

**Agenda Item D3: Sculpin Management**  
**Council Motion**  
**April 7, 2019**

The Council adopts the following purpose and need statement and suite of alternatives for analysis. The Preliminary Preferred Alternative is indicated in **bold**.

**Purpose and Need**

Sculpins are benthic predators distributed throughout the BSAI and GOA where they occupy all benthic habitats along continental shelf and slope areas. No conservation concerns exist for sculpins in the BSAI and GOA. Sculpins are currently managed as target species despite being caught only incidentally, and an annual OFL, ABC, and TAC for the sculpin complex is specified separately for the BSAI and GOA. Incidental catch of sculpins has been substantially below ABC, OFL. There are no directed fisheries for sculpins in either the BSAI or GOA, and sculpin bycatch is rarely retained. If the total TAC of sculpins is caught, retention is prohibited for the remainder of the year.

The purposes of this action are to identify the appropriate level of conservation and management required for sculpins and to accurately classify the sculpin complex in the BSAI and GOA groundfish FMPs based on the best available scientific information. The revised General Section of the National Standard guidelines includes options for classification and management of target and non-target species in FMPs. Options for classification and management of non-target stocks include identification of the species as “non-target ecosystem component species, not in need of conservation and management.”

**Alternative 1:** Status quo. Continue to manage sculpins as a target species in both the BSAI and GOA groundfish FMPs. OFL, ABC, and TAC will continue to be set for sculpins in both areas.

**Alternative 2: Designate sculpins in both BSAI and GOA FMPs as non-target ecosystem component species. Establishment of OFL, ABC, and TAC will no longer be required.**

**Remove regulations referring to sculpins as target species and implement regulations for the groundfish fishery that:**

- **Prohibit directed fishing for sculpins,**
- **Establish a sculpin maximum retainable amount (MRA) when directed fishing for other fisheries at a level to discourage retention while allowing flexibility to prosecute other fisheries:**
  - Option 1 MRA = 2%
  - Option 2 MRA = 10%
  - **Option 3 MRA = 20%**
- **Require recordkeeping and reporting to monitor and report catch and discards of sculpin species annually.**

Encourage the Alaska Fisheries Science Center to continue to explore methods to estimate sculpin abundance and assess the sculpin stocks.