

Executive Director's Report

Personnel Changes

NMFS has a new leader as of April 12th. Penny Dalton, senior staff on the Senate Committee on Commerce, Science and Transportation, replaced Rollie Schmitt who moved up to deputy assistant secretary for international affairs for NOAA. A press release is under Item B-1(a).

We also received word late last week that Trevor McCabe will move off Senator Stevens' staff to head up the At-Sea Processors Association and the Pollock Conservation Cooperative starting June 21. The press release is under B-1(a) also.

Michael Payne has been selected as the new NMFS Assistant Regional Administrator for Protected Resources in Juneau. He comes from headquarters and has a long history in marine mammals and endangered species. A news release is under B-1(a).

Plan Team Addition

Wayne Donaldson has been nominated for membership on the Council's crab plan team. The letter of nomination is under B-1(b).

AP Officers

The Council needs to confirm the newly elected AP officers.

June Meeting

We will meet in Kodiak the week of June 7th. June will be final review time for many prominent agenda items from this week's meeting including American Fisheries Act and Steller sea lion amendments. I hope we can get all our work done, because it will be difficult to schedule a special August meeting, if we do not do it very soon. So as we close in on the end of this meeting, we should once again discuss whether I should be making any special plans for meeting space in August.

Council Publications

B-1(c) is a list of available publications from the Council office. I thought you might be interested in knowing what is available. Many of them are accessible via our website.

GAO Auditors

We have two individuals from the General Accounting Office with us today: Bill Wolter and Jerry Aiken. As noted in B-1(d), they will be available to chat with anyone who wishes to discuss aspects of the American Fisheries Act or the Magnuson-Stevens Act.

Bering Sea task Force Report

Item B-1(e) is the Bering Sea Task Force Report to Governor Knowles. It was part of the state's comprehensive response to the 1998 fisheries disaster and is meant to lay the groundwork for improving scientific understanding of the Bering Sea ecosystem. It recommends creating a North Pacific Research Board, stable research funding, and a comprehensive research plan; making information highly accessible to interested parties; and last but not least, improving coordination among regional, national, and international research bodies. Task force members Steve Pennoyer and Robin Samuelsen may want to add their comments.

New Proposed IFQ Cycle

In B-1(f), Mark Lundsten, with a supporting letter from Maura Phillips, surfaces the idea of the Council taking final action on IFQ issues in December, rather than June when the fleet is away. He proposes that the fishermen's associations would meet just before the December meeting to develop their recommendations, much like the IPHC Conference Board does ahead of the IPHC annual meeting. The Council should consider whether our biannual cycle for IFQ proposals needs to be changed, and if so, to what? If we rotate the schedule to a final decision in December, then initial review would have to occur in October. That means that proposals would need to come in before the June meeting so that the analysis could be tasked during the summer.

UNITED STATES DEPARTMENT OF
COMMERCE
NEWS WASHINGTON, D.C. 20230

NATIONAL
OCEANIC AND
ATMOSPHERIC
ADMINISTRATION

TO: Richard Lauber
North Pacific Fishery Mgmt Council
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NOAA 99-026
4/7/99

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COMMERCE DEPARTMENT PROMOTES NOAA FISHERIES DIRECTOR
Senate Commerce Comte. Fisheries Expert Named NOAA Fisheries Chief

National Marine Fisheries Service director Rolland Schmitten has been appointed deputy assistant secretary for international affairs for the National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration, Commerce Secretary William M. Daley announced today.

“Rollie has a long and distinguished career in natural resources management and brings to his new assignment strong credentials and valuable experience in negotiating challenging international fisheries agreements that will stand him well as he determines international environmental issues critical to the United States,” said Daley.

“Schmitten’s appointment allows NOAA to devote increased international attention on a wide range of environmental stewardship challenges, and to maintain its leadership role in the international community,” said D. James Baker, under secretary of commerce and NOAA administrator.

Penelope “Penny” Dalton, senior professional staff on the Senate Committee on Commerce, Science and Transportation, will replace Schmitten as NOAA Fisheries director, also known as assistant administrator for fisheries.

“Ms. Dalton has an extensive background in a wide range of environmental, scientific and marine policy issues,” said Daley. “Her previous position has provided an outstanding opportunity to acquire a comprehensive understanding of fisheries management and ocean coastal resources issues and to interact extensively with all of our constituents.”

"Penny's knowledge of NOAA's programs and Congress will be invaluable as she applies her knowledge nationwide to the management and sustainability of our living marine resources," Baker added.

Ms. Dalton has held positions with the Senate Commerce Committee since 1987. She was a NOAA National Sea Grant Fellow and faculty research assistant at the University of Maryland and has held several other teaching positions in science and biology. Ms. Dalton has a masters degree in marine-estuarine-environmental science from the University of Maryland and a bachelor's degree in biology from Dickinson College.

Prior to his directorship of NOAA Fisheries, Mr. Schmitten was the agency's Northwest regional director, and before that, director of the Washington State Department of Fisheries. He has a bachelor of science degree in forest management from Washington State University.

Mr. Schmitten and Ms. Dalton will assume their new positions on April 12, 1999.

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NOAA 99-R118

NOAA FISHERIES ANNOUNCES TWO SENIOR MANAGEMENT CHANGES

To strengthen habitat conservation activities while providing continued strong leadership in the Southeast region, NOAA Fisheries Director Rolland Schmitten has reassigned two senior managers from within the agency, the Commerce Department's National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration announced today.

Southeast Regional Administrator Dr. Andrew Kemmerer will lead the office of habitat conservation at NOAA Fisheries headquarters in Silver Spring, Md. Kemmerer brings to the office a considerable amount of knowledge and experience in dealing with controversial issues, such as implementing new Congressional mandates to rebuild fisheries and protect marine life while considering the effects of fishing practices on essential fish habitat.

"Andy's excellent managerial and negotiating skills will improve our interactions with the fishing industry and environmental organizations as we implement critical habitat measures within the agency's 40 fishery management plans," said Schmitten. "We need his experience and scientific strength in this important post."

Dr. William Hogarth will replace Kemmerer as Southeast regional administrator in St. Petersburg, Fla., moving from his post as Southwest regional administrator in Long Beach, Calif. Southwest Region Deputy Director Rodney R. McInnis will temporarily act as regional administrator until a permanent replacement is found.



AT-SEA PROCESSORS ASSOCIATION

Partners for Healthy Fisheries

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE
Thursday, April 15, 1999

For further information:
John Bundy (206) 298-1200 or
Paul MacGregor (206) 285-5139

ALASKA CONGRESSIONAL AIDE TO HEAD AT-SEA PROCESSOR GROUPS

(Seattle) -- Trevor McCabe, legislative director for Sen. Ted Stevens of Alaska, has been named as executive director of the At-sea Processors Association (APA) and the Pollock Conservation Cooperative (PCC). The two affiliated organizations serve the U.S.-flag catcher/processor fleet that fishes for pollock in the Bering Sea.

"Trevor McCabe is the ideal person to continue the at-sea processing industry's leadership in promoting responsible fishing practices and good management of fishery resources," John Bundy, president of the PCC, said. "As Sen. Stevens' legislative director, he played a central role in formulating the 1996 Sustainable Fisheries Act and the 1998 American Fisheries Act -- laws that addressed several of the most critical factors for maintaining healthy and abundant fisheries in the North Pacific."

McCabe will direct the activities of both the APA, the industry's trade association, and the newly formed PCC, a fish harvesting cooperative made up of companies that operate the Seattle-based fleet that catches and processes pollock in the Bering Sea. The two organizations announced a joint management arrangement in February. McCabe will assume the dual posts on June 21st.

"I am delighted at the opportunity to help the at-sea processor industry continue its efforts to assure sustainable fisheries while providing strong economic benefits to Alaskan coastal communities and the Puget Sound area," McCabe said. "It gives me a chance to work on a day-to-day basis toward the goals established under recent improvements to federal fisheries management and conservation laws."

McCabe will be the first PCC executive director and will take over the APA executive director's duties from interim executive director Paul MacGregor. MacGregor will continue as APA's legal counsel, a post he has held since 1987.

"Paul MacGregor deserves tremendous credit for the job he has done for the last three and a half years," Bundy said. "We asked him to fill in as executive director to guide the industry through a period of great challenge. Our industry is stronger today and the fishing resource is better protected than at any time in history. Paul's leadership has been a major contributor to this success."

-more-



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add 2 add 2

"I am proud of what we have accomplished in recent years and excited about Trevor McCabe's appointment," MacGregor said. "Our industry has established itself as a respected leader because of its responsible fishing practices, by-catch reduction initiatives and creation of meaningful economic opportunities for Western Alaskan villages. I can't think of anyone I would rather see taking these accomplishments to the next level."

McCabe will be based in Anchorage where APA will open an office early next year. APA currently maintains offices in Seattle, Juneau and Dutch Harbor.

APA was formed in 1985. Its members include companies that own and operate vessels that catch, and process on board, groundfish species harvested in U.S. fisheries off Alaska and the West Coast.

The Pollock Conservation Cooperative was formed in December 1998 following passage of the American Fisheries Act. Among other things, the American Fisheries Act limited entry into the Bering Sea pollock fishery and established a separate quota for the catcher/processor sector. These changes made it possible to form a new harvesting management system in which the quota that federal fisheries scientists set for the sector is allocated by the cooperative among its members.

McCabe has served on Sen. Stevens' legislative staff in various capacities since 1991. He is a native of Seward, Alaska, and graduated from Harvard University with a Bachelor's degree in 1991. While working for Sen. Stevens, he attended law school in the evenings at Georgetown University, graduating with a J.D. in 1997, and has passed the Alaska Bar examination.

For additional information about APA and the Pollock Conservation Cooperative, please visit our website at www.atsea.org

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Mail for Clarence Pautzke

Date: 3/8/99

Sender: Ron Berg

To: Steve Pennoyer, Jim Balsiger, Jim Coe, Will Stelle, Jon Rittgers, Michael Tillman, Michael Sissenwine, Andrew Kemmerer, Rolland Schmitt, Andy Rosenberg, Hilda Diaz-Soltero, Gary C. Matlock, Usha Varanasi, Garry Mayer, Brad Brown, Clarence Pautzke, Mike Dahlberg, William Hogarth, Lisa Lindeman, Stephen Meyer, Sue Salveson, Phil Smith, Carol Tocco, Jeanne Hanson, Douglas Demaster

Priority: Normal

Subject: AKR selects new PR Division Chief

Alaska Region Selects New Protected Resources Division Chief

The Alaska Region of the National Marine Fisheries Service (NMFS) is pleased to announce its selection of P. Michael (Mike) Payne for the position of Assistant Regional Administrator (Chief) for Protected Resources, says Steven Pennoyer, Alaska Regional Administrator. Mike will also serve as the Acting Chief for the Region's Habitat Conservation Division.

Mike brings to the Alaska Region a wealth of experience. Since 1991, Mike has worked for the Office of Protected Resources at NMFS Headquarters in Silver Spring, Maryland and since April 1996, Mike has been the Chief of the Marine Mammal Division within the Office of Protected Resources. In that capacity, he directed all scientific, educational, and technical aspects of NMFS's programs relating to the management of endangered, threatened, and protected marine mammal species and their habitat conservation. He has worked with representatives of fishing organizations, national/state/local fisheries and conservation offices, the scientific community, and public interest groups concerned with marine mammals and endangered species, resulting in a balanced awareness of conservation and fisheries issues. "It is imperative that everyone work together to achieve the difficult dual objectives of protecting marine mammals and endangered species while maintaining viable fisheries and local traditions" says Payne.

While at Silver Spring, he has worked on recovery and conservation programs/fisheries issues in the Atlantic on harbor porpoise and gillnet fisheries, the highly endangered northern right whales, and other large whales and coastal dolphins in the Atlantic, and also for blue, sei, and fin whales. On the Pacific coast, Mike has been involved with issues pertaining to the Hawaiian monk seals and has been directly involved with current Alaska issues, pertaining to Steller sea lions in the Bering Sea and Gulf of Alaska, and with beluga whales in Cook Inlet. Mike was also one of those who helped develop the Conservation Plan for the northern fur seal on the Pribilofs and has worked with Alaska regional staff and Alaskan Native Organizations on Pribilof Island issues since 1991.

Mike has a Bachelor of Arts degree in biology from Central College at Pella, Iowa, and a Master of Science Degree from Iowa State University at Ames, Iowa. He has also participated in the Boston University Marine Program at Woods Hole, Massachusetts.

In his new position with the Alaska Region, Mike will be responsible for all aspects of NMFS's programs relating to the management of endangered, threatened, and protected marine mammal species in Alaska, as well as with the Alaska Region's programs directed at habitat conservation. "I believe being able to work within a state and region where protected species and their habitat issues have been interwoven over time with the fishing industry and within the heritage of the Alaskan native community is a tremendous opportunity. I look forward to continue working

Mail for Clarence Pautzke

with the State and other Federal agencies, the fishing, scientific and local communities, and public interest groups in Alaska and the Pacific Northwest."

STATE OF ALASKA

DEPARTMENT OF FISH AND GAME

OFFICE OF THE COMMISSIONER

TONY KNOWLES, GOVERNOR

AGENDA B-1(b)
APRIL 1999

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April 7, 1999

Clarence Pautzke, Executive Director
North Pacific Fishery Management Council
605 West 4th Avenue, Suite 306
Anchorage, AK 99510-2252

Dear Mr. Pautzke:

I would like to nominate Mr. Wayne Donaldson for membership to the Council's Crab Plan Team. In February 1999 Wayne was appointed as the regional shellfish/groundfish management biologist for Westward Region of the Division of Commercial Fisheries, Alaska Department of Fish and Game (ADF&G). This position, recently vacated when Al Spalinger retired, is responsible for overseeing shellfish and groundfish management in the western Gulf of Alaska and eastern Bering Sea. Wayne has a BS in biology from the University of Alaska, and he has extensive experience as a fishery management biologist with ADF&G since 1983. With the recent departures of Al Spalinger, Ken Griffin, and Peggy Murphy from the Crab Plan Team, Wayne will be able to provide much needed assistance to the team. His perspective as a fishery manager will be a big asset to BS/AI crab plan team activities.

I appreciate your consideration of our nomination of Wayne Donaldson for membership to the Crab Plan Team. A copy of his resume is enclosed.

Sincerely,



Frank Rue
Commissioner

Enclosure

cc: Gordon Kruse
Pete Probasco
Wayne Donaldson

RESUME

Wayne K. Donaldson
Alaska Department of Fish & Game, 211 Mission Road, Kodiak AK. 99615-6399.
907-486-1842
Wayne_Donaldson@fishgame.state.ak.us

Education:

University of Alaska
Fairbanks, Alaska
B.S. Biological Sciences, 1980

Work History:

State of Alaska, Department of Fish & Game, Kodiak
February 1999 – present
Regional Shellfish/Groundfish Management Biologist - Direct the State of Alaska's shellfish and groundfish management programs in the Westward Region.

State of Alaska, Department of Fish & Game, Kodiak
February 1995 – February 1999
Regional Finfish Management Biologist - Direct and establish policy for management of all salmon and herring commercial and subsistence fisheries in the Westward Region of Alaska.

State of Alaska, Department of Fish & Game, Cordova
March 1991 - January 1995
Finfish Area Management Biologist for the Prince William Sound commercial and subsistence herring and salmon fisheries.

State of Alaska, Department of Fish & Game, Cordova
May 1985 - February 1991
Area Shellfish Management Biologist for Prince William Sound. The major fisheries in the area were king, Tanner, Dungeness crab and pot shrimp.

State of Alaska, Department of Fish & Game, Sand Point
January 1983 - April 1985
Assistant Area Shellfish Management Biologist for the Alaska Peninsula Area. The major fisheries in the area were king, Tanner, and Dungeness crab.

Recent Council Publications

Integrating Ecosystem Considerations into Groundfish Fisheries Management off Alaska, USA (March 1999) written by David Witherell, Clarence Pautzke and David Fluharty. NOTE: draft Manuscript submitted to ICES Journal of Marine Science — A special issue on the proceedings of the ICES/SCOR Symposium on the Ecosystem Effects of Fishing. March 1999. NPFMC Summary Report 99-03.

Status and Trends of Principal Groundfish and Shellfish Stocks in the Alaska EEZ (February 1999) written by David Witherell. NPFMC Summary Report 99-02.

Essential fish habitat and closed areas in federal waters of the North Pacific (January 1999) written by Jane DiCosimo. This paper was presented at the 1998 William R. and Lenore Mote International Symposium: Essential Fish Habitat and Marine Reserves, November 4 - 6, 1998. Sarasota, Florida. The paper describes the closed areas in the BSAI and GOA, the recent designations of essential fish habitat in the Council's five fishery management plans, and the closure of the Cape Edgcumbe pinnacles near Sitka, Alaska to all federal fishing and anchoring. NPFMC Summary Report 99-01.

Groundfish of the Bering Sea and Aleutian Islands (BSAI): Species Profile (December 17, 1998) A concise, informative overview of the major BSAI groundfish species written by David Witherell (NPFMC staff). The profile for each species includes information on biology, stock assessment, population status, fishery (gear types), management under the FMP, economics and a catch history. NPFMC Summary Report 98-05.

King and Tanner Crabs of the Bering Sea and Aleutian Islands Area: Species Profile (October 28, 1998) A concise, informative overview of the BSAI crab species. The profile for each species includes information on biology, management (state and federal), stock structure, and stock history by area and total harvest. NPFMC Summary Report 98-04.

Regulatory and Closure Areas for the Groundfish Fisheries in the Bering Sea/Aleutian Islands (September 1998). NPFMC Summary Report 98-03.

Groundfish of the Gulf of Alaska (GOA): Species Profile (June 5, 1998) A concise, informative overview of the major GOA groundfish species written by Jane DiCosimo (NPFMC staff). The profile for each species includes information on biology, stock assessment, population status, fishery (gear types), management under the FMP, economics and a catch history. NPFMC Summary Report 98-02.

Summary of the Gulf of Alaska (GOA) Groundfish Fishery Management Plan (April 1998) summarizes the current management of the domestic groundfish fisheries in the Gulf of Alaska (GOA) and includes a history of plan amendments. NPFMC Summary Report 98-01.

Summary of the Bering Sea and Aleutian Islands (BSAI) Groundfish Fishery Management Plan (March 1997) summarizes the current management of the domestic groundfish fisheries in the Bering Sea/Aleutian Islands (BSAI) and includes a history of plan amendments. NPFMC Summary Report 97-01.

A Brief History of Bycatch Management Measures for Eastern Bering Sea Groundfish Fisheries: a draft version of this paper (dated June 1997) written by David Witherell and Clarence Pautzke. NPFMC Summary Report 97-02.

A Guide to Stock Assessment of Bering Sea and Aleutian Islands Groundfish (September 1997) written by David Witherell (NPFMC) and James Ianelli (NMFS, AFSC). This article provides the layman with a general understanding of how quotas for groundfish in the BS/AI are established and the various tools used by the scientists to assess fish stocks. NPFMC Summary Report 97-03.

Russian Far East Fisheries Management (September 30, 1997) Report to Congress as mandated by the Magnuson-Stevens Act, written by Clarence Pautzke, Ph.D., Executive Director of the North Pacific Fishery Management Council. Summarizes institutional structures of fisheries management in the Russian Far East and how those relate to management of U.S. fisheries. NPFMC Summary Report 97-04.

A Summary of Current Stock Assessment Information Used in Managing Alaska Groundfish Stocks (October 1997) written by Jane DiCosimo. This paper was originally presented as a poster at the 15th Lowell Wakefield Fisheries Symposium in Anchorage, Alaska, focusing on the NPFMC's precautionary approach in applying stock assessment results to commercial fisheries and an increasing reliance on its scientific advisors in setting quotas. NPFMC Summary Report 97-05.

Development of the Individual Fishing Quota Program for Sablefish and Halibut Longline Fisheries off Alaska (Revised October 8, 1997) written by Clarence Pautzke and Chris Oliver (NPFMC's Executive Director and Deputy Director, respectively) and presented to the National Research Council's Committee to Review Individual Fishing Quotas, September 4, 1997, Anchorage, Alaska. Reviews the policy setting and development of the NPFMC's IFQ program. NPFMC Summary Report 97-06.

Twenty Years In Review (December 1996) highlights the major issues before the Council from 1976 through 1996. A fascinating glimpse of Council issues/events over the past twenty years. NPFMC Summary Report 96-01.

Stock Assessment and Fishery Evaluation (SAFE) Report for the Groundfish Resources of the Gulf of Alaska (November 1998).

Stock Assessment and Fishery Evaluation (SAFE) Report for the Groundfish Resources of the Bering Sea/Aleutian Islands (November 1998).

Stock Assessment and Fishery Evaluation (SAFE) Report for the King and Tanner Crab Fisheries of the Bering Sea and Aleutian Islands Regions (September 1998).

Economic Status of the Groundfish Fisheries off Alaska 1997. (November 1998).

Ecosystem Considerations for 1999. (November 1998).

All documents are available from the North Pacific Fishery Management Council upon request.
Many of these documents are posted as PDF files on our web site
<http://www.fakr.noaa.gov/npfmc>

STATEMENT FOR THE NORTH PACIFIC FISHERY MANAGEMENT COUNCIL

The General Accounting Office (GAO) is currently reviewing implementation impacts of the American Fisheries Act (AFA) and the Magnuson-Stevens Fishery Conservation and Management Act. As part of these efforts, two GAO staff from the Seattle Regional Office will be attending the Council meeting the week of April 19th and will be available to talk to anyone who wishes to provide information or examples on the subjects detailed below.

American Fisheries Act

The AFA mandates that GAO determine whether the implementation of the Act has negatively affected the market for Pollock fillets and fillet blocks, including the supply of such fillets. With respect to this effort, GAO is interested in interviewing those that have experienced changes in supply, product availability or prices that are attributable to the Act's implementation. GAO is also interested in identifying other factors that have impacted the market for Pollock fillets and fillet blocks.

Magnuson-Stevens Fishery Conservation and Management Act

Senate Report 105-235 mandates that GAO review National Marine Fisheries Service compliance with the national standards to base conservation and management measures on the best scientific information available and that such measures take into account the importance of fishery resources to fishing communities. The report also mandates that GAO review NMFS's implementation of the essential fish habitat provisions. GAO is interested in interviewing anyone who wishes to provide information or examples with respect to these three areas.

Bering Sea Task Force

Report to Governor Tony Knowles

March 1999

Bering Sea Task Force:
Lt. Governor Fran Ulmer, Chair
Dr. Vera Alexander
Steve Pennoyer
Frank Rue
Robin Samuelsen
Arliss Sturgulewski
Harry Wilde, Sr.

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- B. *Alaska Department of Fish and Game, 1997 and 1998 Bristol Bay Sockeye, Kuskokwim River Chum, Coho, and Chinook, and Yukon River Chinook and Chum Runs and Fishery Summaries. Prepared December 9, 1998*
- C. *Alaska Department of Fish and Game, Report on the Failure of Western Alaska Salmon Runs and the Link to Ocean and Climate Changes, Fall 1998*
- D. *Catalog of Who's Doing What in Marine Research*
- E. *Inventory of Facilities and Vessels*

About the Bering Sea Task Force

As part of a comprehensive state response to the 1998 fisheries disaster in western Alaska, Governor Tony Knowles created the Bering Sea Task Force to lay the groundwork for improving scientific understanding of the Bering Sea ecosystem.

The task force was charged with:

- 1) reviewing the recent low salmon returns, including available scientific information and research on changing ocean conditions, climate and other environmental factors affecting the survival, productivity and conservation of Bering sea salmon and other species;
- 2) cataloguing the various organizations that undertake marine and anadromous fish research in the North Pacific/Bering Sea and report on their funding sources, research missions and normal reporting mechanisms; and
- 3) making recommendations on creation of a science panel to review and integrate existing scientific and traditional knowledge of Bering Sea conditions and identify future Alaska research needs in order to improve the state's ability to anticipate and respond to changes in the productivity of salmon and other ocean species.

The Governor appointed seven individuals with expertise in science, government, fisheries, and traditional knowledge in the Bering Sea and communities affected by the 1998 salmon disaster. Members included:

Lt. Governor Fran Ulmer	North Pacific Anadromous Fish Commission
Dr. Vera Alexander	Dean, School of Fisheries and Ocean Sciences, University of Alaska Fairbanks
Steve Pennoyer*	Regional Administrator, National Marine Fisheries Service
Frank Rue	Commissioner, Alaska Department of Fish and Game
Robin Samuelson	North Pacific Fishery Management Council, Former Member Board of Fisheries
Arliss Sturgulewski	Advisory Council, School of Fisheries and Ocean Sciences, University of Alaska Fairbanks
Harry Wilde, Sr.	Mayor of Mountain Village, Yukon River Panel, Co-chair of Yukon River Drainage Fisheries Association
*Dr. Jim Balsiger	Director, Alaska Fisheries Science Center, National Marine Fisheries Service, participated on behalf of Mr. Pennoyer.

Problem and Opportunity

There have been numerous efforts over the past several years to bring scientists, managers, stakeholders, and policymakers together to focus attention on the status of the Bering Sea. It is widely acknowledged that the Bering Sea is a biological resource of worldwide significance. There has been an impressive convergence of interest and agreement to focus, coordinate, stabilize, and sustain long-term research efforts in the Bering Sea. Primary interests are to determine what changes are occurring, to understand them, and to predict how they will affect the living resources, environment, and communities of the Bering Sea region. Widespread agreement exists on the need for community involvement, the need to integrate traditional knowledge and western scientific knowledge, and the need for increased communication and sharing of information on the Bering Sea among researchers and between researchers and the public.

Over the past decade, considerable valuable research has been done, and efforts to share information are increasing, but a full understanding of the Bering Sea as a functioning ecosystem remains sketchy. Recent changes have raised alarms and intensified the sense of urgency within the scientific community, Bering Sea communities, the fishing industry, the environmental community, and among resource managers and policymakers.¹

The 1997 and 1998 salmon returns in western Alaska were disastrous to the region and far below the expected returns based on parent year escapements. Commercial harvests were among the lowest on record, and in much of the region, subsistence harvests were extremely poor. The 1997 and 1998 Bristol Bay sockeye runs were the second lowest and lowest in 20 years. In 1998, all drainages in Bristol Bay except the Nushagak saw sockeye runs below forecasts. The Kuskokwim River has seen dramatic declines in recent years, with 1997 and 1998 chum and coho returns some of the lowest on record. Kuskokwim chinook and sockeye were also depressed.

In the Yukon River, the 1997 chinook run was above average, but in 1998 was below the preseason forecast. The 1998 chinook harvest was the lowest since 1952. The 1997 Yukon summer and fall chum runs were below average, and in 1998 were below preseason forecasts. There was no commercial fall chum season on the Yukon. These low returns were completely unexpected based on the parent year escapements. In addition, there were reports of chinook salmon returning in poor shape--thin, diseased, and with

¹ Additionally, the entire Western Bering Sea and Northwest Pacific Ocean is incorporated into the Russian Economic Enterprise Zone (EEZ). Insufficient information from Russia has been made available to properly analyze and determine gaps, much less determine appropriate methods to manage the Bering Sea as an intact ecosystem. Much of the essential Russian information is in paper format with few copies available. Without a formal process to catalog and analyze Russian fisheries, oceanographic, and pollution information, there is a risk that it will be lost.

unhealed lamprey marks, suggesting changing prey and predator relationships and inadequate food. Warmer ocean temperatures and changed migration routes for salmon also suggest that salmon and other ocean species were affected in ways that stressed and altered their survival.²

Reports of netmarked fish, several recent international incidents of illegal high seas salmon driftnet fishing, and salmon harvests within the Russian Economic Enterprise Zone have caused some concern that interception of Alaskan salmon is affecting returns to western Alaska. Efforts to obtain reliable information from the Russians to determine the significance of the interception are continuing, and cooperative enforcement among the nations that are party to the *Convention for the Conservation of Anadromous Stocks in the North Pacific Ocean* has been expanded. However, most observers do not consider interception as a plausible primary cause of low salmon returns and point to the numerous other signs of trouble in the marine environment.

Marine mammal populations also indicate problems in the marine environment. The status of Steller sea lions, particularly the western population, has been in decline for 30 years to the point of official listing as an endangered species under the Endangered Species Act. Bering Sea harbor seals have similarly seen dramatic population changes, declining by 3.5% per year. Fur seal populations declined in the 1970s, with steep dips in the number of pups born until 1980, after which the birth rate stabilized. The St. George population has declined 6% per year. Sea otter population declines in the Aleutians and the apparently poor shape of Bering Sea walrus suggest a Bering Sea-wide problem that requires increased attention.

Seabirds have also shown signs of population stress. Murres and kittiwakes, along with the threatened spectacled and Steller's eiders, and emperor geese have all experienced periodic population declines over the past few decades. In 1998, seabird survival and reproductive success were mixed: kittiwakes did quite well, while murres had a massive die-off during the 1997-1998 winter, and had very poor reproductive rates in the Pribilof Islands in 1998. Last summer also saw a substantial die-off of shearwaters. Sea duck populations are also declining: in addition to the threatened spectacled and Steller's eiders, long-tailed ducks have declined up to 80% in some areas, and scoters up to 40%. Local residents along the Bering Sea coast have reported birds literally dropping out of the sky, and extraordinary numbers of dead birds washing up on beaches in the region.

While no single factor can explain the general decline in sea ducks, there are indications that food shortages may be the primary cause. There is some evidence that shortage of

² See Attachment B: *1997 and 1998 Bristol Bay Sockeye, Kuskokwim River Chum, Coho, and Chinook, and Yukon River Chinook and Chum Runs and Fishery Summaries*, prepared December 9, 1998, by the Department of Fish and Game.

food--generally small forage fish such as capelin and sandlance--is causing population declines, and this is likely driven by changes in ocean conditions.

Environmental changes with ecological and habitat implications, contaminants, and direct human activity are all impacting survival and need to be studied. There is some concern that contaminants accumulating through the food chain may be causing problems for many species. Lead poisoning from shotgun pellets has been implicated in the low survival of the remaining western Alaska spectacled eiders. Lead shot ingestion has been documented also in long-tailed ducks on the Yukon-Kuskokwim Delta. Studies have detected contaminants in birds, sea otters, and marine mammals in the Bering Sea region. In sea ducks, higher than expected levels of some metals have been found, but it is unclear whether it is from natural or manmade sources. Nor do we understand the effects on the birds.

Basic to understanding the condition of the species in the Bering Sea is an understanding of the Bering Sea itself. International research on oceanographic and climatic changes is documenting the effects on the marine environment and the fish and wildlife that depend on it. A variety of conditions and events must be understood in order to understand the system as a whole. Interdecadal regime shifts in ocean temperatures (Pacific Decadal Oscillation), currents, and weather have been documented during this century as a 20-year cycle. Warmer water temperatures in the 1970s through 1990s may have caused fundamental changes in the balance of species. Some scientists believe that we may have already entered another oscillation back toward a cooling period. These large-scale regional changes must be considered in the context of long-term global warming, as well as short-term weather anomalies such as the last few years of *El Niño* conditions.

The Bering Sea system is in turn part of a larger system that extends into nearshore areas, up the rivers, and out into the larger Pacific. Physical oceanographers have clearly demonstrated the large exchange of water between the Bering Sea and the Gulf of Alaska. Biologists have shown that some fish populations move freely over long distances in and out of the Bering Sea. Marine mammals and seabirds, more readily observable, are clearly dependent on areas beyond the Bering Sea. To understand the Bering Sea ecosystem requires an understanding and studies of the larger system, and of the natural corridors through which fish and wildlife move, and the pathways along which nutrients and contaminants are transported.

Changes in the marine environment cause small and large changes in the relationships between species, favoring some and stressing others. It is important to understand how the Bering Sea works as a system, and how a change in one part of the complex web affects other parts. It is extremely complex and dynamic, and we only have certain pieces of the puzzle. It is critical that there be a concerted effort to put the pieces together, understand their interrelationships, and bring "the big picture" into clearer focus.

There will always be limited funding for research, so funds must be strategically targeted to answer the most important questions. Identifying the important questions requires a sustained cooperative effort involving local residents, industry, policymakers, resource managers, scientists, and other stakeholders. Scientists must then convert those questions into an effective research program that adds to our understanding of the system and results in improved ability to forecast future changes. This strategic approach can lead to improvements in management and conservation, including effective adaptive management capabilities.

There are also limited capital funds for research facilities, equipment, and vessels. It is equally important that capital expenditures are targeted effectively towards the most critical needs, and that they are closely aligned with research priorities. In order to appropriately size and locate federal, state and local publicly funded Alaska marine and fisheries support facilities, it is imperative that both educational and teaching facilities and research facilities be closely coordinated. Capital spending without such coordination can overburden operating budgets, resulting in scattered facilities that are not sustainable, and in less than optimum facilities for fisheries and marine research and related educational programs in Alaska. New facilities should respond to research needs; research priorities should drive facilities and not vice-versa.

Recommendations

Over the past several years, many persons and organizations have identified and discussed these problems, and offered good recommendations. Our suggestions build on those recommendations and reinforce these sound ideas. Remarkable agreement exists among those who are concerned about the future health of the Bering Sea. We believe there is a great opportunity at this time to create a mechanism that will 1) improve our understanding of the Bering Sea marine, coastal, and related ecosystems, 2) improve our ability to forecast and respond to the effects of changes, and 3) improve our ability to manage and protect healthy, sustainable fish and wildlife populations.

Now is the time to act to put in place a system to accomplish the vision articulated by the many people involved in the *Draft Bering Sea Ecosystem Research Plan* (1998):

“We envision a productive, ecologically diverse Bering Sea ecosystem that will provide long-term, sustained benefits to local communities and the nation.”

The Bering Sea Task Force recommends undertaking the following actions immediately.

1) Creation of a North Pacific Research Board

Support congressional creation of a broadly representative North Pacific Research Board to develop a comprehensive research plan, set research priorities, and select research projects for funding to implement these priorities for marine and coastal ecosystem research in the North Pacific Ocean, Bering Sea, Arctic Ocean, and related bodies of water, including key watersheds such as the Yukon and Kuskokwim Rivers.

- The board should be broadly representative of users of the resource and of state, federal, academic, and other agencies and organizations involved in carrying out fisheries and ecosystem research, in funding research, in using such research, and in managing fisheries and other marine resources.
- Membership should provide some reasonable degree of overlap with other bodies involved in marine research to foster coordination (e.g., *Exxon Valdez* Oil Spill Trustee Council (EVOSTC), Arctic Council, U.S. Arctic Research Commission, Pacific Salmon Recovery Fund). This may include broadening the board to include international representatives, or developing formal partnerships with international research institutes and organizations such as the North Pacific Marine Science Organization (PICES) and the North Pacific Anadromous Fish Commission (NPAFC).
- The full research board should be responsible for developing and adopting a comprehensive research plan, identifying priority areas for research, developing a process for selection of projects for funding, and administering a North Pacific Research Fund.
- To be effective and efficient, a five-member executive committee, consisting of the Secretary of Commerce, the Secretary of Interior, the President of the University of Alaska, the Commissioner of the Alaska Department of Fish and Game, and the Chair of the North Pacific Fishery Management Council, or their designees, should be responsible for overseeing day-to-day administration for the board. The executive committee should implement the board's research plan and priorities by soliciting research proposals, overseeing a peer review process, and implementing the board's process for selecting research projects for funding. The executive committee should operate by consensus to foster cooperation and coordination (a model used successfully by EVOSTC).
- The board should be exempted from the requirements of the Federal Advisory Committee Act (FACA) in order to maximize its ability to coordinate and

communicate freely with the public, local residents, state, federal, and international agencies and organizations.

- The research board should establish a technical/scientific/traditional knowledge advisory group to advise the board on a research plan, on research priorities, on scientific issues, on how to foster coordination and communication among scientists. Membership should include traditional knowledge and Native science experts.
- The board should establish a community/public advisory group to advise the board on a research plan and priorities, on ways to involve local residents in collecting data and information, on how to gather information effectively from local residents, and how to communicate research findings back to local communities and the public. Membership should include broad representation from local communities and look to existing advisory panels to the extent possible.
- The board should establish a peer review process for reviewing research proposals. (Possible peer review process models include EVOSTC, the Alaska Sea Grant Program, and the Coastal Marine Institute.)
- The board will require adequate staff and administrative support. The task force recommends that it be structured to minimize administrative costs, maximize efficiency, and avoid duplication. The maximum amount of funding should be directed to research and a minimal but reasonable amount used for administrative purposes. The possibility of sharing administrative functions (e.g., with EVOSTC or other entities) should be explored to foster coordination and reduce costs.
- In order to foster international cooperation and coordination, the board should have the authority to invite the participation of additional representatives as *ex officio* members (e.g., Russian, Japanese, and Canadian representatives) and to establish a program for international collaboration and coordination. The board may choose to use the Science Committee of the NPAFC or other appropriate existing entities such as PICES or the Arctic Council.
- The board should make an annual report to Congress on the previous year's activities to ensure that the funds are accomplishing the intended goals.

2) Stable Research Funding

Congress should establish a secure, stable, long-term funding source dedicated to North Pacific and Bering Sea fisheries and marine ecosystem and related research.

- Congress should establish the North Pacific Research Fund to be administered by the North Pacific Research Board. The purpose of the fund is to provide permanent,

sustainable funding for long-term ecosystem research and monitoring. Research should be funded by the earnings from the fund.

- It is important to ensure that the research fund is a stable and dependable source of funding over time and not subject to the annual appropriations cycle.
- The board needs the ability to fund critical short-term research needs; it should design a flexible process that can respond quickly to unpredicted, immediate circumstances when necessary. An example would be a quick research response to address the 1997 and 1998 coccolithophore blooms in the Bering Sea.
- The board should encourage the fisheries and marine research community, and its related educational components, to coordinate and collaborate in the planning, construction, and use of capital facilities and vessels. Facility construction should be driven by research needs, minimize the impact on limited operating budgets, and reflect the goal of maximizing the available dollars directly supporting research.
- In establishing the fund, a reasonable limit should be put on allowable administrative expenses and overhead. The board should structure its operations to maximize the dollars spent directly on research, and minimize ancillary costs.

3) Comprehensive Research Plan

The North Pacific Research Board should develop and maintain a comprehensive, coordinated research plan for the North Pacific/Bering Sea.

- The board should identify and prioritize important research questions that build on past efforts such as the *Draft Bering Sea Ecosystem Research Plan (1998)*, maintaining focus on the “big picture” and “big questions,” including those important to local residents, the fishing industry, scientists, resource managers, policymakers, and the public.
- The board should foster collaboration on existing research undertaken by individual agencies and organizations.
- Board activities should maintain primary focus on the Bering Sea and adjacent North Pacific Ocean, and include key related freshwater watersheds, such as the Yukon and Kuskokwim Rivers.
- The board should develop appropriate and credible mechanisms for involving local residents, fishermen, and resource managers in on-going data gathering and monitoring programs to develop and use local expertise, minimize costs, expand the

scope and reach of monitoring capabilities, broaden understanding and the knowledge base within communities, and enlist community support.

4) Information Accessibility

The North Pacific Research Board should establish a comprehensive system for gathering, keeping and communicating information.

- The board should ensure that information is accessible and is shared--across scientific disciplines, between scientists and the public, between scientists and policymakers. Provide forums for sharing information (e.g., synthesis meetings, annual report to the public on the status and trends in the Bering Sea, symposia, worldwide web, and shared data collections (e.g., NOAA's Bering Sea Metadatabase). Use new technology to foster communication. Provide information that is meaningful to the public: provide "translators" to translate scientific information for non-scientists, emphasizing the integration and meaning of scientific studies.
- Work with coastal communities and nongovernmental organizations to develop systematic and culturally appropriate mechanisms for collecting and disseminating traditional and local knowledge so that this vital source of information is not lost and is incorporated into our understanding of natural systems.
- The board should develop effective ways to integrate traditional knowledge and western science.
- The board should develop appropriate ways to store and retrieve existing information and create a systematic way of collecting, storing and retrieving new information. Make use of new technologies, such as a virtual library.
- The board should develop an international data exchange and dissemination program with research entities throughout the North Pacific to catalog, electronically record, and exchange oceanographic, biological, fisheries, and pollution data. Given the shared borders and resources of the North Pacific and Bering Sea, an important priority should be to work closely with the research institutes and resource managers in the Russian Far East.

5) Coordination with other regional, national and international research bodies.

The North Pacific Research Board should promote and participate in an ongoing statewide mechanism for improving collaboration and coordination among the various regional bodies engaged in funding and carrying out marine and related freshwater research and monitoring programs.

- The North Pacific Research Board should invite representatives from EVOSTC, Arctic Council, U.S. Arctic Research Commission, the proposed Pacific Salmon Recovery Fund, NPAFC, PICES, and other appropriate organizations to meet regularly to present and discuss regional research plans, priorities, and programs.
- The North Pacific Research board should provide a forum for these organizations to come together to coordinate on statewide research and monitoring priorities, and to foster compatibility and congruity among their research plans and priorities, and beneficial collaboration in their research activities.
- Statewide collaboration among these regional entities should foster broad sharing of information and increase the accessibility of information. Creation and maintenance of a common database and an information clearinghouse for use by resource managers, resource users, the public and scientists should be a high priority.
- Joint opportunities for the sharing of administrative functions and costs between the North Pacific Research Board and these other entities should be explored periodically in an effort to minimize costs and maximize the funding available for research.

Attachments

- A. *Status of Alaska's Oceans and Marine Resources, March 1999*
- B. *Alaska Department of Fish and Game, 1997 and 1998 Bristol Bay Sockeye, Kuskokwim River Chum, Coho, and Chinook, and Yukon River Chinook and Chum Runs and Fishery Summaries. Prepared December 9, 1998*
- C. *Alaska Department of Fish and Game, Report on the Failure of Western Alaska Salmon Runs and the Link to Ocean and Climate Changes, Fall 1998*
- D. *Catalog of Who's Doing What in Marine Research*
- E. *Inventory of Facilities and Vessels*

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Mark S. Lundsten, Captain
F/V Masonic

February 22, 1999

Rick Lauber, Chairman
North Pacific Fisheries Management Council
605 West Fourth Avenue, Suite 306
Anchorage, Alaska 99501

Dear Rick,

At the December 1998 Council meeting, I spoke to you and Clarence, and to some other Council members as well, about the possible formation of a new Advisory Panel just for halibut and sablefish issues. After some consideration, and plenty of discussions with different fishermen, I think the ideas expressed in the attached editorial are a better plan. I wrote this editorial for the March, 1999, edition of the *Alaska Fisherman's Journal*.

Thank you for your consideration.

Sincerely,



Mark S. Lundsten

RECEIVED
FEB 23 1999
N.P.F.M.C

We need an annual congress of IFQ fishermen at the December meeting of the North Pacific Council. The current Council system has become so complex and the meetings so lengthy that working fishermen are essentially missing from the Council process. For representatives of corporate fleets and for association managers, attendance at these meetings is not as prohibitive as it is for owner/operators who also have to maintain a boat and go fishing. This is neither a big mystery, nor is it anyone's fault. But without participating, we owner/operators who make up the majority of the IFQ fleet are losing control of our fisheries. Instead of deferring management decisions to others, we who have a stake in these decisions should meet every year and advise the Council directly.

I went to the December 1998, meeting with two other members of our association, and I think that besides one Council member and two AP members, we were the only working IFQ fishermen there. Maybe we as a fleet still are suffering a political hangover from the IFQ battles. Maybe that's why we aren't showing up at these meetings. That was true for me for a while. But I think the problem is not that simple.

Since the passage of IFQs we have had very few issues before the Council of enough importance to justify many owner/operators going to a meeting for a week at a time. Consequently all kinds of "little" issues get

decided without much input from the people who live and work with the outcome. The cumulative effect is beginning to worry me. The nuts and bolts of our fisheries are being designed and decided by others.

That poses a serious problem: informed and earnest as they may be, many in the Council process largely don't know how halibut and blackcod fishing works. We are the ones who have to live with the results of their decisions. We need to define ourselves instead of assuming others understand us.

The mechanics of this wouldn't be too difficult. First, the Council would defer final action on IFQ issues, as much as possible, until the December meeting. Then all the fishermen's associations involved with IFQs could meet in December a few days ahead of the Council.

Just as we do with the Conference Board at the IPHC, we would then deliver our collective point of view to the Council on each issue. We would have no official power; but whenever we reached a consensus, our authority would be impossible to ignore and difficult to dispute.

Anyone would still be free, of course, to testify however they like to the Council. Ultimately, though, this group should both save the Council a lot of time and also come up with better solutions.

Many of the issues ahead of us are the kind that require knowledgeable input from fishermen, not the kind (like IFQs) that require the tough politics of allocation. Rather than deciding who gets to fish, we need to work out other issues: a bird-deterrence regulation that really works and that we all can live with; better utilization of observer data and logbook data in conjunction with the blackcod survey for more accurate stock assessment; streamlining the observer program itself, keeping our NMFS logbook relevant to longlining; and verifying IFQ landings through some industry-wide standard. Anyone can come up with three or four other issues right away, I'm sure.

There are also some new allocation issues that primarily affect other gear groups. Nevertheless, we should definitely discuss them among ourselves. Proposals to limit the halibut sport-charter industry and to assign VBAs to trawlers are two that come to mind immediately – not to mention groundfish co-ops that include processors who also buy halibut and blackcod.

For all of these issues, the point is simple: we as a fleet are an essential part of making management plans for our fishery. With the Council calendar set up as it is, we are being left out of that process.

An inevitable benefit of this gathering would be the opportunity to consider other concerns jointly. For example, farmed halibut poses a potentially serious threat to our markets for halibut. This annual meeting would be a natural forum to present and receive any ideas for marketing, public relations, and political initiatives.

And, of course, this annual meeting would be a place where everyone would be making deals after hours and in the halls – buying and selling fish and quota.

IFQ fishermen are unique in the North Pacific. We fish offshore and are managed federally; but we are also owner/operators, unlike all the other offshore fleets that are largely corporate-owned with hired skippers.

We have “solved” our allocation problem with IFQs, something no other fishery has done. Every management decision of every other fishery is still colored by allocation issues. In the other fisheries, every single Council decision has allocation implications – who gets more fish and who gets less. Like it or not, halibut and blackcod management plans are often greatly affected by the politics of crab, cod, and pollock.

In such a climate, we need to distinguish ourselves in order to manage ourselves. The only way to do that is to meet annually and address the Council directly about halibut and blackcod.

If you think this is a good idea, write a letter (or ask your association manager to do so) to Rick Lauber, Chairman, North Pacific Fishery Management Council, 605 West Fourth Avenue, Suite 306, Anchorage, Alaska 99501. Ask him to schedule final action for IFQ issues for the December meeting. Then plan on attending.

Mark S. Lundsten is owner/operator of the F/V Masonic and a member of Fishing Vessel Owners' Association.



Lone Fisherman, Inc.

John C. Phillips, Pres.
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RECEIVED
MAR 29 1999
N.P.F.M.C

Rick Lauber, Chairman
North Pacific Fisheries Management Council
605 West 4th Avenue, Suite 306
Anchorage, AK. 99501

Dear Chairman Lauber:

I am writing you with concerns about the decisions that are being made in regards to the IFQ fisheries without the presence of IFQ fisherman. The fisherman have a significant interest in the decisions that are being made regarding the blackcod and halibut fisheries. We feel that we have a lot to offer and would like some opportunity to have a voice in the decision making policies.

It was suggested by Mark Lundstrum, FV Masonic, that IFQ holders meet every year and advise the council directly. It is very important to us to let you know what exactly is going on with us as fisherman and more importantly, to let you know, first hand, what is happening out on the grounds that effects the fishery. We would not want and would not have any real official power on the council but feel that our input would be extremely valuable to you in your decision making actions. Presently, with your schedule, we are left out of the management making plans because we have to go out and make a living. I can envision this a cooperative effort by both yourselves and the fisherman. I feel that if the fisherman see you are ready and willing to work together, as a collective group, both having the best interest of the fisheries at the top of the priority list, decisions would be made with significant knowledge. These decisions would be well understood by both yourselves and the fleet.

Would you consider scheduling your final actions for both halibut and blackcod during the December meeting so that as many fisherman as possible have the option of attending and helping you to make sound, knowledgable decisions regarding the longline fisheries?

Thank-you for all you hard work and time invested in preserving the number one employer of Alaskans, in Alaska, fishing.

Sincerely,

Maura J. Phillips

cc:Robert Alverson
FVOA