

eliminated (50 CFR 600.310(e)(4)(ii)(B)(3)). The longest amount of time allowed for rebuilding is the amount of time required to rebuild the stock with no fishing mortality plus one mean generation time. Other potential rebuilding time frames include those consistent with a constant fishing mortality rate of $F = 0.03$, a constant harvest strategy of 8.8 million pounds, and one mean generation time.

3. Evaluate new methods to estimate discards and discard mortality as well as develop management options to reduce discards in other fisheries

The Dogfish Monitoring Committee concluded at its September 2002 meeting that discard mortality may be compromising the fishery's ability to achieve the FMP objective of rebuilding female spawning stock biomass. The Committee strongly recommended increased observer coverage to allow reliable estimation of discards and additional studies to estimate discard mortality rate by gear type. The mortality of dogfish discarded in other fisheries could be greater than that which will allow stock rebuilding. If this is the case, additional constraints on the fisheries which land and discard dogfish should be considered (e.g., time-area closures).

4. Establish a new quota allocation scheme

The current quota allocation scheme designates 57.9 percent of the annual quota to period 1 (May–October) and 42.1 percent to period 2 (November–April). This scheme may be modified in order to simplify the allocation process and/or distribute harvest more evenly over the course of the year. Alternatives to the current scheme include but are not limited to a 50:50 split between quota periods 1 and 2, alternative seasons (i.e., monthly, bimonthly, quarters), changing the fishing year to be consistent with the calendar year, and adding a provision for overages.

5. Other management concerns

A number of additional management measure changes could be considered in the development of Amendment 1. These modifications could include changing the specification of management measures from an annual to a multiple year approach, adding quota set-asides for biological supply and/or biomedical research, limited access options, establishing a percentage of the quota for research set-asides, allocating the quota regionally or state-by-state, establishing a maximum size or slot sizes, and managing the Northwest

Atlantic spiny dogfish resource in cooperation with Canada.

Possible Management Measures

Commercial Fishery Management Measures

Possible management measures for the commercial fishery include:

Discard Monitoring Program	X
Closed seasons	X
Closed areas	X
Regional Quota Allocation	X
Minimum/Maximum Size Limits	X
Trip limits	X
Limited Access	X

Recreational Fishery Management Measures

Possible management measures for the spiny dogfish recreational fishery include:

Discard Monitoring Program	X
Closed seasons	X
Closed areas	X
Minimum/Maximum Size Limits	X
Trip limits	X

Public Scoping Meeting Schedule

A scoping meeting will be held as follows:

7:00 PM March 17, 2003 at Sheraton Oceanfront Hotel, 36th Street & Atlantic Ave. Virginia Beach, VA 23451 Tel: 757-425-9000

Special Accommodations

This meeting is physically accessible to people with disabilities. Requests for sign language interpretation or other auxiliary aids should be directed to Joanna Davis at the Mid-Atlantic Council, telephone (302) 674-2331, at least 5 days prior to the scoping meeting.

Authority: 16 U.S.C. 1801 et. seq.

Dated: February 11, 2003.

Richard W. Surdi,

Acting Director, Office of Sustainable Fisheries, National Marine Fisheries Service.
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DEPARTMENT OF COMMERCE

National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration

50 CFR Part 679

[Docket No. 030128021-3021-01; I.D. 121602A]

RIN: 0648-AQ45

Fisheries of the Exclusive Economic Zone Off Alaska; Opening Waters to Pacific Cod Pot Fishing off Cape Barnabas and Caton Island

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

ACTION: Proposed rule.

SUMMARY: NMFS issues a proposed rule to open waters to Pacific cod pot fishing around Cape Barnabas and Caton Island located in the Gulf of Alaska (GOA). Waters out to 3 nautical miles (nm) around these sites are currently closed to Pacific cod fishing by federally permitted vessels as a Steller sea lion protection measure. State of Alaska regulations do not implement these same closures in State waters. This action is necessary to provide consistency between State and Federal fishing restrictions and to relieve a potential burden on the Pacific cod pot fishing sector. The regulatory amendment is intended to meet the objectives in the Magnuson-Stevens Fishery Conservation and Management Act (Magnuson-Stevens Act) and further the goals and objectives of the Fishery Management Plan for Groundfish of the Gulf of Alaska (FMP).

DATES: Comments on the proposed rule must be received on or before March 20, 2003.

ADDRESSES: Comments should be sent to Sue Salvesson, Assistant Regional Administrator for Sustainable Fisheries, Alaska Region, NMFS, P.O. Box 21668, Juneau, AK 99802-1668, Attn: Lori Durall, or delivered to the Federal Building, 709 W 9th St., Juneau, Alaska. Comments may also be faxed to 907-586-7557, marked Attn: Lori Durall. Copies of the Environmental Assessment/Regulatory Impact Review/Initial Regulatory Flexibility Analysis (EA/RIR/IRFA) prepared for this action and the Steller sea lion supplemental environmental impact statement (SEIS) may also be obtained from the same address, from the Alaska Region, NMFS, Web site at <http://www.fakr.noaa.gov>, or by calling the Alaska Region, NMFS, at 907-586-7228.