

## **PROPOSAL 6**

### **5 AAC 28.648 Dutch Harbor Subdistrict Pacific Cod Management Plan.**

Establish new framework for setting annual state-waters Pacific cod GHLs, as follows:

We propose to create a GHL fishery that addresses the conservation needs of the Pacific Cod Stock, particularly in periods of low abundance while balancing Alaska's economic interests in all sectors of the fishery, knowing that both federal and state fishery participants benefit along with Alaskan communities, harvesters, the CDQ program and processors. We recognize the importance of the state water opportunities for Alaskans and seek a framework that balances these opportunities with the historical dependency on the federal fishery for the 65 coastal Alaska communities in the CDQ program and other Alaskan participants in the federal sectors.

In 2015, a key point in the Board of Fisheries deliberations to increase the DHS GHL to 6.4% was the limited impact to Federal participants, due to the buffer between the ABC and TAC. However, this buffer no longer exists under the current low Pacific Cod biomass levels. A framework providing for the GHL to fluctuate relative to ABC is consistent with the BOF's original intent:

-In years of high abundance, cod is less constraining and the GHL is increased

-In years of low abundance, the GHL decreases to minimize the economic impact to Alaskan communities, fisherman and CDQ groups participating in Federal fisheries.

We propose a 4-tier approach for setting the DHS GHL. Under this approach, the GHL would continue to be set as a percentage of the federal Bering Sea ABC each year. The %ABC in a given year, however, would be determined by a combination of the latest estimate of Pcod biomass and recent fishery performance. If, for example, the fishery is expected to fully harvest the GHL, then the %ABC used for the subsequent year GHL would be based on *biomass tier* (see below). If, on the other hand, the GHL will not be fully harvested, then the subsequent year 's GHL would be reduced by one percentage point relative to ABC. Such a performance-based GHL reduction would not be applied, however, if a tier-based reduction in GHL is going to be necessary due to a decline in biomass. In addition, if the ABC goes up a biomass tier and the GHL was not harvested in the current year the corresponding percentage increase in the subsequent year would not apply. The GHL as a percentage of ABC would be a minimum of 10%, and the maximum would be 13%.

Biomass tiers:

- ABC < 100,000 mt                      GHL = 10% ABC

- ABC 100,000 – 125,000 mt        GHL = 11% ABC (GHL 2022 level is 11% =37.2 mill lbs.)

- ABC 125,000 – 150,000 mt        GHL = 12% ABC

- ABC > 150,000 mt                    GHL = 13% ABC (maximum GHL= 44,092,400 lbs)

Consistent with the original intent of the BOF, we believe this approach strikes a balance between the harvest capacity of both DHS and offshore fisheries and the conservation needs of the Pacific cod stock.

**Draft Language**

### **5AAC 28.648. Dutch Harbor Subdistrict Pacific Cod Management Plan**

**e. During a state-water season,**

**(1). the guideline harvest level for Pacific cod in the Dutch Harbor subdistrict is set annually based on the Pacific cod acceptable biological catch for the federal Bering Sea Subarea as follows:**

- (A) when the annual Bering Sea Subarea Pacific cod acceptable biological catch is less than 100,000 metric tons the guideline harvest level is set at 10 percent of the Bering Sea Subarea Pacific cod acceptable biological catch;**
- (B) when the annual Bering Sea Subarea Pacific cod acceptable biological catch is equal to or greater than 100,000 metric tons but less than 125,000 metric tons the guideline harvest level is set at 11 percent of the Bering Sea Subarea Pacific cod acceptable biological catch;**
- (C) when the annual Bering Sea Subarea Pacific cod acceptable biological catch is equal to or greater than 125,000 metric tons but less than 150,000 metric tons the guideline harvest level is set at 12 percent of the Bering Sea Subarea Pacific cod acceptable biological catch;**
- (D) when the annual Bering Sea Subarea Pacific cod acceptable biological catch is equal to or greater than 150,000 metric tons the guideline harvest level is set at 13 percent of the Bering Sea Subarea Pacific cod acceptable biological catch, not to exceed 44,092,400 pounds (20,000 metric tons);**

**(2). If the guideline harvest level established under this section is not projected to be harvested by the end of the calendar year the subsequent year 's guideline harvest level will be reduced by 1 percent, however, the annual guideline harvest level may not be reduced below 10 percent. The reduction of 1 percent would not take effect if the subsequent years guideline harvest level was reduced due to the Bering Sea Subarea Pacific cod acceptable biological catch dropping in biomass so that the fisheries guideline biological harvest was less than the current years. In addition, if the ABC goes up a biomass tier and the GHL was not harvested in the current year, the corresponding percentage increase in the subsequent year would not apply. The GHL as a percentage of ABC would be a minimum of 10%, and the maximum would be 13%.**

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**What is the issue you would like the board to address and why?** In 2015, the BOF increased the 2016 GHL for Pacific Cod in the Dutch Harbor Subdistrict (DHS) from 3.2 % to 6.4 % of the federal allowable biological catch (ABC) for Pacific Cod in the Bering Sea. The GHL remained at 6.4% of ABC until 2019 when it the BOF increased it to 8% of ABC. In 2018 the BOF also created a step-up provision so that if the DHS GHL is fully harvested, the subsequent year's GHL would increase by 1% of the federal ABC. The DHS GHL is considered to have been achieved if, by November 15, 90% of the GHL is projected to be harvested by the end of that calendar year. Currently, in 2022, the DHS GHL is 11% of ABC (37.2 million lbs.). Although ABC is designated by federal managers and is the basis for the DHS GHL, TAC (total allowable catch) is the term for the harvest available to fishermen that fish in federal waters, and therefore, TAC = ABC – GHL.

In its 2018 action, the BOF established an upper limit on the increases in the DHS GHL, which is 15% of the federal ABC.

The BS Pacific Cod stock is experiencing unprecedented shifts in distribution, biomass and recruitment due to warming ocean temperatures. Case in point is the BS Pacific Cod ABC which has decreased more than 58% in the last 5 years. During the past nine years (2014-2022), the Bering Sea Pacific Cod ABC has been set at a maximum of 255,000 metric tons to a minimum of 106,000 metric tons.

All the available information shows that there is considerable uncertainty regarding the long-term health of the Pacific Cod stock. Taking the conservation of the Pacific Cod stock into consideration it's reasonable to implement a management plan that links access to the resource to the health of the resource. In other words, link the state water GHL to the federal ABC as determined in the Federal BSAI harvest specifications process. .

**PROPOSED BY:** Aleutian Pribilof Island Community Development Association, Bristol Bay Economic Development Corporation, Coastal Villages Region Fund and Yukon Delta Fisheries Development Association (HQ-F22-041)

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