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# Fish News

July 2, 2010

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## Highlights from the June NPFMC Meeting

The recent North Pacific Fishery Management Council (NPFMC) Meeting was held in Sitka on June 7 - 15, 2010. The major issues included the GOA Rockfish Catch Share Program, the Steller Sea Lion Update, the AM 80 Vessel Replacement, Chum Salmon Bycatch and the Observer Program. Highlights from these issues can be found below.

### GOA Rockfish Catch Share Program

The Council took final action defining a catch share program for the Central Gulf of Alaska directed rockfish fisheries. The program replaces the pilot program under which the fisheries are currently managed. The pilot program expires after the 2011 season. In addition to targeting rockfish species (Pacific ocean perch, northern rockfish and pelagic shelf rockfish), the program allocates Pacific cod, sablefish, shortraker rockfish, roughey rockfish, thornyhead rockfish and halibut prohibited species catch to program participants.



**The Rockfish Catch Share Program will expire in 10 years unless renewed and possibly modified by the Council.**

The Council's action would establish cooperative programs for both catcher processors and catcher vessels. A bid by the processing industry to receive harvest shares was not successful. The Rockfish Catch Share Program will expire in 10 years unless renewed and possibly modified by the

Council. The approach taken requires positive action on the part of the Council, which will require a more serious review and will provide an improved opportunity for changes, if needed.

## Halibut PSC Limits



The Council identified additional information to be included in the discussion paper (to amend the halibut prohibited species catch limits) and scheduled review of the revised discussion paper in October 2010.

The Council reviewed a discussion paper required by the GOA Groundfish FMP to amend the halibut prohibited species catch limits. The Council identified additional information to be included in the paper and scheduled review of the revised discussion paper in October. At that time, the Council will determine whether any further action is needed.



Two stocks remain under rebuilding plans (the snow crab and the Pribilof Island blue king crab).

## Crab OFLs

The Scientific and Statistical Committee (SSC) recommended overfishing levels (OFLs) for four crab stocks. The SSC also made recommendations on tier levels and appropriate model parameters for the remaining six stocks. Those six stocks will have final OFLs established in the fall after incorporation of the summer trawl data into the final stock assessments. Two stocks remain under rebuilding plans (snow crab and Pribilof Island blue king crab). Both plans require revision.

## Crab Annual Catch Limits and Snow Crab Rebuilding

The Council took initial review of a combined analysis of crab annual catch limits and the revised snow crab rebuilding plan. Two actions are included in the analysis to amend the Bering Sea Aleutian Islands (BSAI) Crab Fishery Management Plan (FMP). The first action would amend the FMP to specify the method by which the Council will establish annual catch limits to meet the requirements of the revised Magnuson-Stevens Act. The second action in the analysis is to prepare and implement an amended plan to rebuild the snow crab stock. A range of alternative time frames from 2014/15 to 2019/20 will be considered for rebuilding the stock with options to allow for increased probability of

rebuilding the stock by target year ending dates. A public review draft of the analysis will be available on the Council's website in late August.

## Crab Bycatch

The council moved to initiate an analysis to establish prohibited species catch limits in the BSAI groundfish fisheries for all 10 crab stocks. Both fixed and annually-varying limits will be considered. Additional components to be considered include existing or expanded closure areas, application of limits and closures by trawl and fixed gear, and changes to current accounting time frames.

## Steller Sea Lion Update

The National Marine Fisheries Service (NMFS) provided the Council with an update on the schedule for preparation and release of the draft *status quo* Biological Opinion (BiOp) on Steller sea lions. NMFS said the agency intends to release the draft BiOp later this month (July, 2010). The Council plans to hold a special meeting in August to provide input to the agency on management measures for the 2011 fishing year.



NMFS said the agency intends to release the draft BiOp on Steller sea lions later this month.



The Council plans to hold a special meeting scheduled for Aug. 16 - 19, 2010 to provide input to NMFS on the draft BiOp on Steller sea lions and management measures for the 2011 fishing year.

- **The August meetings have been scheduled for Aug. 16 - 19, 2010 at the Hotel Captain Cook in Anchorage.**
- **The SSC meeting is scheduled for Aug. 17 - 17, 2010.**
- **The Advisory Panel meeting is scheduled for Aug. 17 - 18, 2010.**
- **The Council is scheduled to meet Aug. 18 - 19, 2010.**

After the August meetings, NMFS will complete an analysis of alternative management measures. Those management measures could be available for potential Council final action at the October 2010 meeting.

## **GOA Exemption for BSAI Crab Vessels**

The Council reviewed an initial draft of an amendment package to exempt crab vessels from GOA Pacific cod sideboards from Nov. 1 to Dec. 31 of each year. The Council voted against taking any further action until the GOA fixed gear license limitation program (LLP) recency action and GOA Pacific cod sector split regulations are published.

## **AM 80 Vessel Replacement**

The Council took final action to allow Amendment 80 vessel owners to replace their vessels. The Council chose Alternative 3, which allows owners to replace their vessels with another vessel for any purpose. It cannot exceed an overall length of 295 feet. The action would allow the owner of an Amendment 80 vessel to assign a quota share permit from an original qualifying Amendment 80 vessel to the replacement vessel or to the License Limitation Program license taken from the originally qualifying vessel. The Council also specified that a replaced vessel would be allowed to take part in the GOA flatfish fishery if the replaced vessel was also qualified to participate in that fishery.

## **Chum Salmon Bycatch**

The Council reviewed a discussion paper and reports on chum salmon bycatch trends, area closure options, the current suite of management alternatives and updated genetic stock of origin information on chum salmon bycatch in the pollock fishery. (See link below: [Strategies for Determining Stock Composition](#).) The Council took action to refine several alternatives for analysis of chum salmon bycatch management measures in the Eastern Bering Sea pollock fishery. Alternatives under consideration include hard caps on the pollock fishery for chum salmon bycatch in the range of 50,000 - 353,000 fish and area closures triggered by caps between 25,000 - 200,000 fish. Options included under each alternative would allocate caps at the sector level.

Link: [Strategies for Determining Stock Composition](#)

## **Observer Program**

The Council reviewed the initial review draft of the observer restructuring analysis (BSAI FMP Amendment 86/GOA FMP Amendment 76) and a report from the Observer Advisory Committee (OAC). Sectors that are not currently subject to any observer coverage requirement (i.e., the commercial halibut and <60' groundfish sector) are included under every action alternative. The Council approved a motion requiring the OAC and staff to develop electronic monitoring as an additional tool for fulfilling

observer coverage requirements. The current schedule proposed Council final action on a restructured program in October 2010, with the first year of the new program in 2013. The council also approved writing a letter to NOAA headquarters to request federal financial assistance for start-up funding to implement a restructured observer program in the North Pacific and an annual appropriation for ongoing costs. The public review draft analysis is expected for release in mid-September.

For more details on all of these issues, visit the link below:

[NPFMC June Newsletter](#)

**Next regular meeting:** scheduled for Oct. 4, 2010 in Anchorage at the Hotel Captain Cook. Visit the link below for details.

[Three Meeting Outlook - NPFMC](#)

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