regulatory amendment that would allow vessels to use longline pots when fishing for Greenland turbot would likely resolve the depredation problem and allow this fishery to resume. Other benefits of reduced whale depredation on Greenland turbot could include, improved catch accounting for managers, and data quality for the Greenland turbot stock assessment.

Alternatives

Alternative 1. No action (longline pot gear is not authorized for Greenland turbot in the Bering Sea).

Alternative 2. Authorizes the use of pot longline gear when directed fishing for Greenland turbot in the Bering Sea subarea.

Option 1. Exemption from the 9-inch maximum tunnel opening restriction. (The 9-inch maximum tunnel opening requirement does not apply to longline pots used to directed fish for Greenland turbot in the BS subarea.

VOTE ON MOTION: Motion passed unanimously on February 10, 2022, at 9:16 a.m.

D3 Groundfish Management Policy

Council Staff: Diana Evans

Action Required:

1. Review the Programmatic Groundfish Management Policy
2. Review Council actions relative to the Policy
3. Consider whether modifications to the Management Objectives are called for (noting that any change requires and FMP amendment)
4. Consider whether additional Council actions to better fulfill the Management Policy are required.

Summary: *Every three years, the Council reviews management programs in the Bering Sea and Gulf of Alaska to make sure the goals and objectives – like ‘preserving the food web’ and ‘promoting sustainable fisheries and communities’ - are being met.*

No action was taken on this agenda item.

E1 Staff Tasking

Council Staff: David Witherell and Diana Evans

Action Required:

1. Review Committees and Plan Teams
2. Provide direction on tasking priorities and scheduling

Summary: *The Council will listen to public testimony about existing and new management measures that the public may be interested in and will provide feedback to staff and the Council Chair about how to prioritize staff work on existing and new projects.*

The Council will also review its committee membership, identify agendas for any upcoming committee meetings, and discuss plans for returning to in-person meetings.

After staff presentations and public comment, the following actions were taken:

E1 EDR

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

The Council tasks Council staff, with support from AKFIN staff, to develop a discussion paper identifying a few (e.g., 2-4) economic data components, including crew data, that 1) are not currently collected across all sectors but that could improve FMP and regulatory impact analyses if collected from all sectors, and/or 2) should continue to be collected from catch share programs and could inform potential revisions to current EDR requirements. The paper should also evaluate the appropriate data collection mechanism and frequency, which could include surveys, annual reports, or other tools that can collect consistent, useable data in a clear format that minimizes submittal burden and collection cost.

VOTE ON MOTION: Motion passed unanimously on February 10, 2022, at 3:52 p.m.

E1 GOA Rockfish

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

The Council initiates analysis to modify the Central Gulf of Alaska Rockfish Program and adopts the following purpose and need statement.

Purpose and Need

Since 2007, the Central Gulf of Alaska Rockfish Pilot Program and final Rockfish Program have improved conservation, fish quality, and stability for participants. Program reviews have shown increased vessel accountability, controlled fleet capacity, improved safety, and reduced bycatch. Given changes in the fishery since implementation, several changes to the program regulations would increase flexibility and efficiency, improve functionality, and better ensure the rockfish TACs are fully harvested and landed in Kodiak as intended.

Alternatives

Alternative 1: Status Quo

Alternative 2: Change the season start date and modify the harvesting, processing and cooperative holding caps (options are not mutually exclusive).

Option 1: Change the Rockfish Program season start date from May 1 to April 1.

Option 2: Eliminate the CV cooperative holding cap (30% QS assigned to CV sector).

Option 3: Increase the processing cap to 35 – 40% of the CV quota share pool for sablefish, cod and/or primary rockfish.

Option 4: Revise the vessel aggregated rockfish (POP, northern rockfish and dusky rockfish) harvesting cap by capping only POP harvests at 8% of the CV POP quota share pool.

VOTE ON MOTION: Motion passed unanimously on February 10, 2022, at 4:05 p.m.

E1 Pot Gear Discussion Paper

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

The Council is currently examining changes to pot gear regulations for the IFQ and Greenland turbot fisheries that could increase operational efficiency. An increasing number of vessels are using new pot gear designs (i.e., slinky pots). Existing regulations may limit potential innovations in pot gear design that improve harvest efficiency and may minimize bycatch of non-target species. The Council requests staff provide a discussion paper that explores potential regulatory changes to simplify pot gear regulations, and allow for flexibility to use pots in the BSAI and GOA groundfish fisheries. Staff should consider gear

configuration requirements for biodegradable panels, tunnel opening sizes, and the use of longline and single pot gear.

Ms. Vanderhoeven made the following amendment which was seconded by Mr. Tweit:
(add the following language **in bold**)

The Council is currently examining changes to pot gear regulations for the IFQ and Greenland turbot fisheries that could increase operational efficiency. An increasing number of vessels are using new pot gear designs (i.e., slinky pots). Existing regulations may limit potential innovations in pot gear design that improve harvest efficiency and may minimize bycatch of non-target species. The Council requests staff provide a discussion paper that explores potential regulatory changes to simplify pot gear regulations, and allow for flexibility to use pots in the BSAI and GOA groundfish fisheries. Staff should consider gear configuration requirements for biodegradable panels, **escape mechanisms**, tunnel opening sizes, and the use of longline and single pot gear.

VOTE ON AMENDMENT: Amendment passed unanimously on February 10, 2022, at 4:18 p.m.

VOTE ON AMENDED MAIN MOTION: Motion passed unanimously on February 10, 2022, at 4:20 p.m.

E1 EFH

Ms. Vanderhoeven made the following motion which was seconded by Mr. Tweit:

The Council directs the EFH team to address the SSC recommendations from this meeting, with respect to the development of the EFH 5-year review summary report that is being prepared for the Council. The Council particularly emphasizes the recommendations made by the SSC to address stock author concerns for species and life stage combinations that are poorly represented by the survey data, and to clearly characterize the nature of the concerns and data limitations if they cannot be addressed prior to the upcoming review. The Council notes the SSC's support for using the current version of the fishing effects model to evaluate fishing impacts, however, in cases where the species distribution model (SDM)-derived EFH definitions are deemed inadequate, the Council supports the SSC recommendation that the question of whether to elevate a species for possible mitigation should be based on other sources of information.

VOTE ON MOTION: Motion passed unanimously on February 10, 2022, at 4:32 p.m.

E1 Ecosystem Committee Recommendations

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

1. The Council endorses the proposal by the SSC and the EC for a Forage Fish Workshop organized as described in the EC minutes.
2. The Council supports the EC recommendations concerning design and scheduling of an Ecosystem Workshop.
3. To assist NOAA and others in addressing marine debris issues, the Council is willing to provide a venue to facilitate increased awareness and understanding of the marine debris efforts

throughout the State, and support NOAA’s development of a Marine Debris Action Plan for Alaska. The Council requests the SSC consider the science questions of marine debris in the Council’s research prioritization process, to better understand the role and risks of plastics in ecosystem health and human health.

4. The Council appreciates the EC description of its function and roles in the Council process and the value that it contributes to the Council, and encourages the EC to continue to perform these functions. The Council values the Committee’s role as one of numerous forums in the Council process for public input; and encourages the Committee to continue to assist stakeholders in accessing other forums and maintain it’s focus on ecosystem issues. The Council will continue to develop platforms for incorporating indigenous voices in the Council process, and expects the Bering Sea FEP will be the primary forum for that region and hopes the Committee can continue to support that effort as well as providing a forum for other regions.

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

(strike items 3 and 4)

1. The Council endorses the proposal by the SSC and the EC for a Forage Fish Workshop organized as described in the EC minutes.
2. The Council supports the EC recommendations concerning design and scheduling of an Ecosystem Workshop.
- ~~3. To assist NOAA and others in addressing marine debris issues, the Council is willing to provide a venue to facilitate increased awareness and understanding of the marine debris efforts throughout the State, and support NOAA’s development of a Marine Debris Action Plan for Alaska. The Council requests the SSC consider the science questions of marine debris in the Council’s research prioritization process, to better understand the role and risks of plastics in ecosystem health and human health.~~
- ~~4. The Council appreciates the EC description of its function and roles in the Council process and the value that it contributes to the Council, and encourages the EC to continue to perform these functions. The Council values the Committee’s role as one of numerous forums in the Council process for public input; and encourages the Committee to continue to assist stakeholders in accessing other forums and maintain it’s focus on ecosystem issues. The Council will continue to develop platforms for incorporating indigenous voices in the Council process, and expects the Bering Sea FEP will be the primary forum for that region and hopes the Committee can continue to support that effort as well as providing a forum for other regions.~~

VOTE ON AMENDMENT: Amendment passed unanimously on February 10, 2022, at 5:07 p.m.

VOTE ON AMENDED MAIN MOTION: Motion passed unanimously on February 10, 2022, at 5:08 p.m.

E1 IFQ Permit Transfer

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

The Council requests the Secretary promulgate emergency regulations under the authority of Section 305(c) of the Magnuson-Stevens Act to allow the temporary transfer of catcher vessel halibut and

sablefish IFQ for all individual quota share holders for the 2022 fishing season. This action does not modify other aspects of the IFQ Program.

VOTE ON MOTION: Motion passed 10/1 (Mr. Merrill voting in opposition) on February 10, 2022, at 5:20 p.m.

E1 IFQ Vessel Cap

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

The Council requests the Secretary promulgate expedited regulations to remove vessel use cap regulations under 50 CFR Section 679.42(h)(1) for IFQ halibut harvested in IPHC regulatory Areas 4A, 4B, 4C, and 4D for the 2022 IFQ fishing season. This action does not modify other aspects of the IFQ Program.

VOTE ON MOTION: Motion passed unanimously on February 10, 2022, at 5:29 p.m.

E1 Council Appointments

Plan Teams

Danielle Dickson was appointed to the Council's Bering Sea Fishery Ecosystem Plan (FEP) Team to replace Dr. Jo-Ann Mellish.

The Council adjourned on Thursday, February 10, 2022, at 5:35 P.M.



TIME LOG

NPFMC February Council Meeting – 258th Plenary

Session Meeting held via web conference Adobe Connect February 7-10, 2022

Monday, February 7, 2022

B REPORTS

2/7/2022 8:07 AM	Call to Order
2/7/2022 8:10 AM	Bob Mace Award for Lauren Smoker
2/7/2022 8:15 AM	Terry Quinn Award for Dr. Anne Hollowed
2/7/2022 8:17 AM	B Reports – NPFMC staff, David Witherell
2/7/2022 8:25 AM	BREP Grant Project Update – Jamie Goen (ABSC), Kyle Antonelis (NRC), Scott Goodman (BSFRF)
2/7/2022 8:45 AM	B Reports continued – NPFMC staff, David Witherell
2/7/2022 8:56 AM	B2 AFSC State of the Science Center report – Dr. Bob Foy (AFSC)
2/7/2022 10:08 AM	Break
2/7/2022 10:21 AM	B Reports continued – NPFMC staff, David Witherell
2/7/2022 10:25 AM	B5 USCG Arctic Activity – LCDR Jed Raskie
2/7/2022 10:36 AM	B5 USCG Operation North Pacific Guard – LCDR John Suckow
2/7/2022 10:51 AM	B7 IPHC Report – Dr. David Wilson, Ian Stewart, Basia Hutniczak
2/7/2022 11:28 AM	B Public Testimony
2/7/2022 11:30 AM	Marissa Mercurieff and Noah Oppenheim
2/7/2022 11:47 AM	Linda Behnken
2/7/2022 11:55 AM	Lunch Break
2/7/2022 1:01 PM	B10 AP Report in full – Ruth Christiansen

C1 Economic Data Reporting Amendments

2/7/2022 1:27 PM	C1 EDR presentation – NPFMC staff, Sarah Marrinan and NMFS, Scott Miller
2/7/2022 2:50 PM	C1 and D1 SSC Report – Dr. Sherri Dressel
2/7/2022 3:05 PM	C1 Public Testimony
2/7/2022 3:06 PM	Mark Fina
2/7/2022 3:12 PM	Chris Woodley
2/7/2022 3:23 PM	Jason Anderson
2/7/2022 3:28 PM	Jamie Goen
2/7/2022 3:30 PM	Julie Bonney
2/7/2022 3:36 PM	Rebecca Skinner
2/7/2022 3:40 PM	Heather Mann

Tuesday, February 8, 2022

C1 Economic Data Reporting Amendments – Continued

2/8/2022 8:00 AM Call to order
2/8/2022 8:02 AM **Ms. Kimball Motion**

D1 Allocation Review of Halibut Catch Share Plan for Areas 2C/3A

2/8/2022 8:40 AM D1 Presentation – NPFMC staff, Sarah Marrinan and Kurt Iverson (NMFS)
2/8/2022 9:55 AM Break
2/8/2022 10:07 AM **D1 Public Testimony**
2/8/2022 10:07 AM James Kearns
2/8/2022 10:13 AM Marc Carrel
2/8/2022 10:20 AM Judith Brakel
2/8/2022 10:26 AM Ian Ivanoff
2/8/2022 10:29 AM Marsh Skeelee
2/8/2022 10:31 AM Bob Alverson
2/8/2022 10:36 AM Forrest Braden
2/8/2022 10:58 AM Bill Connor
2/8/2022 11:03 AM Casey Knight
2/8/2022 11:06 AM Tara Mason
2/8/2022 11:12 AM Victoria Curran
2/8/2022 11:14 AM Ryan Nichols
2/8/2022 11:17 AM Jeff Wedekind
2/8/2022 11:29 AM Lucas Skordahl
2/8/2022 11:33 AM Paul Clampitt
2/8/2022 11:37 AM Garrett Lambert
2/8/2022 12:00 PM **Lunch Break**
2/8/2022 12:52 PM Mark Guillory
2/8/2022 12:55 PM Jim Martin
2/8/2022 1:08 PM Brian Ritchie
2/8/2022 1:27 PM Bernie Burkholder
2/8/2022 1:29 PM Courtney Howard
2/8/2022 1:33 PM Jeff Thomas
2/8/2022 1:35 PM Charles Wood
2/8/2022 1:37 PM Theresa Weiser
2/8/2022 1:44 PM Matt Kopec
2/8/2022 1:48 PM Daniel Donich
2/8/2022 1:55 PM Phillip Wyman
2/8/2022 1:58 PM Alana Knight
2/8/2022 2:02 PM Greg Sutter
2/8/2022 2:06 PM Tad Fujioka
2/8/2022 2:10 PM Carolyn Nichols
2/8/2022 2:12 PM Ben Martin
2/8/2022 2:19 PM Eric Grundberg
2/8/2022 2:25 PM Travis & Tessa Blount

February 2022 Time Log

2/8/2022 2:28 PM	Jeff Farvour
2/8/2022 2:35 PM	Frank Balovich
2/8/2022 2:37 PM	Break
2/8/2022 2:49 PM	Steve Fish
2/8/2022 2:54 PM	Raymond Nix
2/8/2022 3:00 PM	Kent Barkhau
2/8/2022 3:04 PM	Jacquelyn Sidor
2/8/2022 3:08 PM	David Creighton
2/8/2022 3:12 PM	Craig Evens
2/8/2022 3:15 PM	Scott Jorgensen
2/8/2022 3:19 PM	Cale LaDuke
2/8/2022 3:22 PM	Ocean Mayo
2/8/2022 3:26 PM	Ryan Reeves
2/8/2022 3:28 PM	Cheston Clark
2/8/2022 3:29 PM	Kathy Hansen
2/8/2022 3:35 PM	Capt Kevin Burchfield
2/8/2022 3:38 PM	Megan O'Neil
2/8/2022 3:43 PM	Richard Yamada
2/8/2022 3:55 PM	Woody Cyr
2/8/2022 3:57 PM	Byron Pfundt
2/8/2022 4:04 PM	Lauren Mitchell
2/8/2022 4:09 PM	Hahlen Barkhau
2/8/2022 4:11 PM	Steve Zernia
2/8/2022 4:15 PM	John Murray
2/8/2022 4:17 PM	Josh Wisniewski
2/8/2022 4:22 PM	Tom Gemmell
2/8/2022 4:30 PM	Recess

Wednesday, February 9, 2022

D1 Allocation Review CSP – Continued

2/9/2022 8:01 AM	D1 Public Testimony Continued
2/9/2022 8:01 AM	Linda Behnken
2/9/2022 8:16 AM	Tori Connor
2/9/2022 8:20 AM	Chris McDowell
2/9/2022 8:24 AM	Malcolm Milne
2/9/2022 8:31 AM	Russell Thomas
2/9/2022 8:37 AM	Stephen Rhoads
2/9/2022 8:40 AM	Peggy Parker
2/9/2022 8:46 AM	Tim Cashman
2/9/2022 8:48 AM	Amy Daugherty
2/9/2022 8:51 AM	Kent Huff
2/9/2022 9:04 AM	Mr. Mezirow Motion
2/9/2022 9:14 AM	Mr. Mezirow Motion #2
2/9/2022 11:45AM	Lunch Break

February 2022 Time Log

2/9/2022 12:47 PM **B9 Balance of SSC Report** – Dr. Sherri Dressel

C2 BSAI Crab – Harvest Specifications/SAFE Report NSRKC, CPT Report

2/9/2022 2:50 PM **C2 Presentation** – NPFMC staff, Dr. Diana Stram, Katie Palof (ADFG) and Dr. Mike Litzow (AFSC)

2/9/2022 3:26 PM **C2 Ms. Bush Motion**

C3 Snow Crab Rebuilding Plan

2/9/2022 3:30 PM **C3 Presentation** – NPFMC staff, Jon McCracken and Dr. Diana Stram

2/9/2022 4:04 PM **C3 Public Testimony**

2/9/2022 4:04 PM Jamie Goen

2/9/2022 4:20 PM Recess

Thursday, February 10, 2022

D2 Bering Sea Greenland with Longline Pots

2/10/2022 8:07 AM **Call to Order**

2/10/2022 8:07 AM **D2 Presentation** – NPFMC staff, Sam Cunningham and Kelly Cates (NMFS)

2/10/2022 8:37 AM **D2 Public Testimony**

2/10/2022 8:38 AM Arne Fuglvog

2/10/2022 8:40 AM Chad See and Jim Armstrong

2/10/2022 8:52 AM Jason Anderson

2/10/2022 8:55 AM Joel Peterson

2/10/2022 9:06 AM **Mr. Down Motion**

D3 Groundfish Management Policy

2/10/2022 9:37 AM D3 Presentation – NPFMC DD, Diana Evans

E Staff Tasking

2/10/2022 10:15 AM **E Staff Tasking Presentation** – NPFMC ED, David Witherell

2/10/2022 10:20 AM Ecosystem Committee Report – NPFMC DD, Diana Evans

2/10/2022 10:15 AM E Staff Tasking Presentations Continued

2/10/2022 11:21 AM Lunch Break

2/10/2022 12:32 PM **E Public Testimony**

2/10/2022 12:33 PM Bob Alverson

2/10/2022 12:47 PM Craig Lowenberg

2/10/2022 12:49 PM Brenden Raymond-Yakoubian

2/10/2022 12:56 PM John Gauvin

2/10/2022 1:05 PM Stephanie Madsen

2/10/2022 1:08 PM Theresa Peterson and Dr. Megan Williams

2/10/2022 1:26 PM Ephraim Froehlich

E Staff Tasking Continued

2/10/2022 1:28 PM	Leonard Herzog
2/10/2022 1:37 PM	Marissa Wilson
2/10/2022 1:50 PM	Josh Wisniewski
2/10/2022 2:07 PM	Jeff Kauffman and Heather McCarty
2/10/2022 2:18 PM	Mateo Paz-Soldan
2/10/2022 2:23 PM	Jamie Goen
2/10/2022 2:42 PM	Rebecca Skinner
2/10/2022 2:45 PM	Chris Woodley
2/10/2022 2:52 PM	John Moller
2/10/2022 2:57 PM	Scott Goodman
2/10/2022 3:08 PM	Linda Behnken
2/10/2022 3:14 PM	Julie Bonney
2/10/2022 3:22 PM	Heather Mann
2/10/2022 3:29 PM	Garrett Elwood
2/10/2022 3:37 PM	Break
2/10/2022 3:44 PM	Staff tasking discussion continued
2/10/2022 3:47 PM	E Ms. Kimball Motion – EDR
2/10/2022 3:53 PM	E Ms. Campbell Motion – GOA Rockfish
2/10/2022 4:13 PM	E Mr. Merrill Motion – Pot Gear Discussion Paper
2/10/2022 4:24 PM	E Ms. Vanderhoeven Motion – EFH
2/10/2022 4:49 PM	E Mr. Tweit Motion – Ecosystem Committee Recommendations
2/10/2022 5:14 PM	E Ms. Baker Motion – IFQ Permit Transfer
2/10/2022 5:23 PM	E Ms. Baker Motion – IFQ Vessel Cap
2/10/2022 5:30 PM	Meeting Adjourned

February 2022 Newsletter

Hollowed and Smoker Receive Awards

Bob Mace Award



The Council selected Lauren Smoker to receive the Bob Mace award upon her retirement because of her position with NOAA General Counsel over the course of three decades. In that capacity, Ms. Smoker worked on some of the most complex and controversial fishery

management actions in Alaska, including but not limited to the Community Development Quota Program, the Crab Rationalization and Amendment 80 programs, and salmon management. Her depth of

knowledge about the legal requirements of the Magnuson-Stevens Act helped guide the Council to ensure its management decisions would be robust and defensible to litigation. She helped establish clear procedures for Council members on recusals and record-building, and was always available to answer questions both on the record at meetings, as well as on individual matters. These accomplishments, and her fairness and openness, have earned her the respect, confidence and most importantly, trust, of all of the Council members she worked with, as well as members of the Council family.

Representing the state of Oregon as a Council member for over 23 years, Bob Mace known for his integrity, dedication, professionalism, and conservation ethic. In Bob's honor, the Council established the **Bob Mace Distinguished Service Award**. This award is only occasionally bestowed by the Council, to an individual that exemplifies the highest levels of dedication, professionalism and conservation ethic necessary to make the fisheries off Alaska the best managed in the world.

Terry Quinn II Distinguished Scientist Award

Dr. Anne Hollowed was selected by the Council to be the third recipient of the **Terry Quinn II Distinguished Scientist Award**. Dr. Hollowed's contributions to fisheries science, ecosystem-based fishery management, and the implications of climate variability on fish and crab stocks, are internationally recognized, and we are fortunate to have had long-term participation by this globally recognized scientist in the North Pacific Council process. As a member of the Council's SSC since 2003, the SSC co-Chair since 2018, and leader of the stock assessment team at the Alaska Fisheries Science Center, Anne has been instrumental in upholding and



On the first day of the February Council meeting, the Council presented Ms. Lauren Smoker with the Bob Mace Distinguished Service Award, and Dr. Anne Hollowed with the Terry Quinn II Distinguished Scientist Award.

progressing the scientific foundation of groundfish and crab management in the North Pacific, both through her own research as well as mentorship of SSC members and new scientists. She embodies the Quinn Award values of integrating science and management, by prioritizing innovative research that links to scientific advice that is actionable in a management context and imbuing those values into the AFSC culture.

Dr. Quinn served on the Council's SSC until his death in 2019. This award is bestowed by the Council to an individual who, over the course of many years, has made outstanding contributions in fisheries science or other related field, and has been dedicated to ensuring that fisheries science and management in the North Pacific is the best in the world.



Election of officers

The Council's Scientific and Statistical Committee and Advisory Panel each convened with some new members and held an election for Chair and vice-chair.

The SSC re-elected Sherri Dressel (ADF&G) and elected Franz Mueter (University of Alaska Fairbanks) to serve as co-chairs for 2022. The SSC also re-elected Alison Whitman (ODFW) to serve as vice-chair. The AP re-elected Angel Drobnica as Chair, and Ruth Christiansen and Matt Upton as Vice-Chairs for 2022.

Coast Guard Law Enforcement in the North Pacific

The Council received a report on Operation North Pacific Guard (NPG) from the U.S. Coast Guard in conjunction with their normal B report. NPG is an annual high seas U.S. fisheries law enforcement operation designed to detect and deter illegal, unreported, and unregulated (IUU) fishing activity in accordance with multilateral and bilateral international agreements to which the United States is a party. Operation NPG advances U.S. goals for the conservation and management of high seas fisheries resources and is our at-seas enforcement contribution to a multilateral effort by North Pacific rim nations to eliminate IUU fishing activity from the North Pacific. U.S. Coast Guard provided 51 days of support to Operation NPG 2021 which included 28 boardings and detected 42 violations. Of note, 689 shark fins and 25 salmon were discovered on these boardings.

The U.S. Coast Guard also reported on their arctic activity in the Bering Sea and Chukchi sea. For further details on [Operation North Pacific Guard 2021](#) and their arctic activity, see Agenda item B5 in the February 2022 Council agenda.

Staff contact is Jon McCracken.

Staff contact is Sarah Marrinan.

BSAI Crab

Norton Sound Red King Crab OFL/ABC for 2022 and January Crab Plan Team Meeting Report

The Council received an overview of the 2022 stock assessment for Norton Sound red king crab (NSRKC). The council accepts SSC and CPT recommendations of maintaining an ABC buffer of 40%, given the concerns with the status of the stock and assessment model presented by the CPT. The council specified 2022 NSRKC OFL at 0.30 thousand t (0.67 million lb.) and an ABC of 0.18 thousand metric tons (0.40 million pounds) for Norton Sound red king crab.

The Crab Plan Team and SSC identified a range of concerns related to the NSRKC stock that contributed to maintaining an ABC buffer of 40%. These included uncertainty in methods for estimating discards, harvest specifications in length-dependent or length-independent natural mortality, and uncertainty in model inputs and model fit.

Other topics covered at the January CPT meeting and reviewed by the SSC, AP, and Council included modeling scenarios for the May 2022 stock assessment for Aleutian Islands golden king crab, survey planning and data collection, Essential Fish Habitat 5-year review and assessment of fishing effects, the 2021 crab economic SAFE, a CPT workshop on the GMACS modeling framework, and the snow crab rebuilding progress report.

Staff contact for the BSAI Crab Plan Team is Diana Stram/Sarah Rheinsmith

EBS Snow Crab Rebuilding Plan Progress Report

The Council received a progress report on the BS snow crab rebuilding plan. Action was neither required nor taken at this meeting. The Council is scheduled to select alternatives for analysis during the June 2022 meeting.

On October 19, 2021, NMFS notified the Council that Bering Sea (BS) snow crab status has been changed to overfished. The BS snow crab assessment shows that mature male biomass (MMB) is 50,600 metric tons (mt), which is less than the minimum stock size threshold (MSST) of 76,700 mt, therefore the stock is overfished. The stock is not subject to overfishing. The Magnuson-Stevens Fishery Conservation and Management Act (MSA) requires that a rebuilding plan be developed and implemented within two years of the stock being declared overfished. The rebuilding plan should specify a time period for rebuilding the fishery, not to exceed ten years. To facilitate development of the BS snow crab rebuilding plan, the Council was initially scheduled to select alternatives at this meeting. However, during the January 2022 Crab Plan Team (CPT) meeting, the team determined that the stock assessment model for



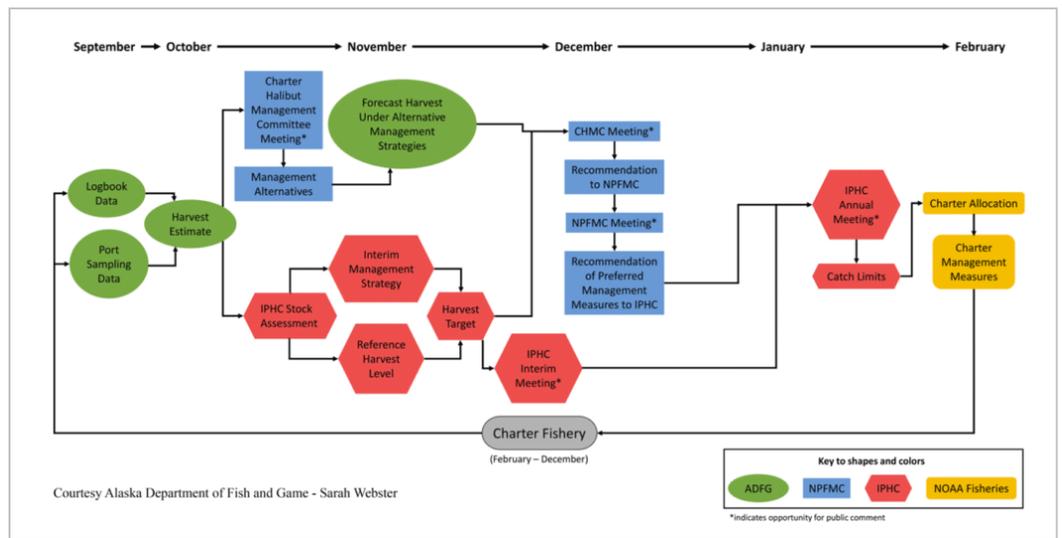
Bering Sea Snow Crab – NOAA

assessing the snow crab stock status and intended for use in estimating the time frame for rebuilding the BS snow crab stock under different levels of fishing conditions, needs further refinement. The CPT is scheduled to review the stock assessment model during the May CPT meeting.

Staff contact for snow crab rebuilding is Jon McCracken.

Catch Sharing Plan Allocation Review

At this meeting the Council considered an Allocation Review for the Area 2C and 3A commercial and charter halibut Catch Sharing Plan (CSP) as required by NOAA Policy Directive. The Council deemed the review complete and final with the incorporation of SSC recommendations.



Charter Halibut Management Process

In response to the review and public input, the Council also initiated an analysis to consider revising the commercial/ charter allocations under the Area 2C and 3A CSP. The Council’s purpose and need statement, as well as discussion, highlighted that the Council’s preferred mechanism for CSP allocation changes would be through compensated reallocation established through the Recreational Quota (RQE) Entity. The purpose and need statement specified that should the RQE fee funding mechanism become law and the Council take final action on the RQE funding mechanism, the Council intends to table or refine this action. Council members discussed concerns about the success and timing of funding the RQE, which is currently scheduled for Council final action at the April meeting but still requires Congressional action. Many Council members emphasized that the tasking of this analysis was not intended necessarily to indicate their support for such an allocation change, but support for an opportunity for additional analysis and consideration, depending on the progress of the RQE.

The analysis will evaluate changes for Area 2C and Area 3A allocations separately, given the different allocation structures in each area. For Area 2C, the analysis will consider increasing the charter halibut portion

of the combined catch limit (CCL) by 1% to 5% in the first tier of the allocation (at lowest level of CCL) and decreasing the charter portion of the CCL by 1% to 3% in the third tier of the allocation. The “stair-step” portion of the allocation in tier 2 would adjust as necessary according to the percentage from the top and bottom tiers to maintain the current approach of avoiding a “cliff drop” in the charter allocation.

For Area 3A, the analysis will similarly consider increasing the charter halibut portion of the CCL by 1% to 5% in the first tier of the allocation and decreasing the charter portion of the CCL by 1% to 3% in the third tier of the allocation. The fifth tier of the allocation would remain the same. The “stair-step” portions of the allocation in tier 2 and tier 4 would adjust as necessary according to the percentage from the top and bottom tiers.

The Council also requested that the analysis explore methods of implementing charter management measures (i.e., bag limits or size restrictions) for more than one year through either the existing Council/IPHC process or through domestic regulations. This alternative is meant to address concerns that were raised about the instability and uncertainty created by the CSP management system, which does not typically establish charter management measures until January in the year measures apply. This alternative is not mutually exclusive from the allocation alternatives.

Staff contact is Sarah Marrinan.

Bering Sea Greenland Turbot Longline Pots



Greenland Turbot

The Council initiated an analysis of authorizing longline pot gear in the directed Greenland turbot fishery in the Bering Sea. The Council reviewed a discussion paper that examined evidence that killer whale depredation is precluding the hook-and-line fishery for Greenland turbot and scoped issues with a new gear authorization that should be fully analyzed. The Council established a Purpose and Need statement and a single action alternative that is a simple authorization for the use of longline pot gear when directed fishing for turbot in the

Bering Sea. The authorization would apply to any type of vessel that is permitted to fish non-trawl gear in those Federal waters, but it is understood that the fishery is largely prosecuted by catcher/processor vessels. The action alternative includes an option to exempt vessels in the turbot directed fishery from a 9-inch maximum pot tunnel opening restriction that currently applies to groundfish pot vessels that do not have unfished halibut IFQ onboard.

The Council directed staff to further analyze the potential for a viable non-trawl Greenland turbot fishery to attract new, or renewed, participation and any effects that might have on competition for catch within the non-trawl sector or with the trawl sector. The Council emphasized that the analysis should address the possibility of spatial and temporal overlap between the trawl and non-trawl sectors that could result in fishing grounds being preempted by pot gear. The Council also directed analysts to further develop information on the species most likely to be encountered as bycatch in pot gear, including prohibited species (e.g., crab and halibut), commercial species (e.g., Pacific cod and sablefish), and species in the ecosystem component of the fishery management plan.

Staff contact is Sam Cunningham

Groundfish Management Policy

The Council conducted a comprehensive review of the Groundfish Management Policy, highlighting Council activities in 2019-2021 that were relevant to priorities and objectives

established in the Policy. The **Management Policy** is part of the Council's Bering Sea and Aleutian Islands (BSAI) and Gulf of Alaska (GOA) Groundfish FMPs, and was developed through a Council process

supported by a programmatic supplemental environmental impact statement (PSEIS), finalized in 2004. The management policy consists of a management approach statement, nine policy goals, and 45 management objectives, and established the Council's ongoing vision for management of these fisheries within an ecosystem-based management perspective.

Under the FMPs, the Council has a requirement to review the management policy periodically. The Council monitors its actions relative to the policy objectives at staff tasking at each meeting, and conducts a comprehensive review of the policy on a three-year cycle. During the discussion, the Council indicated that it continues to approve the substance of the management policy and objectives as written, although noting that some of the language is dated. The Council acknowledged that in the next 2-3 years, it may be appropriate to develop a Supplemental Information Report for the PSEIS, to evaluate whether any new information about environmental concerns triggers a requirement to supplement the PSEIS. Staff will evaluate a process for developing the SIR, and report back to the Council.

Staff contact is Diana Evans.



Trawl Electronic Monitoring

The SSC completed a preliminary review of electronic monitoring (EM) on pelagic trawl pollock catcher vessels (CVs) and tenders both delivering to processing plants. The trawl EM program combines EM systems that provide at-sea monitoring of CVs for compliance with fishery management objectives to achieve maximized retention, electronic reporting of catch and discard information, and shoreside observers to monitor salmon bycatch and collect catch composition and biological information at the trip level. The preliminary review was focused on overall program design and objectives, and how data are collected and used; to provide early

communication and seek feedback from the SSC regarding concerns about data types, quality, availability and priorities.

The SSC found that the preliminary review represented a solid foundation for the initial analysis and appreciated the level of collaboration between agency and industry participants in the project. The SSC included several recommendations regarding specific data analysis and program descriptions to be included in the initial review (detailed in the SSC minutes). An initial review of a full Environmental Assessment and Regulatory Impact Review is scheduled for the June 2022 meeting. Staff contact is Anna Henry.



F/V EXCALIBUR II

Essential Fish Habitat

At this meeting, the SSC reviewed the models and output being used for the Essential Fish Habitat (EFH) 5-year review summary report, which is under preparation for Council review later this year, and the Council supported the SSC's recommendations for improvements. The SSC received reports on progress with assessing EFH component 1, descriptions and maps of EFH by species, and EFH component 2, the effects of fishing on EFH. Under component 1, staff reported on results from the revised species distribution model (SDM)-based EFH maps, which have also undergone review by all stock assessment authors. The SSC found that overall, the information provided exhibits substantial improvement and refinement of EFH descriptions from the previous 5-year review (2017). There are, however, a subset of stocks for which stock assessment authors noted concerns with the SDM-based maps, particularly for species that are not well represented in surveys. The SSC had several recommendations for improvement to the component 1 assessment, as detailed in SSC report. For example, the SSC requests that the final report include a summary table that evaluates survey reliability, seasonal representativeness, and spatial representativeness of the data used in the SDM models, for species where concerns were raised in the stock author review.

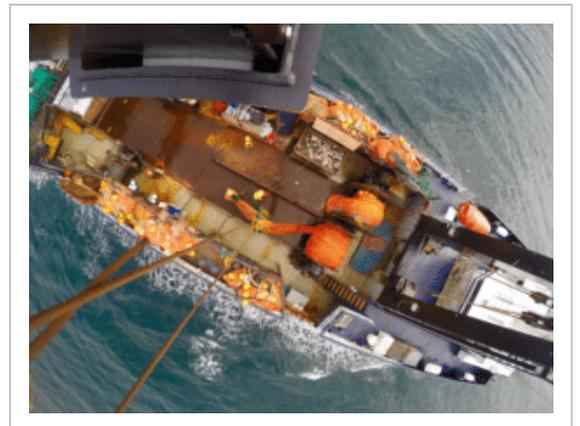


Photo courtesy of Ned Laman

The SSC also reviewed the methodology for the fishing effects (FE) model, which is largely the same as that used in 2017, although with new data and some updates. The SSC supports using this version to evaluate fishing impacts for the 2022 5-year EFH review cycle, after addressing the recommendations in the SSC report. The SSC recommended, and the Council concurred, that for species where concerns have been raised about SDM-based EFH descriptions, the analysis should bring in other sources of information to address any question of possible mitigation.

The SSC is currently scheduled to review output from the fishing effects model in June 2022, and the Council is tentatively scheduled to receive the 2022 EFH 5-year review summary report in October 2022. The Council

noted that this schedule may be adjusted if needed, to ensure staff have sufficient time to address SSC recommendations.

Staff contact is Sarah Rheinsmith.

Marine Mammals

The SSC reviewed the status of marine mammals for which there are conservation concerns or unusual or unexpected results, through a number of presentations from the Alaska Fisheries Science Center Marine Mammal Laboratory, University of Alaska Fairbanks, US Fish and Wildlife Service, and NMFS Alaska Region. The presentations covered a wide variety of topics, species, and regions and several themes related to fisheries management including populations trends, integrated research projects and bioenergetics, changes in the Bering Sea.

The SSC supports continuing to receive annual updates as they provide opportunities for new, fisheries-relevant information and broad perspectives for the Council's strategic and ecosystem-based management efforts. The SSC is additionally supportive of efforts, across species, to incorporate new technology to improve population monitoring. A more detailed description of the series of presentations and findings is included in the [SSC report](#) under item D6.

Staff contact is Diana Evans



Groundfish and Crab Economic SAFE Reports

At this meeting, the SSC reviewed the Groundfish and Crab Economic SAFE reports as presented by the Alaska Fisheries Science Center's Economic and Social Science Research Division. The SSC recognizes the high quality of ongoing work to provide clear and consistent data summaries/analyses to address economic conditions.



Pacific Cod

The Groundfish Economic SAFE report provides a broad overview of the economic performance of the groundfish fisheries in the 2020 data year, with particular attention to changes coinciding with COVID and some new additions to the report. The SSC appreciated the organized and accessible format the Groundfish Economic SAFE uses to depict the current economic status of the fisheries, changes in the economic status of fisheries over time, as well as to provide a detailed economic history of the fisheries. The SSC also appreciated the new and recently added detail in the Groundfish Economic SAFE report and presentation. This includes the report card indices. Finally, the SSC expressed concerns over dropping the Amendment 91 EDR data from the

report. Although the data collected have limitations, it is important for process transparency to summarize for the public what has been collected.

The Crab Economic SAFE report also provides important information on the economic status of the crab fisheries. The SSC particularly appreciated the analysis related to potential COVID impacts, the evolving lease market analysis, work related to understanding the structure of quota share holding entities, and the development quota share decomposition. The SSC looks forward to further work on the integration and continuing refinement of community-scale results and work on areas including composition of active versus absentee owners, advancing the work on decomposing quota share ownership by tenure, and concentration indices. The SSC also recommends an analysis on the flow of quota share between entities to provide a better picture of who is capturing the ownership benefits of the crab fishery and how this may be changing over time. Finally, the SSC appreciated the preliminary report card index results and looks forward to their formal integration into the Crab Economic SAFE report.

Both Economic SAFE reports contained a first look at the impacts of COVID. The SSC found both economic SAFE report documents provided useful information related to COVID impacts and recommends developing a COVID effects narrative that is carried forward in the documents.

Finally, the SSC identified the need to continue discussions around the appropriate vehicle for, and publication timing of, summaries of the social conditions-focused aspects of the Economic SAFE reports. The social and community information that has recently been removed from the groundfish and crab economic SAFE report documents will be updated and made available later this year in the Annual Community Engagement and Participation Overview (ACEPO). In the interim, the SSC endorses the analysts' suggestion to include a few paragraphs in the Executive Summary or some other part of the groundfish and crab economic SAFE report documents.



**Golden king crab (*Lithodes aequispinus*)
photo courtesy of ADF&G**

Staff contact is Jon McCracken.

Staff Tasking

The Council discussed the relative priority and scheduling of previously tasked projects, and identified new tasking. The revised [3 meeting outlook](#) reflects this guidance.

The Council discussed **planning for the April meeting**. At this point, the Council is still planning on an in-person/hybrid April Council meeting in Anchorage, AK, however the Council noted that a final decision on the in-person component will be made at the end of February/early March. In either case, the Council will accommodate remote accessibility options, including broadcasting the SSC and AP in addition to the Council, and allowing for remote and in-person testimony at all three meetings.

The Council also reviewed a [staff paper on reflections on the Council process and ideas for change](#), containing a series of ideas related to potential changes to the Council meeting schedule and agenda timing, and advisory bodies. The inclusion of ideas in the paper was intended to start a public conversation, and were not provided as staff recommendations. The Council chose to refer the paper to their Executive Committee and AP and SSC leadership, who will convene a public meeting to discuss the issues and provide recommendations for the Council to consider about which ideas merit further exploration.

The Council directed staff to **write the following letters**:

- to the Department of Interior, in response to a request for comments on the development of the American Conservation and Stewardship Atlas (Atlas), a new tool that will be used to track conservation and restoration of U.S. lands and waters. The Council reviewed a draft response letter during the meeting addressing the data sources and technical approach used to develop the Atlas.
- to the U.S. Coast Guard, in appreciation of the [presentations](#) as well as ongoing efforts to combat illegal, unreported, and unregulated fishing, working in partnership with other nations.

The Council also **tasked the following projects**:

- Initial review analysis of four changes to the Central Gulf of Alaska Rockfish Program to increase flexibility and efficiency, improve functionality, and better ensure the rockfish TACs are fully harvested and landed in Kodiak as intended. These changes include changing the season start date and modifying harvesting, processing and cooperative holding caps.
- Emergency rule request to modify IFQ transfer provisions of the Halibut and Sablefish IFQ Program, to allow the temporary transfer of catcher vessel halibut and sablefish IFQ for all individual quota share holders for the 2022 fishing season. The Council's rationale pointed to impacts on harvesters, processors, and communities as a result of travel restrictions, health mandates, and operational challenges directly attributable to the global pandemic.
- Expedited rulemaking to waive IFQ vessel use caps for IFQ halibut harvested in IPHC regulatory Areas 4A, 4B, 4C, and 4D for the 2022 IFQ fishing season, with a similar COVID-19 rationale as above.
- Discussion paper identifying a small number of economic data components, including crew data, which could improve Council decision-making if collected from all sectors ([see more info in the EDR newsletter article](#)).

- Discussion paper exploring potential regulatory changes to simplify pot gear regulations across fisheries, and allow for flexibility to use new pot gear designs in the BSAI and GOA groundfish fisheries where they are currently authorized, including biodegradable panels, escape mechanisms, tunnel opening sizes, and the use of longline and single pot gear.

The Council also responded to the [groundfish management policy](#), the [Ecosystem Committee](#), and the [SSC report on EFH 5-year review](#) planning, as described in other newsletter articles. In response to public testimony, the Council tasked the [BS FEP Climate Change Taskforce](#) to evaluate an ecosystem matrix concept as a potential tool for considering climate impacts in the specifications process. The Council also **appointed** Ms. Danielle Dickson to the Bering Sea Fishery Ecosystem Plan Team.

Finally, NMFS signaled to the Council and to the public that the agency is seeking a legal opinion that would help establish the extent of the agency's fiscal authority under the proposed Congressional language to allow a **fee collection program for the RQE**. Specifically, the agency is seeking advice on whether the RQE or some other entity could administer the fee collection under rules that NMFS would implement and enforce. If that option proves to be viable under the new law, then it will be examined in the next iteration of analysis for RQE funding, currently scheduled for Council review in April 2022.

Staff contact is Diana Evans.

Ecosystem Committee

The Council received a report from the **Ecosystem Committee** about their January meeting, at which the Committee discussed marine debris events and response in Alaska, a status report on northern fur seals from NMFS and co-managers, a review of EFH modeling methods for determining habitat distribution and evaluating fishing effects on EFH, a discussion of forage fish as considered in the Council process, progress to date planning a second Council ecosystem workshop, and an ongoing discussion about the Ecosystem Committee's role for the Council. Based on the Committee's report, the Council:

- endorsed a proposal for the Groundfish Plan Teams to organize a public forage species workshop focusing on the quality and availability of forage species information.
- supported the Committee's recommendation to reframe a proposal for a second Council ecosystem workshop in a future year, and report back to the Council in June.

The Council elected to address other Ecosystem Committee recommendations regarding Council support for marine debris planning and clarification of the purpose of the Ecosystem Committee for a future meeting. Staff contact is Diana Evans.

Upcoming Meetings

Council Committees, Plan Teams, Taskforces

February

- Scallop Plan Team – February 16, 2022 [AGENDA](#)

March/April

- Pacific Northwest Crab Industry Advisory Committee (PNCIAC) – March 2, 2022
- Partial Coverage Fishery Monitoring Advisory Committee (PCFMAC) – March 3, 2022 [AGENDA](#)
- Ecosystem Committee – March 29-30, 2022
- BSFEP Climate Change Taskforce (CCTF) – March 15-17, 2022
- Enforcement Committee – March/April 2022 (T)
- Executive Committee meeting on Council process ideas staff paper – March/April 2022 (T)

May

- BSAI Crab Plan Team – May 16-20, 2022
- Trawl EM Committee – May 2022 (TBD)
- Fishery Monitoring Advisory Committee (FMAC) – May 2022 (TBD)
- Ecosystem Committee – May 25, 2022 (T)

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