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## **North Pacific Fishery Management Council Meeting in Seattle - February 2018**

The Council staff presented the Initial Review of the 'Chinook Salmon Prohibited Species Catch (PSC) in the Gulf of Alaska Non-pollock Trawl Fisheries'. This is the first analysis of the issue since the Council motion in April 2017 under Staff Tasking to analyze options to increase the Chinook PSC cap. The purpose is to alleviate concerns that the fleet could again exceed the cap and shut down cod and other fisheries. At this meeting, the Council added options that would allow the rollover of unused PSC from the previous year. The added options will require the document to come back after analysis for a 2<sup>nd</sup> Initial Review, probably in April.

The Council action to potentially increase Chinook bycatch by GOA trawlers comes under close scrutiny as the Alaska Board of Fisheries, during a somewhat contentious January meeting in Sitka, approved a Stock of Concern action plan for three Southeast river Chinook salmon stocks. The Board also passed a proposal to implement a Chinook salmon possession restriction for vessels participating in the enhanced chum salmon troll fishery. The Board will look at the NPFMC GOA Chinook PSC Limits paper during their March Statewide meeting in Anchorage.

The Council also discussed the North Pacific Observer program, including electronic monitoring (EM), at the February meeting. EM is included in the 2018 Observer program, currently for hook and line and pot gear. In Seattle, the Council specifically prioritized the inclusion of trawl gear in EM as well. An EM project to explore full retention on WGOA pollock trawl catcher vessels using EM compliance, moved up on the priority list. The Council will also analyze the Observer program fee structure. The program has been subsidized from other NMFS funding sources up until now, and needs additional funding.

IFQ (individual fishing quota) for halibut and sablefish was a hot topic in Seattle, and the Seattle fleet came out, mostly to speak against any changes to hired master provisions. The Council moved to look at the use of hired masters, change eligibility requirements to hold quota to include a history of at-sea days, and look at the beneficiary and medical lease provisions. The Council will also analyze allowing CQE's (community quota entities) to fish 'D' class halibut quota on 'C' class vessels after August 15<sup>th</sup> or September 1<sup>st</sup>.

The Council also set Norton Sound Red King Crab specifications and took final action on a paperwork reduction item to remove small sideboards that have been historically too small to be fished. The entire Council family, including the SSC (Scientific and Statistical Committee), AP (Advisory Panel) and others participated in a full day workshop to review and discuss North Pacific ecosystem research.



The Council and others participated in a day-long workshop focusing on North Pacific ecosystem research. Photo courtesy: NPFMC.

The AP holds elections for officers in February and AP leadership for 2018 remains unchanged from last year: vice-chairs are Matt Upton of US Seafoods and Angel Drobnika of APICDA (Aleutian Pribilof Island Community Development Association). The 2018 AP Chair is Ernie Weiss of the Aleutians East Borough. Three Council seats will expire this year; Andy Mezirow of Seward and Craig Cross of Seattle are up for reappointment. Council Chair Dan Hull of Anchorage will term out this year and is not eligible for reappointment. Council appointments will be announced in June. For more information from the Seattle meeting, go to [www.npfmc.org](http://www.npfmc.org).

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