



Fish News

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NPFMC takes action at October 2013 meeting

By Ernie Weiss, AEB Natural Resources Director

The NPFMC took action on GOA Trawl Bycatch Management, the Steller Sea Lion EIS, the Observer Program, and other agenda items at the October 2 – 8, 2013 meeting.

The GOA Trawl Bycatch Management (GOA TBM) expanded discussion [paper](#) that staff prepared for this meeting analyzed 8 proposals submitted by stakeholders in June. The Advisory Panel (AP) recommended the Council continue analysis on all these proposals moving forward, but ADF&G Commissioner Campbell's motion took a different approach by laying out possible elements of a future [GOA TBM](#) program.



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According to Campbell, the public would not be able to provide any more meaningful input without some direction from the Council. The motion assumes a cooperative (co-

op) structure as the best type of program to avoid bycatch. In the proposed program, both



ADF&G Commissioner Cora Campbell's motion on GOA TBM assumes a cooperative structure as the best type of program to avoid bycatch.

target and bycatch species would be allocated to a co-op. To begin with, trawl catcher vessels would be part of a co-op based on historical associations. Communities are protected through consolidation limits, active participation and regionalization requirements. All trawl catcher vessels in the program would be 100% observed. State-waters issues are not addressed in the motion. The Council GOA TBM motion passed unanimously with one

abstention. This GOA TBM program structure as presented in the October motion will be analyzed by Council staff and the discussion paper will be scheduled for the NPFMC agenda April 2014 in Anchorage, to give the public ample opportunity to provide input.

The Council took final action on GOA trawl data collection during the October meeting. This agenda item had been fast-tracked through the Council process to get information, including crew compensation and fuel costs as soon as possible, in order to better understand how a new bycatch management and/or catch share program will affect fishermen and communities. Implementation of the NMFS final rule on GOA trawl data collection is expected in 2015.

The NPFMC [motion](#) on Steller Sea Lions affirms the Council's Preferred Alternative #5 for the final EIS and requests NMFS to share a draft of the expected new Biological Opinion (BiOp) when it becomes available. The 2010 BiOp, a section 7 consultation of the Endangered Species Act (ESA), determined that commercial fishing in the western Aleutians was causing nutritional stress on the animals, resulting in the implementation of restrictive fishing management measures. The Council's preferred alternative for the court-mandated EIS is somewhat less restrictive than the current measures and will require a new BiOp. The final EIS is due to be released March 2014.



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The Council [motion](#) on Observers endorsed

recommendations in the Observer Advisory Committee (OAC) [report](#), including an action to address tendering activity. Currently observed fishing trips technically begin and end with deliveries to port. To include tender deliveries to begin and end observed trips, the Council will need to initiate a regulatory amendment to the program. The Observer motion also supported OAC comments prioritizing deployment of the EM Pilot program.

The Council adopted proposed [groundfish specifications](#), TACs, ABCs and OFLs for GOA and BSAI groundfish species for 2014 and 2015 at the October meeting. The joint groundfish plan teams will meet again in November and the Council will adopt final groundfish specifications at the December meeting. The council motion for the BSAI salmon bycatch agenda item requested a discussion paper to explore ways to incorporate Bering Sea chum salmon bycatch avoidance into the industry cooperative Chinook salmon Incentive plan agreements.



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The NPFMC meets next in Anchorage, December 9 - 17.

Board of Fisheries starts a new cycle

The Alaska Board of Fisheries began the 2013/2014 cycle with a 2-day work session in Girdwood. The Board considered Agenda Change Requests (ACRs) at the meeting. One ACR that would have impacted AEB fishermen, ACR 11, the board chose not to consider out of cycle. ACR 11 was opposed by Concerned Area M Fishermen (CAMF) and proposed setting GPS coordinates to define the commercial salmon fishing boundaries of Outer Port Heiden, Ilnik and Three Hills sections of the Northern District.

There are 37 [proposals](#) to be considered at the Statewide Pacific Cod Board meeting October 18 - 22. Thirteen of those proposals are specifically regarding South Alaska Peninsula Cod fisheries:

- 2 proposals would modify South Alaska Peninsula groundfish boundaries.
- 4 proposals would increase the state-waters WGOA Pacific cod guideline harvest level.
- 3 proposals would change or clarify the Pacific cod fishery season opening date.

- 1 proposal would make the South Alaska Peninsula area super-exclusive.
- 2 proposals would modify pre-season pot storage regulations.
- 1 proposal would close the Caton & Sanak Islands area to nonpelagic trawl.

Two other proposals, 35 & 36, would establish a state-waters Pacific cod fishery in Bering Sea waters of groundfish Registration Area O, from Cape Sarichef west to 170°. Proposal 35 would mirror the state-waters Pacific cod fishery in the South Alaska Peninsula Area. Proposal 36 would take a graduated percent of the Bering Sea/Aleutian Islands (BSAI) total allowable catch (TAC) up to 2 – 3% of the BSAI TAC.



Proposals 35 & 36 would establish a state-waters Pacific cod fishery in Bering Sea waters of groundfish Registration Area O, from Cape Sarichef west to 170°.

All of the Pacific cod proposals could potentially impact the NPFMC GOA Trawl Bycatch Management action.

The Board of Fish will consider Chignik finfish proposals December 3 - 6, 2013. At the recent work session, the Board decided to combine Area M finfish with Chignik finfish with perhaps one day in between, for the next meeting cycle. The next Board of Fisheries meeting to consider Area M / Chignik finfish proposals will be February 23 – March 5th, 2016.

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