

Summary of the Council Motion – April 2014

(Parts 1 - 4) The Council passed a motion expanding on a framework to meet its Goals & Objectives for the GOA groundfish trawl fishery through a program of groundfish and prohibited species allocations to cooperatives. These cooperatives would be made up of catcher vessels and shoreside processors, or would be cooperatives comprised of catcher processors. Chief among the Council's 14 Goals & Objectives are (1) giving the trawl fleet the tools to better avoid Prohibited Species Catch (or bycatch) of Chinook salmon, halibut, and crab, and (2) reducing regulatory discards in the trawl fisheries.

The envisioned program would cover the Western Gulf, Central Gulf, and West Yakutat management areas.

Reducing bycatch will both leave prohibited species fish in the water for conservation, and provide additional target fishery opportunities through more efficient use of constraining PSC limits.

Allowing voluntary cooperatives to manage a collection of allocated fishing privileges and bycatch caps (cooperative quotas) will enable flexible, coordinated, and responsive behaviors on the water throughout the course of the year. Cooperatives allow harvesters and processors to pool quotas and reduce the risk of lost fishing opportunity due to hitting individual bycatch limits, while incorporating real-time information sharing (about bycatch hotspots), formalized incentive plans, and shared efforts in gear modification to reduce bycatch.

All trawl vessels in the GOA would be subject to 100% observer coverage.

Vessels that choose not to join a cooperative would be able to fish in a "limited access" fishery, the catch limit for which would be determined by the amount of catch history that is associated with limited access participants' licenses, in aggregate. Limited access participants would be subject to a collective bycatch limit – also determined in relation to their collective catch history and then reduced to allow for bycatch savings – and would also be required to have 100% observer coverage.

(Part 5) The Council began with a framework in 2013 that would allocate only pollock and Pacific cod, because those target fisheries are of the greatest importance to the Catcher Vessel sector, the available catch is close to fully utilized, and the majority of halibut and Chinook salmon bycatch attributed to the CV fleet are in these primary fisheries. With this motion, the Council is considering the allocation of some additional target species – flatfish, rockfish, and secondary species that are both valuable and fully utilized. Allocating these other species is also necessary to consider now that the Council is considering including the Catcher/Processor sector in the bycatch management program, which rely mainly on non-pollock/non-cod target species. The purpose of allocating species is to slow down the "race for fish" – which often produces higher bycatch rates – and to allow those allocated fisheries to come under the cooperative management structure – which is good for bycatch management.

(Part 6) In allocating pollock, cod, and other target and secondary species, the Council would start from existing allocations of target species between harvest sectors and gear types. In relation to pollock – for example – 100% of the directed fishery is allocated to cooperatives comprised of vessels that deliver to inshore (mainly shore-based) processors. Catcher/Processors can only retain and process pollock catch that is incidental to their fisheries, subject to existing retention limits. This aspect of management would not be changed.

Inshore cooperatives would receive pollock allocations based on the catch history associated with their members' licenses. The total amount of PSC (for Chinook salmon or halibut) that is designated for use in the pollock fishery is *then* allocated to cooperatives in accordance with the individual license holder's

historical *pollock* catch... so as not to reward individuals who caught more prohibited species in the past with more prohibited species quota.

(Part 7 - 8) Each inshore cooperative would have a processor-member. For the first two years of participation in the program, a harvester must join the cooperative that is formed around the processor to which they delivered the majority of their catch during the qualifying period. This is intended to provide some stability in the processing sector (and communities) at the program's outset. The harvesters, processor (and an option is provided to include a community representative) would have to agree upon a contract that lays out a fishing plan, a plan to manage and reduce bycatch, and other requirements that help to achieve Council objectives like community stability and fair access to participate in the fishery.

A similar cooperative structure is laid out for the C/P sector, with the main difference being a minimum number of separate entities (or a minimum number of LLPs) required to join a co-op.

In both cases, annual harvest and PSC allocations are freely transferable within a cooperative (to promote flexibility, cooperation, and to manage risk). Transfers between co-ops must receive NMFS approval. C/P cooperatives can transfer annual cooperative quota to inshore co-ops, but they cannot receive inshore quota.

(Part 9) Several elements of the motion's framework address "Community Stability" by limiting consolidation to a smaller number of active vessels or processing plants, and by restricting changes in where groundfish are delivered for processing (compared to a historical qualifying period). The program has limits on how much target species quota (for a given region – WG, or CG/WY) that a person can hold... or that can be fished on a single vessel in the course of a year. There are also caps on how much of the total aggregate target species quota can be processed at a single plant in a given year. Landings of target species history that was earned in a certain region (WG, or CG/WY) must still be delivered in that region.

(Part 10) In addition to annual quota transfers within (or between) cooperatives, LLP licenses and their associated quotas are transferable. For CVs, catch history can be severed from the license and transferred to another trawl license-holder... thus allowing a license holder to increase their participation, or to enter the fishery, without necessarily having to acquire a new LLP license that has associated history.

(Part 11) The Council's motion would also allow CVs in a cooperative to fish Pacific cod trawl quota with pot gear. This measure is intended to allow fishermen to harvest their cooperative allocations with gear that is better for avoiding or reducing bycatch of prohibited species. Any pot gear catch by program quota holders would still count against their trawl cod allocation, so as not to impact the amount of cod that is currently allocated directly to the pot sector.

(Part 13) The Council is evaluating whether all existing "sideboards" are still necessary. Sideboards limit the participation of GOA vessels that also have quota in other North Pacific programs... for example, in the Bering Sea or Aleutian Islands. Similarly, the Council is considering whether it needs to create new sideboards to ensure that participants in this program do not expand their activities in other GOA fisheries, relative to historical levels. The Council specifically noted Pacific cod trawl fisheries in West Yakutat (not allocated under this program), and pot cod fisheries in the Western and Central GOA that are already separate from the trawl cod fishery in those areas.