

North Pacific Fishery Management Council
Report on ACLs, Ending Overfishing, and Rebuilding Status
CCC Meeting, February 2009

Annual Catch Limits

The NPFMC's two Groundfish FMPs include a suite of catch limits for individual groundfish stocks. These catch limits include an overfishing limit (OFL), and acceptable biological catch limit (ABC) and a total allowable catch limit (TAC) where $TAC \leq ABC < OFL$. The OFL and ABC are set by the SSC, and the TAC is set by the Council. The groundfish TAC meets the definition of an ACL per the guidelines -- it is set not to exceed the ABC, and there are accountability measures geared both to prevent the TAC from being exceeded (e.g. directed fishing closures) and to respond if the TAC is exceeded (e.g. prohibition of retention).

The state/federal BSAI Crab FMP currently specifies annual OFLs (set by the SSC) and TACs (set by state) for individual stocks, where $TAC \leq OFL$. A direct allocation of harvest shares prevents the TAC from being exceeded (catch is limited by individual/cooperative quota shares). Any harvest over the allotted quota results in forfeiture and/or fines.

The state/federal Alaska Scallop FMP specifies an overfishing level for weathervane scallops and annual guideline harvest levels (GHL) for stock areas that cumulatively are set well below the OFL. The upper end of the GHL in each management area is analogous to a TAC or ACL. The fishery operates as a cooperative and has 100% at-sea observer coverage. The GHL is prevented from being exceeded by directed fishing closures.

The state/federal salmon FMP is unique in that the catches for the thousands of stocks are limited by in-season management by the Alaska Department of Fish and Game. We believe that our Salmon FMP meets the alternative approach described in section (h)(3) on page 3211 of the final rule, which specifically mentions Pacific salmon, and thus should be deemed exempt from ACL and AM requirements.

Action for the Council: In 2009, the Council will begin to develop an analysis to specify ABCs for stocks under the Crab and Scallop FMPs. The Salmon FMP will also be reviewed to ensure that the existing language is consistent with the MSA and the NS1 alternative approach, and the FMP will be amended if necessary. Final action on these amendments would occur in 2010.

Ending Overfishing

No stocks are subject to overfishing in the North Pacific.

Action for the Council: No action appears necessary.

Rebuilding Status

To date, there have been four stocks that were deemed 'overfished' (Bering Tanner crab, Bering Sea opilio crab, St. Matthew blue king crab, and Pribilof blue king crab) when the stocks fell below MSST following years of poor recruitment. Rebuilding plans were implemented for these crab stocks. To date, one stock is fully rebuilt above Bmsy (Tanner crab). Two stocks are no longer overfished but not yet fully rebuilt to Bmsy (opilio crab and St. Matthew blue king crab). One stock, Pribilof blue king crab, remains well below MSST ('overfished') despite not having a fishery since 1999, establishment of a no-trawl zone to protect the stock since 1995, and closures of other fisheries to limit bycatch.

Action for the Council: In 2009, the crab plan team will develop an analysis to review and revise the Pribilof Islands blue king crab rebuilding plan. The Council is tentatively scheduled to make an initial review of this analysis in December 2009, with final action scheduled for February or April 2010. The Council may also need to revise the rebuilding plans for Bering Sea opilio crab and St. Matthew blue king crab as it does not appear these stocks will be rebuilt by 2010 (T_{max} for both rebuilding plans).