



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



## Meeting Summary

The meeting was held in person at the Egan Center in Anchorage on October 13, 2022. The meeting agenda, background materials, presentation, and written comment letters are posted on the meeting webpage at <http://www.adfg.alaska.gov/index.cfm?adfg=fisheriesboard.meetinginfo&date=10-13-2022&meeting=anchorage>

Joint Protocol Committee membership:

North Pacific Fishery Management Council

Angel Drobnic  
Kenny Down  
Andy Mezirow

Alaska Board of Fisheries

John Jensen  
Märit Carlson-Van Dort  
Mike Heimbuch

The meeting convened at approximately 8:35am.

1. **Introductions** – Mr. Jensen served as meeting Chair and opened the meeting with introductions of the members and Executive Directors.
2. **Staff Reports** – Mark Stichert (ADF&G) provided a presentation on **Bering Sea crab stock status**. He reviewed the catch specifications (limits) for the coming season. The snow crab fishery and all king crab fisheries are closed for the 22/23 season. For snow crab, mature biomass is the lowest in the timeseries, and the stock is considered overfished and a rebuilding plan is under development. He reviewed the recruitment data, including the historically high 2018 juvenile cohort, and the unexpected and subsequent collapse of the stock due to an extremely high natural mortality event between 2019 and 2021 (there was no survey in 2020 due to covid). There was also a fishery in 2020/21 based on model estimates, that in retrospect, added fishing mortality on larger crab. There is a 50mm cohort in the survey data that may recruit in about 4 years. Tanner crab remain at relatively low population levels, with some sign of good recruitment in future years. Bristol Bay red king crab has a very low level of mature males and females below threshold, with a poor outlook. There are no signs of incoming recruitment in the data.

Sarah Rheinsmith and Jon McCracken (NPFMC) provided an overview of the Bering Sea **snow crab rebuilding plan**. Due to the stock status overfished determination in 2021, a rebuilding plan is required by section 304 of the MSA. The time period for rebuilding the stock must be specified to be as short as possible, taking into account requirements detailed in MSA NS1. The Council intends to review a draft rebuilding plan in December 2022, and take final action in February 2023. Under the proposed rebuilding plan, there exist two alternatives; Alternative 1: no action and Alternative 2: adopt a rebuilding plan and specify target rebuilding time not to exceed  $T_{max}$ . Under Alternative 2, there are two options that consider whether or not directed fishing will occur during the time the stock is rebuilding. The minimum time projected for rebuilding ( $T_{min}$ ) is 6 years, dictating that the maximum time for rebuilding ( $T_{max}$ ) is 10 years. The rebuilding projections suggests there is minimal impact of bycatch on the rebuilding period.

Dr. Diana Stram (NPFMC) and Josh Keaton (NMFS) provided an overview of **Federal Pacific cod stock assessment and management**. Three stocks are managed: Bering Sea, Aleutian Islands, and Gulf of Alaska. Slides provided a description of harvest control rules, cod distribution, survey biomass estimates, and modeled biomass and recruitment where estimated. The Bering Sea stock biomass is high, but declining; AI biomass is low; and the GOA biomass is low and declining. The directed fishery has been closed in the GOA. Genetic information shows a break between Eastern GOA, Western GOA, AI, and Eastern Bering Sea/Northern Bering Sea stocks. Diana reviewed the allocations of total catch limits into federal (TAC) and state waters (GHL) in the Bering Sea and AI. In Federal fisheries, cod are further allocated to different sectors, gears and vessel sizes, and seasons, such that there are 34 separate allocations. Josh provided a summary of the 2021 catch by sector, maps showing the catch occurs by each sector, and histograms showing timing of catch by different gear sectors for Bering Sea and GOA Pacific cod fisheries. Time series of participation by different gear types were also provided for the GOA cod fisheries. A summary of observer coverage in the Pacific cod fisheries was provided.

Dr. Kate Haapala (NPFMC) provided an update of recent council action on **small boat access for Bering Sea Pacific cod**. This action would amend the FMP to require smaller vessels operating in the <60' hook and line /pot catcher vessels to harvest Pacific cod from the jig sector. Council took action in December 2022 to redefine the cod jig sector to include hook and line or pot vessels less than or equal to 55' length overall. The B and C season will be jig only, such that after the end of the jig sector's A season end, all hook and line or pot catcher vessels less than or equal to 60' would be in the same sector. Dr. Haapala highlighted points to consider for the BOF. Under the council's action, the BOF would need to address the trigger for opening the Dutch Harbor Subdistrict pot fishery. Currently, the state uses the <60' hook and line/pot catcher vessel sectors closure date as a trigger to open the DHS state waters cod fishery seven days after the sectors closure date. Impacts were discussed relative to possible BOF options (e.g., the redefined jig sector's A season closure date or the redefined <60' sector's closure date) to use as a trigger. For example, the redefined jig sector's A season might end at the regulatory closure date of April 30 which would substantially delay the timing of the DHS state waters cod fishery opening.

Given the timing for regulation development, this action would likely be implemented for the start of the 2025 fishing year. Recent participation in Federal and state water fisheries was presented for the different vessel size groups.

Mark Stichert (ADF&G) provided an overview of **State Pacific cod management**. State jurisdiction and state groundfish management areas were described, as well as the two types of fisheries that occur in State waters: Parallel fisheries that operate concurrently with federal fisheries, and state waters GHL fisheries. Mark reviewed the BSAI parallel and state waters Pacific cod fisheries requirements and characteristics.

A review of the various Alaska Peninsula, AI, Bering Sea and Chignik Pacific cod meeting proposals to the BOF was provided, with a highlight on those proposals that may involve both management bodies.

- **Proposal 1** (from ADF&G) would update the regulations in the AI.
- **Proposal 2** would restrict AI Pcod fishing to only pot vessels less than or equal to 100' using single lines, and jig vessels under 58' that are limited to <25% of GHL.
- **Proposals 3 and 4** would adjust the season start date in AI to March 1 for >60' trawl vessels.
- **Proposal 5** would restrict vessels fishing Unalaska Bay to <55'.
- **Proposal 6** would restructure allocation range of 10 to 13% of ABC for GHL in Dutch Harbor district, using 4 teirs.

- **Proposal 7** (from ADF&G) would revise pot and jig gear fishery requirements in the Dutch Harbor subdistrict.
  - **Proposal 8** (from ADF&G) would add a weather delay provision in opening the South Alaska Peninsula Pacific cod fishery.
  - **Proposal 9** would remove vessel registration exclusivity for state waters jig gear fisheries (black rockfish and Pacific cod) and open state waters Pacific cod seasons for jig gear on January 1.
  - **Proposal 10** would define a GHF for sablefish in state waters of the AI, set at 5% of the combined federal BSAI sablefish ABC.
3. **Oral Public Testimony.** A total of 3 people provided oral public comments: Jamie Goen, George Pappas, and John Moller. Testifiers noted concerns with the crab fishery closures and salmon runs, federal subsistence communications, and progress on reopening a fish plant on Adak. Written comment letters were also submitted and posted online.
4. **Committee discussion** – Council members highlighted recent Council action to conserve Bristol Bay Red king crab and snow crab, including identification of these stocks as priority conservation species, scheduling a review of an analysis for emergency action to restrict fishing gears from the Bristol Bay Red King Crab Savings Area, request for immediate voluntary efforts of the groundfish fleets to avoid salmon bycatch, and development of a comprehensive workplan to consider future conservation actions. The workplan will allow for additional time to work with the scientists and industry to find the best solutions for conserving and rebuilding this stock.

Board members requested that any action by the Council in December, relative to BSAI crab stocks and Cook Inlet salmon, be communicated to the members of the JPC. Should the Executive Directors decide that another JPC meeting should be scheduled to discuss these issues, one could be scheduled for some appropriate time next year.

Committee chair thanked staff for excellent and informative presentations, as well as the public for providing additional information and perspectives in their testimony.

5. **Other Business** – No other business was addressed.
6. **Adjourn** – The meeting adjourned at approximately 11:40 am.