

# North Pacific Fishery Management Council

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NEWSLETTER

4/22/88

## Groundfish Amendment Proposals Approved for Public Review

At its April 13-15 meeting the Council reviewed and approved for public review several proposed changes to the Gulf of Alaska and Bering Sea/Aleutian Islands Groundfish Fishery Management Plans. A notice of availability for amendments for the Gulf of Alaska is included with this newsletter. The notice for the Bering Sea and Aleutian Islands will be mailed within the next two weeks to commence the public review period. The Council will take final action in June and send the approved amendments on for Secretary of Commerce review and implementation. The Council also received a status report on the revised king and Tanner crab management plan for the Bering Sea/Aleutian Islands, approved a regulatory amendment decreasing the sablefish bycatch allowed in other Gulf of Alaska longline fisheries, recommended releasing pollock reserves to joint ventures, and approved reopening Zone 1 in the Bering Sea to trawling by totally U.S. operations. Details on these and other items are found in this newsletter.

## June Council Meeting Scheduled in Anchorage

The Council will meet June 22-24 at the Anchorage Sheraton to review public comments on amendments proposed to the Gulf of Alaska and Bering Sea/Aleutian Islands groundfish fishery management plans and determine which to send forward for Secretary of Commerce review and implementation. The Council will also review alternatives for controlling access to the sablefish longline fishery and receive a report from its Future of Groundfish Committee. A revised crab plan and initial draft of a new salmon plan also will be available for review. The Scientific and Statistical Committee, Advisory Panel, and the Council's Crab Management Committee will meet at the hotel June 20-21. A more detailed agenda should be available by June 3.

## Council Sets Meeting Dates for 1989

The Council approved the following meeting dates for 1989, all to be held in Anchorage:

Week of January 16  
Week of April 10  
Week of June 19  
Week of September 25  
Week of December 4

The remaining 1988 meetings, scheduled at the Anchorage Sheraton Hotel are:

Week of June 20  
Week of September 26  
Week of December 5

Upcoming Meetings

Future of Groundfish Committee	May 3-4 (5)	Room 2079, NWAFC 10:00 a.m.
Maritime Support Group	May 5	Room 2039, NWAFC 9:00 a.m.
Bycatch Committee	May 4-7	Kodiak, AK
Technical Subcommittee Canada-U.S. Groundfish	June 6-9	Monterey, CA
NPFMC Scientific & Statistical Committee	June 20-21	Sheraton Hotel Anchorage, AK
NPFMC Advisory Panel	June 20-21	Sheraton Hotel Anchorage, AK
NPFMC Meeting	June 22-24	Sheraton Hotel Anchorage, AK
MAFAC	June 28-29	South Carolina

Council Bids Farewell to Bob McVey

The Council bid a fond farewell to Bob McVey who will retire on May 2 from his post as Alaska Regional Director of the National Marine Fisheries Service. Bob has been on the Council for the past 12 years and has played a very significant role in maintaining the abundance of the resources. He and his wife, Betty, plan on staying in Southeast Alaska to continue enjoying the boating and fishing opportunities.

Legislative Update

Fisheries and ocean-related issues continue to occupy an important spot on the Congressional agenda this year. Following are descriptions of Congressional actions in this area since the last Council meeting.

Vessel Safety

On February 24 and April 14, 1988 the House Merchant Marine and Fisheries Committee held mark-up sessions on H.R. 1841, the Commercial Fishing Industry Vessel Safety and Compensation Act. Title I relates to compensation limits for injuries suffered in the course of employment on fishing, fish processing, or fish tender vessels, and Title II sets safety standards and equipment requirements for commercial fishing, fish processing and fish tender vessels. The bill was reported out of committee on April 14 with substantial amendments. Floor action in the House is expected this summer.

### Seafood Inspection

On March 24, 1988 the House Committee on Agriculture, the Subcommittee on Livestock, Dairy and Poultry, held a hearing on H.R. 3735, a bill providing for research on microbiological contamination of agricultural products, including seafood products. A Subcommittee mark-up on the bill is expected sometime in May.

There has been no action, as yet, this year on S. 1813, the Safe Foods Standards Act introduced by Senator Leahy on October 23, 1987. The bill requires the Secretary of Commerce to develop and administer a program of testing for the presence of pathogenic micro-organisms in fish or fish products intended for human consumption. Committee hearings may be held on S. 1813 in May.

### Marine Mammal Protection Act

The MMPA is up for reauthorization this year but no substantive legislative changes have surfaced yet. However, on March 16, 1988 Representatives Studts, Don Young, Jones and Davis introduced H.R. 4189 which is a straight reauthorization through FY 1993. A hearing on this bill is scheduled for May 10 by the House Fisheries & Wildlife Subcommittee.

### Marine Research Centers

On February 17, 1988 Senator Mitchell introduced S. 2068, the Marine Research Act of 1988, to create ten multi-state regional marine research centers. The centers are to consist of existing marine research institutions in each region and are to provide a regional focus for planning, coordinating and conducting marine scientific research. The legislation authorizes \$29.5 million for each fiscal year, 1989-1993. A hearing on the bill is scheduled for April 28 by the Senate Environment and Public Works Committee, Subcommittee on Environmental Protection.

### Budgets

To date, several hearings have been held in Washington on the NOAA and Coast Guard budgets for FY 1989. At this time it does not appear that there will be any increases for either budget although there is some support for supplementing the Coast Guard's FY 1988 appropriation. The Senate Committee on Appropriations, Subcommittee on Transportation, will hold a hearing April 28 on FY 1989 Coast Guard appropriations.

### Diesel Fuel Taxes

Several bills have been introduced in both the House and Senate to reinstate the excise tax exemption for certain users of diesel fuel. Until April 1, off-highway users of diesel fuel, such as farmers and fishermen, were exempt from the 15¢ per gallon excise tax. The Omnibus Budget Reconciliation Act of 1987, which was enacted in December, changed the collection of the diesel excise tax from the retail level to the wholesale level. By implementing this change, the Reconciliation Act removed the excise tax exemption for off-highway users. Although no legislation was enacted prior to the April 1 effective date for the tax change, there will be an attempt to reinstate the exemption by October 1, 1988.

### MARPOL ANNEX V -- Proposed Regulations

Legislation implementing Annex V to the International Convention for the Prevention of Pollution from Ships, 1983 (MARPOL) was signed by the President on December 29, 1987. A representative from the Coast Guard briefed the Council on the development of regulations implementing Annex V. An Advanced Notice of Proposed Rule Making will be published in the Federal Register this month and a Notice of Proposed Rule Making will be published in July. A 60-day public comment period will be provided and the effective date of the regulations should be on or before December 31, 1988. A summary of key provisions of Annex V follows:

- The disposal into the sea of plastics (including ropes and net) is prohibited.
- Dunnage, lining and packing materials which will float may only be discharged beyond 25 nautical miles from the nearest land.
- Food wastes and other garbage are to be discharged beyond 12 nautical miles from the nearest land except if those items have been ground so that they can pass through a 25mm screen, they may be discharged beyond 3 nautical miles from the nearest land.
- The Government shall ensure that port facilities provide for reception of garbage.

### Non-Profit Fishery Foundation

The Council heard a status report on efforts by some industry organizations to form a non-profit fishery foundation that would fund various research and data gathering projects. There appears to be general agreement that the interested associations could serve as channels for funds provided by their members. For that reason, a separate foundation may not be needed. A meeting of representatives from the relevant fisheries associations will be held in conjunction with the June Council meeting to pursue this project.

### Halibut Management

The Council was briefed on regulations for the 1988 season adopted by the International Pacific Halibut Commission at its annual meeting in Sitka January 25-28, 1988. They also heard a status report on allocational regulations adopted last December for Regulatory Areas 4C and 4E. The public comment period on those regulations ended on April 14 and they will take effect by mid-May. The first opening is on June 20 in Area 4C and on June 1 in Area 4E.

### Momentum Building on Donut Area

The Council was briefed by Ed Wolfe, U.S. Ambassador for Fisheries, on issues surrounding the high seas fisheries in the international waters of the Bering Sea. The U.S. Department of State has initiated bilateral talks with the Soviet Union on management and conservation strategies for the area. These could include a moratorium on fishing, multilateral discussions to develop an international management regime, and scientific meetings on the groundfish

stocks and their interrelationships with resources in the U.S. and U.S.S.R. EEZs. An interagency task force has been established to review legal principles and customary international law and initiate discussions with the Soviets.

During the Council meeting, industry members announced the formation of a Bering Sea Steering Committee with representatives from the U.S. harvesting and processing sectors. They will meet in Washington, DC the week of May 2 to talk with government representatives on management initiatives for the international waters.

The Council endorsed efforts by NMFS to improve their ability to monitor fisheries activities in the international waters. These measures will include requiring Federal permits on all foreign processors that process within the U.S. EEZ even if the fish are solely from international waters. In addition, NMFS is exploring better ways to monitor the fisheries including: (1) requiring foreign fishing vessels carrying U.S. observers within the EEZ to continue carrying them into the Donut Hole, (2) allowing processing and support activities in the EEZ only for fish harvested inside U.S. waters, and (3) requiring inspection of foreign fishing vessels entering and leaving the EEZ in the Bering Sea.

#### Sablefish Management

The Council received a report on workshops on limited entry alternatives for the sablefish longline fishery in the Alaskan EEZ. They were held in Seattle, Homer, Kodiak, Petersburg and Sitka in late February and March. After considering the results of the workshops, the Council directed the staff to further analyze the following management options for the fishery:

1. An individual fishing quota system.
2. A license limitation system.
3. Two-tier or mixed systems that may include elements of license limitation and individual fishing quota systems.
4. A modified status quo option that would include measures such as sequential short openings, trip limits, area registration, or other measures intended to spread the fishery out in time and space.
5. Sablefish as bycatch. (Under this system there would be no directed fishing for sablefish; it would be allocated in conjunction with other longline fisheries such as halibut and Pacific cod.)

The schedule for work on sablefish management options is as follows:

June 20-24, 1988	Council reviews report on selected options and adopts a preferred management method.
June 25-July 31, 1988	Plan teams and Council staff prepare further analysis on preferred management method. Analysis released for public review.
Sept. 26-30, 1988	Council takes final action and, if necessary, FMP amendment process begins.

U.S. Coast Guard Report

From January 1 through March 31, four Coast Guard cutters spent 119 days and Coast Guard aircraft flew 26 missions in fisheries enforcement patrols off Alaska. They were involved in six significant search and rescue cases involving fishing vessels.

There were two seizures and 26 reports of violation issued. A Japanese transport vessel and a U.S. catcher/processor were both seized for conducting a transfer in a closed area; the Japanese vessel also did not have a proper permit. As a result of the evidence provided in January by the Alaska Factory Trawlers Assn., the Coast Guard issued reports of violation to five Japanese stern trawlers for conducting directed fishing without a permit in the U.S. EEZ on January 13, 1988. During February and March several U.S. fishing vessels were issued reports of violation for having more than the allowed 20% bycatch of pollock or sablefish aboard, and the master of a Soviet stern trawler was issued a report of violation for the assault of a NMFS observer by a member of his crew. Other violations included infractions of catch reporting requirements and failure to have required permits.

Since January the Coast Guard has conducted 14 surveillance flights and three cutter patrols into the international waters of the Bering Sea. Vessels from Japan, Korea, the U.S.S.R., and Poland were sighted. Permission to board a Japanese and two South Korean vessels was denied; however the Polish stern trawler WALEN allowed Coast Guard personnel to board and voluntarily provided information on catch and effort and other Polish vessels fishing in the area. The information was forwarded to the Northwest and Alaska Fisheries Center in Seattle.

Budget cuts for FY88 have forced a reduction in Coast Guard fisheries enforcement efforts, reducing projected cutter patrol days for the period March 1 through September 30, 1988 by about 35% and aircraft surveillance flights by 55% compared to the same period during 1987. The Coast Guard reports these reductions will significantly affect their ability to detect and deter violations in the EEZ and monitor foreign fishing activity in the international waters of the Bering Sea, as well as enforce IPHC halibut openings, INPFC regulations, and monitor foreign high seas squid driftnet fleets.

Regulatory Amendment Will Reduce Percentage of Sablefish Allowed as Incidental Longline Catch

The Council approved a regulatory amendment for the Gulf of Alaska which reduces the percentage of sablefish allowed as incidental longline catch from 20% to 4%. The lower bycatch level was based on an analysis of foreign observer data from the cod longline fisheries and the recommendations of the Advisory Panel. The regulatory amendment permanently implements an emergency rule approved by the Council in January which will expire July 5. There was concern that excessive bycatch taken before the season would sharply curtail the directed fishery. The 4% figure will allow some retention of sablefish incidentally caught in the Pacific cod longline fishery thereby reducing wastage of the sablefish resource.

Draft Bering Sea/Aleutian Islands Crab FMP Delayed Until June

At the request of the Crab Management Committee and members of the crab fishing industry the Council approved a delay in releasing the draft Bering Sea/Aleutian Islands King and Tanner Crab FMP until June to allow the crab industry time to come to agreement on several elements of the proposed plan. The Committee reported that unanimous industry support for the draft plan was close at hand and that a short delay would not adversely affect the management of the king and Tanner crab fisheries. An industry consensus was believed important if the proposed plan is to proceed smoothly through Council and Secretarial review. Under the revised schedule the plan and associated analyses would be approved for public review in June, with final Council action in September. Secretarial review would commence in October and the plan would be implemented in April 1989.

Gulf of Alaska Amendment 17 Approved for Public Review

The Council approved proposed Amendment 17 to the Gulf of Alaska Groundfish Fishery Management Plan for public review. It addresses two issues:

1. Delay the opening of the longline sablefish fishing season by either a plan amendment or a framework procedure.
2. Require all vessels receiving groundfish caught in the U.S. EEZ to have Federal permits.

Members of the staff and plan team will edit the environmental and regulatory analyses associated with Amendment 17 and incorporate Council, SSC, and AP suggestions before sending the package out for public review. A notice of availability is included at the end of this newsletter, commencing a 30-day public review period until May 27. The Council will take final action in June and forward the approved amendment for Secretarial review and implementation in late 1988.

Pollock Released to Joint Ventures

After lengthy discussion of the projected requirements of the U.S. processing industry for pollock in the Bering Sea and by joint venture fishermen to augment the second season's pollock quota, the Council advised NMFS to immediately release 100,000 mt from reserves to Bering Sea pollock JVP. Additional releases would be at the Regional Director's discretion but the Council urged caution to ensure that the DAP fishery does not run short and that sufficient pollock is held back for bycatch in other joint venture fisheries.

The Council also recommended that NMFS promptly release any surplus DAP to JVP after the survey of the processing industry is completed. May 15 was indicated in the Council's motion as the target date for the release which would need to take into account projected annual requirements of the U.S. processing industry.

Bering Sea Zone 1 May Reopen

Special Zone 1 in the Bering Sea was closed to all trawling on March 8 because the prohibited species catch limit of 80,000 C. bairdi Tanner crab was exceeded. U.S. fishermen that catch and process their own fish have expressed great interest in continued fishing in that area for yellowfin sole and other flatfish species. The Council advised NMFS to reopen Zone 1 to DAP trawling but to be very cautious about the bycatch of crab and halibut and the effects of trawling on molting crab. Council members also were concerned with the lack of data from DAP fisheries and requested all companies fishing those sensitive areas to voluntarily provide bycatch information. While they did not request 100% observer coverage, the Council did urge suitable levels to reliably estimate bycatches.

Bering Sea/Aleutian Islands Amendment 12  
Approved for Public Review

The Council approved Amendment 12 to the Bering Sea/Aleutian Islands Groundfish FMP for public review. It addresses six issues:

1. Establish a bycatch management system for king crab, Tanner crab, and halibut.
2. Require all floating processors receiving groundfish caught in the EEZ to obtain federal permits and report catch weekly.
3. Establish limits on the bycatch of groundfish species for which the TAC has been previously attained.
4. Remove the July 1 deadline for the annual Resource Assessment Document (RAD).
5. Establish limits on the amount of roe-bearing rock sole that can be harvested by joint ventures.
6. Revise the upper limit to the optimum yield (OY) range.

The impacts of changing the optimum yield range have been analyzed in a draft supplemental environmental impact statement (SEIS) which will be filed shortly with the Environmental Protection Agency. After EPA files the SEIS in the Federal Register, it will be available to the public. The other five issues in Amendment 12 are discussed in a standard environmental assessment/regulatory impact review, which will be available from the Council offices in late April.

Public comment will be invited on the amendment package and the Council will take final action in June. The amendment as approved will be forwarded to the Department of Commerce for Secretarial review and implementation in late 1988.



### Revised High-Seas Salmon Plan Due in June

The Council approved a schedule for revising the High-Seas Salmon Plan which covers the troll fisheries off Southeast Alaska. Recent developments in salmon management, including activities of the Pacific Salmon Commission and continued actions by the State of Alaska, are not adequately addressed by the existing plan. The scientific information also is outdated.

In June a revised and updated plan will be presented to the Council along with an "options paper" outlining some additional management concerns that the Council may wish to address. If all goes well, associated environmental and regulatory assessment documents will be prepared by the Council meeting in September and go to public review shortly thereafter.

### ADF&G Reports on Crab and Salmon

The 1987/88 winter troll season, which is limited to those areas inside the surf line, began October 1 and will continue through April 14. A total catch of about 70,000 chinook is projected during this season, an increase of 42,000 chinook over last year's winter fishery.

The total statewide Tanner crab harvest as of early April was approximately 84 million pounds. The Eastern and Western Aleutian districts remain open as well as the Bering Sea C. bairdi fishery.

### Domestic Groundfish Processing

By April 2 the U.S. industry had harvested and processed 160,926 mt of groundfish off Alaska. The catch in the Gulf of Alaska was 31,596 mt including 15,232 mt pollock, 9,609 mt Pacific cod, 4,671 mt sablefish, 1,725 mt other rockfish and lesser amounts of other species. The catch in the Bering Sea and Aleutians was 129,329 mt including 84,256 mt pollock, 21,417 mt other flounders, 19,364 mt Pacific cod, 1,684 mt sablefish, 1,143 mt yellowfin sole and lesser amounts of other species. These figures do not include joint venture harvests by U.S. trawlers delivering to foreign processing vessels in over-the-side sales off Alaska.

### Joint Venture Harvests

The total joint venture catch off Alaska as reported on April 21 by NMFS was 599,551 mt, all from the Bering Sea and Aleutians. The catch included 332,639 mt pollock, 111,634 mt yellowfin sole, 77,637 mt Pacific cod, 71,079 mt flatfish, and 5,860 mt of other species. There were 99 U.S. catchers delivering to 87 joint venture processors during the week of March 14. The number of active boats has not varied greatly since the beginning of the pollock season in mid-January.

### NOAA-GC Reports on U.S. Support Industry Proposal

In January the Council reviewed a proposal to give U.S. transport and bulk fuel carriers preferential treatment over foreign vessels that now provide those services to the foreign fish processors operating off Alaska. The Council requested a legal opinion from NOAA General Counsel on whether such

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The total statewide Tanner crab harvest as of early April was approximately 84 million pounds. The Eastern and Western Aleutian districts remain open as well as the Bering Sea C. bairdi fishery.

### Domestic Groundfish Processing

By April 2 the U.S. industry had harvested and processed 160,926 mt of groundfish off Alaska. The catch in the Gulf of Alaska was 31,596 mt including 15,232 mt pollock, 9,609 mt Pacific cod, 4,671 mt sablefish, 1,725 mt other rockfish and lesser amounts of other species. The catch in the Bering Sea and Aleutians was 129,329 mt including 84,256 mt pollock, 21,417 mt other flounders, 19,364 mt Pacific cod, 1,684 mt sablefish, 1,143 mt yellowfin sole and lesser amounts of other species. These figures do not include joint venture harvests by U.S. trawlers delivering to foreign processing vessels in over-the-side sales off Alaska.

### Joint Venture Harvests

The total joint venture catch off Alaska as reported on April 21 by NMFS was 599,551 mt, all from the Bering Sea and Aleutians. The catch included 332,639 mt pollock, 111,634 mt yellowfin sole, 77,637 mt Pacific cod, 71,079 mt flatfish, and 5,860 mt of other species. There were 99 U.S. catchers delivering to 87 joint venture processors during the week of March 14. The number of active boats has not varied greatly since the beginning of the pollock season in mid-January.

### NOAA-GC Reports on U.S. Support Industry Proposal

In January the Council reviewed a proposal to give U.S. transport and bulk fuel carriers preferential treatment over foreign vessels that now provide those services to the foreign fish processors operating off Alaska. The Council requested a legal opinion from NOAA General Counsel on whether such

preferential treatment of the U.S. support industry is mandated or even allowed under the MFCMA. They also established an industry workgroup to carefully examine the issues involved and recommend solutions.

The draft NOAA-GC Opinion was reviewed by the Council last week. It states that a separate Support Industry plan would not be authorized by the Magnuson Act. An amendment to the groundfish plans also probably would not be approved unless it could be tied to conservation and management or enforcement and monitoring. The remaining options would be for the Council in reviewing foreign vessel permits to either give preference to joint ventures using U.S. support services or directly limit the number of foreign support vessel permits.

The Council's Maritime Support Group, chaired by Dick Knapp, has representatives from all major shipping and services firms operating in the Alaska region, several fisheries associations, and various communities. It will meet again on May 5 in Seattle to review the legal opinion and discuss strategies for further development of the proposal.

#### Pilot Domestic Observer Program Back on Track

After a winter break in activities, observers from the Council's pilot program are back on the grounds. Two were in Kodiak and two in Dutch Harbor by early February looking for groundfish vessels to ride. Since then they've taken 17 trips on 15 vessels. Two longline vessels participated: the ELDAN, a shoreside delivery vessel, and the PROWLER, a catcher/processor. Thirteen trawl vessels participated: the SPEEDWELL, a processor; HARVESTER ENTERPRISE and ALEUTIAN TRAWLER, both catcher/processors; and TASSINGE, DOMINION, OCEAN HOPE III, ROYAL BARON, STARFISH, MARGARET LYN, PELAGOS, PACIFIC STAR, MAR DEL NORTE, and JULIE JOLYNN, all shoreside delivery vessels. Their cooperation is greatly appreciated by the Council.

The program will continue through Spring. Many of the earlier problems with boarding agreements and insurance seem to be resolved. The University of Alaska continues to reimburse vessel owners for insurance riders if required in order to carry an observer, but to date only six vessels have required additional riders.

The success of the program depends on acceptance by the industry. The information gathered will help the Council assess the status of the stocks, estimate bycatch rates of non-target and prohibited species, investigate population interrelationships, and assess the impacts of proposed fishery management plan amendments. More vessels are needed to volunteer for the program. Interested vessel owners and skippers should contact Ron Dearborn at (907) 474-7086.



# North Pacific Fishery Management Council

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## NORTH PACIFIC FISHERY MANAGEMENT COUNCIL FISHERY MANAGEMENT PLAN FOR GROUND FISH OF THE GULF OF ALASKA

### AMENDMENT 17

#### NOTICE OF AVAILABILITY

The North Pacific Fishery Management Council has directed the Gulf of Alaska Groundfish Plan Team to prepare an amendment (No. 17) and supporting documentation for management of the Gulf of Alaska groundfish fisheries. The Council has identified the issues and problems to be addressed by Amendment 17 but has not yet chosen preferred solutions. The plan team has reviewed the issues and identified and analyzed the biological, socioeconomic, and management impacts of various alternative solutions for public and Council consideration based on all information available to it at this time. These issues and alternative solutions are listed and briefly described in the attached summary.

A draft Environmental Assessment/Regulatory Impact Review/Initial Regulatory Flexibility Analysis (EA/RIR/IRFA) was reviewed by the Council at their April 13-15 meeting and approved for public distribution. This document is available upon request by calling the Council staff at (907) 271-2809. Primary contact: Steve Davis.

The Council requests that anyone having additional information pertaining to the amendment, its alternatives, or the EA/RIR/IRFA, submit it to the Council during the 30-day public comment period which commences April 27. All new information will be summarized and included when possible in the final documents. Due to the time constraints imposed by the annual management cycle and Council meeting schedule, it will not be possible to include information received after the close of the comment period at 5:00 p.m. on May 27.

The Council is also asking for the opinions of the fishing community and other affected individuals regarding which alternatives the Council should approve. It is hoped that the draft EA/RIR/IRFA will help the public provide meaningful and constructive feedback to aid the Council in their deliberations.

At their June 22-24 meeting in Anchorage, the Council will make their final decision and submit the amendment and supporting documentation to the Secretary of Commerce for implementation. The Council will accept oral testimony at the June meeting; however, such testimony should be limited to clarification of earlier written comments and recommendations about the Council's choices rather than submission of new information.

GULF OF ALASKA GROUND FISH  
AMENDMENT 17 SUMMARY

ISSUES AND ALTERNATIVE MANAGEMENT SOLUTIONS

1. Delay the opening of the longline sablefish fishing season by either a plan amendment or a framework procedure.

Alternative 1: Maintain the status quo (i.e., do nothing). The longline sablefish season would open on April 1.

Alternative 2: Move the sablefish longline fishery opening date to May 1 in the Gulf of Alaska.

Alternative 3: Move the sablefish longline fishery opening date to July 1 in the Gulf of Alaska.

Alternative 4: Open the season on April 1 but prohibit directed sablefish fishing with longline gear at depths less than 500 m. This alternative includes specifying any depth less than 500 m.

Alternative 5: Establish a fishing season framework procedure for the annual setting of sablefish hook and longline fishing seasons, which would include an analysis to determine if the setting of seasons has any allocative impact. Possible seasons established with the framework include single seasons, split seasons, and/or a series of seasons.

2. Require all vessels receiving groundfish caught in the U.S. EEZ to have federal permits.

Alternative 1: Maintain the status quo (i.e., do nothing). Under this alternative, only vessels fishing in the EEZ would be required to have a federal permit. Processing vessels located inside 3 miles or outside 200 miles that receive fish from the EEZ would not be required to report their processed catch on a weekly basis as do processing vessels operating in the EEZ. No report or even a delay in reporting could lead to overharvests.

Alternative 2: Amend the FMP to require all vessels receiving groundfish caught in the EEZ to have a federal permit and comply with weekly reporting requirements.