

# North Pacific Fishery Management Council

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## NEWSLETTER

### Council Acts on Heavy Agenda in September

The North Pacific Fishery Management Council began their meeting on September 28 and 29 at the Old Federal Building in Anchorage with the election of new officers for the coming year. James O. Campbell of Anchorage is the new Chairman and Harold Lokken of Seattle was elected to his sixth term as Vice-Chairman. The Council agenda included reports by the Alaska Department of Fish and Game, National Marine Fisheries Service, the U.S. Coast Guard and the International Pacific Halibut Commission, in addition to staff reports and public testimony on the Council's fishery management plans. The Council approved the draft herring fishery management plan for the Bering/Chukchi Sea to go to Secretarial review, voted not to send Tanner Crab Amendment 10 to Secretarial review, considered preliminary figures for Total Allowable Catch, Domestic Annual Processing, and Joint Venture Processing for 1984 for groundfish in the Gulf of Alaska and the Bering Sea/Aleutian Islands, and reaffirmed their decision to send the King Crab Fishery Management Plan to Secretarial review. The Council approved Spanish and Taiwanese joint venture requests, and conceptually approved a Portuguese operation that would fish directly, but also buy fish from U.S. processors and in joint ventures. The Council also discussed objectives and future action for management of the halibut fishery. Details on these and other items are included in this newsletter.

### December Council Meeting to be Held in Anchorage

The next meeting of the North Pacific Fishery Management Council is December 7 and 8. The Scientific and Statistical Committee will meet on December 5 and 6, and the Advisory Panel on December 6. All meetings will be held in the Old Federal Building, 605 W. 4th Avenue, in Anchorage. The agenda will include discussion and possible action on halibut fishery management measures, final estimation of the U.S. industry's needs for groundfish for 1984 in the Gulf of Alaska and the Bering Sea/Aleutian Islands, as well as the total amount of groundfish that will be available for harvest in those areas. The Council will also consider an amendment to the Gulf groundfish plan to increase the pollock OY and change area apportionments of Pacific cod OY. Amendment 9 to the Bering Sea/Aleutian Islands Groundfish Fishery Management Plan granting field order authority for conservation measures will be before the Council for final consideration. Proposals affecting management of the 1984 troll salmon fishery may also be on the agenda.

### Council Elects Officers

James O. Campbell was elected to serve as Chairman and Harold Lokken re-elected as Vice-Chairman of the Council for the next 12 months.

Jim Campbell, a member of the Council since 1978, is the President of the Alaska Division of Spenard Builders Supply and has served as President of the Anchorage Chamber of Commerce, Anchorage Businessmen's Association, and the Alaska State Chamber of Commerce. Campbell currently serves on the Council's committees for Board/Council Coordination, Policy and Planning, and Halibut.

Harold Lokken, a charter member of the Council, has served one term as Chairman of the Council and five previous terms as Vice-Chairman. Mr. Lokken serves on the Council's committees for Finance, Policy and Planning, Incidental Species, and Halibut.

### Council Accepts Draft Objectives for Halibut Management

The Council's Halibut Workgroup proposed five management objectives for Council review:

1. Distribute the hook and line halibut fishery in time and space to ensure conservation of all components of the stock.
2. Preserve halibut as a hook and line fishery.
3. Retain the International Pacific Halibut Commission as the primary management authority.
4. Provide for high quality fresh and frozen fish to the consumer throughout the year.
5. Develop means of reducing the catch of incidentally-caught, non-target species by all gear types.

The Council accepted them as draft objectives and released them for comment. The Workgroup will meet before the December Council meeting to determine if the objectives are to be amended in light of comments received.

### Halibut Workgroup to Draft Moratorium

The Council directed the Halibut Workgroup to draft a moratorium on new entry into the halibut fishery and present this proposal to the Council in December. The workgroup is expected to meet in mid-November.

### Herring Plan Goes to Secretarial Review

The Council approved the Bering/Chukchi Sea Herring Fishery Management Plan for Secretary of Commerce review. The plan provides for a limited offshore domestic herring fishery should the inshore fisheries fail to harvest the Acceptable Biological Catch. The plan also prohibits directed foreign fishing for herring and retention of any herring caught incidentally to groundfish trawling operations. Even though all herring must be discarded, each nation will have a limit on how much can be caught incidentally. Once a

nation reaches that limit, which is referred to as the Prohibited Species Catch or PSC, time and area closures will be imposed on the nation. Further public comment will be solicited on the plan when it is published in the Federal Register as a Notice of Proposed Rulemaking during Secretarial review.

The Council was also asked to approve a request for an experimental domestic fishery that would catch up to 10,000 mt offshore during this winter. The primary purpose of the fishery would be to gather information on the distribution and composition of herring stocks on the wintering grounds. The experimental fishery would also explore the commercial feasibility of such a domestic offshore winter harvest operation. The Council deferred action on this request, but asked a workgroup to examine the offshore herring research needs and alternative methods to gather needed data.

The workgroup will consider the utility of the experimental fishery proposal in terms of feasibility and cost, and will then make recommendations to the Council regarding how a fishery of this type could fit into a multi-year research program. The workgroup will report to the Council in December.

#### Council Reaffirms King Crab Plan

The Council again reviewed the Bering Sea/Aleutian Islands King Crab Fishery Management Plan and supporting documents and reaffirmed their adoption for Secretarial Review. The plan culminates a five-year effort by the Council to address the concerns of various user-groups in the fishery while at the same time acknowledging over twenty years of management of king crab by the State of Alaska.

The Plan provides for the State Board of Fisheries to take the lead in king crab management but reserves oversight responsibility to the Council to ensure that regulations comply with the Magnuson Fishery Conservation and Management Act.

Council readoption of the plan will result in it being reviewed by the Secretary of Commerce in accordance with new procedures which allow for a review and final implementation in 140 days. This should place the plan in effect by April 1984.

#### Council Disapproves Amendment 10 to the Tanner Crab FMP

Tanner crab was an important and at times controversial issue on the Council's September agenda. Amendment 10, which proposed establishing a 200-pot limit in Kodiak and designating the Alaska Peninsula and Southeastern areas as exclusive registration areas, was disapproved by the Council because it lacked specific objectives and did not meet the requirements of the Magnuson Act and other federal laws. The amendment was prepared to eliminate inconsistencies with state regulations. While in some cases pot limits and exclusive registration areas may be approvable under Council guidelines, the supporting information for this amendment was not strong enough to approve it. The Council is taking steps to improve coordination with the Board of Fisheries so this sort of problem will not occur in the future.

### Industry Needs for Groundfish in 1984 Examined

Based on a survey taken by NMFS the Council estimated that joint ventures may require almost 625,000 mt of groundfish off Alaska in 1984, and U.S. processors will need an additional 170,000 mt. This year's joint venture catch will probably be about 350,000 mt. The domestic industry is continuing to expand at the rapid rate experienced for the last three years. Council recommendations for 1984 domestic annual processed catch (DAP) and joint venture processed catch (JVP) will be distributed for public review by October 14. The Council will make final recommendations on these amounts at the December meeting.

The estimated harvest levels in 1984 for the Bering Sea/Aleutian Islands groundfish complex will be distributed at the same time. The Council's initial recommendation is for a total harvest of 2,000,000 mt including 1,067,710 mt pollock, 258,920 mt Pacific cod, 275,830 mt yellowfin sole, 133,460 mt flatfish and the remainder consisting of various other groundfish species. Final estimates on catch will be made in December when the Council sets the Total Allowable Catch (TAC) for both areas.

### Council Clarifies Petrel Bank Closure

The Council was requested to review and clarify foreign fishing regulations for the Petrel Bank area around Amchitka Pass in the Aleutians. They recommended retaining the foreign trawl closure dates from January 1 through June 30 to protect molting crab and reaffirmed their action of February 1981 closing the entire area, not just the area between 3 and 12 nautical miles offshore. Their recommendations have been forwarded to the Regional Director of NMFS as part of the Bering Sea/Aleutian Islands Groundfish Fishery Management Plan Amendment 1 which is scheduled to be implemented in January 1984.

### Prohibited Species in the Gulf

The Council is continuing work on ways to reduce the incidental catch of prohibited species in the Gulf of Alaska. A Council workgroup met in late August to examine the scope of the problem and to determine the biological and economic impacts of incidental catches on halibut, crab, and salmon fisheries. The working group report is available to the public on request. The Council has started the second phase of the study which will be devoted to the development of methods to control the prohibited species bycatch and an analysis of the benefits and costs of such controls on the fishing industry. There will be a report at the December Council meeting.

### Groundfish Joint Ventures Approved

The Council recommended approval of a joint venture permit application for 1983 from the Spanish ship BAHIA DE LOS BASCOS to receive 8,000 mt cod and 4,000 mt pollock from American draggers. The operation is expected to begin in November and may operate in both the Bering Sea/Aleutian Islands and the Gulf of Alaska. The American firm participating in this venture is the Alaska Salt Fish Corporation.

The Council also recommended approval of an application for the Pribilof/Highly Seaproducts joint venture to be conducted in the Bering Sea in 1983. The original application, considered and deferred at the Council's July meeting, was amended to substitute the CHIEF DRAGON 737 for the HIGHLY 301, both Taiwanese ships. The application proposes that one or two catchers will deliver 6,000 mt each annually for the next eight years. The Council recommended approval for 1983 only but will reconsider it on an annual basis. The catch will be 40% Pacific cod and 30% flounders.

A proposal from the Portugese to fish and buy cod off Alaska was approved in concept by the Council. Though no actual vessel permit applications are in hand, negotiations are underway with the Portugese who have tentatively agreed to purchase 10,000 mt of wet salted Pacific cod and 12,000 mt of cod in the round from Alaska processors and fishermen in 1984 in exchange for a direct fishing allocation of 8,000 mt Pacific cod and 20,000 mt pollock. Vessel permits will probably be before the Council at its December meeting.

#### Crab Outlook Not Good

Bob Otto, NMFS, reviewed the results of the NOAA 1983 crab survey in the eastern Bering Sea, conducted between June 7 and August 6. The survey covered the habitats of all commercial crab stocks in the Bering Sea except for Norton Sound red king crab.

The survey showed the abundance of legal red king crab to be the lowest on record. The 1983 size-frequency data show that there has been a tremendous loss of small crab and that the estimated number of sub-legal males was only 43 million. Following a record catch of 130 million pounds in 1980, catches fell to 33 million in 1981 and to 3 million pounds in 1982. There will be no fishery in 1983.

Legal blue king crab in the Pribilof Island area are estimated at 1.3 million individuals. Trends in the number of pre-recruits and size-frequency data indicate continued declines in abundance. Catches declined from 11 million pounds in 1980 to about 5 million pounds in 1982. The fishery will open on October 1, and landings will probably be in the 2 to 4 million pound range.

The abundance of legal St. Matthew Island blue king crab declined from 6.8 million in 1982 to 3.4 million individuals in 1983 but was still the second highest on record. This, coupled with a 40% decline in pre-recruit crab, indicates that abundance of legal crab will continue to decline in 1984. Catches have increased from 5 million pounds in 1981 to almost 10 million in 1983. Increasing catches have been accompanied by record levels of effort. As a result, the 1983 catch will probably be one of the top two king crab fisheries in the state.

The abundance of legal Tanner crab (C. bairdi) declined from 10.1 million in 1982 to 6.7 million individuals in 1983. The distribution of legal crab showed areas of relatively high abundance in Bristol Bay east of Amak Island and near the Pribilof Islands. Anticipated recruitment for 1983 did not materialize and low numbers of crab in the 60-80 mm size group indicate a near failure of at least one year class. Catches have declined from 30 million pounds in 1981 to 5 million pounds in 1983. Even lower catches can be anticipated in 1984.

In the Bering Sea, the abundance of Tanner crab (C. opilio) was stable from 1981 to 1982. The abundance of pre-recruit crab increased by about 44% in the Pribilof and Southeastern Sub-districts and declined by 40% in the Northern Sub-district. Catches declined from 53 million pounds in 1981 to 23 million pounds by June 1983. Abundance and size-frequency data indicate stable abundance but landings may fluctuate with effort and market conditions.

The abundance of Korean hair crab declined by more than 50% from 1982 to 1983. The vast majority of the stock is located near the Pribilof Islands. The 1982 catch in this developing fishery was 1.2 million pounds and the 1983 catch is currently 0.7 million pounds. The fishery is still in progress, but landings are sporadic. Catches have probably reflected market conditions rather than abundance.

#### ADF&G Reports on Domestic Commercial Fisheries

Alaska Department of Fish and Game estimates that 290,000 chinooks were harvested in Southeastern Alaska in 1983. That estimate includes 30,000 in the winter troll fishery, 240,000 in the summer troll fishery, and 20,000 in the seine and gillnet fisheries. About 1,930,000 coho were caught in 1983, including 1,280,000 in the summer troll fishery and 650,000 in the net fisheries.

The statewide domestic catch of sablefish was approximately 2,353 mt. By area, 1,805 mt came from the Eastern Gulf; 276 mt from the Central Gulf; 70 mt from the Western Gulf; and 202 mt from the Bering Sea.

44,705 mt of Pacific cod have been caught by U.S. fishermen off Alaska, 41,383 mt from the Bering Sea, 3268 mt from the Central Gulf, and 54 mt from other areas.

The statewide domestic catch of pollock totaled 207,765 metric tons, including 76,588 mt from the Bering Sea, 189 mt from the Western Gulf, and 130,988 mt from the Central Gulf.

#### Joint Venture Update

The total joint venture catch off Alaska through September 3, 1983 was 334,267 mt. In the Gulf of Alaska, 136,086 mt of pollock and other species were harvested, using 21 foreign and 38 U.S. vessels, while in the Bering Sea/Aleutians, 18 foreign vessels and 45 U.S. vessels harvested 198,181 mt, including 138,611 mt pollock, 33,819 mt flatfish, 13,567 mt Pacific cod, and 10,419 mt Atka mackerel. Three foreign and nine U.S. vessels are currently operating in the Gulf of Alaska.

#### Foreign Fisheries Update

By September 10 foreign fleets in the Gulf of Alaska had caught 65,074 mt of groundfish or about 41% of the current foreign allocation for that area. The catch included 25,544 mt pollock, 17,786 mt Pacific cod, 9,235 mt Atka mackerel, 3,332 mt Pacific Ocean perch, 4,581 mt flounders, 1,872 mt sablefish, and 2,724 mt other species.

In the Bering Sea and Aleutians they had caught 774,340 mt, about 68% of the current foreign allocation. The catch included 638,739 mt pollock, 24,667 mt Pacific cod, 1,563 mt sablefish, 645 mt Pacific Ocean perch, 95,304 mt flatfish, and 13,222 mt other species. There were 239 foreign vessels off Alaska on September 21, 221 from Japan, 15 from South Korea, two from Taiwan and one from West Germany. U.S. observer coverage on foreign fishing vessels has averaged around 41% in the Gulf of Alaska and 38% in the Bering Sea/Aleutian Islands area. In the joint venture fisheries the coverage has been 77% and 56% for the Gulf and Bering Sea/Aleutians, respectively.

#### U.S. Coast Guard Enforcement Report

The Coast Guard reported five infractions by foreign vessels since July 21. A South Korean trawler failed to quickly return halibut to the sea, a Japanese trawler failed to quickly return Tanner crab to the sea, a Soviet trawler fished in U.S. waters despite a ban on Soviet fishing since Afghanistan was invaded, and a South Korean longliner and a Japanese trawler failed to maintain accurate catch logs.

In addition, the Coast Guard seized a Canadian fishing vessel, HAPPY QUEEN, near Dixon Entrance on July 21 for fishing without a valid permit. The boarding team found 2,300 pounds of salmon.

Efforts to enforce the International Pacific Halibut Commission's (IPHC) regulations totaled 24 cutter days and 359 aircraft hours in the IPHC regulatory areas. This effort resulted in 921 sightings of U.S. halibut fleet vessels and 43 vessel boardings. Twenty violations were detected. The catch of the F/V REGINA was seized because the vessel was fishing without a valid IPHC license.