

MEMORANDUM

TO: Council, SSC and AP Members

FROM: Clarence G. Pautzke
Executive Director



DATE: April 9, 1999

ESTIMATED TIME 8 HOURS all D-1 items
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SUBJECT: Board of Fisheries/North Pacific Council Joint Committee Meeting

ACTION REQUIRED

Report on March 4, 1999 Joint Committee Meeting

BACKGROUND

The Board of Fisheries/North Pacific Council Joint Committee Meeting convened on March 4, 1999, in Anchorage. Agenda items included: (1) state waters fisheries; (2) forage fish proposals; (3) demersal shelf rockfish; (4) chinook salmon bycatch; (5) license limitation for scallop fishery; and (6) crab license limitation program. The minutes from the meeting are attached as Item D-1(a). The next committee meeting is scheduled for sometime this summer.

Earl Krygier, ADFG, will provide a report on Board actions related to the above items that were taken at its March meeting. Board action concerning crab fishing seasons and stand-down requirements will be discussed under a separate agenda item (D-2).

Minutes from the Joint Council/BOF Committee Meeting

Thursday, March 4, 1999
Anchorage, Alaska

The Joint Committee of the North Pacific Fishery Management Council and the Alaska Board of Fisheries met on Thursday, March 4, 1999 with the following persons in attendance:

Council members: Kevin O'Leary, Robin Samuelson, Dennis Austin

BOF members: Dan Coffey, Larry Engel

Staff: Clarence Pautzke and Chris Oliver (NPFMC); Earl Krygier, Pete Probasco, Doug Pengilly, and Don Tracy (ADF&G); Tim Ragen, Barbara Mahoney, and Brad Smith (NMFS); Lauren Smoker (NOAA GC); and, approximately eight persons from the public.

The following is a summary of the discussion:

State Waters Fisheries

The Committee discussed four proposals to either develop state water fisheries for pollock, or allow the use of seine and/or sunken gillnet gear for existing state water fisheries for groundfish. The consensus of the Committee was that development of state water fisheries for pollock should not be pursued at this time, due primarily to the following factors: the current changes in pollock management related to the American Fisheries Act and development of co-ops; the uncertainty of Steller sea lion management measures related to pollock and the critical nature of near shore pollock resources to sea lion recovery; allocational aspects related to development of such fisheries; lack of observer coverage on small vessels; and, potential conflict of such fisheries with the recent bans on bottom trawling for pollock, as the smaller vessels which would participate in this fishery would likely be unable to pull pelagic gear. Because of these issues the Committee unanimously recommended that the BOF not proceed with proposals #59 or #397.

Regarding proposals to allow seine gear (proposal #64) or sunken gillnet gear for groundfish (proposal #395), the consensus was not to proceed with such proposals, due primarily to salmon bycatch and other entanglement issues associated with such gear. These proposals would likely direct new effort in State waters, which would then require they be addressed under the BOF's new and emerging fisheries policy.

The Committee supported proposal #62 to delay the Cook Inlet sablefish fishery to protect sexually immature sablefish, but left the following proposals to the BOF's discretion: #65 (pot storage requirements in Cook Inlet), #394 (extension of cod jig allocation later in the year in South Alaska Peninsula area), and #396 (review cycle for the state bottom fishery).

It also was noted that further consideration of differences between the Board of Fisheries and Council definitions of pelagic trawls will first be taken up by the Council's Enforcement Committee on April 22, before being brought back to the joint committee this coming fall. Concerning a proposed state waters fisheries for Pacific cod near Adak, ADF&G noted that there was no need for a formal state waters fishery since the federal catch quota in the area is rarely taken.

Forage Fish Proposals

The Committee heard staff reports regarding specific forage fish proposals and the more comprehensive ADF&G proposal for a forage fish FMP (proposal #297/5AAC30.168). The Committee also heard from NMFS marine mammal scientists regarding the general role of forage fish in marine mammal diets and on the status of the Cook Inlet Beluga whale population (related to a proposal to the BOF to create a commercial hooligan fishery in and around the mouth of the Susitna River). Based on affirmation that the Council's forage fish prohibition was intended to prevent new forage fisheries, and not to curtail existing fisheries, the Committee recommended moving forward with ADF&G proposal #297/5AAC30.168, based on Alternative 3 (this would allow existing commercial forage fisheries, and prohibit the development of new fisheries), with the clarification that this would not prevent the BOF from reviewing existing commercial forage fisheries within their regular cycle, including herring, based on specification of the following information (these are contained in proposal 297, though #6 and #7 were added by the Committee):

1. Open fishing seasons
2. Open fishing areas
3. Reporting requirements
4. Methods of harvest
5. Amounts to be harvested
6. Biomass estimates
7. 10% maximum exploitation rate
8. Any other conditions deemed necessary by the Commissioner for conservation and management purposes

The Committee suggests that these eight items be included on the Commissioner's permit and that if the department does not have this information the fishery may not open. Regarding specific proposals, the Committee had the following recommendations:

Proposal #54: the commercial aspect of this proposal is moot in light of #297; the subsistence aspect will be taken up separately by the BOF.

Proposal #55: has been withdrawn.

Proposal #79: already voted down by the BOF in January 1999.

Proposal #80: subsumed by #297.

Demersal Shelf Rockfish

The Committee received a report summarizing recent Council action to require full retention of DSR in the management area 650 (Southeast) by federal fixed gear fisheries. This action was taken to reduce waste and provide better information to managers on total DSR mortality. Pending resolution of legal issues, this program would be in place in year 2000, necessitating complementary action at the State level. The Committee stressed that Council and ADF&G staff need to coordinate to make sure the necessary steps are taken to place this issue in the BOF's 1999-2000 cycle for necessary action.

Chinook Salmon Bycatch

The Committee received a report summarizing recent Council action to incrementally reduce the BSAI chinook salmon bycatch cap for the pollock fisheries. The Committee discussions reinforced the need for more accurate accounting (total enumeration as opposed to sampling extrapolations, for example), noting that recent provisions of the AFA, including co-ops and increased observer coverage, should facilitate better accounting.

License Limitation for Scallop Fishery

The Committee discussed the Council's recent actions which resulted in a total of 9 vessels licensed for the statewide scallop fisheries, and recognized that further conforming actions at the State level may be necessary. Pending action by the Legislature, the BOF may need to address this issue at a later date. BOF members were supportive of the Council's action on this issue.

Crab License Limitation Program

The Committee once again discussed the status of the Council's license limitation program for the BSAI crab fisheries. Among the issues discussed was the fact that the BOF will be considering crab management issues at its upcoming March session, some of which hinge upon the number of vessels expected to be licensed for various crab fisheries. This presents a dilemma for the BOF, where they may have to base some actions on expectations of further Council actions which are possible in April and June of this year (Examples include pot limit discussions and pre-season closure notice decisions). Alternately, the BOF may have to take provisionary actions which could be reassessed following resolution of Council actions later this year.

The Committee also discussed the issue of competing objectives of the Council and BOF relative to crab management; for example, the Council's LLP decision was guided by general concerns over latent capacity (rather than a specific target number of vessels), whereas the BOF and ADF&G managers see a target number of vessels (250) as critical to management objectives. Though this issue was not resolved by the Committee, a suggestion was to try and reconcile a common objective and then pursue management options which might satisfy that objective for both the Council and BOF.