

ENDANGERED SPECIES ACT MITIGATION MEASURES FOR SEABIRDS– SCOPING

Based on observed take of endangered short-tailed albatross in groundfish longline fisheries in 2016 National Marine Fisheries Service (NMFS) reinitiated consultation with the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service (USFWS) on the operation of the fisheries managed under the Pacific Coast Groundfish Fishery Management Plan (PCGFMP) pursuant to Section 7 of the Endangered Species Act. On May 2, 2017 USFWS published its Biological Opinion. The Council was briefed on the contents of the Biological Opinion (B.O.) in November 2017 (Agenda Item F.7). The Incidental Take Statement in the B.O. lists nondiscretionary term and conditions, one of which mandates that the Council develop recommendations amending current groundfish regulations to require vessels that use the longline gear to:

- i) Employ streamer lines in the commercial longline fishery of the Pacific Coast Ground Fishery consistent with the Alaska streamer line regulations for Federal waters, including the use of single streamer lines on boats 26-55 feet in length, OR
- ii) Set longlines after civil sunset.

NMFS must implement these regulation changes as soon as practical, but initiation of implementation shall not exceed a three-year period after the biological opinion issuance date. Current regulations (50 CFR 660.21) require the use of streamer lines for PCGFMP longline vessels 55 feet and longer.

The attached background paper describes this action in more detail (Attachment 1) and outlines considerations for determining the scope. As discussed in the paper, NMFS would prefer the Council take final action no later than the June 2019 meeting. The Council also may wish to consider the adoption of alternatives at this or a future meeting such that a final preferred alternative could be chosen by the June 2019 meeting.

Council Action:

Scope Mitigation Measures for Seabird Interactions in Groundfish Fisheries Pursuant to the 2017 United States Fish and Wildlife Service Biological Opinion.

Reference Materials:

1. Agenda Item G.5, Attachment 1: Mitigation Measures to Address Incidental Take of Short-Tailed Albatross in Fisheries Managed under the Pacific Coast Groundfish Fishery Management Plan, Staff Briefing Paper.
2. Agenda Item G.5.a, NMFS Report 1: Free Seabird Streamer Lines (Bird Scaring Lines).

Agenda Order:

- G.5 Endangered Species Act Mitigation Measures for Seabirds– Scoping Kit Dahl
- a. Reports and Comments of Management Entities and Advisory Bodies
 - b. Public Comment
 - c. **Council Action:** Scope Mitigation Measures for Seabird Interactions in Groundfish Fisheries Pursuant to the 2017 United States Fish and Wildlife Service Biological Opinion