

ALASKA BOARD OF FISHERIES

Walleye Pollock Workgroup Minutes

The Workgroup met on April 16, 2014 at the Hilton Hotel in Anchorage, AK

1. Introductions

Workgroup members present:

Sue Jeffrey, Co-Chair	(Board of Fisheries)
John Jensen, Co-Chair	(Board of Fisheries)
Ed Dersham	(North Pacific Fishery Management Council- NPFMC)
Duncan Fields	(North Pacific Fishery Management Council)
Julie Bonney	(CGOA trawl voluntary cooperative manager)
Patrick O'Donnell	(CGOA LLP trawl vessel owner)
Curt Waters	(CGOA LLP trawl vessel operator)
Matt Hegge	(Proposal author)
Raymond May	(Kodiak purse seine vessel)
Beaver Nelson	(Cook Inlet purse seine vessel)
Darius Kasperzak	(Kodiak jig vessel)
John Gucer	(Cook Inlet jig vessel)
Mitch Kilborn	(CGOA large processor)
Bill Fejes	(CGOA small processor)
Chris Sannito	(CGOA small processor)

Support staff:

Glenn Haight, Sherry Wright	Board support
Kelly Hepler, Nicole Kimball	ADF&G Commissioner's office
Forrest Bowers, Karla Bush	ADF&G Headquarters
Wayne Donaldson, Mark Stichert, Trent Hartill	ADF&G Westward Region
Tim Baker, Jan Rumble	ADF&G Central Region
Glenn Merrill	NMFS Sustainable Fisheries
Sam Cunningham, Chris Oliver	NPFMC staff

Members of the public: Sam Cotton, Chuck McCallum, Neil Peterson, Art Holmberg, George Hutchings, Ernie Weiss, Sinclair Wilt, Mike Flores, Rebecca Skinner, Heather McCarty, Theresa Peterson, Becca Robins-Gisclair, and Dale Pedersen.

2. General Comments on the Purpose of Pollock Workgroup

Board member Jeffery opened the meeting by reviewing the goals and objectives of the workgroup. Primarily, the workgroup will gather information and provide perspectives on the benefits to the State that could result from the North Pacific Fishery Management Council's (Council) Gulf of Alaska trawl bycatch program and a proposal to the Board to open a state guideline harvest level (GHL) walleye pollock fishery.

3. Description of GOA Pollock Fisheries in Federal and State Waters

a. State Parallel Fishery¹

Trent Hartill (ADF&G) provided an overview of the state-water parallel pollock fishery, which is prosecuted concurrent to the federal pollock fishery. The parallel fishery is managed by adopting most of the federal management measures in state waters and provides seamless transition for vessels that participate in the pollock trawl fishery from 0 -200 miles. Harvest during the parallel fishery is deducted from the federal total allowable catch (TAC) for pollock and all salmon prohibited species catch (PSC) is deducted from the federal PSC limits. There is no separate accounting for catch or PSC during the parallel fishery. Vessels participating in the parallel fishery are not required to have a federal fishery permit (FFP) or a federal license limitation permit (LLP) for groundfish. Currently all pollock trawl participants have an LLP and none fish exclusively in state waters. The State's Constitution does not recognize federal sector allocations based on processing activity (catcher vessels or catcher processors). All state waters in the Cook Inlet, Kodiak, and Chignik Registration Areas are closed to non-pelagic trawling.

The majority of pollock in the federal and parallel fisheries are taken by trawl gear (~99%); very little is taken by other gear types. Jig gear is currently a legal gear type for pollock in both the federal and parallel fisheries, seine gear is not. Pollock may be retained by vessels using jig and longline gear up to the maximum retainable amount (MRA) during a closed federal season. An average of 23% of the total pollock harvest in the Central GOA comes from state waters (2003 – 2012 average).

Workgroup comments/questions:

Members discussed how harvest is accounted for within state waters. The proportion of harvest that comes from state waters is calculated using fish tickets (eLandings). Harvest location, reported by state statistical area, is self-reported by the vessel operator at the time of landing. There is no standard approach for reporting where catch occurs, some operators report the statistical area where they hauled back (brought in their net). Therefore, the proportion of catch from state/federal waters is likely not an exact accounting of where the fish were harvested since vessels often tow across multiple statistical areas while fishing. This is not a management concern because all harvest accrues to the TAC, regardless of whether it is harvested in federal or state waters.

Members also discussed the stock assessment process, and staff noted there is no separate pollock stock assessment for state and federal waters. Pollock in the Western, Central, and Eastern GOA are considered to be one stock based on current understanding of stock structure. There are no proposed changes to the current stock assessment program if a change is made to how the fishery is managed (separate federal and state seasons). State resources for additional stock assessments do not exist; in Pacific cod, for example, the State relies on the federal stock assessments in order to set the GHGs for state-water Pacific cod fisheries.

The current fishery is spread out geographically and temporally as a precautionary measure to address Endangered Species Act concerns for Steller Sea Lions (SSL). SSL measures don't have to be adopted in a state pollock GHG fishery, but in most cases the state has mirrored management to ensure that jeopardy or adverse modification to SSL critical habitat doesn't occur. Changes in management or new information can trigger a consultation. Consultations can be informal or formal, depending on the magnitude of the action. If

¹ Meeting document titled "Current CGOA Pollock Fishery in State Waters" found on the Board of Fisheries CGOA Pollock Workgroup's webpage: <http://www.adfg.alaska.gov/index.cfm?adfg=cgoapollockworkgroup.meetinginfo>

an action is determined likely to have an adverse effect on SSL, then federal management would have to be modified and would likely constrain other fisheries.

b. State Prince William Sound (PWS) Fishery²

Jan Rumble (ADG&F) presented an overview of the state-GHL pollock trawl fishery that occurs in PWS. This is an open access, non-exclusive directed fishery that began in 1995. There is not a parallel fishery that occurs in PWS, as there is not an adjacent federal fishery. The GHL is based on 2.5% of the GOA acceptable biological catch (ABC) for pollock. The PWS Pollock Pelagic Trawl Management Plan divides the district into three management sections and restricts harvest from any one management section to no more than 60% of the GHL. Total weight of all bycatch species combined may not exceed 5% of the total round weight of the pollock harvested. Bycatch caps for individual species or species groups are also specified (e.g. 0.5% for rockfish). Other management measures include trip limits (300,000 pounds) and procedures for checking in and out of the fishery. In addition, there is a test fishery that is generally conducted after the close of the directed pollock fishery.

In 2014, there were 19 vessels that participated in the PWS pollock fishery; in 2013 a total of 14 vessels participated. The 2014 fishery closed before the total GHL was taken (72% was harvested) due to reaching the bycatch limit for rockfish. During the past 10 years, there are only a few other instances when the fishery closed early due to bycatch. This year, bad weather and vessels racing for fish contributed to the early closure.

Workgroup comments/questions:

Bycatch limits for individual species or species groups in the PWS fishery are generally based on historic catch records and these limits are static (similar to the Chinook PSC caps in the GOA). All bycatch accounting happens at the time of landing.

There is no directed commercial fishery for rockfish in PWS, rather harvest occurs incidental to longline, jig, and trawl fisheries. The rockfish harvest limit in PWS is set in regulation by the Board and is currently 150,000 pounds.

c. Federal Fishery³

Glenn Merrill (NMFS) presented an overview of federal management. The Magnuson-Stevens Fishery Conservation and Management Act (MSA) is the primary law governing marine fisheries management in federal waters. The Act establishes regional fishery councils, such as the North Pacific Fishery Management Council for waters off Alaska, which are responsible for developing fishery policy. The Council is made up of 11 voting members, the majority of which represent Alaska (six seats). The National Marine Fisheries Service (NMFS) implements Council policy. The Council process requires extensive opportunity for public input and effective management relies on a strong cooperative working relationship with the State and the fishing community.

Federal stock assessments form the foundation of conservative and sustainable management. These assessments monitor the health of fishery resources and are relied upon to set appropriate catch limits in

² Meeting document titled “Prince William Sound State-Waters Walleye Pollock Fishery” found on the Board of Fisheries CGOA Pollock Workgroup’s webpage: <http://www.adfg.alaska.gov/index.cfm?adfg=cgoapollockworkgroup.meetinginfo>

³ Meeting document titled “Overview of Federal Groundfish Management” found on the Board of Fisheries CGOA Pollock Workgroup’s webpage: <http://www.adfg.alaska.gov/index.cfm?adfg=cgoapollockworkgroup.meetinginfo>

federal, State GHL (Pacific cod), and State parallel fisheries. Once stock assessments are completed, the Council's Science and Statistical Committee establishes two important limits: an Overfishing Level (OFL), which can never be exceeded; and an ABC which is the maximum permissible harvest and is always set less than the OFL. The Council, after input from the public, sets the TAC which is the actual permissible harvest. The TAC can be equal to, but not greater than, the ABC. These limits are established annually with some limited flexibility to re-adjust individual sector allocations during the year. All harvest, including discards, count towards the total catch and fisheries are managed to ensure that annual limits (OFL/ABC) are not exceeded. This means that if catch is set aside in a State GHL fishery, such as Pacific cod, NMFS reduces the amount available to the federal fisheries; it's a zero sum game. Federal PSC limits for Chinook salmon are set in regulation and not specified annually; they apply to the federal/parallel fishery (where harvest is deducted from the TAC) and would not necessarily be reduced if a state GHL fishery for pollock included a PSC limit for salmon.

The Council and NMFS have established a wide range of tools to track catch on a timely basis. These include the federal observer program to collect basic biological samples (used in stock assessments) and monitor bycatch, especially for salmon and halibut. Tracking bycatch without onboard observers is very challenging; observer sampling occurs before discards so that total catch can be estimated. There are also reporting requirements for vessels, vessels monitoring systems (VMS) for enforcement and inseason management, video compliance (in some fisheries), and a catch reporting system developed in close coordination with the State (eLandings). Monitoring and reporting requirements are tied to the federal fishing permit (FFP – a requirement for fishing in federal waters); any vessel with an FFP is subject to these requirements, even in state waters.

When developing fishery management plans, the Council and NMFS are subject to the national standards in the MSA, which requires balancing objectives such as achieving optimum yield from the fishery, minimizing bycatch, considering communities, promoting safety, and the efficient management of resources. This balance has led to fishery management programs that try to maximize catch, but that will shut down fishing if salmon PSC limits are reached; and programs that limit the number of participants to avoid a race for fish, but that provide harvest opportunities for specific rural communities (e.g. GOA fixed gear Pacific cod LLPs).

4. Proposed Council Trawl Bycatch Management Program ⁴

a. Objectives

Nicole Kimball (ADF&G) provided background and discussed the objectives of the Council's proposed action on GOA trawl bycatch. At the June 2012 meeting, the Council took action to reduce the halibut bycatch cap and it was recognized that there are significant limitations under the current open access management structure to meet bycatch objectives. The purpose of the proposed action is to create a new management structure to mitigate the impacts of derby-style race for fish by allocating allowable harvest to individuals, cooperatives, or other entities, i.e. a form of catch shares. The Council acknowledges that fishing cooperatively, slowly, and strategically can help improve bycatch performance. The State has taken the lead on this issue, recognizing that halibut and salmon are important to the State.

The Council's program is focused on harvesters, processors, and community stability, and includes trawl fisheries in the Western and Central GOA as well as the West Yakutat (WY) management area. As the Council builds the program they will seek to minimize adverse impacts to those not in the program, provide

⁴ Links to the Council's discussion papers can be found on the Board of Fisheries CGOA Pollock Workgroup's webpage: <http://www.adfg.alaska.gov/index.cfm?adfg=cgoapollockworkgroup.references>

for new entry opportunities (there will be no closed class of vessels or processors), and promote active participation. The expanded program structure proposed by the Commissioner and approved by the Council in April will be evaluated in a discussion paper prior to the Council selecting alternatives for formal analysis. The program is far along conceptually, but has not moved into the full analysis stage.

b. Motion update ⁵

Sam Cunningham (Council staff), presented a summary of the April 2014 Council motion, which represents an expanded program structure for consideration and discussion. The Commissioner's motion expanded on the program's framework to meet its goals and objectives through a program that allocates groundfish and PSC to cooperatives. Cooperative management allows for better information sharing, such as where bycatch is occurring, and can mandate formal participation by all members in a program to reduce bycatch through the cooperative contracts. Cooperative management of bycatch is more successful than provisions fixed in federal regulation, as it can be flexible and responsive to conditions on the water. In addition, vessels can do test tows or experiment with gear modifications without incurring a loss; vessels are inhibited from this behavior under a race for fish.

Joining a cooperative is not mandatory; the Council must also create an opportunity for those who don't join cooperatives to participate in a competitive limited access fishery. Full (100%) observer coverage will be required for all GOA trawl vessels (cooperative and limited access fishing) under the Council's proposed action and is a crucial element to hold individual vessels accountable for their fishing practices.

The latest motion added catcher processors to the program and included some flatfish, rockfish, and secondary species that are both valuable and fully utilized. Allocating these other species may be necessary to slow down the "race for fish", which often produces higher bycatch rates. The October 2013 motion was focused on the inshore catcher vessel sector and on the most valuable species for that sector: pollock and Pacific cod. Catcher processors don't have a directed fishery for pollock and Pacific cod is used mostly to support other fisheries; the additional species added in the April motion are the primary targets for the catcher processor sector.

The Council's starting point for cooperative allocations in the trawl fisheries would not change existing sector allocations between the trawl and fixed gear sectors or the inshore and offshore sectors. Target species allocations would be based on the catch history of LLPs in a cooperative. PSC would be allocated pro rata based on allocations of primary species (not based on history of PSC use, in order to avoid rewarding those with higher relative bycatch). Each inshore cooperative would have a processor-member. For the first two years of participation, 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. 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, bycatch management plan, and other requirements that help achieve Council objectives like community stability and fair access to participate in the fishery. A similar cooperative structure is laid out for the catcher processor sector, with the main difference being a minimum number of separate entities required to join a cooperative.

Annual harvest and PSC allocations are proposed to be freely used within a cooperative. Transfers between cooperatives must be approved by NMFS. Catcher processor cooperatives will be able to transfer quota to inshore cooperatives, but they will not be able to receive inshore quota.

⁵ Meeting document titled "Council Motion Summary" found on the Board of Fisheries CGOA Pollock Workgroup's webpage: <http://www.adfg.alaska.gov/index.cfm?adfg=cgoapollockworkgroup.meetinginfo>

Community stability is addressed in the Council's motion through consideration of regionalization (designating the region (CGOA/WY or WGOA) to which the cooperative quota can be landed, based on where it was landed historically) and by limiting vessel and processor consolidation. The motion proposes limits on how much target species quota a person can hold or that can be fished on a single vessel in a year. Likewise, processing caps would limit the amount that a single plant can process in a given year. Regionalization keeps historical processing within a region at the historic level.

The Council is also considering whether catch history associated with a trawl LLP can be severed and transferred to another trawl LLP. This would allow new entrants, who may have an LLP with no history, to enter the fishery at a lower cost than if they were required to purchase an entire license with all attached endorsements and history.

Other provisions in the Council's motion include gear conversions which would allow catcher vessels 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.

The Council made two additional motions in April for discussion papers related to this agenda item. The first would look at a proposal to allocate quota to a community fishing association as another means to mitigate community impacts and economic harm that may arise from a catch share program. The second paper evaluates a program in the west coast trawl fisheries, which sets aside a portion of quota for adaptive management as a way to mitigate unforeseen or unintended circumstances relative to processors, communities, etc.

c. Discussion

One member asked whether catch shares in the federal pollock fisheries would exacerbate the race for fish in the state-managed pollock fishery in PWS. There was some discussion on this point relative to sideboards, which are usually adopted to limit participation in other fisheries and are linked to federal permits. Further exploration on the utility of sideboards to limit effort in the PWS fishery is needed.

Two important points for Board members on the Council's proposed program: Cooperative management has proven to be very effective in reducing bycatch, and the Council majority is comprised of Alaskan members (6/11 voting seats), led in this case by the Commissioner.

Is total harvest going to be allocated based on catch that occurred in state waters? Harvest in the proposed program would be allocated based on history of catch (years to be determined) taken off of the federal TAC, which includes both parallel waters and federal waters, minus any GHM the BOF may establish for pollock in state waters.

Where's the incentive in the cooperative agreements to reduce bycatch? Many trawl fisheries are limited by PSC, and minimizing PSC usage in one target fishery may provide for additional harvest opportunities in other fisheries that also use PSC. The Council will need to balance savings vs. usage which can be done either through the annual cooperative contract provisions or through regulations. The motion specifies that some portion of bycatch savings would be left in the water. The Council needs to balance regulatory requirements and flexibility within cooperatives to be responsive to the program's objectives.

Is there an incentive to use the gear conversion provision? Pot gear does not have the same bycatch concerns and vessels can harvest more Pacific cod with less bycatch. In the Western GOA, allowing gear conversions may provide for additional efficiencies. Currently the fleet switches back and forth between pot and trawl gear, depending on what season (or fishery) is open for Pacific cod.

5. Proposed CGOA State Pollock Fishery (BOF Proposal 44) – Introduction

a. Proposal 44 Objectives ⁶

Matt Hegge (proposal author) provided background on his proposal. He supports the goals and objectives of the Council's program and stated that his proposal was not intended to go around that; the intent was to provide continued access to state waters after catch shares are implemented. There will be a need for new management once cooperative management is implemented in the federal fishery. Components of the proposal were intended as a template of some management measures that could be considered by the Board. Prior to submittal, he was asked by other stakeholders to include jig and seine gear for the Board's consideration. At the January, 2014 meeting he submitted RC 52⁷ which removed the 58' length limit, because the Kodiak fleet is largely over 58' in length.

Mark Stichert (ADF&G) spoke briefly to the staff comments on proposal 44. Staff tried to frame the discussion based on how the fisheries are currently structured. When developing the GHL Pacific cod fisheries, the state initially only allowed gears with lower bycatch concerns (pot and jig). The complexity of any management plan depends on what types of gear are included.

b. Test Fishery Update

Trent Hartill (ADF&G) provided an update on the 2014 jig and seine test fisheries. Both of these gear types were included in the proposal for a state-water GHL pollock fishery and the Board supported testing these gear types at their January 2014 meeting. The Commissioner's Permit for jig gear allows pollock to be retained above the maximum retainable allowance (MRA) during the Pacific cod fishery. A total of 26 permits were issued and to date 49 landings, totaling ~7,000 pounds, have been harvested. The pattern of harvest is consistent with what has occurred in past years without the permit.

Pre-season registration for the seine test fishery was received from 12 vessels. The department is now beginning the process of coordinating efforts and some fishing may occur after the herring season ends and before the salmon season begins (end of May/early June). ADF&G personnel will serve as observers during the test fishery. There may also be an opportunity for some seine test fishing this fall if there is interest. The purpose of the seine test fishery is to look at both how effective the gear is and market interest.

c. Discussion

The workgroup had several questions related to seasonal apportionments, whether measures would be in place to avoid stranded fish if the GHL is not achieved, and how PSC limits would be determined. Allocative issues such as seasonal apportionments are determined by the Board. It is unknown what methodology would be used to determine PSC limits. It was noted that these questions are largely implementation issues that would need to be worked out in the future and are difficult to discuss at this point in the process.

⁶ Meeting documents titled "Staff Comments on Proposal 44 and Advisory Committee" and "Public Comments on Proposal 44" found on the Board of Fisheries CGOA Pollock Workgroup's webpage: <http://www.adfg.alaska.gov/index.cfm?adfg=cgoapollockworkgroup.meetinginfo>

⁷ Link to RC 52: http://www.adfg.alaska.gov/static/regulations/regprocess/fisheriesboard/pdfs/2013-2014/kodiak/rcs/rc052_Matt_Hegge_Sub_Lang_Proposal_44.pdf

Harvesters stressed the need for flexibility to go in and out of state waters to avoid bycatch which may be different from year to year.

From the processing perspective, timing is critical for rollovers (between state/federal fisheries). If the rollover occurs after the roe season (spawned out fish), then the product is not as valuable. Meat quality (and fish size) tends to improve in the fall.

Critical habitat closures for SSL have closed all of Kachamak Bay to trawling. Harvesters in this area expressed interest in the possibility of a seine fishery and have concerns about the impacts on other fisheries (crab/shrimp) of an increased local pollock biomass. Department staff noted that the intent of Commissioner's permits is not to create new opportunity or fisheries, but to test the gear to see if a fishery is viable. The testing is occurring in Kodiak at the outset.

The jig fleet is currently developing markets for jig caught pollock and wants to make sure there will be fishing opportunities if a catch share program is implemented.

6. Coordination Between State and Federal Fisheries ⁸

a. Describe potential problems

Nicole Kimball (ADF&G) provided an overview of why coordination is necessary between the Board and the Council relative to a new trawl bycatch management program in the GOA. The challenge is to find a way to implement the program while at the same time allowing historical participants to continue to fish in state waters, and without exacerbating a race for fish in state waters. Currently, any vessel (with or without a federal permit) can fish in the state waters parallel trawl fishery; opportunity in state waters would continue as long as state waters were open.

Under current management, all vessels stop fishing at the same time. Under a catch share program, fishing is allowed within a defined season and each vessel can choose when to fish within that season. Concurrent opening and closing of state waters for the parallel season will no longer be possible because each vessel stops fishing at a different time; thus there is no single date on which the parallel fishery would be closed for the entire sector. In order to allocate harvest to cooperatives (or the limited access fishery), the Council and NMFS will need to know the amount taken out of state waters at the beginning of the year. This lends to GHL management as opposed to parallel management, in which the amount of harvest in state waters is not limited.

b. Identify possible paths discussed to-date

Nicole Kimball (ADF&G) and Ed Dersham (Council member) discussed the Council's current thoughts on this issue. As an alternative to the existing parallel fishery system, the Board could either close state waters to trawl fishing or it could set a limit for trawl harvest in state waters using a state-managed GHL. The most feasible approach thus far analyzed in Council staff discussion papers is a system where NMFS would deduct all harvest from cooperative member vessels off of the cooperative allocation whether they fished in state or federal waters. Only state water harvests by persons that do not hold federal quota at the time the landing is made would be deducted from the GHL. Once the GHL is taken, state waters would close to all participants. Vessels with remaining federal quota could only fish in federal waters. This method of accounting is still being discussed, and other options could prove viable.

⁸ Meeting document titled "Federal GOA Trawl Bycatch Management Program Overview" found on the Board of Fisheries CGOA Pollock Workgroup's webpage: <http://www.adfg.alaska.gov/index.cfm?adfg=cgoapollockworkgroup.meetinginfo>

The idea is that if you qualify for the federal program then all catch comes off your federal allocation, whether you are fishing in state or federal waters. If you don't have a federal license, your catch comes off the GHL. The GHL wouldn't need to be reflective of the historical catch in state waters because that historical catch was made by federally-licensed participants and their catch would not accrue to the GHL under this concept. It would rather be set at a level that allows some time for federal participants to fish in state waters while at the same time provide opportunity for new participants. There may be some federal license holders who don't have much history who choose to give up their federal permits and fish only in state waters. It will be a balancing act for the Board to decide what amount to set that GHL.

This system was presented to the Council as preferred over one where federal quota holders' state-waters catch is deducted from the GHL and off of their federal allocation. This would double-count federal participant's harvest and would require mid-season adjustments to the federal catch share amounts in order to not significantly under-harvest the TAC.

c. Discussion

One member asked whether the Commercial Fisheries Entry Commission (CFEC) can implement limited entry for pollock. This would be up to the CFEC and the process would begin by first petitioning the CFEC.

Although there is currently no mechanism to roll unused GHL back to the federal fisheries in the GOA, there are not the same constraints as exist in the Bering Sea and Aleutian Islands (BSAI). In the BSAI, the groundfish fisheries are constrained by the 2 million metric ton harvest cap, and thus, there is not 'room' to roll back unused GHL without exceeding that cap. In the GOA, the groundfish fisheries are not constrained by an optimum yield harvest cap. Rollover options could be explored, although there may be some constraints due to SSL protections (currently no pollock harvest is allowed May 31 – August 25 or after November 1).

There were several questions about how to address the Western GOA, where most of the pollock TAC is harvested in state waters. What happens when the GHL is achieved and state waters close? Setting a larger GHL may incentivize people to drop their federal licenses and only participate in the state GHL fishery. We may need some other mechanism for accounting in this area. One idea would be a system where you could fish in the federal fishery first, then move into the GHL fishery, for example once 90% of the A season was taken, vessels could move to the GHL fishery. The Council is still in the initial stages for this discussion. The Council has been trying to solicit feedback from Western GOA participants on this question, and whether they support a cooperative management approach for federal waters recognizing that the majority of harvest is in state waters.

Market share per vessel is in the 2.5% range for the Central GOA. If the GHL opportunity is greater than that, then there would be an incentive to forgo the federal fishery and move into a state fishery instead.

There is a need to find out what the Board may be interested in doing before we get too far down the road in the Council program.

Concern was expressed that the Workgroup will be focused only on the existing fisheries in the Central and Western GOA and not on underutilized stocks in state waters. Young people need a way to enter the fishery and seine is an entry opportunity. In Cook Inlet the Pacific cod stocks are not underutilized, but pollock are.

Creating new gear opportunities in other areas would not prevent the Council from implementing a trawl bycatch management program; the federal TAC would be reduced for any new GHL fisheries. The GHL for these other fisheries would likely not be large enough to impact the federal program significantly, although

concern was expressed about cumulative impacts on the federal trawl fishery if new opportunities in state waters were created in multiple areas.

It was noted that a federal solution for jig fishermen may be better than a state solution. Under a catch share program, the Council could create year-round opportunity for jig with step-up provisions similar to Pacific cod. Increasing the pollock MRA for jig fishermen may also be a solution, without creating a new fishery.

There was discussion that the Board will need to determine what its goals are for a state water fishery. Is the goal to preserve the current profile of the fishery or to increase some opportunity for new gears (jig/seine) or new trawlers? One goal could be to build a system (in state-waters) that allows the fleets to meet the Council's bycatch objectives without creating a race for fish.

7. Proposed meeting schedule

Board member Jeffery discussed the need to include representatives from the Western GOA (harvesters and processors) in the Workgroup. It was agreed that additional members from this area would be helpful as the Workgroup moves forward.

The next meeting was scheduled for October 6, 2014; prior to the Council's October meeting in Anchorage.

8. Final comments

The Joint Protocol Committee will meet in Anchorage on May 21, 2014.

9. Adjourn