



The Joint Protocol Committee of the  
**North Pacific Fisheries Management Council**  
and the  
**Alaska Board of Fisheries**



## Draft Meeting Summary

October 17, 2018, 9 am – 5 pm  
Anchorage, Alaska – Egan Center

Joint Protocol Committee (JPC) membership:

North Pacific Fishery Management Council (NPFMC)

Buck Laukitis  
Andy Mezirow  
Kenny Down

Alaska Board of Fisheries (BOF)

John Jensen  
Fritz Johnson  
Robert Ruffner

Meeting commenced at 9:05am.

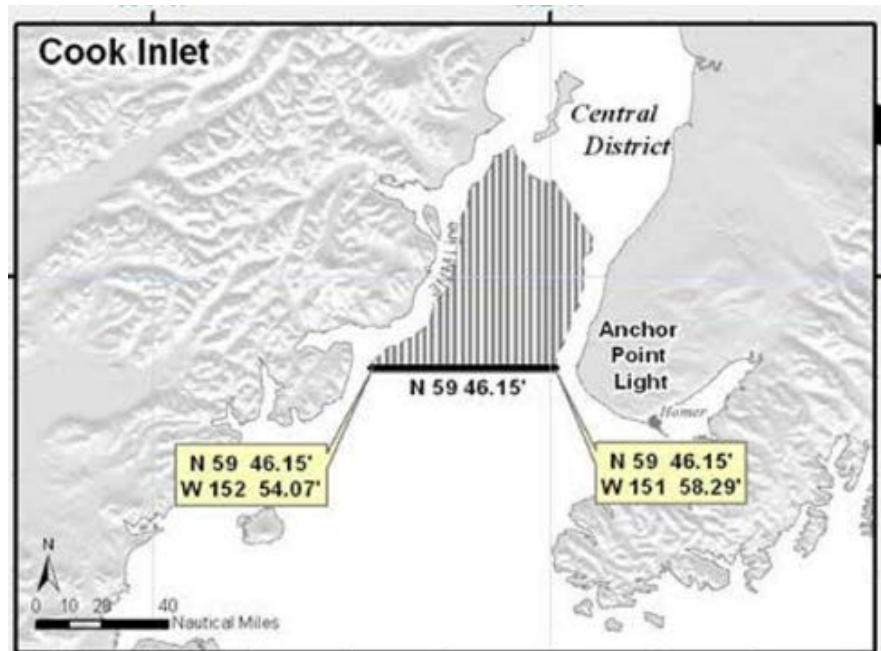
1. Introductions and review of the Agenda: Mr. Jensen served as chair and provided opening remarks followed by introductions of members and staff. All committee members were in attendance along with staff from the NPFMC, National Marine Fisheries Service (NMFS), and Alaska Department of Fish & Game (ADF&G).
2. Executive Director reports. Director Dave Witherell provided Council updates including the St. Matthew blue king crab stock decline and rebuilding plan, halibut bycatch retention provisions in the Bering Sea/Aleutian Islands (BS/AI) sablefish pot fishery, and AI crab.
3. Staff Reports

NPFMC Action on the Salmon Fisheries Management Plan (FMP).

[http://www.adfg.alaska.gov/static/regulations/regprocess/fisheriesboard/pdfs/2018-2019/jp/council\\_salmon.pdf](http://www.adfg.alaska.gov/static/regulations/regprocess/fisheriesboard/pdfs/2018-2019/jp/council_salmon.pdf)

Jim Armstrong, Plan Coordinator with NPFMC, presented on the status of the Council's efforts to establish a salmon FMP for Cook Inlet federal waters in compliance with court orders. Mr. Armstrong reported a committee, chaired by Mr. Jensen, was formed to provide a review and recommendations on meeting Magnuson-Stevens Act (MSA) requirements including a description of the fishing sectors, standardized bycatch reporting methodology, and social, economic and community impacts. A staff working group is drafting an analysis of two primary alternatives to the status quo: a cooperative state-federal management program (like the Crab and Scallop FMP), or full federal management. A committee meeting is tentatively scheduled for December 4.

Following the presentation, Mr. Armstrong clarified the action area for management was the federal waters within Cook Inlet (those waters three miles from shore) and the focus was on fisheries management as opposed to species management. There were also questions and clarifications about the MSA standard of managing fisheries throughout their range, and the composition of the committee to include other salmon users on the committee in the future. It was further noted the BOF will begin its formal review of the Upper Cook Inlet finfish regulations starting this winter and culminating in a meeting February 2020.



#### Southeast Alaska King Salmon Stock Status and Management.

[http://www.adfg.alaska.gov/static/regulations/regprocess/fisheriesboard/pdfs/2018-2019/jp/se\\_king.pdf](http://www.adfg.alaska.gov/static/regulations/regprocess/fisheriesboard/pdfs/2018-2019/jp/se_king.pdf)

ADF&G's Jeff Nichols, Southeast Regional Fisheries Research Coordinator, and Bob Chadwick, Southeast Regional Fisheries Management Coordinator, provided a status report on Southeast Chinook salmon and management, focused on escapement goals, stock status, and harvest rates of Southeast Chinook salmon. There are 34 known Chinook stocks, eleven which are identified as indicator stocks. Indicator stocks receive a high level of monitoring and assessment including the application of escapement goals<sup>1</sup>. Stock status is very poor. Four of the 11 indicator stocks had levels below their biological escapement goals over the past 3 years. There are four Chinook stocks of concern in Southeast for the Chilkat, Stikine, Unuk, and King Salmon rivers. Detailed action plans were developed at the February 2018 Southeast Finfish meeting in an effort to curtail harvest on these stocks. The actions plan culminated in significant restrictions to harvest among all users.

A question was answered about the genetic composition of NMFS's Gulf of Alaska (GOA) trawl bycatch showing a very low percentage of Southeast Chinook salmon. Other responses discussed the long term status of Chinook salmon as 'good' based on average escapement observed over the time series and the effects of ocean temperature on production in the GOA described in the Council's ecosystem status report.

#### Bering Sea Aleutian Islands Pacific Cod Assessment and Management.

[http://www.adfg.alaska.gov/static/regulations/regprocess/fisheriesboard/pdfs/2018-2019/jp/bsai\\_pcod.pdf](http://www.adfg.alaska.gov/static/regulations/regprocess/fisheriesboard/pdfs/2018-2019/jp/bsai_pcod.pdf)

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<sup>1</sup> Escapement goals for salmon refers to the range of salmon that must return and reproduce in their natal spawning grounds in order to have consistent and sustainable returns of salmon in years to follow.

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NPFMC Plan Coordinator Dr. Diana Stram, and Economist Jon McCracken, provided an overview on the status of Pacific cod stocks, an overview of total allowable catch (TAC) allocation and federal management of BS/AI cod, and updates on NPFMC initiatives on BS/AI cod fishery participation and AI cod community and shoreside processor protections.

Pacific cod is managed as three separate stocks: Eastern BS, AI, and GOA. The control rules for maximum catches provide for reduced harvests at biomass below 40%, and a closure to directed fishing when biomass drops below 20%. Survey data indicate declines in BS abundance, a low biomass but slight increases in the AI, and a steep decline in the GOA due to high mortality (from starvation) resulting from warmer water temperatures. The relative abundance of Pacific cod in state waters from the NMFS summer trawl surveys in the AI (~ 13% in 2018) and BS were reported. Genetic information suggests separate cod populations in Prince William Sound, Kodiak, Adak, and all BS areas (including the Northern BS). Genetic samples are needed from the Shumagin Islands area for a full picture of the populations. Tagging studies suggest large seasonal movements within the Eastern BS. Tagging also shows a winter migration of cod from the BS into the GOA at perhaps 15-17% of the population. There is likely a strong association between the Shumagin and Unimak populations.

Catch limit specifications were described, including the allocation to the state waters guideline harvest level (GHL) fisheries from the acceptable biological catch (ABC) levels in the AI (27%) and BS (6.4%). Thirty-four separate sector allocations of TAC were described.

Over 50% of the cod vessels have full coverage (100+%) with at least one observer on the vessel at all times. The other vessels fall into the partial coverage category funded by a fee collected based on a percent of landings fish ticket value. Pacific cod contributed to 45% of all observer fees collected in the BSAI and 8% coastwide.

The NPFMC is looking at adjusting the AI Pacific cod harvest set-aside program to protect shore plants in the Aleutians. NPFMC is also considering limiting participation in the trawl catcher vessel cod fishery and the number of catcher processors acting as motherships. Also noted was the decline in halibut stock, and the mortality associated with pot gear (9%), but not limited by a prohibited species limit for this gear type.

The report touched on potential implications of increases to the GHL. These included less harvest with observer coverages which would reduce fees for coverage. Smaller allocations to the federal fishery would result in shorter seasons and constraints on other fisheries. There may also be stranded quota in the state waters fishery if participating vessels are unable to fully harvest the GHL.

Questions were raised about including Northern BS fish in the abundance estimates (not for 2018) and plans for including this information in this year's stock assessment and specifications given the Northern BS was a substantial portion of the survey catches and bears reporting by the NPFMC. A question regarding potential observer coverage rate changes after an allocation of more Pacific cod to state waters was answered by indicating data will be available after the BOF takes action. A question on observer coverage of the fishery was answered that a majority of cod is observed; in the BS/AI 172 vessels with the highest allocation of cod are in the full coverage category.

The committee asked about Unimak Pass cod movements and if this migration was accounted for in the assessment model. It was indicated the assessment is based on a closed boundary without any consideration of mixing of the stocks through the Unimak Pass. The committee had more questions on how an increase in the state-waters GHL can constrain catches for some fisheries. Staff indicated that Pacific cod is a 'choke' species that can limit the catch of target species in the Amendment 80 sector where cod is limited and used only as a bycatch. Once the Amendment 80 sector uses all of its cod bycatch it must shut down.

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The committee received further information on tagging and recovery studies from the 1990's, migration patterns federal and state-waters, and survey locations.

State-Waters Pacific Cod Fishery Review and Proposals of Mutual Interest.

[http://www.adfg.alaska.gov/static/regulations/regprocess/fisheriesboard/pdfs/2018-2019/jp/state\\_pcod.pdf](http://www.adfg.alaska.gov/static/regulations/regprocess/fisheriesboard/pdfs/2018-2019/jp/state_pcod.pdf)

ADF&G's Mark Stichert, Groundfish/Shellfish Fisheries Management Coordinator, provided an overview of the state's Pacific cod fisheries management, and a review of BOF Pacific cod proposals to be deliberated at the upcoming Pacific cod meeting. Mr. Stichert reviewed fisheries jurisdictions between state and federal management area boundaries. The fisheries are broken out into federal fisheries, parallel fisheries (federal fishery within 3 miles of the shore with catch deducted from TAC), and state-waters GHL fisheries. The presentation included an overview of the stock assessment process, and how the ABC, TAC, and GHLs are determined. State GHL fisheries are allocated by area. An overview of management measures were provided for the federal, parallel, and state fisheries jurisdictions.

The BOF is set to review 17 Pacific cod proposals. For the AI subdistrict -

- Proposal 2 eliminates the 15 million pound GHL limit.
- Proposal 5 increases the 2020 GHL based on the Amendment 113 set-aside not available due to unrestricted trawl harvest during the 2019 fishery.
- Proposal 7 would allow vessels 100 feet or less with hold capacity less than or equal to 250,000 pounds to fish in the parallel season within the Kanaga Islands/Ship Rock Sea Lion closure area.

For the Dutch Harbor subdistrict, proposals include –

- Proposal 11 would create a state-water management plan for jig vessels with 100,000 pounds GHL and a new subdistrict.
- Proposals 12-14 would increase GHL to 8%, 10%, or 20% of the BS Pacific cod ABC.

Questions on Mr. Stichert's presentation included trip limits in Adak and why that was implemented. Mr. Stichert noted that there was concern about fish being taken by larger catcher processors and not being delivered shoreside to promote development of small local fleet. To a question about dockside sampling in the absence of an observer program, it was indicated the BOF limited the fishery pot and jig gear to limit bycatch, and there is still an opportunity to collect biological samples shoreside if needed to supplement federal observer sampling.

National Marine Fisheries Service Presentation.

[http://www.adfg.alaska.gov/static/regulations/regprocess/fisheriesboard/pdfs/2018-2019/jp/bsai\\_catch.pdf](http://www.adfg.alaska.gov/static/regulations/regprocess/fisheriesboard/pdfs/2018-2019/jp/bsai_catch.pdf)

<http://www.adfg.alaska.gov/static/regulations/regprocess/fisheriesboard/pdfs/2018-2019/jp/pcs.pdf>

NMFS's Glenn Merrill, Assistant Regional Director, noted NMFS written comments (PC-1) on concerns about the complexity in integrating upcoming BOF proposals with federal management, including potential impacts on Stellar sea lion (SSL) measures and pending federal actions. The comments discussed potential distributional effects the proposals had on existing sector allocations. NMFS also provided comments on reallocation and step up provisions for the AI fishery, including determining if there was 'undo harm' on fishery not subject to a set-aside fishery. Some proposals seeking change to management in the parallel fisheries may cause a Section 7 Consultation under the Endangered Species Act (ESA) to all of the BS/AI groundfish fisheries, which might cause changes in federal fisheries. If the BOF wished to pursue these proposals, one approach might be to conduct a consultation before taking affirmative action to determine the impact.

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Mr. Merrill discussed the NMFS presentation which provides distributional maps of Pacific cod catch by area from 2011-2018. There is a progressive movement of Pacific cod catch northward, implying that catch in state waters (Area O) may be more difficult to achieve in the future.

Mr. Merrill responded to a question about how observer coverage is affected. There is full observer coverage in federal and parallel fisheries, but not in GHL fisheries. Many catcher vessels are subject to full coverage. For those subject to partial coverage, if the vessel has a federal fishing permit (FFP) onboard it is subject to observer coverage requirements. A vessel without an FFP onboard fishing in state-waters during the parallel fishery does not have observer coverage requirements.

When asked about the resources required for an ESA consultation, Mr. Merrill discussed two ways to address this situation, a formal or informal consultation. Informal consultations are simple, discrete actions, seeking concurrence from the Protected Resources Division that the management action is not likely to have an adverse impact. A formal consultation is required when a determination indicates actions may affect a protected species. In this case it may require a large biological assessment, and reasonable and prudent measures be established to mitigate effects. There was additional discussion about the Bogoslof jig fishery and ability to affect a consultation.

4. Public Testimony. The committee took public testimony from -

- Gerry Davis, Yukon Delta Fisheries Development Association
- Matt Robinson, Bristol Bay Economic Development Corporation
- Gerry Merrigan – Freezer Longliners
- Craig Lowenberg - Bering Sea Pot Cod Cooperative
- Brent Paine – United Catcher Boats
- Chad See – individual
- Chris Woodley / Todd Loomis – Groundfish Forum
- Hannah Heimbech – Under 60 Foot Harvesters.
- Paddy O’ Donnell – Alaska Whitefish Trawlers Association
- Julie Bonney – Alaska Groundfish Bank
- Dustin Dickerson – Unalaska Native Fishermen’s Association

5. Committee discussion of Agenda items

Following public testimony, the Committee discussed what they had heard in presentations and testimony. Comments were made on how helpful this information could be for decision making.

Kenny Down noted the importance of the tagging study information. While an old study, it provides insights into Pacific cod migrations. The Board went from 3.5% to 6.4%, but now there is not much buffer between the ABC and TAC to allow an increase in Pacific cod catch from the ABC. Testimony described impacts of Pacific cod GHL changes; the BOF should consider these.

Andy Mezirow also felt like he learned a lot about how the state made decisions and was struck by testimony of the Community Development Quota groups and others about the effects on Alaskans and Alaska communities.

Glenn Merrill expressed appreciation to staff for providing briefings and hope they help the BOF to understand complicated decisions and ESA issues. He also noted that economic analysis was not provided, but if the BOF thinks it might be useful, NMFS could help provide this information the next time around.

John Jensen also learned a lot and thanked everyone for participating.

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Fritz Johnson also found it valuable, noting the complexity of federal management. He thanked all for the great presentations.

Buck Laukitis thanked staff for excellent reports and feels that the JPC should occur more often, and, in the future, it would be good to know what data might be needed before the meeting to assist in decision-making. Mr. Laukitis encouraged a process for JPC members to think about the information they might want before them at the meeting. We may want to think about the best time to schedule future meetings.

6. Other Business. None.

7. Adjourn