

management because they do not fall within the scientifically determined ABC. Moreover, in 2006, the sum of the TACs contemplated under Alternative 1 would also exceed the statutorily mandated two million mt optimum yield for the BSAI (it would exceed this by only a small amount in 2007).

A copy of the IRFA is available from NMFS (see **ADDRESSES**).

This regulation does not impose new recordkeeping or reporting requirements on the regulated small entities. This analysis did not reveal any Federal rules that duplicate, overlap, or conflict with the proposed action.

Authority: 16 U.S.C. 773 *et seq.*; 1540(f); 1801 *et seq.*; 1851 note; and 3631 *et seq.*

Dated: December 12, 2005.

James W. Balsiger,

Acting Deputy Assistant Administrator for Regulatory Programs, National Marine Fisheries Service.

[FR Doc. 05-24168 Filed 12-15-05; 8:45 am]

BILLING CODE 3510-22-P

DEPARTMENT OF COMMERCE

National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration

50 CFR Part 679

[Docket No. 051201318-5318-01; I.D. 112805A]

Fisheries of the Exclusive Economic Zone Off Alaska; Gulf of Alaska; Proposed 2006 and 2007 Harvest Specifications for Groundfish

AGENCY: National Marine Fisheries Service (NMFS), National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration (NOAA), Commerce.

ACTION: Proposed rule; apportionment of reserves; request for comments.

SUMMARY: NMFS proposes 2006 and 2007 harvest specifications, reserves and apportionments, and Pacific halibut prohibited species catch (PSC) limits, for the groundfish fishery of the Gulf of Alaska (GOA). This action is necessary to establish harvest limits and associated management measures for groundfish during the 2006 and 2007 fishing years. The intended effect of this action is to conserve and manage the groundfish resources in the GOA in accordance with the Magnuson-Stevens Fishery Conservation and Management Act (Magnuson-Stevens Act).

DATES: Comments must be received by January 17, 2006.

ADDRESSES: Send comments to Sue Salvesson, Assistant Regional Administrator, Sustainable Fisheries

Division, Alaska Region, NMFS, Attn: Lori Durall. Comments may be submitted by:

- Mail to P.O. Box 21668, Juneau, AK 99802;

- Hand Delivery to the Federal Building, 709 West 9th Street, Room 420A, Juneau, AK;

- E-mail to 2006AKgroundfish.tacspeccs@noaa.gov and include in the subject line the document identifier: 2006 Proposed Specifications (E-mail comments, with or without attachments, are limited to 5 megabytes);

- Fax to 907-586-7557; or

- Webform at the Federal eRulemaking Portal: <http://www.regulations.gov>. Follow the instructions at that site for submitting comments.

Copies of the draft Environmental Assessment/Initial Regulatory Flexibility Analysis (EA/IRFA) prepared for this action are available from NMFS at the address above or from the Alaska Region Web site www.fakr.noaa.gov. Copies of the final 2004 Stock Assessment and Fishery Evaluation (SAFE) reports, dated November 2004, and the October 2005 Council meeting minutes, are available from the North Pacific Fishery Management Council, West 4th Avenue, Suite 306, Anchorage, AK, 99510 or from its home page at <http://www.fakr.noaa.gov/npfmc>.

FOR FURTHER INFORMATION CONTACT: Tom Pearson, Sustainable Fisheries Division, Alaska Region, 907-481-1780 or e-mail at tom.pearson@noaa.gov.

SUPPLEMENTARY INFORMATION:

Background

NMFS manages the GOA groundfish fisheries in the exclusive economic zone off Alaska under the Fishery Management Plan for Groundfish of the GOA (FMP). The North Pacific Fishery Management Council (Council) prepared the FMP under the authority of the Magnuson-Stevens Act, 16 U.S.C. 1801, *et seq.* Regulations governing U.S. fisheries and implementing the FMP appear at 50 CFR parts 600, 679, and 680.

These proposed specifications are based on the 2004 SAFE reports. In November 2005, the 2005 SAFE reports will be used to develop the 2006 and 2007 final acceptable biological catch (ABC) amounts. Any anticipated changes in the final specifications from the proposed specification are identified in this notice for public review.

The FMP and its implementing regulations require NMFS, after consultation with the Council, to specify the total allowable catch (TAC)

for each target species and for the "other species" category, the sum of which must be within the optimum yield (OY) range of 116,000 metric tons (mt) to 800,000 mt. Section 679.20(c)(1) further requires NMFS to publish and solicit public comment on proposed annual TACs, halibut PSC amounts, and seasonal allowances of pollock and inshore/offshore Pacific cod. The proposed specifications set forth in Tables 1 through 16 of this document satisfy these requirements. For 2006, the sum of the proposed TAC amounts is 301,304 mt. For 2007, the sum of the proposed TAC amounts is 281,640 mt. Under § 679.20(c)(3), NMFS will publish the 2006 and 2007 final specifications after (1) considering comments received within the comment period (see **DATES**), (2) consulting with the Council at its December 2005 meeting, and (3) considering new information presented in the EA and the final 2005 SAFE report prepared for the 2006 and 2007 fisheries.

Proposed ABC and TAC Specifications

The proposed ABC and TAC for each species or species group are based on the best available biological and socioeconomic information, including projected biomass trends, information on assumed distribution of stock biomass, and revised methods used to calculate stock biomass. The FMP specifies the formulas, or tiers, to be used in computing ABCs and overfishing levels (OFL). The formulas applicable to a particular stock or stock complex are determined by the level of reliable information available to fisheries scientists. This information is categorized into a successive series of six tiers with tier one representing the highest level of information and tier six the lowest level of information.

The Council and its Science and Statistical Committee (SSC) and Advisory Panel (AP) reviewed current biological and harvest information about the condition of groundfish stocks in the GOA in October 2005. Most of the information available to the SSC, AP, and Council was initially compiled by the Council's GOA Groundfish Plan Team and was presented in the final 2004 SAFE report for the GOA groundfish fisheries, dated November 2004 (see **ADDRESSES**). The Plan Team annually produces the SAFE report as the first step in the process of specifying TACs.

The SAFE report contains a review of the latest scientific analyses, estimates of each species' biomass and other biological parameters, summaries of the available information on the GOA ecosystem, and the economic condition

of the groundfish fisheries off Alaska. From these data and analyses, the Plan Team estimates an ABC for each species category. The 2004 SAFE report will be updated to include new information collected during 2005. The Plan Team will provide revised stock assessments in November 2005 in the final 2005 SAFE report. The Council will review the 2005 SAFE report in December 2005. The final 2006 and 2007 harvest specifications may be adjusted from the proposed harvest specifications based on the 2005 SAFE report.

The SSC adopted the OFL and ABC recommendations from the Plan Team for all groundfish species. Based on the recommendations from the SSC for OFLs and ABCs and the AP recommendations for TAC amounts, the Council recommended amending the 2006 OFL, ABC, and TAC amounts for pollock, Pacific cod, sablefish, flathead sole, arrowtooth flounder, northern rockfish, and "other species" as published in the 2005 and 2006 final harvest specifications for groundfish in the GOA on February 24, 2005 (70 FR 8958). These amended amounts were recommended by the Council based on new information developed in 2005. For tier 1–3 stocks listed above, the GOA Groundfish Plan Team recommended projected groundfish OFLs and ABCs for 2006 and 2007 at its September 2005 meeting. The projections for tier 1–3 stocks used species-specific Alaska Fisheries Science Center population models, which include information on age structure, growth and reproduction, and natural and fishing mortality. The Council recommended that proposed OFL and ABC levels for those stocks in tiers 4–6, for which projections cannot be made, remain unchanged from 2005 levels for 2006 and 2007.

As in 2005, the SSC's, AP's and Council's recommendation for the method of apportioning the sablefish ABC among management areas includes commercial fishery and survey data. NMFS stock assessment scientists believe that the use of unbiased commercial fishery data reflecting catch-per-unit effort provides a desirable input for stock distribution assessments. The use of commercial fishery data is evaluated annually to assure that unbiased information is included in stock distribution models. The Council's recommendation for sablefish area apportionments also takes into account the prohibition on the use of trawl gear in the Southeast Outside (SEO) District of the Eastern GOA and makes available 5 percent of the combined Eastern GOA TACs to trawl gear for use as incidental catch in other

directed groundfish fisheries in the West Yakutat District (WYK).

The AP, SSC, and Council recommended that the ABC for Pacific cod in the GOA be apportioned among regulatory areas based on the three most recent NMFS summer trawl surveys. As in previous years, the Plan Team, SSC, and Council recommended that total removals of Pacific cod from the GOA not exceed ABC recommendations. Accordingly, the Council recommended adjusting the 2006 and 2007 TACs downward from the ABCs by amounts equal to the 2005 guideline harvest levels (GHL) established for Pacific cod by the State of Alaska (State) for the state managed fisheries in the GOA. The effect of the State's GHL on the Pacific cod TAC is discussed in greater detail below. As in 2005, for 2006 and 2007, NMFS proposes to establish an A season directed fishing allowance (DFA) for the Pacific cod fisheries in the GOA based on the management area TACs less the recent average A season incidental catch of Pacific cod in each management area before June 10 (§ 679.20(d)(1)). The DFA and incidental catch before June 10 will be managed such that total harvest in the A season will be no more than 60 percent of the annual TAC. Incidental catch taken after June 10 will continue to be taken from the B season TAC. This action meets the intent of the Steller Sea Lion Protection Measures by achieving temporal dispersion of the Pacific cod removals and reducing the likelihood of harvest exceeding 60 percent of the annual TAC in the A season (January 1 through June 10).

For 2006 and 2007, the Council recommends and NMFS proposes the ABCs listed in Tables 1 and 2. These amounts reflect harvest amounts that are less than the proposed 2006 and 2007 overfishing amounts. The sum of the proposed 2006 ABCs for all target species TACs is 547,181 mt, which is higher than the final 2005 ABC total of 539,263 mt and the final 2006 ABC total of 542,456 mt (70 FR 8958, February 24, 2005). The sum of the proposed 2007 ABCs for all target species TACs is 536,559 mt, which is lower than the final 2005 ABC total and the final 2006 ABC total of 547,181 mt.

Specification and Apportionment of TAC Amounts

The Council recommended proposed TACs for 2006 and 2007 that are equal to proposed ABCs for pollock, deep-water flatfish, rex sole, sablefish, Pacific ocean perch, shortraker rockfish, rougheye rockfish, northern rockfish, pelagic shelf rockfish, thornyhead rockfish, demersal shelf rockfish, skates, and Atka mackerel. The Council

recommended TACs that are less than the ABCs for Pacific cod, flathead sole, shallow-water flatfish, arrowtooth flounder, and other rockfish.

The apportionment of annual pollock TAC among the Western and Central Regulatory Areas of the GOA reflects the seasonal biomass distribution and is discussed in greater detail below. The annual pollock TAC in the Western and Central Regulatory Areas of the GOA is divided into four equal seasonal apportionments. Twenty-five percent of the annual TAC in the Western and Central Regulatory Areas of the GOA is apportioned respectively to the A season (January 20 through March 10), the B season (March 10 through May 31), the C season (August 25 through October 1), and the D season (October 1 through November 1) in Statistical Areas 610, 620, and 630 of the GOA (§§ 679.23(d)(2)(i) through (iv) and 679.20(a)(5)(iii)(B)).

The 2006 and 2007 Pacific cod TACs are affected by the State's developing fishery for Pacific cod in State waters in the Western and Central GOA, and in Prince William Sound (PWS). The SSC, AP, and Council recommended that the sum of all State and Federal water Pacific cod removals not exceed the ABC. Accordingly, the Council recommended that for 2006 and 2007, the Pacific cod TACs be reduced from ABC levels to account for State GHLs in each regulatory area of the GOA. Therefore, respective 2006 TACs are reduced from ABCs as follows: (1) Eastern GOA 386 mt, (2) Central GOA 7,898 mt, and (3) Western GOA 4,988 mt. Respective 2007 TACs are reduced as follows: (1) Eastern GOA 324 mt, (2) Central GOA 6,643 mt, and (3) Western GOA 4,196 mt. These amounts reflect the sum of the State's 2006 and 2007 GHLs in these areas, which are 10 percent, 25 percent, and 25 percent of the Eastern, Central, and Western GOA ABCs, respectively.

NMFS also is proposing seasonal apportionments of the annual Pacific cod TAC in the Western and Central Regulatory Areas. Sixty percent of the annual TAC is apportioned to the A season for hook-and-line, pot or jig gear from January 1 through June 10, and for trawl gear from January 20 through June 10. Forty percent of the annual TAC is apportioned to the B season for hook-and-line, pot or jig gear from September 1 through December 31, and for trawl gear from September 1 through November 1 (§§ 679.23(d)(3) and 679.20(a)(11)). These seasonal apportionments of the annual Pacific cod TAC are discussed in greater detail below.

The FMP specifies that the amount for the “other species” category is calculated as 5 percent of the combined TAC amounts for target species. The 2006 GOA-wide “other species” TAC is 14,348 mt and the 2007 TAC is 13,411 mt, which is 5 percent of the sum of the combined TAC amounts (286,946 mt for 2006 and 268,229 mt for 2007) for the assessed target species. The sum of the TACs for all GOA groundfish is 301,304 mt for 2006 and 281,640 mt for 2007, which is within the OY range specified by the FMP. The sum of the proposed 2006 TACs are higher than the 2005 TAC sum of 291,298 mt while the sum of the proposed 2007 TACs are lower than in 2005.

In June 2005, the Council selected its preferred alternative for Amendment 69 to the GOA FMP to revise the manner in which the “other species” complex TAC is annually established. If approved, Amendment 69 would allow the Council, as part of its annual harvest specification process, to recommend a TAC amount for the “other species” less than or equal to 5 percent of the sum of the combined TAC amounts for target species. The intent of Amendment 69 is to better conserve and manage the species which comprise the “other species” complex.

If approved by the Secretary of Commerce, the Central Gulf of Alaska Rockfish Pilot Program would allocate

rockfish, associated groundfish, halibut PSC limits, and groundfish sideboard limits to a specific group of eligible harvesters in 2007. These amounts are expected to be identified in September 2006 and would modify the harvest specifications for 2007.

NMFS finds that the Council’s recommendations for proposed OFL, ABC, and TAC amounts are consistent with the biological condition of groundfish stocks as adjusted for other biological and socioeconomic considerations, including maintaining the total TAC within the required OY range of 116,000 to 800,000 mt. The proposed 2006 and 2007 ABCs, TACs, and OFLs are shown in Tables 1 and 2.

TABLE 1.—PROPOSED 2006 ABCs, TACS, AND OVERFISHING LEVELS OF GROUND FISH FOR THE WESTERN/CENTRAL/ WEST YAKUTAT (W/C/WYK), WESTERN (W), CENTRAL (C), EASTERN (E) REGULATORY AREAS, AND IN THE WEST YAKUTAT (WYK), SOUTHEAST OUTSIDE (SEO), AND GULFWIDE (GW) DISTRICTS OF THE GULF OF ALASKA.

[Values are rounded to the nearest metric ton]

Total	Species	Area ¹	ABC	TAC	Overfishing level
Subtotal	Pollock ²	Shumagin (610)	35,202	35,202	N/A
		Chirikof (620)	39,865	39,865	N/A
		Kodiak (630)	21,678	21,678	N/A
		WYK (640)	1,955	1,955	N/A
		W/C/WYK	98,700	98,700	133,900
		SEO (650)	6,520	6,520	8,690
Total			105,220	105,220	142,590
Total	Pacific cod ³	W	19,952	14,964	N/A
		C	31,590	23,692	N/A
		E	3,858	3,472	N/A
			55,400	42,128	82,000
Total	Flatfish ⁴ (deep-water)	W	330	330	N/A
		C	3,340	3,340	N/A
		WYK	2,120	2,120	N/A
		SEO	1,030	1,030	N/A
			6,820	6,820	8,490
Total	Rex sole	W	1,680	1,680	N/A
		C	7,340	7,340	N/A
		WYK	1,340	1,340	N/A
		SEO	2,290	2,290	N/A
			12,650	12,650	16,480
Total	Flathead sole	W	12,316	2,000	N/A
		C	31,617	5,000	N/A
		WYK	3,149	3,149	N/A
		SEO	408	408	N/A
			47,490	10,557	59,240
Total	Flatfish ⁵ (shallow-water)	W	21,580	4,500	N/A
		C	27,250	13,000	N/A
		WYK	2,030	2,030	N/A
		SEO	1,210	1,210	N/A
			52,070	20,740	63,840
Total	Arrowtooth flounder	W	25,833	8,000	N/A
		C	166,275	25,000	N/A
		WYK	11,599	2,500	N/A
		SEO	9,753	2,500	N/A
			213,460	38,000	249,140
Subtotal	Sablefish ⁶	W	2,371	2,371	N/A
		C	6,767	6,767	N/A
		WYK	2,409	2,409	N/A
		SEO	3,333	3,333	N/A
		E	5,742	5,742	N/A
Total			14,880	14,880	18,000
Subtotal	Pacific ocean perch ⁷	W	2,525	2,525	3,019
		C	8,375	8,375	10,008
		WYK	813	813	N/A
		SEO	1,579	1,579	N/A
		E	N/A	N/A	2,860

TABLE 1.—PROPOSED 2006 ABCs, TACs, AND OVERFISHING LEVELS OF GROUND FISH FOR THE WESTERN/CENTRAL/ WEST YAKUTAT (W/C/WYK), WESTERN (W), CENTRAL (C), EASTERN (E) REGULATORY AREAS, AND IN THE WEST YAKUTAT (WYK), SOUTHEAST OUTSIDE (SEO), AND GULFWIDE (GW) DISTRICTS OF THE GULF OF ALASKA.—Continued

[Values are rounded to the nearest metric ton]

Total	Species	Area ¹	ABC	TAC	Overfishing level
Total	Shortraker rockfish ⁸	W	13,292	13,292	15,887
		C	155	155	N/A
		E	324	324	N/A
			274	274	N/A
Total	Rougheye rockfish ⁹	W	753	753	982
		C	188	188	N/A
		E	557	557	N/A
			262	262	N/A
Total	Other rockfish ^{10 11}	W	1,007	1,007	1,531
		C	40	40	N/A
		WYK	300	300	N/A
		SEO	130	130	N/A
			3,430	200	N/A
Total	Northern rockfish ^{11 12}	W	3,900	670	5,150
		C	752	752	N/A
		E	3,978	3,978	N/A
			0	0	N/A
Total	Pelagic shelf rockfish ¹³	W	4,730	4,730	5,620
		C	366	366	N/A
		WYK	2,973	2,973	N/A
		SEO	205	205	N/A
			871	871	N/A
Total	Thornyhead rockfish	W	4,415	4,415	5,510
		C	410	410	N/A
		E	1,010	1,010	N/A
			520	520	N/A
Total	Big skates ¹⁴	W	1,940	1,940	2,590
		C	727	727	N/A
		E	2,463	2,463	N/A
			809	809	N/A
Total	Longnose skates ¹⁵	W	3,999	3,999	5,332
		C	66	66	N/A
		E	1,972	1,972	N/A
			780	780	N/A
Total	Other skates ¹⁶	GW	2,818	2,818	3,757
	Demersal shelf rockfish ¹⁸	SEO	1,327	1,327	1,769
	Atka mackerel	GW	410	410	640
	Other species ^{17 19}	GW	600	600	6,200
			N/A	14,348	N/A
Total ²⁰			547,181	301,304	694,748

¹ Regulatory areas and districts are defined at § 679.2.

² Pollock is apportioned in the Western/Central Regulatory Areas among three statistical areas. During the A season, the apportionment is based on an adjusted estimate of the relative distribution of pollock biomass of approximately 24 percent, 56 percent, and 20 percent in Statistical Areas 610, 620, and 630, respectively. During the B season, the apportionment is based on the relative distribution of pollock biomass at 24 percent, 66 percent, and 10 percent in Statistical Areas 610, 620, and 630, respectively. During the C and D seasons, the apportionment is based on the relative distribution of pollock biomass at 49 percent, 21 percent, and 30 percent in Statistical Areas 610, 620, and 630, respectively. These proposed seasonal apportionments for 2006 and 2007 are shown in Tables 5 and 6. In the West Yakutat and Southeast Outside Districts of the Eastern Regulatory Area, pollock is not divided into seasonal allowances.

³ The annual Pacific cod TAC is apportioned 60 percent to an A season and 40 percent to a B season in the Western and Central Regulatory Areas of the GOA. Pacific cod is allocated 90 percent for processing by the inshore component and 10 percent for processing by the offshore component. Proposed seasonal apportionments and component allocations of TAC for 2006 and 2007 are shown in Tables 7 and 8.

⁴ "Deep water flatfish" means Dover sole, Greenland turbot, and deepsea sole.

⁵ "Shallow water flatfish" means flatfish not including "deep water flatfish," flathead sole, rex sole, or arrowtooth flounder.

⁶ Sablefish is allocated to trawl and hook-and-line gears for 2006 and to trawl gear in 2007 these amounts are shown in Tables 3 and 4.

⁷ "Pacific ocean perch" means *Sebastes alutus*.

⁸ "Shortraker rockfish" means *Sebastes borealis*.

⁹ "Rougheye rockfish" means *Sebastes aleutianus*.

¹⁰ "Other rockfish" in the Western and Central Regulatory Areas and in the West Yakutat District means slope rockfish and demersal shelf rockfish. The category "other rockfish" in the SEO District means slope rockfish.

¹¹ "Slope rockfish" means *Sebastes aurora* (aurora), *S. melanostomus* (blackgill), *S. paucispinis* (bocaccio), *S. goodei* (chilipepper), *S. crameri* (darkblotch), *S. elongatus* (greenstriped), *S. variegatus* (harlequin), *S. wilsoni* (pygmy), *S. babcocki* (redbanded), *S. proriger* (redstripe), *S. zacentrus* (sharpchin), *S. jordani* (shortbelly), *S. brevispinis* (silverygrey), *S. diploproa* (splitnose), *S. saxicola* (stripetail), *S. miniatus* (vermillion), and *S. reedi* (yellowmouth). In the Eastern GOA only, slope rockfish also includes northern rockfish, *S. polyspinus*.

¹² "Northern rockfish" means *Sebastes polyspinis*.

¹³ "Pelagic shelf rockfish" means *Sebastes ciliatus* (dark), *S. variabilis* (dusky), *S. entomelas* (widow), and *S. flavidus* (yellowtail).

¹⁴ Big skate means *Raja binoculata*.

¹⁵ Longnose skate means *Raja rhina*.

¹⁶ Other skates means *Bathyraja* spp.

¹⁷ N/A means not applicable.

¹⁸ "Demersal shelf rockfish" means *Sebastes pinniger* (canary), *S. nebulosus* (china), *S. caurinus* (copper), *S. maliger* (quillback), *S. helvomaculatus* (rosethorn), *S. nigrocinctus* (tiger), and *S. ruberrimus* (yelloweye).

¹⁹ "Other species" means sculpins, sharks, squid, and octopus. There is no OFL or ABC for "other species", the TAC for "other species" equals 5 percent of the TACs for assessed target species.

²⁰ The total ABC and OFL is the sum of the ABCs and OFLs for assessed target species.

These footnotes also apply to Table 2.

TABLE 2.—PROPOSED 2007 ABCs, TACS, AND OVERFISHING LEVELS OF GROUND FISH FOR THE WESTERN/CENTRAL/ WEST YAKUTAT (W/C/WYK), WESTERN (W), CENTRAL (C), EASTERN (E) REGULATORY AREAS, AND IN THE WEST YAKUTAT (WYK), SOUTHEAST OUTSIDE (SEO), AND GULFWIDE (GW) DISTRICTS OF THE GULF OF ALASKA.

[Values are rounded to the nearest metric ton]

Total	Species	Area ¹	ABC	TAC	Overfishing level
Subtotal	Pollock ²	Shumagin (610)	31,743	31,743	N/A
		Chirikof (620)	35,947	35,947	N/A
		Kodiak (630)	19,547	19,547	N/A
		WYK (640)	1,763	1,763	N/A
		W/C/WYK	89,000	89,000	119,800
		SEO (650)	6,520	6,520	8,690
Total			95,520	95,520	128,490
Total	Pacific cod ³	W	16,783	12,587	N/A
		C	26,572	19,929	N/A
		E	3,245	2,920	N/A
			46,600	35,436	68,900
Total	Flatfish ⁴ (deep-water)	W	330	330	N/A
		C	3,340	3,340	N/A
		WYK	2,120	2,120	N/A
		SEO	1,030	1,030	N/A
			6,820	6,820	8,490
Total	Rex sole	W	1,680	1,680	N/A
		C	7,340	7,340	N/A
		WYK	1,340	1,340	N/A
		SEO	2,290	2,290	N/A
			12,650	12,650	16,480
Total	Flathead sole	W	12,355	2,000	N/A
		C	31,721	5,000	N/A
		WYK	2,336	2,336	N/A
		SEO	308	308	N/A
			47,650	9,644	59,500
Total	Flatfish ⁵ (shallow-water)	W	21,580	4,500	N/A
		C	27,250	13,000	N/A
		WYK	2,030	2,030	N/A
		SEO	1,210	1,210	N/A
			52,070	20,740	63,840
Total	Arrowtooth flounder	W	26,939	8,000	N/A
		C	173,394	25,000	N/A
		WYK	12,096	2,500	N/A
		SEO	10,171	2,500	N/A
			222,600	38,000	260,150
Subtotal	Sablefish ⁶	W	2,215	2,215	N/A
		C	6,322	6,322	N/A
		WYK	2,250	2,250	N/A
		SEO	3,113	3,113	N/A
		E	5,363	5,363	N/A
Total			13,900	13,900	16,900
Subtotal	Pacific ocean perch ⁷	W	2,494	2,494	2,985
		C	8,293	8,293	9,896
		WYK	803	803	N/A
		SEO	1,560	1,560	N/A
		E	N/A	N/A	2,829
Total			13,150	13,150	15,710
Total	Shortraker rockfish ⁸	W	155	155	N/A
		C	324	324	N/A
		E	274	274	N/A
			753	753	982
Total	Rougheye rockfish ⁹	W	188	188	N/A
		C	557	557	N/A
		E	262	262	N/A
			1,007	1,007	1,531
Total	Other rockfish ^{10 11}	W	40	40	N/A
		C	300	300	N/A
		WYK	130	130	N/A
		SEO	3,430	200	N/A

TABLE 2.—PROPOSED 2007 ABCS, TACS, AND OVERFISHING LEVELS OF GROUND FISH FOR THE WESTERN/CENTRAL/ WEST YAKUTAT (W/C/WYK), WESTERN (W), CENTRAL (C), EASTERN (E) REGULATORY AREAS, AND IN THE WEST YAKUTAT (WYK), SOUTHEAST OUTSIDE (SEO), AND GULFWIDE (GW) DISTRICTS OF THE GULF OF ALASKA.—Continued

[Values are rounded to the nearest metric ton]

Total	Species	Area ¹	ABC	TAC	Overfishing level
Total	Northern rockfish ^{11 12}	W	3,900	670	5,150
		C	704	704	N/A
		E	3,726	3,726	N/A
			0	0	N/A
Total	Pelagic shelf rockfish ¹³	W	4,430	4,430	5,270
		C	366	366	N/A
		WYK	2,973	2,973	N/A
		SEO	205	205	N/A
			871	871	N/A
Total	Thornyhead rockfish	W	4,415	4,415	5,510
		C	410	410	N/A
		E	1,010	1,010	N/A
			520	520	N/A
Total	Big skates ¹⁴	W	1,940	1,940	2,590
		C	727	727	N/A
		E	2,463	2,463	N/A
			809	809	N/A
Total	Longnose skates ¹⁵	W	3,999	3,999	5,332
		C	66	66	N/A
		E	1,972	1,972	N/A
			780	780	N/A
Total	Other skates ¹⁶	GW	2,818	2,818	3,757
	Demersal shelf rockfish ¹⁸	SEO	1,327	1,327	1,769
	Atka mackerel	GW	450	450	690
	Other species ^{17 19}	GW	600	600	6,200
Total ²⁰			²¹	13,411	N/A
			536,559	281,640	677,191

The footnotes in Table 2 are identical to those presented above for Table 1.

Proposed Apportionment of Reserves

Regulations at § 679.20(b)(2) require 20 percent of each TAC for pollock, Pacific cod, flatfish, and the “other species” category to be set aside in reserves for possible apportionment at a later date. In 2005, NMFS reapportioned all the reserves in the final harvest specifications. For 2006 and 2007, NMFS proposes apportionment of all the reserves for pollock, Pacific cod, flatfish, and “other species.” Specifications of TAC shown in Tables 1 and 2 reflect apportionment of reserve amounts for these species and species groups.

Proposed Apportionments of the Sablefish TAC Amounts to Vessels Using Hook-and-Line and Trawl Gear

Under § 679.20(a)(4)(i) and (ii), sablefish TACs for each of the regulatory areas and districts are allocated to hook-and-line and trawl gear. In the Western and Central Regulatory Areas, 80 percent of each TAC is allocated to hook-and-line gear, and 20 percent of each TAC is allocated to trawl gear. In the Eastern GOA, 95 percent of the TAC is allocated to hook-and-line gear and 5 percent is allocated to trawl gear. The trawl gear allocation in the Eastern GOA may only be used to support incidental catch of sablefish in directed fisheries for other target species (§ 679.20(a)(1)). In recognition of the trawl ban in the SEO District of the Eastern GOA, the

Council recommended and NMFS proposes that 5 percent of the combined Eastern GOA sablefish TAC be allocated to trawl gear in the WYK District and the remainder to vessels using hook-and-line gear. In the SEO District, 100 percent of the sablefish TAC is allocated to vessels using hook-and-line gear. The Council recommended that only trawl sablefish TAC be established biennially. This recommendation results in an allocation of 287 mt to trawl gear and 2,122 mt to hook-and-line gear in the WYK District and 3,333 mt to hook-and-line gear in the SEO District in 2006. Table 3 shows the allocations of the proposed 2006 sablefish TACs between hook-and-line gear and trawl gear. Table 4 presents the allocation of the proposed 2007 sablefish TACs to trawl gear.

TABLE 3.—PROPOSED 2006 SABLEFISH TAC SPECIFICATIONS IN THE GULF OF ALASKA AND ALLOCATIONS THEREOF TO HOOK-AND-LINE AND TRAWL GEAR

[Values are rounded to the nearest metric ton]

Area/District	TAC	Hook-and-line apportionment	Trawl apportionment
Western	2,371	1,897	474
Central	6,767	5,414	1,353
West Yakutat	2,409	2,122	287

TABLE 3.—PROPOSED 2006 SABLEFISH TAC SPECIFICATIONS IN THE GULF OF ALASKA AND ALLOCATIONS THEREOF TO HOOK-AND-LINE AND TRAWL GEAR—Continued

[Values are rounded to the nearest metric ton]

Area/District	TAC	Hook-and-line apportionment	Trawl apportionment
Southeast Outside	3,333	3,333	0
Total	14,880	12,766	2,114

TABLE 4.—PROPOSED 2007 SABLEFISH TAC SPECIFICATIONS IN THE GULF OF ALASKA AND ALLOCATION THEREOF TO TRAWL GEAR

[Values are rounded to the nearest metric ton]

Area/District	TAC	Hook-and-line apportionment ¹	Trawl apportionment
Western	2,215	N/A	443
Central	6,322	N/A	1,264
West Yakutat	2,250	N/A	268
Southeast Outside	3,113	N/A	0
Total	13,900	N/A	1,975

¹ The Council recommended that specifications for the hook-and-line gear sablefish IFQ fisheries be limited to 1 year to ensure that those fisheries are conducted concurrently with the halibut IFQ fishery.

Proposed Apportionments of Pollock TAC Among Seasons and Regulatory Areas, and Allocations for Processing by Inshore and Offshore Components

In the GOA, pollock is apportioned by season and area, and is further divided between inshore and offshore processing components. Under § 679.20(a)(5)(iii)(B), the annual pollock TAC specified for the Western and Central Regulatory Areas of the GOA is apportioned into four equal seasonal allowances of 25 percent. As established by § 679.23(d)(2)(i) through (iv), the A, B, C, and D season allowances are available from January 20 through March 10, March 10 through May 31, August 25 through October 1, and October 1 through November 1, respectively.

Pollock TACs in the Western and Central Regulatory Areas of the GOA are apportioned among statistical areas 610, 620, and 630 in the A and B seasons in proportion to the distribution of pollock biomass based on a composite of NMFS winter surveys and in the C and D seasons in proportion to the distribution

of pollock biomass based on the four most recent NMFS summer surveys. As in 2005, the Council recommended averaging the winter and summer distribution of pollock in the Central Regulatory Area for the A season to better reflect the distribution of pollock and the performance of the fishery in the area during the A season for the 2006 and 2007 fishing years. Within any fishing year, the underage or overage of a seasonal allowance may be added to, or subtracted from, subsequent seasonal allowances. The rollover amount is limited to 20 percent of the seasonal apportionment for the statistical area. Any unharvested pollock above the 20 percent limit could be further distributed to the other statistical areas, in proportion to the estimated biomass in the subsequent season in those statistical areas. The WYK District pollock TAC of 1,955 mt in 2006, and 1,763 mt in 2007, along with the SEO District pollock TAC of 6,520 mt for 2006 and 2007, are not allocated seasonally.

Section 679.20(a)(6)(i) requires the allocation of 100 percent of the pollock

TAC in all regulatory areas and all seasonal allowances thereof to vessels catching pollock for processing by the inshore component after subtraction of amounts that are projected by the Regional Administrator to be caught by, or delivered to, the offshore component incidental to directed fishing for other groundfish species. The amount of pollock available for harvest by vessels harvesting pollock for processing by the offshore component is that amount actually taken as incidental catch during directed fishing for groundfish species other than pollock, up to the maximum retainable amounts allowed under at § 679.20(e) and (f). At this time, these incidental catch amounts are unknown and will be determined during the fishing year.

The proposed 2006 and 2007 seasonal biomass distribution of pollock in the Western and Central GOA, area apportionments, and seasonal apportionments for the A, B, C, and D seasons are summarized in Tables 5 and 6.

TABLE 5.—PROPOSED 2006 DISTRIBUTION OF POLLOCK IN THE CENTRAL AND WESTERN REGULATORY AREAS OF THE GULF OF ALASKA; SEASONAL BIOMASS DISTRIBUTION, AREA APPORTIONMENTS; AND SEASONAL ALLOWANCES OF ANNUAL TAC

[Values are rounded to the nearest metric ton]

[Area Apportionments Resulting From Seasonal Distribution of Biomass]

Season	Shumagin (Area 610)	Chirikof (Area 620)	Kodiak (Area 630)	Total
A	5,835 (24.12%)	13,547 (56.01%)	4,805 (19.87%)	24,187 (100%)
B	5,835 (24.12%)	16,012 (66.2%)	2,339 (9.68%)	24,186 (100%)

TABLE 5.—PROPOSED 2006 DISTRIBUTION OF POLLOCK IN THE CENTRAL AND WESTERN REGULATORY AREAS OF THE GULF OF ALASKA; SEASONAL BIOMASS DISTRIBUTION, AREA APPORTIONMENTS; AND SEASONAL ALLOWANCES OF ANNUAL TAC—Continued

[Values are rounded to the nearest metric ton]
[Area Apportionments Resulting From Seasonal Distribution of Biomass]

Season	Shumagin (Area 610)	Chirikof (Area 620)	Kodiak (Area 630)	Total
C	11,766 (48.64%)	5,153 (21.3%)	7,267 (30.06%)	24,186 (100%)
D	11,766 (48.64%)	5,153 (21.3%)	7,267 (30.06%)	24,186 (100%)
Annual total	35,202	39,865	21,678	96,745

TABLE 6.—PROPOSED 2007 DISTRIBUTION OF POLLOCK IN THE CENTRAL AND WESTERN REGULATORY AREAS OF THE GULF OF ALASKA; SEASONAL BIOMASS DISTRIBUTION, AREA APPORTIONMENTS; AND SEASONAL ALLOWANCES OF ANNUAL TAC

[Values are rounded to the nearest metric ton]
[Area Apportionments Resulting From Seasonal Distribution of Biomass]

Season	Shumagin (Area 610)	Chirikof (Area 620)	Kodiak (Area 630)	Total
A	5,262 (24.12%)	12,216 (56.01%)	4,332 (19.87%)	21,810 (100%)
B	5,261 (24.12%)	14,439 (66.2%)	2,109 (9.68%)	21,809 (100%)
C	10,610 (48.64%)	4,646 (21.3%)	6,553 (30.06%)	21,809 (100%)
D	10,610 (48.64%)	4,646 (21.3%)	6,553 (30.06%)	21,809 (100%)
Annual total	31,743	35,947	19,547	87,237

Proposed Seasonal Apportionments of Pacific Cod TAC and Allocations for Processing of Pacific Cod TAC Between Inshore and Offshore Components

Pacific cod fishing is divided into two seasons in the Western and Central Regulatory Areas of the GOA. For hook-and-line, pot, and jig gear, the A season is January 1 through June 10, and the B season is September 1 through December 31. For trawl gear, the A season is January 20 through June 10, and the B season is September 1 through November 1 (§ 679.23(d)(3)). After subtraction of incidental catch, 60 percent and 40 percent of the annual

TAC will be available for harvest during the A and B seasons, respectively, and will be apportioned between the inshore and offshore processing components, as provided in § 679.20(a)(6)(ii). Between the A and the B seasons, directed fishing for Pacific cod is closed, and fishermen participating in other directed fisheries may retain Pacific cod up to the maximum retainable amounts allowed under § 679.20(e) and (f). Under § 679.20(a)(11)(ii), any overage or underage of Pacific cod allowance from the A season may be subtracted from or added to the subsequent B season allowance.

Section 679.20(a)(6)(ii) requires the allocation of the TAC apportionment of Pacific cod in all regulatory areas to vessels catching Pacific cod for processing by the inshore and offshore components. Ninety percent of the Pacific cod TAC in each regulatory area is allocated to vessels catching Pacific cod for processing by the inshore component. The remaining 10 percent of the TAC is allocated to vessels catching Pacific cod for processing by the offshore component. These seasonal apportionments and allocations of the proposed 2006 and 2007 Pacific cod TACs are shown in Tables 7 and 8, respectively.

TABLE 7.—PROPOSED 2006 SEASONAL APPORTIONMENTS AND ALLOCATION OF PACIFIC COD TAC AMOUNTS IN THE GULF OF ALASKA; ALLOCATIONS FOR PROCESSING BY THE INSHORE AND OFFSHORE COMPONENTS

[Values are rounded to the nearest metric ton]

Season	Regulatory area	TAC	Component allocation	
			Inshore (90%)	Offshore (10%)
Annual	Western	14,964	13,468	1,496
A season (60%) .....	.....	8,978	8,080	898
B season (40%) .....	.....	5,986	5,388	598
Annual	Central	23,692	21,323	2,369
A season (60%) .....	.....	14,215	12,794	1,421
B season (40%) .....	.....	9,477	8,529	948
Annual	Eastern	3,472	3,125	347
Total .....	.....	42,128	37,915	4,213

TABLE 8.—PROPOSED 2007 SEASONAL APPORTIONMENTS AND ALLOCATION OF PACIFIC COD TAC AMOUNTS IN THE GULF OF ALASKA; ALLOCATIONS FOR PROCESSING BY THE INSHORE AND OFFSHORE COMPONENTS

[Values are rounded to the nearest metric ton]

Season	Regulatory area	TAC	Component allocation	
			Inshore (90%)	Offshore (10%)
Annual	Western	12,587	11,328	1,259
A season (60%) .....	.....	7,552	6,797	755
B season (40%) .....	.....	5,035	4,531	504
Annual	Central	19,929	17,936	1,993
A season (60%) .....	.....	11,957	10,761	1,196
B season (40%) .....	.....	7,972	7,175	797
Annual	Eastern	2,920	2,628	292
Total .....	.....	35,436	31,892	3,544

Proposed Halibut PSC Limits

Under § 679.21(d), annual halibut PSC limits are established and apportioned to trawl and hook-and-line gears and may be established for pot gear. In October 2005, the Council recommended that NMFS maintain the 2005 halibut PSC limits of 2,000 mt for the trawl fisheries and 300 mt for the hook-and-line fisheries. Ten mt of the hook-and-line limit is further allocated to the demersal shelf rockfish (DSR) fishery in the SEO District. Historically, the DSR fishery, defined at § 679.21(d)(4)(iii)(A), has been apportioned this amount in recognition of its small scale harvests. Most vessels in the DSR fishery are less than 60 ft (18.3 m) length overall (LOA) making them exempt from observer coverage. Although observer data are not available to verify actual bycatch amounts, NMFS assumes the halibut bycatch in the DSR fishery is low because of the short soak times for the gear and duration of the DSR fishery. Also, the DSR fishery occurs in the winter when less overlap occurs in the distribution of DSR and halibut.

Section 679.21(d)(4) authorizes the exemption of specified non-trawl fisheries from the halibut PSC limit. The

Council recommended that pot gear, jig gear, and the hook-and-line sablefish fishery be exempted from the non-trawl halibut limit for 2006 and 2007. The Council recommended these exemptions because: (1) The pot gear fisheries experience low halibut bycatch mortality (averaging 11 mt annually from 2001 through 2004 and 38 mt through October 8, 2005); (2) the Individual Fishing Quota (IFQ) program requires legal-sized halibut to be retained by vessels using hook-and-line gear if a halibut IFQ permit holder is aboard and is holding unused halibut IFQ; and (3) halibut mortality for the jig gear fleet cannot be estimated because these vessels do not carry observers. NMFS assumes halibut mortality is very low given the small amount of groundfish harvested by jig gear (averaging 303 mt annually from 2001 through 2004 and 153 mt through October 8, 2005) and assumes that survival rates of any halibut incidentally caught by jig gear and released are high.

Under § 679.21(d)(5), NMFS seasonally apports the halibut PSC limits based on recommendations from the Council. The FMP and regulations require that the Council and NMFS consider the following information in

seasonally apportioning halibut PSC limits: (1) Seasonal distribution of halibut, (2) seasonal distribution of target groundfish species relative to halibut distribution, (3) expected halibut bycatch needs on a seasonal basis relative to changes in halibut biomass and expected catch of target groundfish species, (4) expected bycatch rates on a seasonal basis, (5) expected changes in directed groundfish fishing seasons, (6) expected actual start of fishing effort, and (7) economic effects of establishing seasonal halibut allocations on segments of the target groundfish industry.

The final 2005 groundfish and PSC specifications (70 FR 8958, February 24, 2005) summarized the Council and NMFS findings with respect to each of these FMP considerations. The Council's and NMFS' findings are unchanged. The proposed Pacific halibut PSC limits, and apportionments thereof for 2006 and 2007, are presented in Table 9. Sections 679.21(d)(5)(iii) and (iv) specify that any underages or overages in a seasonal apportionment of a PSC limit will be deducted from or added to the next respective seasonal apportionment within the 2006 and 2007 fishing years.

TABLE 9.—PROPOSED 2006 AND 2007 PACIFIC HALIBUT PSC LIMITS, ALLOWANCES, AND APPORTIONMENTS. THE PACIFIC HALIBUT PSC LIMIT FOR HOOK-AND-LINE GEAR IS ALLOCATED TO THE DEMERSAL SHELF ROCKFISH (DSR) FISHERY AND FISHERIES OTHER THAN DSR. THE HOOK-AND-LINE SABLEFISH FISHERY IS EXEMPT FROM HALIBUT PSC LIMITS.

[Values are in metric tons]

Trawl gear		Hook-and-line gear			
Dates	Amount	Other than DSR		DSR	
		Dates	Amount	Dates	Amount
January 20–April 1	550 (27.5%)	January 1–June 10	250 (86%)	January–December 31	10 (100%)
April 1–July 1	400 (20%)	June 10–September 1	5 (2%)	.....	.....
July 1–September 1	600 (30%)	September 1–December 31	35 (12%)	.....	.....
September 1–October 1	150 (7.5%)	.....	.....	.....	.....
October 1–December 31	300 (15%)	.....	.....	.....	.....

TABLE 9.—PROPOSED 2006 AND 2007 PACIFIC HALIBUT PSC LIMITS, ALLOWANCES, AND APPORTIONMENTS. THE PACIFIC HALIBUT PSC LIMIT FOR HOOK-AND-LINE GEAR IS ALLOCATED TO THE DEMERSAL SHELF ROCKFISH (DSR) FISHERY AND FISHERIES OTHER THAN DSR. THE HOOK-AND-LINE SABLEFISH FISHERY IS EXEMPT FROM HALIBUT PSC LIMITS.—Continued

[Values are in metric tons]

Trawl gear		Hook-and-line gear			
Dates	Amount	Other than DSR		DSR	
		Dates	Amount	Dates	Amount
Total	2,000 (100%)	.....	290 (100%)	.....	10 (100%)

Section 679.21(d)(3)(ii) authorizes the further apportionment of the trawl halibut PSC limit to trawl fishery categories, based on each category's proportional share of the anticipated halibut bycatch mortality during a fishing year and the need to optimize the total amount of groundfish harvest

under the halibut PSC limit. The fishery categories for the trawl halibut PSC limits are (1) a deep-water species complex, comprised of sablefish, rockfish, deep-water flatfish, rex sole and arrowtooth flounder; and (2) a shallow-water species complex, comprised of pollock, Pacific cod,

shallow-water flatfish, flathead sole, Atka mackerel, skates, and "other species" (§ 679.21(d)(3)(iii)). The proposed 2006 and 2007 seasonal apportionments for these two fishery complexes are presented in Table 10.

TABLE 10.—PROPOSED 2006 AND 2007 SEASONAL APPORTIONMENTS OF PACIFIC HALIBUT PSC TRAWL LIMITS BETWEEN THE TRAWL GEAR DEEP-WATER SPECIES COMPLEX AND THE SHALLOW-WATER SPECIES COMPLEX

[Values are in metric tons]

Season	Shallow-water	Deep-water	Total
January 20–April 1	450	100	550
April 1–July 1	100	300	400
July 1–September 1	200	400	600
September 1–October 1	150	Any remainder	150
Subtotal January 20–October 1	900	800	1,700
October 1–December 31	N/A	N/A	300
Total	N/A	N/A	2,000

No apportionment between shallow-water and deep-water fishery complexes during the 5th season (October 1–December 31).

Based on public comment and information contained in the final 2005 SAFE report, the Council may recommend, or NMFS may make, changes in the seasonal, gear-type, or fishing-complex apportionments of halibut PSC limits for the final 2006 and 2007 harvest specifications. NMFS will consider the following types of information in setting final halibut PSC limits.

Estimated Halibut Bycatch in Prior Years

The best available information on estimated halibut bycatch is data collected by observers during 2005. The calculated halibut bycatch mortality by trawl, hook-and-line, and pot gears through October 8, 2005, is 2,005 mt, 187 mt, and 38 mt, respectively, for a total halibut mortality of 2,230 mt.

Halibut bycatch restrictions seasonally constrained trawl gear fisheries during the 2005 fishing year. Trawling during the first season closed for the deep-water complex on March 23

(70 FR 15600, March 28, 2005) and during the second season on April 8 (70 FR 19339, April 13, 2005). This April 18 closure was modified to open trawling for the deep-water fishery complex from April 24 through May 3 (70 FR 21678, April 27, 2005 and 70 FR 23940, May 6, 2005). Trawling during the third season closed for the deep-water complex on July 24 (70 FR 43327, July 27, 2005) and during the fourth season on September 4 (70 FR 52326, September 2, 2005). Trawling during the third season closed for the shallow-water complex on August 19 (70 FR 49507, August 24, 2005) and during the fourth season on September 4 (70 FR 52325, September 2, 2005). Trawling for all groundfish targets (with the exception of pollock by vessels using pelagic trawl gear) closed for the fifth season on October 1 (70 FR 57803, October 4, 2005). The use of hook-and-line gear targeting groundfish has remained open thus far as the first seasonal allowance of halibut PSC has not been reached (as of November 8,

2005). The amount of groundfish that trawl gear might have harvested if halibut catch limitations had not restricted the 2005 season is unknown.

Expected Changes in Groundfish Stocks and Catch

Proposed 2006 and 2007 ABCs for pollock, flathead sole, and arrowtooth flounder (in 2007) are higher than those established for 2005. However, the proposed 2006 and 2007 ABCs for Pacific cod, sablefish, arrowtooth (in 2006), northern rockfish, Pacific ocean perch, and pelagic shelf rockfish are lower than those established for 2005. For the remaining target species, the Council recommended that ABC levels remain unchanged from 2005. More information on these changes is included in the final SAFE report (November 2004) and in the Council, SSC, and AP October 2005 meeting minutes available from the Council (see ADDRESSES).

The total TAC amounts for the GOA are 301,304 mt for 2006, and 281,640 mt

for 2007, an increase of about 3.4 percent in 2006 and a decrease of about 3.3 percent in 2007 from the 2005 TAC total of 291,298 mt. Those fisheries for which the 2006 and 2007 TACs are lower than in 2005 are Pacific cod (decreased to 42,128 mt in 2006 and 35,436 mt in 2007 from 44,433 mt in 2005), flathead sole (decreased to 9,644 mt in 2007 from 10,390 mt in 2005), sablefish (decreased to 14,880 mt in 2006 and 13,900 mt in 2007 from 15,940 mt in 2005), northern rockfish (decreased to 4,730 mt in 2006 and 4,430 mt in 2007 from 5,091 mt in 2005), Pacific ocean perch (decreased to 13,292 mt in 2006 and 13,150 mt in 2007 from 13,575 mt in 2005), and "other species" (decreased to 13,411 mt in 2007 from 13,871 mt in 2005). Those fisheries for which the 2006 and 2007 TACs are higher than in 2005 are pollock (increased to 105,220 mt in 2006 and 95,520 mt in 2007 from 91,710 mt in 2005), flathead sole (increased to 10,557 mt in 2006 from 10,390 mt in 2005), and "other species" (increased to 13,411 mt in 2006 from 13,871 mt in 2005).

Current Estimates of Halibut Biomass and Stock Condition

The most recent halibut stock assessment was conducted by the International Pacific Halibut Commission (IPHC) in December 2004 for the 2005 commercial fishery. The 2004 assessment contains minor technical changes from the previous year. The halibut stock is healthy in the central and southern portion of its range (Areas 3A through 2A) but is believed to have declined in western and northern portion of its range (Areas 3B and 4). The current exploitable halibut biomass in Alaska for 2005 was estimated to be 149,687 mt, down from 215,912 mt in 2004. Most of this change is due to revised estimates of biomass in 2004. The female spawning biomass remains far above the minimum which occurred in the 1970s.

The exploitable biomass of the Pacific halibut stock apparently peaked at 326,520 mt in 1988. According to the IPHC, the long-term average reproductive biomass for the Pacific halibut resource was estimated at 118,000 mt. Long-term average yield was estimated at 26,980 mt, round weight. The species is fully utilized. Recent average catches (1994–2004) in the commercial halibut fisheries in Alaska have averaged 34,241 mt, round weight. This catch in Alaska is 27 percent higher than long-term potential yield for the entire halibut stock reflecting the good condition of the Pacific halibut resource. In January

2005, the IPHC recommended commercial catch limits totaling 35,828 mt, round weight, for Alaska in 2005.

Through October 14, 2005, commercial hook- and line harvests of halibut in Alaska totaled 34,459 mt, round weight.

In 2004, IPHC staff identified a 25 percent harvest rate as a candidate target rate for use with the new population assessment, pending its evaluation using the sex-specific population model. This updated evaluation was completed and indicated that a harvest rate less than 25 percent would result in a 50 percent lower probability that the stock biomass would reach a level requiring reductions in harvest rate. Accordingly, the IPHC adopted a harvest rate of 22.5 percent for the central and southern regulatory areas (Areas 3A through 2A) and a harvest rate of 20 percent for the western and northern regulatory areas (Areas 3B and 4) in 2005. The lower rate for the western and northern areas is based on a concern that the long term productivity of these areas may not be as high as the central and southern areas.

Additional information on the Pacific halibut stock assessment may be found in the IPHC's 2004 Pacific halibut stock assessment (December 2004), available from the IPHC and on its website at <http://www.iphc.washington.edu>. The IPHC will consider the 2005 Pacific halibut assessment for 2006 at its January 2006 annual meeting when it sets the 2006 commercial halibut fishery quotas.

Other Factors

The allowable commercial catch of halibut will be adjusted to account for the overall halibut PSC mortality limit established for groundfish fisheries. The 2006 and 2007 groundfish fisheries are expected to use the entire proposed annual halibut PSC limit of 2,300 mt. The allowable directed commercial catch is determined by accounting for the recreational and subsistence catch, waste, and bycatch mortality and then providing the remainder to the directed fishery. Groundfish fishing is not expected to adversely affect the halibut stocks. Methods available for reducing halibut bycatch include: (1) Publication of individual vessel bycatch rates on the NMFS Alaska Region homepage at <http://www.fakr.noaa.gov>, (2) modifications to gear, (3) changes in groundfish fishing seasons, (4) individual transferable quota programs, and (5) time/area closures.

Reductions in groundfish TAC amounts provide no incentive for fishermen to reduce bycatch rates. Costs that would be imposed on fishermen as a result of reducing TAC amounts

depend on the species and amounts of groundfish foregone.

Under § 679.2, the definition of "Authorized fishing gear," paragraph 12, specifies requirements for biodegradable panels and tunnel openings for groundfish pots to reduce halibut bycatch. As a result, low bycatch and mortality rates of halibut in pot fisheries have justified exempting pot gear from PSC limits.

The regulations also define "Pelagic trawl gear" in a manner intended to reduce bycatch of halibut by displacing fishing effort off the bottom of the sea floor when certain halibut bycatch levels are reached during the fishing year. The definition provides standards for physical conformation (§ 679.2, "Authorized fishing gear," paragraph 11) and performance of the trawl gear in terms of crab bycatch (§ 679.7(a)(14)). Furthermore, all hook-and-line vessel operators are required to employ careful release measures when handling halibut bycatch (§ 679.7(a)(13)). These measures are intended to reduce handling mortality, thereby lowering overall halibut bycatch mortality in the groundfish fisheries, and to increase the amount of groundfish harvested under the available halibut mortality bycatch limits.

NMFS and the Council will review the methods available for reducing halibut bycatch listed here to determine their effectiveness, and will initiate changes, as necessary, in response to this review or to public testimony and comment.

Halibut Discard Mortality Rates

The Council recommends and NMFS proposes that the recommended halibut discard mortality rates (DMRs) developed by the staff of the IPHC for the 2005 GOA groundfish fisheries be used to monitor halibut bycatch mortality limits established for the 2006 and 2007 GOA groundfish fisheries. The IPHC recommended use of long-term average DMRs for the 2004–2006 groundfish fisheries. The IPHC recommendation also includes a provision that DMRs could be revised should analysis indicate that a fishery's annual DMR deviates substantially (up or down) from the long-term average. Most of the IPHC's assumed DMRs were based on an average of mortality rates determined from NMFS observer data collected between 1993 and 2002. DMRs were lacking for some fisheries, so rates from the most recent years were used. For the "other species" and skate fisheries, where insufficient mortality data are available, the mortality rate of halibut caught in the Pacific cod fishery for each gear type was recommended as

a default rate. The DMRs proposed for the GOA in 2006 and 2007 are unchanged from those used in 2005. The DMRs for hook-and-line targeted fisheries range from 8 to 13 percent. The DMRs for trawl targeted fisheries range

from 57 to 75 percent. The DMRs for all pot targeted fisheries is 17 percent. The proposed DMRs for 2006 and 2007 are listed in Table 11. The justification for these DMRs is discussed in Appendix A of the final SAFE report dated

November 2004. The IPHC will update and provide recommendations for halibut DMRs in 2006 for the 2007 groundfish fisheries.

TABLE 11.—PROPOSED 2006 AND 2007 HALIBUT DISCARD MORTALITY RATES FOR VESSELS FISHING IN THE GULF OF ALASKA

[Listed values are percent of halibut bycatch assumed to be dead]

Gear	Target	Mortality Rate
Hook-and-line	Other species	13
	Skates	13
	Pacific cod	13
	Rockfish	8
Trawl	Arrowtooth flounder	69
	Atka mackerel	60
	Deep-water flatfish	57
	Flathead sole	62
	Non pelagic pollock	59
	Other species	61
	Skates	61
	Pacific cod	61
	Pelagic pollock	75
	Rex sole	62
	Rockfish	67
	Sablefish	62
	Shallow-water flatfish	68
Pot	Other species	17
	Skates	17
	Pacific cod	17

Non-Exempt American Fisheries Act (AFA) Catcher Vessel Groundfish Harvest and PSC Limitations

Section 679.64 established groundfish harvesting and processing sideboard limitations on AFA catcher/processors and catcher vessels in the GOA. These sideboard limitations are necessary to protect the interests of fishermen and processors who do not directly benefit from the AFA from fishermen and processors who received exclusive harvesting and processing privileges under the AFA. In the GOA, listed AFA catcher/processors are prohibited from

harvesting any species of fish (§ 679.7(k)(1)(iii)) and from processing any groundfish harvested in Statistical Area 630 of the GOA (§ 679.7(k)(1)(iv)). Section 679.64(b)(2)(ii) exempts from sideboard limitations AFA catcher vessels in the GOA less than 125 ft (38.1 m) LOA whose annual Bering Sea and Aleutians Islands pollock landings totaled less than 5,100 mt and that made 40 or more GOA groundfish landings from 1995 through 1997.

For non-exempt AFA catcher vessels in the GOA, sideboard limitations are based on their traditional harvest levels

of TAC in groundfish fisheries covered by the GOA FMP. Section 679.64(b)(3)(iii) establishes the GOA groundfish sideboard limitations based on the retained catch of non-exempt AFA catcher vessels of each sideboard species from 1995 through 1997 divided by the TAC for that species over the same period. These amounts are listed in Table 12 for 2006 and in Table 13 for 2007. All targeted or incidental catch of sideboard species made by non-exempt AFA catcher vessels will be deducted from the sideboard limits in Tables 12 and 13.

TABLE 12.—PROPOSED 2006 GOA NON-EXEMPT AMERICAN FISHERIES ACT CATCHER VESSEL (CV) GROUNDFISH HARVEST SIDEBOARD LIMITATIONS

[Values are rounded to nearest metric ton]

Species	Apportionments and allocations by area/season/processor/gear	Ratio of 1995–1997 non-exempt AFA CV catch to 1995–1997 TAC	2006 TAC	2006 non-exempt AFA catcher vessel sideboard
Pollock	A Season (W/C areas only) January 20–March 10			
	Shumagin (610)	0.6112	5,835	3,566
	Chirikof (620)	0.1427	13,547	1,933
	Kodiak (630)	0.2438	4,805	1,171
	B Season (W/C areas only) March 10–May 31			
	Shumagin (610)	0.6112	5,835	3,566
	Chirikof (620)	0.1427	16,012	2,285
	Kodiak (630)	0.2438	2,339	570
	C Season (W/C areas only)			

TABLE 12.—PROPOSED 2006 GOA NON-EXEMPT AMERICAN FISHERIES ACT CATCHER VESSEL (CV) GROUND FISH HARVEST SIDEBOARD LIMITATIONS—Continued

[Values are rounded to nearest metric ton]

Species	Apportionments and allocations by area/season/processor/gear	Ratio of 1995–1997 non-exempt AFA CV catch to 1995–1997 TAC	2006 TAC	2006 non-exempt AFA catcher vessel sideboard
Pacific cod	August 25–October 1			
	Shumagin (610)	0.6112	11,766	7,191
	Chirikof (620)	0.1427	5,153	735
	Kodiak (630)	0.2438	7,267	1,772
	D Season (W/C areas only)			
	October 1–November 1			
	Shumagin (610)	0.6112	11,766	7,191
	Chirikof (620)	0.1427	5,153	735
	Kodiak (630)	0.2438	7,267	1,772
	Annual			
	WYK (640)	0.3499	1,955	684
	SEO (650)	0.3499	6,520	2,281
	A Season ¹			
	January 1–June 10			
	W inshore	0.1423	8,080	1,050
	W offshore	0.1026	898	92
	C inshore	0.0722	12,794	924
	C offshore	0.0721	1,421	102
	B Season ²			
	September 1–December 31.			
	W inshore	0.1423	5,388	767
	W offshore	0.1026	598	61
	C inshore	0.0722	8,529	616
	C offshore	0.0721	948	68
	Annual			
Flatfish deep-water	E inshore	0.0079	3,125	25
	E offshore	0.0078	347	3
	W	0.0000	330	0
Rex sole	C	0.0670	3,340	224
	E	0.0171	3,150	54
	W	0.0010	1,680	2
Flathead sole	C	0.0402	7,340	295
	E	0.0153	3,360	56
	W	0.0036	2,000	7
Flatfish shallow-water	C	0.0261	5,000	131
	E	0.0048	3,557	17
	W	0.0156	4,500	70
Arrowtooth flounder	C	0.0598	13,000	777
	E	0.0126	3,240	41
	W	0.0021	8,000	17
Sablefish	C	0.0309	25,000	773
	E	0.0020	5,000	10
	W trawl gear	0.0000	474	0
Pacific ocean perch	C trawl gear	0.0720	1,353	97
	E trawl gear	0.0488	287	14
	W	0.0623	2,525	157
Shortraker rockfish	C	0.0866	8,357	725
	E	0.0466	2,392	111
	W	0.0000	155	0
Rougheye rockfish	C	0.0237	324	8
	E	0.0124	247	3
	W	0.0000	188	0
Other rockfish	C	0.0237	557	13
	E	0.0124	262	3
	W	0.0034	40	0
Northern rockfish	C	0.2065	300	62
	E	0.0000	330	0
	W	0.0003	752	0
Pelagic shelf rockfish	C	0.0336	3,978	146
	W	0.0001	366	0
	C	0.0000	2,973	0
Thornyhead rockfish	E	0.0067	1,076	7
	W	0.0308	410	13
	C	0.0308	1,010	31
Big skates	E	0.0308	520	16
	W	0.0090	727	7

TABLE 12.—PROPOSED 2006 GOA NON-EXEMPT AMERICAN FISHERIES ACT CATCHER VESSEL (CV) GROUND FISH HARVEST SIDEBOARD LIMITATIONS—Continued

[Values are rounded to nearest metric ton]

Species	Apportionments and allocations by area/season/processor/gear	Ratio of 1995–1997 non-exempt AFA CV catch to 1995–1997 TAC	2006 TAC	2006 non-exempt AFA catcher vessel sideboard
Longnose skates	C	0.0090	2,463	22
	E	0.0090	809	7
	W	0.0090	66	1
	C	0.0090	1,972	18
Other skates	E	0.0090	780	7
	GW	0.0090	1,327	12
Demersal shelf rockfish	SEO	0.0020	410	1
Atka mackerel	Gulfwide	0.0309	600	19
Other species	Gulfwide	0.0090	14,348	129

¹ The Pacific cod A season for trawl gear does not open until January 20.² The Pacific cod B season for trawl gear closes November 1.

TABLE 13.—PROPOSED 2007 GOA NON-EXEMPT AMERICAN FISHERIES ACT CATCHER VESSEL (CV) GROUND FISH HARVEST SIDEBOARD LIMITATIONS.

[Values are rounded to nearest metric ton]

Species	Apportionments and allocations by area/season/processor/gear	Ratio of 1995–1997 non-exempt AFA CV catch to 1995–1997 TAC	2007 TAC	2007 non-exempt AFA catcher vessel sideboard
Pollock	A Season (W/C areas only): January 20–March 10			
	Shumagin (610)	0.6112	5,262	3,216
	Chirikof (620)	0.1427	12,216	1,743
	Kodiak (630)	0.2438	4,332	1,056
	B Season (W/C areas only)			
	March 10–May 31			
	Shumagin (610)	0.6112	5,261	3,216
	Chirikof (620)	0.1427	14,439	2,060
	Kodiak (630)	0.2438	2,109	514
	C Season (W/C areas only)			
	August 25–October 1			
	Shumagin (610)	0.6112	10,610	6,485
	Chirikof (620)	0.1427	4,646	633
	Kodiak (630)	0.2438	6,553	1,598
	D Season (W/C areas only)			
	October 1–November 1			
Pacific cod	Shumagin (610)	0.6112	10,610	6,485
	Chirikof (620)	0.1427	4,646	663
	Kodiak (630)	0.2438	6,553	1,598
	Annual			
	WYK (640)	0.3499	1,763	617
	SEO (650)	0.3499	6,520	2,281
	A Season ¹			
	January 1–June 10			
	W inshore	0.1423	6,797	967
	W offshore	0.1026	755	77
	C inshore	0.0722	10,761	777
	C offshore	0.0721	1,197	86
	B Season ²			
	September 1–December 31			
	W inshore	0.1423	4,531	645
	W offshore	0.1026	504	52
Flatfish deep-water.	C inshore	0.0722	7,175	518
	C offshore	0.0721	797	57
	Annual			
	E inshore	0.0079	2,628	21
Rex sole.	E offshore	0.0078	292	2
	W	0.0000	330	0
	C	0.0670	3,340	224
	E	0.0171	3,150	54
	W	0.0010	1,680	2

TABLE 13.—PROPOSED 2007 GOA NON-EXEMPT AMERICAN FISHERIES ACT CATCHER VESSEL (CV) GROUNDFISH HARVEST SIDEBOARD LIMITATIONS.—Continued

[Values are rounded to nearest metric ton]

Species	Apportionments and allocations by area/season/processor/gear	Ratio of 1995–1997 non-exempt AFA CV catch to 1995–1997 TAC	2007 TAC	2007 non-exempt AFA catcher vessel sideboard
Flathead sole.	C	0.0402	7,340	295
	E	0.0153	3,630	56
	W	0.0036	2,000	7
Flatfish shallow-water.	C	0.0261	5,000	131
	E	0.0048	2,664	13
	W	0.0156	4,500	70
Arrowtooth flounder.	C	0.0598	13,000	777
	E	0.0126	3,240	41
	W	0.0021	8,000	17
Sablefish.	C	0.0309	25,000	773
	E	0.0020	5,000	10
	W trawl gear	0.0000	443	0
Pacific ocean perch.	C trawl gear	0.0720	1,264	91
	E trawl gear	0.0488	268	13
	W	0.0623	2,494	155
Shortraker rockfish.	C	0.0866	8,293	718
	E	0.0466	2,363	110
	W	0.0000	155	0
Rougheye rockfish.	C	0.0237	324	8
	E	0.0124	247	3
	W	0.0000	188	0
Other rockfish.	C	0.0237	557	13
	E	0.0124	262	3
	W	0.0034	40	0
Northern rockfish.	C	0.2065	300	62
	E	0.0000	330	0
	W	0.0003	704	0
Pelagic shelf rockfish.	C	0.0336	3,726	136
	W	0.0001	366	0
	C	0.0000	2,973	0
Thornyhead rockfish.	E	0.0067	1,076	7
	W	0.0308	410	13
	C	0.0308	1,010	31
Big skates.	E	0.0308	520	16
	W	0.0090	727	7
	C	0.0090	2,463	22
Longnose skates.	E	0.0090	809	7
	W	0.0090	66	1
	C	0.0090	1,972	18
Other skates.	E	0.0090	780	7
	GW	0.0090	1,327	12
	SEO	0.0020	410	1
Atka mackerel.	Gulfwide	0.0309	600	19
Other species.	Gulfwide	0.0090	13,411	121

¹ The Pacific cod A season for trawl gear does not open until January 20.² The Pacific cod B season for trawl gear closes November 1.

In accordance with § 679.64(b)(4), PSC sideboard limitations for non-exempt AFA catcher vessels in the GOA are based on the ratio of aggregate

retained groundfish catch by non-exempt AFA catcher vessels in each PSC target category from 1995 through 1997, relative to the retained catch of all

vessels in that fishery from 1995 through 1997. These amounts are shown in Table 14.

TABLE 14.—PROPOSED 2006 AND 2007 NON-EXEMPT AMERICAN FISHERIES ACT CATCHER VESSEL PROHIBITED SPECIES CATCH (PSC) LIMITS FOR THE GOA.

[Values are in metric tons]

PSC species	Season	Target fishery	Ratio of 1995–1997 non-exempt AFA CV retained catch to total retained catch	2006 and 2007 PSC limit	2006 and 2007 non-exempt AFA catcher vessel PSC limit
Halibut (mortality in mt).	Trawl 1st seasonal allowance January 20–April 1.	shallow water targets	0.340	450	153
		deep water targets	0.070	100	7
	Trawl 2nd seasonal allowance April 1–July 1.	shallow water targets	0.340	100	34
		deep water targets	0.070	300	21
	Trawl 3rd seasonal allowance July 1–September 1.	shallow water targets	0.340	200	68
		deep water targets	0.070	400	28
	Trawl 4th seasonal allowance September 1–October 1.	shallow water targets	0.340	150	51
		deep water targets	0.070	0	0
	Trawl 5th seasonal allowance October 1–December 31.	all targets	0.205	300	61

Non-AFA Crab Vessel Groundfish Harvest Limitations

Section 680.22 establishes groundfish catch limitations for vessels with a history of participation in the Bering Sea snow crab fishery to prevent these vessels from using the increased flexibility provided by the Crab Rationalization Program to expand their level of participation in the GOA groundfish fisheries. Restrictions on participation in other fisheries, also called sideboards, will restrict a vessel's harvests to its historical landings in all GOA groundfish fisheries (except the fixed-gear sablefish fishery). Restrictions also will apply to landings made using a License Limitation Program (LLP)

license derived from the history of a restricted vessel, even if that LLP is used on another vessel.

For non-AFA crab vessels in the GOA, sideboards limitations are based on their traditional harvest levels of TAC in groundfish fisheries covered by the GOA FMP. The regulations base the groundfish sideboard limitations in the GOA on the retained catch by non-AFA crab vessels of each sideboard species from 1996 through 2000 divided by the total retained harvest of that species over the same period (§ 680.22 (d) and (e)). These amounts are listed in Table 15 for 2006 and in Table 16 for 2007. All harvests of sideboard species made by non-AFA crab vessels, whether as

targeted catch or incidental catch, will be deducted from the sideboard limits in Tables 15 and 16. Vessels exempt from Pacific cod sideboards are those that landed less than 45,359 kg of Bering Sea snow crab and more than 500 mt of groundfish (in round weight equivalents) from the GOA between January 1, 1996 and December 31, 2000, and any vessel named on an LLP that was generated in whole or in part by the fishing history of a vessel meeting the criteria in § 680.22(a)(3). The ratios of 1996–2000 non-AFA CV catch to 1996–2000 total harvest in Tables 15 and 16 may be subject to modification pending changes to named vessels on LLPs as of December 31, 2005.

TABLE 15.—PROPOSED 2006 GOA NON AMERICAN FISHERIES ACT CRAB VESSEL (CV) GROUND FISH HARVEST SIDEBOARD LIMITATIONS

[Values are rounded to nearest metric ton]

Species	Apportionments and allocations by area/season/processor/gear	Ratio of 1996–2000 non-AFA CV catch to 1996–2000 total harvest	2006 TAC	2006 non-AFA crab vessel sideboard
Pollock	A Season (W/C areas only); January 20–March 10			
	Shumagin (610)	0.0325	5,835	190
	Chirikof (620)	0.0101	13,547	137
	Kodiak (630)	0.0003	4,805	1
	B Season (W/C areas only); March 10–May 31			
	Shumagin (610)	0.0325	5,835	190
	Chirikof (620)	0.0101	16,012	162
	Kodiak (630)	0.0003	2,339	1
	C Season (W/C areas only); August 25–October 1			

TABLE 15.—PROPOSED 2006 GOA NON AMERICAN FISHERIES ACT CRAB VESSEL (CV) GROUND FISH HARVEST
SIDEBOARD LIMITATIONS—Continued

[Values are rounded to nearest metric ton]

Species	Apportionments and allocations by area/season/processor/gear	Ratio of 1996–2000 non-AFA CV catch to 1996–2000 total harvest	2006 TAC	2006 non-AFA crab vessel sideboard
Pacific cod	Shumagin (610)	0.0325	11,766	382
	Chirikof (620)	0.0101	5,153	52
	Kodiak (630)	0.0003	7,267	2
	D Season (W/C areas only); October 1–November 1			
	Shumagin (610)	0.0325	11,766	382
	Chirikof (620)	0.0101	5,153	52
	Kodiak (630)	0.0003	7,267	2
	Annual			
	WYK (640)	0.0000	1,955	0
	SEO (650)	0.0000	6,520	0
	A Season ¹ ; January 1–June 10			
	W inshore	0.0976	8,080	789
	W offshore	0.3550	898	319
	C inshore	0.0502	12,794	642
	C offshore	0.2659	1,421	378
	B Season ² September 1–December 31			
	W inshore	0.0976	5,388	526
	W offshore	0.3550	598	212
	C inshore	0.0502	8,529	428
	C offshore	0.2659	948	252
	Annual			
Flatfish deep-water	E inshore	0.0179	3,125	56
	E offshore	0.0000	347	0
	W	0.0048	330	2
Rex sole	C	0.0001	3,340	0
	E	0.0000	3,150	0
	W	0.0001	1,680	0
Flathead sole	C	0.0001	7,340	1
	E	0.0000	3,630	0
	W	0.0037	2,000	7
Flatfish shallow-water	C	0.0005	5,000	3
	E	0.0000	3,557	0
	W	0.0061	4,500	27
Arrowtooth flounder	C	0.0001	13,000	1
	E	0.0000	3,240	0
	W	0.0017	8,000	14
Sablefish	C	0.0003	25,000	8
	E	0.0000	5,000	0
	W trawl gear	0.0000	474	0
Pacific ocean perch	C trawl gear	0.0007	1,353	1
	E trawl gear	0.0000	287	0
	W	0.0000	2,525	0
Shortraker rockfish	C	0.0008	8,357	7
	E	0.0000	2,392	0
	W	0.0017	155	0
Rougheye rockfish	C	0.0028	324	1
	E	0.0012	247	0
	W	0.0067	188	1
Other rockfish	C	0.0050	557	3
	E	0.0011	262	0
	W	0.0035	40	0
Northern rockfish	C	0.0034	300	1
	E	0.0001	330	0
	W	0.0005	752	0
Pelagic shelf rockfish	C	0.0018	3,978	7
	W	0.0017	366	1
	C	0.0002	2,973	1
Thornyhead rockfish	E	0.0000	1,076	0
	W	0.0051	410	2
	C	0.0077	1,010	8
Big skate	E	0.0050	520	3
	W	0.0200	727	15
	C	0.0200	2,463	49
Longnose skate	E	0.0200	809	16
	W	0.0200	66	1
	C	0.0200	1,972	39

TABLE 15.—PROPOSED 2006 GOA NON AMERICAN FISHERIES ACT CRAB VESSEL (CV) GROUND FISH HARVEST
SIDEBOARD LIMITATIONS—Continued
[Values are rounded to nearest metric ton]

Species	Apportionments and allocations by area/season/processor/gear	Ratio of 1996–2000 non-AFA CV catch to 1996–2000 total harvest	2006 TAC	2006 non-AFA crab vessel sideboard
Other skates	E	0.0200	780	16
Demersal shelf rockfish	GW	0.0200	1,327	27
Atka mackerel	SEO	0.0000	410	0
Other species	Gulfwide	0.0000	600	0
	Gulfwide	0.0200	14,348	287

¹ The Pacific cod A season for trawl gear does not open until January 20.

² The Pacific cod B season for trawl gear closes November 1.

TABLE 16.—PROPOSED 2007 GOA NON AMERICAN FISHERIES ACT CRAB VESSEL (CV) GROUND FISH HARVEST
SIDEBOARD LIMITATIONS.
[Values are rounded to nearest metric ton]

Species	Apportionments and allocations by area/season/processor/gear	Ratio of 1996–2000 non-AFA CV catch to 1996–2000 total harvest	2007 TAC	2007 non-AFA crab vessel sideboard
Pollock	A Season (W/C areas only) January 20–March 10 Shumagin (610)	0.0325	5,262	171
	Chirikof (620)	0.0101	12,216	123
	Kodiak (630)	0.0003	4,332	1
	B Season (W/C areas only) March 10–May 31 Shumagin (610)	0.0325	5,261	171
	Chirikof (620)	0.0101	14,439	146
	Kodiak (630)	0.0003	2,109	1
	C Season (W/C areas only) August 25–October 1 Shumagin (610)	0.0325	10,610	345
	Chirikof (620)	0.0101	4,646	47
	Kodiak (630)	0.0003	6,553	2
	D Season (W/C areas only) October 1–November 1 Shumagin (610)	0.0325	10,610	345
	Chirikof (620)	0.0101	4,646	47
	Kodiak (630)	0.0003	6,553	2
	Annual WYK (640)	0.0000	1,763	0
	SEO (650)	0.0000	6,520	0
Pacific cod	A Season ¹ January 1–June 10 W inshore	0.0976	6,797	663
	W offshore	0.3550	755	268
	C inshore	0.0502	10,761	540
	C offshore	0.2659	1,197	318
	B Season ² September 1–December 31 W inshore	0.0976	4,531	442
	W offshore	0.3550	504	179
	C inshore	0.0502	7,175	360
	C offshore	0.2659	797	212
	Annual E inshore	0.0179	2,628	47
	E offshore	0.0000	292	0
Flatfish deep-water	W	0.0048	330	2
	C	0.0001	3,340	0
	E	0.0000	3,150	0
Rex sole	W	0.0001	1,680	0
	C	0.0001	7,340	1
	E	0.0000	3,630	0
Flathead sole	W	0.0037	2,000	7
	C	0.0005	5,000	3
	E	0.0000	2,664	0

TABLE 16.—PROPOSED 2007 GOA NON AMERICAN FISHERIES ACT CRAB VESSEL (CV) GROUND FISH HARVEST SIDEBOARD LIMITATIONS.—Continued

[Values are rounded to nearest metric ton]

Species	Apportionments and allocations by area/season/processor/ gear	Ratio of 1996– 2000 non-AFA CV catch to 1996–2000 total harvest	2007 TAC	2007 non-AFA crab vessel sideboard
Flatfish shallow water	W	0.0061	4,500	27
	C	0.0001	13,000	1
	E	0.0000	3,240	0
Arrowtooth flounder	W	0.0017	8,000	14
	C	0.0003	25,000	8
	E	0.0000	5,000	0
Sablefish	W trawl gear	0.0000	443	0
	C trawl gear	0.0007	1,264	1
	E trawl gear	0.0000	268	0
Pacific ocean perch	W	0.0000	2,494	0
	C	0.0008	8,293	7
	E	0.0000	2,363	0
Shortraker rockfish	W	0.0017	155	0
	C	0.0028	324	1
	E	0.0012	247	0
Rougheye rockfish	W	0.0067	188	1
	C	0.0050	557	3
	E	0.0011	262	0
Other rockfish	W	0.0035	40	0
	C	0.0034	300	1
	E	0.0001	330	0
Northern rockfish	W	0.0005	704	0
	C	0.0018	3,726	7
Pelagic shelf rockfish	W	0.0017	366	1
	C	0.0002	2,973	1
	E	0.0000	1,076	0
Thornyhead rockfish	W	0.0051	410	2
	C	0.0077	1,010	8
	E	0.0050	520	3
Big skate	W	0.0200	727	15
	C	0.0200	2,463	49
	E	0.0200	809	16
Longnose skate	W	0.0200	66	1
	C	0.0200	1,972	39
	E	0.0200	780	16
Other skates	GW	0.0200	1,327	27
Demersal shelf rockfish	SEO	0.0000	410	0
Atka mackerel	Gulfwide	0.0000	600	0
Other species	Gulfwide	0.0200	13,411	268

¹ The Pacific cod A season for trawl gear does not open until January 20.² The Pacific cod B season for trawl gear closes November 1.

Classification

An IRFA was prepared to evaluate the impacts of the 2006 and 2007 proposed harvest specifications on directly regulated small entities. This IRFA is intended to meet the statutory requirements of the Regulatory Flexibility Act (RFA). A copy of the IRFA is available from NMFS (See ADDRESSES). The reason for the action, a statement of the objective of the action, and the legal basis are discussed in the preamble and are not repeated here.

The 2006 and 2007 harvest specifications establish harvest limits for the groundfish species and species groups in the GOA. Entities directly impacted are those fishing for groundfish in the Exclusive Economic

Zone (EEZ), or in parallel fisheries in State waters (in which harvests are counted against the Federal TAC). An estimated 693 small catcher vessels, 18 small catcher/processors, and 6 small private non-profit CDQ groups may be directly regulated by these harvest specifications in the GOA. The catcher vessel estimate in particular is subject to various uncertainties. It may provide an underestimate since it does not count vessels that fish only within State parallel fisheries. This underestimate may be offset by upward biases introduced by the use of preliminary price estimates (which don't fully account for post-season price adjustments) and by a failure to account for affiliations, other than AFA

cooperative affiliations, among entities. For these reasons, the catcher vessel estimate must be considered an approximation.

The IRFA examined the impacts of the preferred alternative on small entities within fisheries reliant on species groups whose TACs might be notably adjusted by the harvest specifications. The IRFA identified the potential for adverse impacts on small fishing operations harvesting Pacific cod, sablefish, and rockfish species in the GOA.

GOA Pacific cod revenue decreases for small entities and were estimated to be about 1 percent of their revenues from all sources in 2006 and 3.7 percent between 2005 and 2007. Sablefish revenue decreases for small entities and

were estimated to be about 3.7 percent of their revenues from all sources in 2006 and 6.7 percent between 2005 and 2007. TAC declines were expected for the rockfish species or species groups, Pacific ocean perch, northern rockfish, and pelagic shelf rockfish. Rockfish revenue changes for small entities were estimated to be a maximum of 4.7 percent of their revenues from all sources in 2006 and a maximum of 4 percent between 2005 and 2007.

This regulation does not impose new recordkeeping or reporting requirements on the regulated small entities. This analysis did not reveal any Federal rules that duplicate, overlap, or conflict with the proposed action.

This analysis examined four alternatives to the preferred alternative. These included alternatives that set TACs to produce fishing rates equal to $\max F_{ABC}$, one half $\max F_{ABC}$, the recent

5 year average F, and zero. Only one of these alternatives, setting TACs equal to $\max F_{ABC}$, would have potentially a smaller adverse impact on small entities than the preferred alternative. This alternative is associated with larger gross revenues for the GOA fisheries. Many of the vessels identified above would share in these gross revenues. However, the $\max F_{ABC}$ is a fishing rate that may, and often does, exceed biologically recommended ABCs. For the pollock, deep-water flatfish, rex sole, sablefish, Pacific ocean perch, shortraker rockfish, rougheye rockfish, northern rockfish, pelagic shelf rockfish, thornyhead rockfish, demersal shelf rockfish, skate, and Atka mackerel fisheries described above, the preferred alternative, which produces fishing rates less than $\max F_{ABC}$, sets TACs equal to projected annual ABCs. In

addition, the preferred alternative TACs for Pacific cod, when combined with the State of Alaska guideline harvest levels for these fisheries, also equals ABC. The increases in TACs related to producing fishing rates of $\max F_{ABC}$ would not be consistent with biologically prudent fishery management because they do not fall within the scientifically determined ABC.

This action is authorized under § 679.20 and is exempt from review under Executive Order 12866.

Authority: 16 U.S.C. 773 *et seq.*; 1540(f); 1801 *et seq.*; 1851 note; and 3631 *et seq.*

Dated: December 12, 2005.

James W. Balsiger,

*Acting Deputy Assistant Administrator for
Regulatory Programs, National Marine
Fisheries Service.*

[FR Doc. E5-7463 Filed 12-15-05; 8:45 am]

BILLING CODE 3510-22-P