

TABLE 1. FINAL 1995 ACCEPTABLE BIOLOGICAL CATCH (ABC), TOTAL ALLOWABLE CATCH (TAC), INITIAL TAC (ITAC), AND OVERFISHING LEVELS OF GROUND FISH IN THE BERING SEA AND ALEUTIAN ISLANDS AREAS<sup>1 2</sup>—Continued

Species	ABC	TAC	ITAC DAP <sup>3 4</sup>	Over fishing level
Totals .....	2,836,985	2,000,000	1,700,000	3,655,945

<sup>1</sup> Amounts are in metric tons. These amounts apply to the entire Bering Sea (BS) and Aleutian Islands (AI) area unless otherwise specified. With the exception of pollock and for the purpose of these specifications, the BS includes the Bogoslof district.

<sup>2</sup> Zero amounts of groundfish are specified for Joint Venture Processing (JVP) and Total Allowable Level of Foreign Fishing (TALFF).

<sup>3</sup> Except for the portion of the sablefish TAC allocated to hook-and-line and pot gear, 0.15 of each TAC is put into a reserve. For the portion of the sablefish TAC allocated to vessels using hook-and-line or pot gear, .20 of the allocated TAC is reserved for use by Community Development Quota participants. The ITAC for each species is the remainder of the TAC after the subtraction of these reserves.

<sup>4</sup> DAP = domestic annual processing = ITAC.

<sup>5</sup> "Other flatfish" includes all flatfish species except for Pacific halibut (a prohibited species) and all other flatfish species that have a separate specified TAC amount.

<sup>6</sup> "Other red rockfish" includes shortraker, roughey, sharpchin, and northern.

<sup>7</sup> "Other rockfish" includes all *Sebastes* and *Sebastolobus* species except for Pacific ocean perch, sharpchin, northern, shortraker and roughey.

<sup>8</sup> "Other species" includes sculpins, sharks, skates, eulachon, smelts, capelin, and octopus.

The SSC's revisions to the ABCs recommended by the Plan Team for Bogoslof pollock, Greenland turbot, and Atka mackerel are discussed below.

**Bogoslof pollock.** The Plan Team indicated in the final 1995 SAFE report that the current estimate of biomass of Aleutian Basin pollock (442,000 mt) is the best estimate, assuming that no recruitment to the stock has occurred and that the natural mortality rate (M) is 0.2. Reassessment of the Bogoslof area hydroacoustic survey with new threshold levels of abundance has not changed previous conclusions that this stock has continued to decrease since 1988. The Plan Team lacks conclusive data that Bogoslof pollock are an independent stock that is self sustaining. Recruitment to the Aleutian Basin is most likely coming from another area from the surrounding continental shelf. To the extent that this recruitment may not be the progeny of Bogoslof spawners, the Plan Team assumed no recruitment will occur in 1995, and projected a biomass for 1995 of 442,000 mt using  $M=0.2$ . The Plan Team then calculated the  $F_{0.35}$  exploitation rate of 0.26 to derive an ABC of 115,000. However, the SSC continued the policy of adjusting the exploitation rate downward by  $M/4$ , or .05, in proportion to the ratio of current biomass to optimal biomass. This leads to an ABC of 22,100. Due to lack of recruitment predicted for 1995, the Council recommended a TAC of 1,000 mt to provide for bycatch in other groundfish operations. That recommendation is adopted in these final specifications (Table 1).

**Greenland turbot.** The Plan Team used the stock synthesis model to estimate the ABC, which was updated with 1994 catch and survey data. Similar to last year, the Plan Team used a more conservative exploitation rate of  $F_{0.40}$  and an increased slope survey

catchability coefficient of 0.75, due to the lack of recruitment. These parameters resulted in a conservative ABC of 18,500 mt. Continued poor recruitment and stock abundance levels lead the SSC to recommend a continuation of the present 7,000 mt ABC for this species. The SSC further recommended that the ABC be split into two apportionments: Two-thirds to the eastern Bering Sea, and one-third to the Aleutian Islands. This resulted in ABCs of 4,669 mt and 2,331 mt, respectively. This recommendation is intended to spread fishing effort over a larger area to avoid localized depletion. The Council concurred with the SSC's recommendation for ABC and set the TAC equal to ABC. That recommendation is adopted in these final specifications.

**Atka mackerel.** The Plan Team was not able to assess the current Atka mackerel stock level and the magnitude of the incoming year classes because data from the 1994 trawl survey and age composition of the 1993 fishery were not available. As a result, the Plan Team's recommended ABC (245,000 mt) was unchanged from 1994. Since 1992, the SSC has been apprehensive about possible environmental problems that may result from an increased catch of the magnitude implied by the Plan Team's estimate of ABC. Atka mackerel is a prey species of northern fur seals (a depleted species under the Marine Mammal Protection Act) and Steller sea lions (a threatened species under the Endangered Species Act). During their migrations, northern fur seals feed heavily on Atka mackerel as they move through the Aleutian passes. Therefore, since 1992, the SSC has recommended phasing in the Plan Team's estimate of ABC over a 6-year period by adopting the Plan Team's biomass estimate (832,000 mt for 1995), and raising the exploitation rate in steps. These

incremental steps are as follows: (M)(1/6) in 1992, (M)(2/6) in 1993, (M)(3/6) in 1994, (M)(4/6) in 1995, (M)(5/6) in 1996, and M in 1997. However, due to current uncertainty about the stock status, the SSC recommends that the stairstep be frozen at the level used to reduce the calculated ABC for 1994. According to this revised schedule, the recommended ABC for 1995 is  $(0.30/2)(832,000)=125,000$  mt. The main purpose of this approach is to postpone a large ABC increase until data are available to evaluate the phase-in policy.

The Council recommended an 80,000 mt TAC for Atka mackerel in the BSAI in 1995. Based on the authority provided by Amendment 28 to the FMP, the Council recommended the following apportionment of the TAC for Atka mackerel among the Aleutian Islands (AI) management districts and the Bering Sea relative to survey biomass distribution estimates: 16,500 mt in the western AI district; 50,000 mt in the central AI district; and 13,500 mt in the eastern AI district and Bering Sea combined. These recommendations are adopted in these final specifications (Table 1).

#### Apportionment of the Pollock TAC to the Inshore and Offshore Components

Regulations at § 675.20(a)(2)(iii) require that the 1995 pollock ITAC specified for the BSAI be allocated 35 percent to vessels catching pollock for processing by the inshore component and 65 percent to vessels catching pollock for processing by the offshore component. Definitions of these components are found at § 675.2. The 1995 ITAC specifications are consistent with these requirements (Table 2).

#### Seasonal Allowances of Pollock TAC

Under § 675.20(a)(2)(ii), the TAC of pollock for each subarea or district of