

Pacific Northwest Crab Industry Advisory Committee (PNCIAC)

Meeting Minutes and Recommendations

3.29.2023 1-2pm AKT

ATTENDEES

Committee Members: Sean Dwyer (*Chair*), Lance Farr (*Vice Chair*), Elizabeth Reed, Mike Simpson, Jake Jacobsen, Gary Painter, Dean Fasnacht, Jamie Goen (*Secretary, non-voting*)

(Committee members not in attendance: Steve Minor, Brett Reasor, Edward Poulsen, Mark Casto)

Quorum = greater than or equal to 50%

Others in Attendance:

Council staff - Sarah Marrinan, Sam Cunningham

ADFG – Kendall Henry

NOAA General Counsel - Henry Tashjian

Ernie Weiss

AGENDA

1. Election of Officers
2. NPFMC crab measures for June
3. Crab Rationalization Program Review discussion
4. Other business

MINUTES

Meeting called to order- quorum present

1. Election of Officers

Lance Farr is the current vice chair and offered to lead election of officers in Steve Minor's (current chair's) absence.

MOTION: Nominate Sean Dwyer (Trident- processor sector but also has harvester experience) as chair of PNCIAC (Lance/Jake-Elizabeth) Motion passed

MOTION: Nominate Lance Farr (harvester rep) to remain as vice chair. (Elizabeth/Gary) Motion passed

Jamie agreed to stay as secretary. Lance offered to lead the meeting.

2. NPFMC crab measures for June

Council staff highlighted a number of crab actions that may be on the North Pacific Fishery Management Council's (NPFMC's or Council's) agenda for June including: Crab facility and Individual Processor Quota (IPQ) use caps, crab crew share (C-share) active participation requirements, an analysis considering a number of Bristol Bay Red King Crab (BBRKC) area closures (including the Red King Crab Savings Area (RKCSA) and Area 512), and Crab Plan Team (CPT) Report from May meeting.

Facility & IPQ use caps –

Sarah described the NPFMC's outstanding motions for facility and IPQ use caps. This proposed action is on the schedule for October with a T (tentative) but, depending on what is tasked with C-shares, still a hope that it can be scheduled for June. It looks at two potential actions that are not mutually exclusive: removing the 60% facility use caps for Eastern Aleutian Islands (AI) golden king crab and Western AI red king crab and including south-designated Bering Sea snow crab, BBRKC, and Western AI golden king crab (WAG) processed east of 174 W long from having IPQ that is custom processed counting towards the facility owner's IPQ use caps. This would align the IPQ use caps for these fisheries with all of the other Bering Sea and Aleutian Island (BSAI) Crab Rationalization (CR) Program fisheries.

There are a lot of types of caps in the CR Program. This action is specifically looking at the PQS/IPQ use caps that limit an individual to not holding more than 30% of the PQS or using any more than 30% of the IPQ – which in the case of a few crab fisheries, that includes custom processing. This action would make custom processing exempt from use caps across all CR fisheries.

C-shares –

In addition, the Council has an outstanding motion for crab C-shares and an analysis is expected to come back in June. However, staff [prepared a memo for April](#) that highlights some challenges with that issue as written. Encouraging crabbers to provide testimony on this issue. Is the focus still “covid- years” or has the focus been extended due to ongoing issues with the crab closures and expected low harvest levels (total allowable catch or TACs). The current Council's motion couldn't be implemented the way that it's written (i.e., to exempt certain “covid-years”) because the timeline is too late for that to occur.

Discussion about Council and NMFS staff workload and tradeoffs between use caps and c-shares actions, particularly ahead of June Council meeting where either or both could be addressed. If the Council wants to move forward with both of these – and they don't want C-shares revoked in the meantime - is there a precedent for the Council to give a signal to NOAA Fisheries that it was working on a package and to not take action to revoke C-shares? Need to ask NOAA Fisheries to consider and if there are examples, perhaps in other parts of the country, for NMFS waiting to act based on Council's active progress of an issue. Comment that this is an absolute time of crisis and the crab industry needs maximum flexibility for C-shares and for processing.

Comment that C-shares and the risk that people in a situation where their quota will be revoked may force a sale of their quota which could disrupt the general value of all crab quota shares, negatively affecting the whole market. Don't want to put people in a place of making hasty decisions regarding the value of their quota share assets especially during a fishery crisis. Council staff noted that Council action in June on C-shares may not prevent that unless NOAA Fisheries is willing to do what was suggested earlier where they choose not to revoke C-shares while the Council is actively working on an action to fix the issue.

MOTION : PNCIAC recommends the Council seek immediate action to protect C-share quota holders so their quota is not revoked as well as pursuing action on facility and IPQ use caps. Both actions are priority items for creating flexibility in a challenging time for crab fisheries. (Sean/Elizabeth) Motion passed

BBRKC area closures initial review for June –

Sam described the Council's proposed action for area closures intended to protect BBRKC (Council [motion](#) from Dec 2022). Similar to the action considered in December – but coming back to the Council in June as an initial review and limiting closures to times of low crab abundance or closed crab fisheries. The alternatives consider a number of area closures for groundfish fishing - RKCSA for all groundfish gear (with considering exemptions to certain gear types) and Area 512 for pot cod. Not mutually exclusive and both consider different types of triggers for low abundance. Council's motion also included some informational requests on the performance standard applicable to vessels in the pollock fishery and the regulatory definition of pelagic trawl gear. Sam said he also plans to include a general update on the cooperative research of the Bering Sea Fisheries Research Foundation (BSFRF), NOAA Fisheries, and Alaska Department of Fish and Game on crab movement to the extent this is available (likely from what was provided at the Jan CPT).

Discussion of technology available to determine pelagic trawl gear bottom contact and how to better enforce performance measures like the Kodiak requirement where the pelagic trawl net must not be on the bottom more than 10% of the time. Brianna King has a research paper that should be published soon. She studied seafloor footrope contact for pelagic trawl for her master's thesis at Alaska Pacific University. Council staff summarized some of that related work in Oct 2022. For the timeline on this related issue, there was a discussion paper April 2022, another one in Oct 2022, and then an emergency rule analysis in Dec 2022, June will be the next one.

Talk of the original intent of the RKCSA not being included in the Council's Dec 2022 motion. Original intent to prohibit all mobile bottom contact gear year-round regardless of whether the BBRKC stock was at low abundance or had closed fisheries. Talk of increased effort by pelagic trawl gear in the RKCSA than when established.

3. Crab Rationalization Program Review discussion

Document under staff tasking at the April Council meeting that speaks to the review schedule for all fisheries' program/allocation reviews, noting that the CR Program is up for review this year. Talked about a workplan coming in December 2023 to get the review started. The review is not an action document, rather it looks at the program holistically and whether meeting its intended goals. Actions coming out of a program review may follow.

Think about priorities with this review and other current crab actions. Crab stakeholders interested in getting the review out sooner rather than later. Talk of a focused/consolidated review this time especially since the economic information going into the review will be several years lagged and likely not capture the current economic crisis the fishery stakeholders are in.

4. Other business

Members agreed to meet again in May for 2 hours to provide comment on the agenda items for the June Council meeting. Maybe after the May CPT meeting.

Meeting adjourned ~2:15pm (Elizabeth/Sean)