

329-333 Katlian Street



Sitka, Alaska 99835

FAX TRANSMITTAL SHEET

DATE: June 30, 1991

TIME: 19:40

TO: Clarence Pautke
NPFMC

FROM: Unda Behnken, ALFA

NUMBER OF PAGES INCLUDING THIS SHEET: 6

COMMENT: Arbha Testimony - D-2 Bycatch Amendmen
I will not be able to participate in
the teleconference because I will be
fishing.

Thanks -
Unda

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PUBLIC TESTIMONY: D-2, BYCATCH AMENDMENTS

June 30, 1991

Mr. Chairman, members of the Council, my name is Linda Behnken; I am representing the Alaska Longline Fishermen's Association (ALFA). I wish to testify on the importance of prioritizing for analysis this summer an out-of-cycle Groundfish Plan Amendment to prohibit trawling east of 140 degrees West Longitude.

The requested Plan Amendment is supported by the state of Alaska, (through H.R. 40, a joint House/Senate Resolution), 15 Southeast coastal communities, 6 Southeast Fish and Game Advisory Panels, numerous sport and commercial fishing organizations, conservation groups, and several thousand individuals who signed the petition requesting that the Council prohibit trawling east of 140 degrees.

Since we testified at length on this issue at the April Council meeting, I will only briefly reiterate our concerns today.

We are requesting the Plan Amendment for the following reasons:

- 1. The area east of 140 degrees has a century long tradition as a hook and line zone.**
- 2. The fisheries east of 140 are fully utilized by the hook and line fleet.**
- 3. The Southeast coastal communities are dependent on the traditional fisheries.**
- 4. Trawl bycatch of these fully utilized species; which include salmon, halibut, sablefish and rockfish, threaten the health of the resource and the socioeconomic health of the coastal communities.**
- 5. Trawl vessels operating east of 140 degrees target Pacific ocean perch, a species that was over-exploited by the foreign trawl fleet during the 1960s and still has not recovered. The rockfish trawl fishery has recently been identified as one of the "dirties" fisheries in the GOA, having unacceptably high bycatch rates. The rockfish trawl fleet's bycatch of rougheye/shortraker and demersal shelf rockfish could preempt the traditional longline fisheries.**
- 6. The physical and biological characteristics of the area, which include a narrow shelf and rocky substrata rich in sponges and corals, make it unique and extremely vulnerable to trawl impact.**

To remind you: there are currently no shore based trawlers operating in the Southeast Outside/East Yakutat area. Trawl effort east of 140 is currently

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limited to factory vessels prosecuting the slope rockfish fisheries. In other words, a few highly mobile factory trawlers are threatening to preempt the local small-boat hook and line fleet, undermine the socioeconomic health of the Southeast coastal communities, and damage the marine ecosystem on which both the local fishermen and the coastal communities depend.

In summary, for both socioeconomic and conservation reasons, it is critical that the analysis necessary for the out-of-cycle Plan Amendment to prohibit trawling east of 140 degrees be conducted this summer so that a permanent solution can be in place by early next year. ALFA, and the Southeast region as a whole, respectfully requests that this issue be treated as a top priority.

Thank you for your time and consideration.

Sincerely,

Linda Behnken

Linda Behnken

7-LS116-VJ

SENATE CS FOR HOUSE JOINT RESOLUTION NO. 40 (RESOURCES)

IN THE LEGISLATURE OF THE STATE OF ALASKA

SEVENTEENTH LEGISLATURE - FIRST SESSION

BY THE SENATE RESOURCES COMMITTEE

Offered: 5/18/91
Referred: Rules

Sponsor(s): REPRESENTATIVES GRUSSENDORF, Navarre, Ulmer, C.Davis, Leman, Hudson
SENATOR Eliason

A RESOLUTION

1 Requesting a closure of the Eastern Gulf of Alaska East of 140 degrees West longitude
2 to pelagic and on-bottom trawl fishing.

3 BE IT RESOLVED BY THE LEGISLATURE OF THE STATE OF ALASKA:

4 WHEREAS the Eastern Gulf of Alaska has been a significant hook and line fishing area for
5 almost 100 years and most of the high value fisheries in the area are fully utilized by the hook and line
6 fishing fleet; and

7 WHEREAS the intended level of trawl fishing effort in the Eastern Gulf of Alaska during 1991
8 is unprecedented and is expected to exert undue fishing pressure on fish stocks in the area and displace
9 traditional hook and line fisheries; and

10 WHEREAS foreign trawl fishing in the Gulf of Alaska resulted in depressed populations of
11 several species of rockfish; and

12 WHEREAS domestic trawl fishing now threatens these depressed stocks of rockfish; and

13 WHEREAS federal fishing regulations require that all fisheries that take a species of fish must
14 be closed when the allowable biological catch for the species is reached; and

15 WHEREAS the trawl fishery in the Eastern Gulf of Alaska is rapidly approaching the allowable
16 biological catch for rougheye rockfish and shortraker rockfish for 1991; and

1 **WHEREAS** all fisheries, including the longline sablefish fishery, that take rougheye rockfish and
2 shortraker rockfish will be closed in order to prevent overfishing of these rockfish once the allowable
3 biological catch is achieved and as a consequence the longline sablefish fishery may be canceled before
4 it can open; and

5 **WHEREAS** the opening of the longline sablefish fishery was delayed until May 15, 1991, at the
6 request of the International Pacific Halibut Commission, in order to reduce the bycatch of halibut; and

7 **WHEREAS** the domestic trawl fishery intends to fish in the same area and during the same time
8 period that has been closed to the longline sablefish fishery to protect halibut; and

9 **WHEREAS** only by closing the Eastern Gulf of Alaska East of 140 degrees West longitude to
10 trawl fishing will halibut receive the full protection, as intended by the delayed opening of the longline
11 sablefish fishery season, necessary to reduce the bycatch of halibut; and

12 **WHEREAS** recent trawl fishing for rockfish in the Gulf of Alaska has resulted in a high bycatch
13 of Alaska chinook salmon; and

14 **WHEREAS** the narrowness of the continental shelf and continental slope in the Eastern Gulf of
15 Alaska concentrates trawl fishing effort in a small area and as a result prevents recovery of trawl fishing
16 areas and may permanently impoverish the ecosystem of the Eastern Gulf of Alaska;

17 **BE IT RESOLVED** by the Alaska State Legislature that United States Secretary of Commerce
18 is respectfully requested to immediately implement emergency and permanent regulations closing the
19 Eastern Gulf of Alaska East of 140 degrees West longitude to pelagic and on-bottom trawling.

20 **COPIES** of this resolution shall be sent to the Honorable Robert A. Mosbacher, Sr., Secretary
21 of the U.S. Department of Commerce; the Honorable Steve Pennoyer, Alaska Regional Director, National
22 Marine Fisheries Service, U.S. Department of Commerce; and to the Honorable Ted Stevens and the
23 Honorable Frank Murkowski, U.S. Senators, and the Honorable Don Young, U.S. Representative,
24 members of the Alaska delegation in Congress.

SITKA, AK

DAILY SENTINEL

Thursday, June 13, 1991

Volume 52 No. 114

Sitka Fishermen Snag Trawl Waste

By ALLEN SYKORA
Sentinel Staff Writer

Talk about adding insult to injury. Sitka fisherman Mark Young says he fared poorly in this spring's longline sablefish fishery.

So he and his crew were especially displeased when their longline gear fished up an abandoned trawl net loaded with the rotting remains of about 2,000 sablefish.

The incident occurred at a time when Southeast longliners are fighting to keep out-of-state factory trawlers away from stocks of sablefish — also called black cod — the small Alaska operators have traditionally fished.

Not only are the longliners worried about the number of sablefish and other species that the trawlers would take, but also about the possible destruction of fish habitat by bottom trawls.

Trawls take everything in their path, and by taking an entire season's allowable bycatch of Demersal Shelf rockfish, for example, trawlers could force closures of directed longline fisheries for sablefish. Sablefish are increasingly important to Southeast fishermen of all gear types in the face of ever shorter salmon and halibut seasons.

This spring, the sablefish quota for the Southeast-East Yakutat area was 4,500 tons, down from 5,680 a year ago.

Young went farther north to fish after the black cod season closed here

May 23, but left his pictures to be processed. His wife brought by the Sentinel this week, and talked to the Sentinel from Sevel to relate the incident.

He said he was about 30 miles out of Crawford Inlet, aboard his boat, Chelsea Dawn, pulling a longline set when it got caught in something on the bottom. The pulper and saw it was a trawl net.

"We couldn't get the whole on board," said Young. "It was heavy. It was full of black cod. All that was in there."

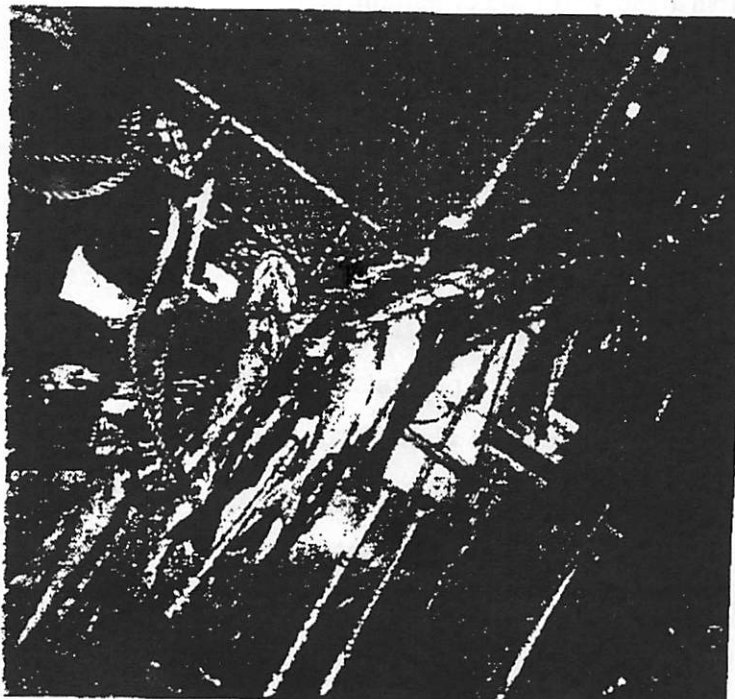
His crew pulled as much of it out of the water as possible, too, then had to cut it loose.

"I'd say there was over 2,000 pounds of black cod in it. That's a couple thousand fish," said Young. "When the fishing is poor and you come across that, it kind of makes you upset."

Young said his sablefish catch this spring was only about 40 percent of what he has taken in past years. He said he had taken about 37,000 pounds, compared with his usual catch of between 75,000 and 100,000.

This year's opening was delayed from the usual early April start to mid-May, in order to protect halibut stocks. Prior to the opening, however, trawlers were reported to be working in the Eastern Gulf.

"I don't know if that is directly related to the poor fishing we're having here. I'm sure it doesn't help any," said Young.



The crew of Mark Young's fishing vessel brings up a trawl net with hundreds of rotting sablefish, during this spring's sablefish opening. They took these photos to document the waste. The crew in the above photo are Jim Allen, left, and Brent Young. Below is one of the wasted fish.



* No trawlers were registered for this area 3 weeks prior