NORTH PACIFIC FISHERY MANAGEMENT COUNCIL

Action Memo

File Number:Cons 14-011

Agenda Date4/7/2014

Agenda Number:C9

Eric Olson, Chairman
Chris Oliver, Executive Director

SUBJECT:
Bering Sea Canyons: Discussion paper

ESTIMATED TIME:
4 hours

ACTION REQUIRED:
Review Discussion Paper, action as necessary

BACKGROUND
In June 2013, the Council passed a motion to identify and validate areas of coral concentrations for possible management measures for the conservation and management of deep sea corals in Pribilof and Zhemchug canyons. The motion requested that AFSC expand upon their initial analysis of coral concentration to include an overlay of model results with existing data, and a biodiversity index and rare species analysis. The Council also tasked staff to initiate a discussion paper that addresses management measures to be considered for conserving areas of coral concentration and associated fish productivity. Staff was instructed to meet with the Alaska Fisheries Science Center (AFSC) and stakeholders to discuss possibilities for collaboration in order to survey areas of coral abundance and to identify and develop tools for coral impact reduction.

In February 2014, staff hosted a workshop on the Bering Sea canyons in Seattle. At the workshop scientists from the AFSC and presented their expanded analysis (see attached). The workshop also focused on planned and potential collaborative research to understand the distribution and abundance of corals in the canyons, and to develop tools to mitigate potential impacts of fishing gear on those corals.

At this meeting, the Council will review a discussion paper that provides an overview of the workshop, as well as information on management measures that could be implemented to reduce potential impacts on corals in the Bering Sea canyon areas. Should the Council choose to move forward to further evaluate potential coral conservation measures, the Council may want to discuss a process to identify specific options for analysis.