



# B1 Executive Director's Report

April 2019

## Action Memo

### Aaron Martin's Last Meeting

Mr. Aaron Martin has served as the US Fish & Wildlife Service Council member representative for several years, as the alternate for USFWS Regional Director Greg Siekaniec. Aaron has informed me that this will be his last meeting as a Council member, as he is transitioning away from the fishery programs to focus on coordinating the USFWS terrestrial and aquatic invasive species program. Mr. Jon Gerken, the USFWS Fisheries Branch Chief in the Anchorage Field Office has been named as Aaron's replacement on the Council. Jon has spent many years conducting fisheries management, population assessment, and habitat restoration efforts throughout much of the state. Thank you, Aaron, for your service on the Council, and welcome aboard Jon!

### Peggy Kircher Retiring

The Council's senior Administrative Assistant Peggy Kircher is retiring at the end of April. Ms. Kircher originally started working for the Council as a Secretary in September 1980 and stayed through May 1991. After a stint working in the private sector and raising 3 boys, she returned to work for the Council as an Administrative Assistant in March 2004 and served as the secretary for the Advisory Panel through 2018. She has witnessed many changes in the fisheries, the council process, and technology throughout her tenure. She led the Council staff into the computer age with her youthful knowledge of how to use the ultra-modern high tech 1980 IBM Displaywriter which could hold nearly 100 pages of text (~250K bits of memory) on 8" floppy discs! In more recent years, Ms. Kircher has maintained the Council website, loaded agenda materials for all the meetings, and has taken on a whole suite of other responsibilities and tasks to keep our office running smoothly. She has been a very dedicated employee, and she will be greatly missed. Congratulations Peggy on your retirement!

### Plan Team Nomination

ADF&G Commissioner Doug Vincent-Lang has nominated Dr. Jie Zheng to serve as an ADF&G member on the Bering Sea and Aleutian Islands (BSAI) Crab Plan Team. Dr. Zheng is a Fishery Scientist within the Commercial Fisheries Division and has over twenty years of experience working with BSAI crab stocks. He is the lead author on the Bristol Bay red king crab stock assessment and a co-author for the Norton Sound red king crab, Aleutian Islands golden king crab, and the St. Matthew Island blue king crab assessments. His CV is [attached](#). The SSC will review the nomination, and the Council will discuss it in Executive Session.

### National Bycatch Report

NOAA Fisheries has published the third update to the National Bycatch Report. The National Bycatch Reports examine bycatch occurring across major fisheries managed under the MSA. Since 2011, NMFS has published a National Bycatch Report and three online updates provide information on overall bycatch

that may inform fishery monitoring, science, and management priorities. The third update is available here: <https://www.fisheries.noaa.gov/webdam/download/87740881>

The Council has previously raised a number of concerns with the report (see: [https://www.npfmc.org/wp-content/PDFdocuments/CM/2018/102318/101218\\_NPFMCcommentsBycatch.pdf](https://www.npfmc.org/wp-content/PDFdocuments/CM/2018/102318/101218_NPFMCcommentsBycatch.pdf)). The third update does address the concern about the fisheries target groupings, but does not address other concerns about how the data are presented (amount of catch retained, breakout of marketable and unmarketable fish, breakout of regulatory and economic discards, or reporting the bycatch estimates in significant digits).

## **BSAI Crab Rationalization Program Review Schedule**

Section 303A(c)(1)(G) of the Magnuson-Stevens Fishery Conservation and Management (as amended under the Reauthorization Act of 2006) requires a formal and detailed review of a limited access privilege program (LAPP), such as the BSAI crab rationalization program. The Magnuson-Stevens Act requires a program review “5 years after the implementation of the program and thereafter to coincide with scheduled Council review of the relevant fishery management plan (but no less frequently than once every 7 years).”

When the Council established its preferred alternative for the BSAI crab rationalization program through a motion in 2002 (i.e. prior to the Reauthorization Act of 2006), the Council included its own expectations for program reviews. The first program review occurred 18 months after implementation and was focused specifically on the distributional benefits between harvesters and processors arising under the harvest share/ processor share allocations and arbitration system and the distribution of landings of different harvest share types. The Council motion (which was subsequently adopted into the BSAI crab FMP) also required a broader 3-year primary review, a formal and comprehensive review on the fifth year of the program, and *subsequent reviews every five years*. The 3-year preliminary review was first available in 2008. The more extensive 5-year review of the program was first available in 2010. The 10-year review of the program was thus intended for 2015; however, with an interest in having 2014/15 fish ticket data and 2014 Economic Data Report (EDR) data available, the Council scheduled the review for 2016. Without any changes to the schedule, the next program review would be due in 2020/21.

When the Council considered and approved its timeline for program and allocation reviews (June 2017) it was reported that the BSAI crab program review cycle was once every 7 years (consistent with other LAPP reviews) and therefore the next comprehensive review would be expected in 2023. Given the language in the BSAI crab FMP, the Council may wish to more formally clarify this schedule for the BSAI crab reviews. **To allow the program and allocation review occur simultaneously (for maximum efficiency), the Council could consider changing the allocation review schedule to every 5 years, or changing the program review to every 7 years.**

Switching to a 7-year cycle for comprehensive BSAI crab program reviews would be consistent with the review schedule for other LAPPs managed by the Council and still in compliance with the Magnuson-Stevens Act requirement. Program reviews require considerable resources in staff or contractor hours as well as time on the Council agenda. The Council would continue to receive annual (voluntary) cooperative reports from the crab cooperatives and it is expected the Alaska Fisheries Science Center would continue to produce the BSAI crab Economic SAFE on an annual basis. Moreover, a focused evaluation of the program could occur at any time through the consideration of program amendments. The change in scheduling of comprehensive program reviews would not change the Council’s ability to take up proposals on specific crab-related issue at any Council meeting. Switching BSAI crab program reviews to a 7-year cycle could be addressed through a housekeeping FMP amendment.

## **Groundfish FMP Amendment Summaries**

Ms. Sara Cleaver recently completed summaries of the Gulf of Alaska Groundfish FMP amendments. These summaries have been compiled into a comprehensive reference document to illustrate the evolution of the GOA Groundfish FMP. This volume is meant to serve as a research tool for anyone interested in understanding the development of the North Pacific's federal fishery management program, and it illustrates how fisheries management in the Gulf of Alaska has adapted and changed over time. Each summary provides an overview of the purpose and need, analysis, regulation, and results of each action. A document with amendment summaries for the Bering Sea and Aleutian Islands Groundfish FMP was printed in May 2016. Both volumes (BSAI and GOA) can be found on the Council website in the publications section - summary reports page.

## **Ocean Acidification Network**

Ocean acidification is expected to impact Arctic and subarctic regions faster and more intensively than other parts of the world, and researchers are working to investigate how and when this might affect commercial species. Dr. Bob Foy, Alaska Fisheries Science Center Director, is with us today to provide an update on what is known, with particular focus on crab stocks in the Bering Sea. NOAA scientists have explored the physiological response of red king crab and Tanner crab to ocean acidification, the stock assessment and bioeconomic projections based on this research, and how global climate models can integrate ocean acidification and other factors to give us insights into future fisheries. The presentation will also touch on the efforts of the Ocean Acidification Network to engage with and disseminate information to fishing communities.

## **Recent Staff/Council activities**

Mr. Tweit, Dr. Diana Stram, and Ms. Diana Evans attended an EBFM workshop in Seattle on February 19-21. This workshop was part of a [Lenfest project](#) that is developing practical indicators of ecosystem structure and function that have management relevancy, in 4 case study regions: the Bering Sea, Chile, southwest India, and southeast Australia. Workshop participants examined ecosystem models under development in each region, potential indicators for ecosystem health and structure, and how they might be tied to specific management needs for EBFM in each region. Staff provided presentations on the Magnuson-Stevens Act, and how the Act enables EBFM in US fisheries and particularly the North Pacific.

On March 6-8 Ms. Sarah LaBelle attended a portion the Pacific Fishery Management Council meeting to get ideas to improve administrative efficiencies and observe the installation of PFMC's new state-of-the-art sound system, which has programmable frequencies to autodetect white noise and 1GB of backup recording automatically input on the hard drive, and may other useful and customizable features. We may consider this system when we upgrade our AP and SSC sound systems.

On March 12, Mr. Tweit and Ms. Diana Evans attended a one-day workshop with a visiting government and industry contingent from Denmark, interested in learning about the Council's development of the fixed gear EM program. The Danish government is interested in exploring the possibility of EM as a mechanism to enforce the EU landings obligation that came into effect this year.

On March 13, Mr. Steve MacLean presented information about the Community Engagement Committee to the Yukon-Kuskokwim Delta Regional Advisory Council. Dr. Diana Stram prepared a summary of salmon and halibut bycatch for the USFWS Subsistence Regional Advisory Councils.

On March 26-27, Mr. Steve MacLean participated in the Alaska Seabird Bycatch Workgroup meeting. You will hear more about this meeting during the NMFS management report and USFWS report.

On March 26-28, Dr. Diana Stram participated at the NPRB Science Panel meeting in Seattle.

## **Committee Meetings**

On Monday, the IFQ Committee is scheduled to meet to review the IFQ related issues on the Council's agenda and discuss IFQ tasking priorities. You will receive a report of the IFQ Committee meeting under Agenda Item D-7.

The Ecosystem Committee is also scheduled to meet on Monday to discuss Ocean Acidification, Northern Fur Seal conservation, Bering Sea FEP planning efforts, habitat issues, and developing a workplan for future work of the Ecosystem Committee. A report from the meeting will be discussed during Staff Tasking, Agenda Item E-1.

The Fishery Monitoring Advisory Committee is scheduled to meet on Tuesday to develop recommendations regarding the Fee Analysis. You will receive a report of the Committee meeting under Agenda Item C-7.

The Trawl Electronic Monitoring Committee met on March 4-5 in Seattle to develop a coordinated plan for WGOA and Bering Sea projects, and draft a strategy and plan for obtaining exempted fishing permits to be on the water by January 20, 2020.

The Cook Inlet Salmon Committee met Wednesday, March 6 in Anchorage, to discuss status determination criteria, monitoring and reporting and other measures for the fishery. The Committee will meet again on Tuesday April 2. You will receive a report of the Committee meeting under Agenda Item D-2.

The Enforcement Committee met on Tuesday to review the CQE fish-up in 3A, the discussion paper on allowing sablefish discards, and an update on Trawl Electronic Monitoring Committee's cooperative Research plan. A report from the meeting will be given in parts during the appropriate agenda items.

The Community Engagement Committee met on March 20 to review the June 2018 discussion paper and discuss development of tools and processes to facilitate improved communication and understanding between rural communities and tribes and the Council. A report from the meeting will be discussed during Staff Tasking, Agenda Item E-1.

## **Events this week**

On Monday evening from 5:00 to 7:00 pm, there will be a workshop on sablefish cooperative research in the Dillingham room. The objective of the workshop is to consider opportunities for cooperative research that might help to understand the effects of sablefish depredation by sperm and killer whales on the stock assessment of sablefish in the Gulf of Alaska and Bering Sea. The ultimate goal for this process is to ensure that the sablefish survey appropriately considers whale predation pressure during the assessment process.

On Wednesday evening from 5:30 to 7:30 pm, AFSC researchers will host a workshop on ACLIM, the [Alaska Climate Integrated Modeling Project](#), which is a collaborative research project aimed at providing information regarding the far-reaching impacts of environmental changes in the Bering Sea. Dr. Kirstin Holsman and Dr. Alan Haynie have hosted several workshops over the last couple of years in order to get feedback from the Council and stakeholders about how to design the project to achieve management-relevant evaluations. The goals for this workshop are to get feedback on the science work to date and the direction the team is taking, to share results and identify what is meaningful and what is missing, and to receive specific input on scenarios and performance metrics for modeling work in the upcoming year. The ACLIM workshop will also inform the development of the Council's Bering Sea FEP climate change action module.

On Saturday from 3-5 pm, the Council will be in Executive Session to review several administrative issues including the AP and SSC Handbook, Plan Team nominations, Council compensation policy and other administrative issues, and the annual performance review for the Executive Director.