

DRAFT Motions and Rationale**Framework 27**

Staff reviewed preliminary 2015 survey results, biomass estimates, and preliminary fishery projections for FY2016. The Committee asked several questions about the surveys and preliminary analyses. Staff and the Chair of the AP reviewed input from the advisors related to potential specification alternatives. Ultimately, the Committee directed the PDT to continue development of FW27 specifications alternatives including four specific alternatives to further protect small scallops.

The Committee decided not to recommend consideration of a gear modification in FW27, a consensus statement passed by the AP the day before. The Committee discussed that it was admirable that the industry wanted to explore additional gear modifications before directed research was conducted in that area, but the Committee did not support development of an alternative in FW27 primarily due to concerns about delaying the action. One Committee member explained that the Committee hears time and time again that fishery specifications get delayed because additional items are added for consideration and here we are again. In addition, there is no research available in the specific area under consideration (MA waters in high concentrations of small scallops). It was discussed that it may be possible for additional research to be conducted between now and the start of the fishing year and that work could be shared with the industry on an informal basis. The Committee is supportive of that effort and encourages the industry to proactively modify gear on a voluntary basis, but does not think it should be required as regulation until more research is completed and available for the process to consider.

*By consensus, the Committee directs the PDT to explore several specific alternatives in Framework 27 to further protect small scallops: 1) extension of ETA closed area including AP suggestions for how to expand the area; 2) consider a closure of Hudson Canyon; 3) consider a closure south of CA2 – the same area considered in FW26; and 4) consider some limited level of access in NL in 2016.*

**Amendment 19**

Staff reviewed the Draft EA for this action including a summary of alternatives and analyses. Staff highlighted several issues that need to be clarified about the alternatives developed to date, including input from the PDT and AP for each item.

*By consensus, the Committee clarified all 4 items:*

- 1) confirmed the list of items that can be modified by specification process;*
- 2) confirmed that specification process should be up to two years, and the Council will need to decide the length of time in the priority setting process;*
- 3) confirmed that NMFS has the same review authority as the framework process in terms of approval, disapproval, and partial approval; and*
- 4) confirmed that if the start of the fishing year changes to April 1, the first fishing year should be 13 months to get in sync with April 1 start (March 1 – March 31).*

Next the Committee considered preferred alternatives and ultimately supported the same measures identified by the AP the previous day. Several Committee members wanted to discuss the April 1 alternative in more detail based on the relatively close vote at the AP level (6:4:2). Several AP members still present at the Committee meeting provided some rationale for why the vote was relatively split. Briefly, it was explained that a start date of March 1 may be less of an issue now than it used to be when allocations were higher and the plan was less flexible in terms of carryover provisions. Some of the fleet is not supportive of moving the date because they are concerned that would increase the risk of later implementation; give NMFS until April and measures would not be in place until May. It was explained that there is some recognition that April 1 makes sense from an administrative standpoint, but any later would cause real problems for the fishery and that is why the industry never supported other dates when this issue came up in the past (May 1, August 1, etc).

The Committee considered waiting to identify preferred alternatives until more public input was collected at subsequent meetings. But in the end the Committee voiced that at this time they are supportive of moving the start date to April 1 and it would be helpful to inform the public now to help solicit more informed input before final action in December. One Committee member expressed concern that if the start date was not moved the action would not achieve one of the stated purposes of the action: to reduce overall administrative burden associated with late implementation of specifications.

**Motion 1: Kendall/Pappalardo**

**Committee supports Alt 2.2 be selected as preferred for Amendment 19.**

**Vote: 6:0:0, carries**

**Motion 2: Alexander/Kaelin**

**Committee also supports Alt. 2.3 be selected as preferred for Amendment 19.**

**Vote: 6:0:0, carries**

**2016 Work Priorities**

Staff reviewed a draft list of potential priorities for 2015. The Committee supports all items listed and if the Council is not able to include all four items in the work plan for 2016 the overall priority order should be: 1) fishery specifications; 2) Framework 28; 3) finish inshore workshop; and 4) required 5 year IFQ report. The Committee specified two issues for consideration in Framework 28 (modify GB access areas based on approval of EFH action and gear modifications to further protect small scallops). At this time the Committee did not specify if they recommend the fishery specifications developed next year should be for FY2017 or both FY2017 and 2018. The Council will have to clarify that at the final meeting in December.

*By consensus, the Committee supports the four items on the draft priority list, and recommends that the general priority order be as listed 1 through 4. The Committee also supports item #5 as an important priority for the Groundfish Committee to consider. Item #2 should include consideration of gear modifications to further reduce impacts on small scallops.*