

North Pacific Fishery Management Council

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ADVISORY PANEL MINUTES

September 23-25, 1985
Sheraton Hotel
Anchorage, Alaska

The Advisory Panel for the North Pacific Fishery Management Council met on September 23-25, 1985 in the Yukon Room of the Sheraton Anchorage Hotel. Members present were:

Larry Cotter, Chairman	Robert Hunter	Cameron Sharick
Robert Alverson, Vice Chairman	Pete Isleib	Thorn Smith
Terry Baker	Eric Jordan	Walter Smith
Alvin Burch	Richard Lauber	Thomas Stewart
Joseph Chimegalrea	Nancy Munro	Richard White
Barry Fisher	Alvin Osterback	Dave Woodruff
Ronald Hegge	Don Rawlinson	John Woodruff
Oliver Holm	Julie Settle	

Minutes of the May 20-22, 1985 Advisory Panel meeting were approved as read.

SALMON/CRAB INTERCEPTION

A. King Crab Incidental Catch in the Yellowfin Sole Fishery

The AP wishes to convey its extreme concern with the abhorrent level of incidental catch of king crab in the yellowfin sole fishery. We urge the industry to develop concrete, long-term solutions to substantially reduce future incidental catch rates. In order to accomplish this we urge all industry participants to join in the current efforts of the Industry Incidental Catch Workgroup. The Workgroup should include in its presentation to the Council at the December meeting, specific recommendations on how to reduce the incidental catch through modifications of gear type, fishing techniques, and other approaches, as well as provide the Council with a specific figure of crab which it feels is adequate for incidental catch purposes.

In the absence of concrete progress and/or solutions being developed by the industry in the immediate future, the AP urges the Council to take very strong steps to address this problem. Further, the AP believes it is critical that research activities take place to identify the impact of trawl activities upon crab populations in order to ensure future management decisions adequately protect the crab resource while still providing for other fisheries.

The AP does take note of the fact that the trawl fleet has recently made a successful effort to reduce its incidental catch rate. The motion passed 23 to 0.

B. Japanese Interception of Salmon

The AP reviewed a draft letter relative to Japanese high seas interception of salmon. The AP unanimously adopted various changes to the letter which were designed to strengthen the tone of the letter. A copy of the letter is included as Attachment A.

GULF OF ALASKA GROUND FISH FMP

A. DAP, JVP and OY Recommendations for 1986

Pollock. The AP members expressed concern with the biological condition of the resource and with changes in data utilized to describe the status of the stocks. AP members felt strongly the Council should encourage exploration and prospecting for additional Gulf of Alaska pollock stocks outside of the Shelikof Strait area. Concern was also expressed relative to the developing needs of the domestic industry both short and long term: short term, the domestic industry needs to have access to spawning stocks for economic reasons; long term, the fishery should be managed in such a way as to provide a supply of large fish for domestic production.

The AP recommends the public be advised that we anticipate an OY of 50,000 mt to be designated as DAP. Yet, we are interested in encouraging exploration for pollock resources outside of the Shelikof Strait area and are seeking methods to accomplish this. We do not anticipate any TALFF in 1986, and JVP, if any becomes available, would be excluded from Shelikof Strait and limited to exploration during the first four months of the year. The motion passed 12 to 9.

Minority Report. Several members of the AP believe that a recommendation for Shelikof Strait of 50,000 mt OY, all for DAP, is inappropriate at the present time. The major factor leading us to this conclusion is that the scientific data available at this time is insufficient to set an OY (examples follow). During the review period we encourage the scientists and industry to come up with better data on which to set an OY, DAP and any possible JVP.

(1) The most conservative estimate of pollock biomass in the Gulfwide area was 1.2 million mt during the summer of 1984. The winter Shelikof pollock biomass was assessed at 0.7 million mt. About 0.5 million mt is apparently unaccounted for.

(2) Is the reported near lack of 6- to 7-year-old and older pollock in Shelikof Strait during the 1985 winter survey surprising? We believe a close review of past age composition data will show that the spawning stock in Shelikof Strait typically consists of primarily 3- to 6-year-olds.

(3) Foreign historic catch data for January through April in the Gulf of Alaska should be reviewed to determine if pollock have been harvested during these months outside of Shelikof Strait.

(4) Large recruitment is anticipated in 1987 due to a reportedly very successful 1984 year class. How should that affect the 1986 OY decision?

(5) DAP requests are not available and DAP should be established on best estimates of industry needs. OY which is surplus to DAP should be allocated to JVP.

We are concerned about the primary issues: (1) a risk to the biological integrity of the stocks, and (2) the economic implications to the American fishing industry (DAP and JVP). We believe the risks need to be clearly outlined during the public review period. Note that no discussion has been made of pollock bycatch in other targeted fisheries such as cod and flounder.

The AP noted there is 5,000 mt of unallocated TALFF remaining in 1985 and an additional amount of DAP which will probably not be utilized in 1985. Given the AP's concern with the biological health of the resource the members determined the TALFF amounts should remain unallocated and the DAP portion should not be redistributed.

The AP recommends withholding the 5,000 mt of unallocated TALFF and make no further release to TALFF in 1985 from any source. The motion passed 19 to 2.

Pacific Cod. Some concern was expressed that Pacific cod stocks are not as high as projected. Some prospecting has occurred in the Gulf and has met with little success.

The AP recommends maintaining the status quo for OY in 1986, except there be no TALFF. The motion passed 22 to 0, with 1 abstention.

Flounder. The AP recommends maintaining the status quo for OY in 1986, except there be no TALFF; however, the Council should bear in mind the potential for halibut incidental catch. The motion passed 14 to 0.

Pacific Ocean Perch. It was noted that with few exceptions, POP is a bycatch fishery. The AP does not want to adversely affect those directed POP fisheries which do occur, but is cognizant of the fact that the resource is relatively small.

The AP recommends the Council provide for as much of a DAP directed fishery as possible, while bearing in mind the total OY is a relatively small component of Gulf of Alaska directed fisheries. Therefore, the NMFS Regional Office should provide for an adequate amount of the OY to be set aside for bycatch purposes. The motion passed 16 to 0.

Sablefish. The AP was pleased to discover the rebuilding program adopted a number of years ago has been successful and that it appears an increase in the OY can now be justified.

The AP recommends, for public comment purposes only, establishing an OY range of 9,000 mt to 25,000 mt, while informing the public we do not anticipate setting the OY in the upper range. The motion passed 16 to 0.

Atka Mackerel. The AP recommends the Council maintain the status quo for OY in 1986 and Atka mackerel should be designated bycatch only. The motion passed 16 to 0.

Other Rockfish. The AP recommends maintaining the status quo for OY in 1986. The motion passed 16 to 0.

Thornyhead/Squid/Others. The AP recommends maintaining the status quo for OY in 1986. The motion passed 16 to 0.

B. Halibut Bycatch

The AP expressed concern with the data and was also concerned with the use of data obtained through research fishing efforts as opposed to data obtained through joint venture fishing efforts.

The AP recommends, for public comment purposes only, the Council notify the public that bycatch amounts may be established for halibut which could result in a bycatch of 4,000 mt to 9,000 mt. The notification to the public should contain reference to appropriate data which may be used by the Council to develop bycatch amounts, information concerning the status of stocks, and an indication that the Council intends to set bycatch rates conservatively. The motion passed 22 to 1. The opposition was concerned with the definition of "conservative".

BERING SEA/ALEUTIAN ISLANDS GROUND FISH FMP

A. Resource Assessment Document

The AP noted the RAD document provides for area management for seven species that were previously managed region-wide. The AP expressed concern that even though this approach may have merit in some ways, the change in management approach warrants a more indepth review of the socioeconomic impact of this approach and existing fishery activities.

B. TAC Recommendations for 1986

Pollock. The AP recommends setting pollock TAC in the Bering Sea at 1.1 million mt and in the Aleutians at 100,000 mt for 1986. The motion passed 21 to 0 with 1 abstention.

Pacific Cod. A discussion ensued regarding appropriateness of the TAC given the failure of fishery activities during the past years to meet the Pacific cod TAC. Various AP members felt this indicated the resource was not as abundant as the TAC might indicate.

The AP recommends, for public comment purposes only, the Council propose the TAC be established at 141,000 mt in the Bering Sea and 24,000 mt in the Aleutians for 1986. However, the public should be advised that due to recent catch rates during the preceding four years being substantially lower than the

TAC, the Council anticipates decreasing the TAC for conservation purposes. Furthermore, there shall be no TALFF in 1986. The motion passed 19 to 2 with 1 abstention.

Yellowfin Sole. The AP recommends, for public comment purposes only, setting TAC at 339,780 mt for the Bering Sea and Aleutians for 1986. The motion passed 19 to 2 with 1 abstention.

A concern was expressed by a few AP members that there should be no yellowfin sole fishery in view of recent incidental catch problems with king crab.

All Remaining Species. The AP recommends the Council send out for public review all TACs for the remaining species as proposed in the Bering Sea Resource Assessment Document (see Attachment B). Those species are: turbot, other flatfish, sablefish, Pacific ocean perch, other rockfish, Atka mackerel, squid, and other species. The motion passed 23 to 0.

C. DAP and JVP Recommendations for 1986

The AP recommends the Council send out for public review all preliminary DAPs and JVPs as proposed in agenda item D-2(b). A copy of the agenda item is included as Attachment C. The AP also wishes to notify the public that given the potential for sizeable decreases of OY in the Gulf of Alaska, we anticipate increasing joint venture activities in the Bering Sea/Aleutian Islands region. The motion passed 23 to 0.