MEMORANDUM

TO: Council, SSC and AP Members

FROM: Clarence G. Pautzke
Executive Director

DATE: September 20, 1994

ESTIMATED TIME
8 HOURS
(all D-3 items)

SUBJECT: Initial GOA Groundfish Specifications for 1995

ACTION REQUIRED

(c) Review 1995 GOA Preliminary Stock Assessment and Fishery Evaluation (SAFE) document.

(d) Set initial 1995 Acceptable Biological Catch (ABC) limits and Total Allowable Catch (TAC) limits for GOA groundfish, and set PSC specifications and apportionments for halibut.

(f) Recommend discard mortality rates for halibut in the groundfish fisheries.

(g) Approve Plan Team Terms of Reference.

BACKGROUND

At this meeting, the Council begins the annual groundfish cycle in which it adopts proposed specifications of groundfish amounts and bycatch allowances. The preliminary SAFE Report, groundfish specifications, and bycatch allowances need to be adopted and made available for public review and comment. Twenty-five percent of the initial specifications will go forward as interim specifications for management of the 1995 groundfish fisheries until superseded by publication of the Council's final specifications. On the basis of comments and new information, the Council will adopt final recommendations for the 1995 fishing year at its December 1994 meeting.

(c) GOA SAFE Document

The groundfish Plan Teams met in Seattle from August 29 through September 2, 1994 to prepare the preliminary SAFE documents provided at this meeting for Council review. This SAFE forms the basis for preliminary groundfish specifications for the 1995 fishing year.

The preliminary Gulf of Alaska (GOA) SAFE contains the Plan Team's estimates of biomass and ABCs for all groundfish species covered under the FMP and information concerning halibut bycatch to provide guidance to the Council in establishing PSC apportionments. Most of the stock assessments contained in the GOA SAFE have been updated to incorporate data from the 1993 bottom trawl survey. Tables 1 - 3 from the SAFE summary chapter (Item D-3(c) (1); Item D-3(c) (2); Item D-3(c) (3)) list the 1994 ABCs, TACs, and catches through August 1994, and the Plan Team's recommended 1995 ABCs and corresponding overfishing levels for each of the species or species complexes. None of the Plan Team's recommended ABCs exceeds its corresponding overfishing level.

(d) **Initial ABCs, TACs, and Apportionments for the 1995 GOA Fisheries**

The SSC and AP recommendations will be provided to the Council during the week of the Council meeting. Under Amendment 21, twenty-five percent of the initial specifications for groundfish (from September) will go forward as interim specifications for the 1995 fisheries until superseded by publication of the Council's recommended final specifications in the *Federal Register*, sometime in early 1995.

Tables 1 - 3 (Item D-3(c) (1); Item D-3(c) (2); Item D-3(c) (3)) from the SAFE summary chapter provides the biomass, ABC, overfishing level and stock status of seventeen GOA groundfish management groups compared to 1994. The Plan Team's sum of recommended ABCs for 1995 is 535,100 mt (almost identical to the 1994 combined ABC of 535,050 mt approved by the Council last year).

Set Initial PSC Limits for Halibut

The PSC limits for halibut in the Gulf of Alaska are set by gear type and may be apportioned seasonally over the fishing year (Amendment 21). In recommending any seasonal allocations, the Council will consider its objective to promote harvest of as much of the groundfish optimum yield as possible with a given amount of halibut PSC.

During 1994, halibut PSC mortality applied only to the bottom trawl fisheries and to the hook-and-line fisheries. The midwater trawl fishery (targeting on pollock) has been exempt from bycatch related closures. The pot fishery (primarily for Pacific cod), was again exempted from the 1994 fixed gear PSC limit due to minimal bycatch mortality in that fishery.

For 1994 PSC limits, the Council recommended the following halibut PSC apportionments for the Gulf of Alaska groundfish fisheries:

Trawl gear		**Hook and Line gear**	
1st quarter	600 mt (30%)	1st trimester	200 mt (26.7%)
2nd quarter	400 mt (20%)	2nd trimester	500 mt (66.7%)
3rd quarter	600 mt (30%)	3rd trimester	50 mt (6.7%)
4th quarter	400 mt (20%)		
TOTAL	2,000 mt		750 mt

Beginning last year, PSC limits for trawl gear were further apportioned by specific fishery. The Council may apportion PSC limits by fishery during the annual specification process. Apportionments of the overall cap may be made to a 'Shallow water complex' and a 'Deep water complex.' Species in the shallow water complex are: pollock, Pacific cod, shallow water flatfish, Atka mackerel, and other species. Deep water complex species include: deep water flatfish, rockfish, flathead sole, sablefish, and arrowtooth flounder. The following apportionments were made for 1994:

Quarter	Shallow water Complex	Deep water Complex	Total
1	500 mt	100 mt	600 mt
2	100 mt	300 mt	400 mt
3	200 mt	400 mt	600 mt
4	No apportionment between shallow and deep for the 4th quarter.		

(f) Discard Mortality Rates

In March 1994, the International Pacific Halibut Commission requested that the Council discuss discard mortality rates of halibut bycatch from the groundfish fisheries in September of each year. Accordingly, the IPHC provided the results of recent analysis of 1993 observer data examining halibut discard mortality rates (Appendix C to the GOA SAFE and Appendix B to the BSAI SAFE) for the Council to review. Discard mortality rates are determined from the distribution of the release condition of halibut caught as bycatch. The criteria are different for trawls, pots, and hook & line bycatch. The IPHC analysis continued the same procedures used in previous analyses. Discard mortality rates were calculated for each target fishery and gear in the BSAI and GOA. For most fisheries, the 1993 rates were quite similar to 1992 values, the exceptions being BSAI and GOA trawl rockfish, GOA hook & line cod, and BSAI pot cod. Halibut discard mortality rates observed in the 1993 fisheries along with the IPHC recommendations for 1995 are listed in Table 4 of Appendix B in the GOA SAFE (Item D-3(f)(1)). The IPHC recommendations are traditionally forwarded to NMFS in Juneau for use in monitoring halibut bycatch mortality against the PSC limits.

At the December 1993 Council meeting, discussions with the AP, SSC, and IPHC staff concluded that an average of the rates for the two most recent years would serve as an appropriate preseason adjustment rate. The GOA and BSAI Plan Teams concurred that the IPHC recommendations for 1995 are the most appropriate rates to use.

The IPHC is seeking guidance from the Council and industry on two issues in recommending preseason assumed rates for 1995: (1) whether to set unique rates for at-sea and shoreside components in the GOA trawl fishery for shallow water flatfish and the bottom trawl fishery for pollock; and (2) whether to assign unique rates to observed and unobserved hook-and-line vessels.

(1) The Teams noted that only GOA bottom trawl pollock and shallow water flatfish fisheries had significantly different discard rates from last year. Since the Council recently prohibited the circumvention of directed fishing standards by ballasting with arrowtooth flounder, there should be minimal bottom trawl pollock fishing by at-sea processing vessels in the future. However, because of the significant difference in rates between the two fishery components, the GOA Team recommends that at-sea and shore-based delivery vessels in the BT pollock fishery be assigned unique discard mortality rates. IPHC staff will provide a similar breakdown of mortality rate data for the 1992 fishery to calculate the two-year average for the November 1994 Plan Team meeting.

(2) The GOA Team concurred with the IPHC single rate of 64% for theGOA shallow water flatfish trawl fishery, since there is no effort by at-sea processors for this target.

(3) The IPHC data for 1993 represent fisheries that occurred before and after the Careful Release requirement became effective in mid-May. The major fisheries which occurred following implementation both showed increases in discard mortality rates from 1992. The rates were also much higher than expected. Careful Release compliance by unobserved vessels is unknown. Without an observer, a vessel may have little incentive to carefully release the halibut bycatch, but applying a higher discard mortality rate offers little, if any, disincentive to carefully release halibut. Applying the same mortality rate to the unobserved vessel as is applied to the observed vessel means that the unobserved fisherman gets credit for the actions taken by the observed fisherman. While noting that unobserved fishermen may be getting undue credit, the Plan Team did not believe that sufficient information exists to assign a different rate for unobserved vessels. Since the recommendations for hook & line fisheries were derived in the same manner as for pots and trawls, the Team concurred with the IPHC recommendation of a single discard mortality rate for all hook & line fisheries.

(g) Terms of Reference

At the joint GOA and BSAI Plan Team meeting, members discussed the need to formalize the procedures under which they review Council documents and provide comments and recommendations to the Council. The "Terms of Reference" defines the role of the teams' establishment, membership, organization, andfunction. The Council is requested to review and approve the Plan Team Terms of Reference (Item D-3 (g)(1)).

Table 1. Gulf of Alaska groundfish 1994 and 1995 ABCs, 1994 TACs, and 1994 catches reported through August 6, 1994. MSY is unknown for all species.

Species 1994	1994	ABC (mt) 1994	ABC (mt) 1995	1994 TAC	1994 Catch
Pollock	W(61)	22,130	30,380	22,130	16,709
	C(62)	23,870	15,310	23,870	18,475
	C(63)	56,000	16,310	56,000	44,618
	E	7,300	3,360	7,300	6,848
	Total	109,300	65,360	109,300	86,650
Pacific cod	W	16,630	29,900	16,630	14,679
	C	31,250	68,000	31,250	30,066
	E	2,520	5,100	2,520	1,646
	Total	50,400	103,000	50,400	46,391
Flatfish[1] (deep water)	W	460	670	460	53
	C	12,930	8,150	7,500	2,344
	E	3,120	5,770	3,120	697
	Total	16,510	14,590	11,080	3,094
Rex sole[2]	W	800	1,350	800	50
	C	9,310	7,050	50500	2,819
	E	1,840	2,810	1,840	5
	Total	11,950	11,210	10,140	2,874
Flatfish[3] (shallow water)	W	20,290	26,280	4,500	184
	C	12,950	23,140	12,950	2,549
	E	1,180	2,850	1,180	10
	Total	34,420	52,270	18,630	2,743
Flathead sole	W	9,120	8,880	2,000	495
	C	23,080	17,170	5,000	1,362
	E	3,650	2,740	3,000	2
	Total	35,850	28,790	10,000	1,859
Arrowtooth flounder	W	28,590	28,400	5,000	1,165
	C	186,270	141,290	20,000	14,141
	E	21,380	28,440	5,000	422
	Total	236,240	198,130	30,000	15,728
Sablefish	W	2,290	2,290	2,290	566
	C	11,220	11,220	11,220	8,112
	WY	4,850	4,850	4,850	2,836
	SEO	7,140	7,140	7,140	6,292
	Total	25,500	25,500	25,500	17,806
Slope rockfish (other)	W	330	170	199	74
	C	1,640	1,150	988	590
	E	6,330	5,610	1,048	726
	Total	8,300	6,930	2,235	1,390
Northern Rockfish	W	1,000	640	1,000	1,610
	C	4,720	4,610	4,720	4,384
	E	40	20	40	49
	Total	5,760	5,270	5,760	6,043
Pacific Ocean Perch	W	680	1,370	571	170
	C	850	2,460	714	626
	E	1,500	2,970	1,265	121
	Total	3,030	6,800	2,550	917

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Table 1. (continued)

Species 1994		ABC (mt) 1994	1995	1994 TAC	Catch
Shortraker/Rougheye	W	100	170	100	77
	C	1,290	1,210	1,290	837
	E	570	530	570	554
	Total	1,960	1,910	1,960	1,468
Pelagic shelf rockfish	W	1,030	910	1,030	253
	C	4,550	3,200	4,550	1,226
	E	1,310	1,080	1,310	888
	Total	6,890	5,190	6,890	2,367
Black Rockfish	GW		400		295
Demersal shelf rockfish	SEO	960	960	960	406
Atka mackerel	GW	4,800	6,480		2,769
	W			2,500	
	C			1,000	
	E			5	
	TOTAL			3,505	
Thornyhead rockfish	GW	1,180	2,320	1,180	1,068
Other species	GW	NA		14,405	2,913
Totals		553,050	535,110	304,589	196,486

1/ Shelikof Strait pollock is included within the W/C ABC range.
2/ "Deep water flatfish" means rex sole, Dover sole, and Greenland turbot in 1993. In 1994 rex sole is a separate target category.
3/ "Shallow water flatfish" means rock sole, yellowfin sole, butter sole, starry flounder, and other flatfish not specifically defined.
4/ Demersal shelf rockfish catch incudes 97 mt of unreported mortality from halibut fisheries.

NOTE: ABCs are rounded to nearest 10.
GW means Gulfwide.
Catch data source: NMFS Blend Reports.
Northern Rockfish were separated from Slope Rockfish in 1993.
Atka mackerel was separated from "other species" in 1994.
Black rockfish was recommended for separation from the pelagic shelf rockfish in 1995.

Table 2. Gulf of Alaska exploitable biomasses, 1995 ABCs, and estimated trends and abundances for Western, Central, Eastern, Gulfwide, West Yakutat, and Southeast Outside regulatory areas.

Species	Exploitable Biomass (mt)		1995 ABC	1995 Overfishing Level	Abundance,[3] Trend
Pollock	546,000[1]	{ W(61)	30,380 }		Below, declining
		{ C(62)	15,310 }	266,000	
		{ C(63)	16,310 }		
		E	3,360	14,400	
		Total	65,360	280,000	
Pacific cod	542,000	W	29,900		Above, declining
		C	68,000		
		E	5,100		
		Total	103,000	120,000	
Flatfish (deep water)	116,710	W	670		Unknown, Unknown
		C	8,150		
		E	5,770		
		Total	14,590	17,040	
Rex sole	89,660	W	1,350		Unknown,[4] Stable
		C	7,050		
		E	2,810		
		Total	11,210	13,091	
Flatfish (shallow water)	355,590	W	26,280		Unknown,[4] increasing
		C	23,140		
		E	2,850		
		Total	52,270	60,262	
Flathead sole	198,470	W	8,880		Unknown,[4] stable
		C	17,170		
		E	2,740		
		Total	28,790	31,557	
Arrowtooth flounder	1,585,040	W	28,400		Above, stable
		C	141,290		
		E	28,440		
		Total	198,130	231,416	
Sablefish	218,000	W	2,290		Near, stable
		C	11,220		
		WYK	4,850		
		SEO	7,140		
		Total	25,500	31,700	
Slope rockfish (Other)	110,054	W	170		Unknown, Unknown
		C	1,150		
		E	5,610		
		Total	6,930	8,229	
Northern Rockfish	87,845	W	640		Unknown, Unknown
		C	4,610		
		E	20		
		Total	5,270	9,926	
Pacific ocean Perch	135,840	W	1,370		Below, increasing
		C	2,460		
		E	2,970		
		Total	6,800	8,830	

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Table 2. (continued)

Species	Exploitable Biomass (mt)		1995 ABC	1995 Overfishing Level	Abundance,[3] Trend
Shortraker/ Rougheye	71,811	W	170		Unknown,
		C	1,210		Unknown
		E	530		
		Total	1,910	2,925	
Pelagic shelf rockfish[2]	57,644	W	910		Unknown,
		C	3,200		Unknown
		E	1,080		
		Total	5,190	8,704	
Black rockfish		GW	400	400	Unknown,[4] Unknown
Demersal shelf rockfish	49,280	SEO	960	1,680	Unknown, Unknown
Atka mackerel		GW	6,480	11,700	Unknown, Unknown
Thornyhead rockfish	64,770	GW	2,320	2,740	Unknown, Stable
Other species	NA	W	NA		TAC = 5%
		C	NA		of the sum
		E	NA		of TACs

1/ Biomass estimates includes only Western and Central Gulf areas.
2/ Pelagic shelf rockfish for 1994 includes black rockfish
3/ Abundance relative to target stock size as specified in SAFE documents.
4/ Historically lightly exploited therefore expected to be above the specified reference point.

Note: ABCs are rounded to nearest 10.
Overfishing is defined Gulf-wide.
Northern Rockfish were separated from Slope Rockfish in 1993.
Atka mackerel will be separate from "other species" in 1994.
Rex sole was part of deepwater flatfish until 1994.
Black rockfish was separated from the pelagic rockfish in 1995.

Table 3. Summary of fishing mortality rates for the Gulf of Alaska, 1995.

Species	ABC Rate[1]	FABC[2]	OFL Rate[3]	F_{OFL}
Pollock	0.200	F_{ABC}	0.510	$F_{30\%}$
Pacific cod	0.40	$F_{35\%}$	0.48	$F_{30\%}$
Deepwater flatfish	0.125	$F_{35\%}$	0.146	$F_{30\%}$
Rex sole	0.125	$F_{35\%}$	0.146	$F_{30\%}$
Flathead sole	0.145	$F_{35\%}$	0.159	$F_{30\%}$
Shallow water flatfish	0.145-0.149[5]	$F_{35\%}$	0.159-0.175[6]	$F_{30\%}$
Arrowtooth	0.125	$F_{35\%}$	0.146	$F_{30\%}$
Sablefish	0.131	$F_{35\%}$[4]	0.166	$F_{30\%}$
Pacific Ocean Perch	0.05	$F_{44\%}$	0.065	F_{msy}
Shortraker/rougheye	0.03/0.025	F=M	0.03/0.046	F_{mix}[7]
Rockfish (other slope)	0.04-0.10	F=M	0.04-0.10	F_{mix}[8]
Northern Rockfish	0.060	F=M	0.113	$F_{30\%}$
Rockfish (Pelagic Shelf)	0.090	F=M	0.151	$F_{30\%}$
Black rockfish				
Demersal Shelf Rockfish	0.020	F=M	0.040	$F_{30\%}$
Thornyhead	0.0359	$F_{35\%}$	0.0425	$F_{30\%}$
Atka Mackerel	0.30	F=M	0.54	$F_{30\%}$

1/ Maximum 1993 catch level allowable under overfishing definition.
2/ Fishing mortality rate corresponding to acceptable biological catch.
3/ Maximum fishing mortality rate allowable under overfishing definition.
4/ Adjusted by current biomass.
5/ Shallow water flatfish; yellowfin sole 0.149, rocksole 0.147, others 0.145.
6/ Shallow water flatfish; yellowfin sole 0.175, rocksole 0.172, others 0.159.
7/ $F_{30\%}$ for rougheye, F=M for shortraker.
8/ $F_{30\%}$ for sharpchin, F=M for other species.

Table 4. **Trend in halibut discard mortality rates during 1990 through 1993, and recommendations for discard mortality rates to use in monitoring halibut bycatch mortality in 1995. Rates shown under "Used in 1994" for hook & line fisheries represent rates applied to observed/unobserved vessels.**

Region/Target	1990	1991	1992	1993	1992-93 Average	Used in 1994	Recommendation for 1995
BSAI TRAWL							
MWT Pollock	81	81	87	90	89	80	89
Atka mackerel	69	73	62	56	59	70	59
Rock sole/Oflats[1]	58	68	78	72	75	70	75
Pacific cod	68	60	67	62	65	60	65
BT Pollock	65	59	76	78	77	60	77
Rockfish	62	54	59	78	69	60	69
Yellowfin sole[1]	73	74	77	75	76	70	76
Arrowtooth	57	41	-	-	-	40	49[2]
Grnld. turbot	58	38	-	-	-	40	48[2]
GOA TRAWL							
MWT Pollock	63	74	69	63	66	75	66
Rockfish	61	65	69	62	66	60	66
BT Pollock	65	56	70	70	70	55	70
Shallwtr. flatfish	62	61	62	66	64	60	64
Pacific cod	61	55	59	56	58	55	58
Deepwtr. flatfish	57	52	59	59	59	55	59
BSAI H&L							
Pacific cod	17	21	18	18	18	18/18	12 - 18
Sablefish	13	18	19	14	17	12.5/15	17
Rockfish	18	29	-	-	-	12.5/15	24[2]
Grnld. turbot	-	-	17	21	19	12.5/15	19
GOA H&L							
Pacific cod	13	17	30	9	20	16/16	20
Sablefish	11	28	23	26	25	14/17	25
Rockfish	15	20	-	-	-	11.5/14	18[2]
BSAI POT							
Pacific cod	7	3	12	4	8	5	8
GOA POT							
Pacific cod	10	5	16	20	18	5	18

54 mts 8 10 88

[1]During 1990 and 1991, "Other flatfish" was grouped with yellowfin sole. Since 1992, the target has been grouped with rock sole.
[2]Average of 1990 and 1991, the two most recent years.

PLAN TEAMS FOR THE GROUNDFISH FISHERIES OF THE BERING SEA/ALEUTIAN ISLANDS AND GULF OF ALASKA

TERMS OF REFERENCE

As approved by the Plan Teams on August 29, 1994

1. **Establishment.** The North Pacific Fishery Management Council (Council) shall establish Plan Teams for the groundfish fisheries of the Bering Sea/Aleutian Islands (BS/AI) and Gulf of Alaska (GOA). The Plan Teams will provide the Council with advice in the areas of regulatory management, natural and social science, mathematics, and statistics as they relate to the groundfish fisheries of the BS/AI and GOA.

2. **Membership.** Plan Team members will be appointed from government agencies and academic institutions having expertise relating to the groundfish fisheries of the BS/AI and GOA. Normally, each Plan Team will include at least one member from the Council staff, the regional office of the National Marine Fisheries Service (NMFS), NMFS' Alaska Fishery Science Center, the Alaska Department of Fish & Game, the Washington Department of Fisheries, the International Pacific Halibut Commission, the University of Alaska, and the University of Washington. With the consent of the sponsoring agency or institution, nominations may be made by the Council, the Scientific and Statistical Committee (SSC), the Advisory Panel (AP), or the Plan Teams themselves. All nominations will be subject to approval by the SSC, with the Council retaining final appointment authority. Appointments should reflect the Plan Teams' responsibility to provide advice in the areas of regulatory management, natural and social science, mathematics, and statistics.

3. **Organization.** Each Plan Team will be directed by a chairperson, and may divide some of its responsibilities among work groups organized according to subject matter. A work group may include members from more than one Plan Team. Each work group will be directed by a work group leader.

   (a) **Rules of order.** In general, rules of order will be informal. Plan Team decisions will be reached by consensus, whenever possible. If a decision is required and consensus cannot be reached, the opinion of the majority will prevail. In representing either Plan Team publicly, the spokesperson will take care to relate Plan Team opinions accurately, noting points of concern where consensus cannot be reached.

   (b) **Meetings.** Plan Team meetings will be held prior to Council's September and December meetings. The Plan Team chairpersons may call other meetings as necessary. The two Plan Teams may meet either separately or jointly. A draft agenda will be prepared in advance of each meeting by the Council staff in consultation with the respective chairperson or chairpersons, and may be revised by the Plan Team(s) during the meeting. Each agenda will include an opportunity for comments from the general public. Minutes of each meeting will be prepared by the Council staff, distributed to Plan Team members, and revised as necessary at or before the subsequent Plan Team meeting.

   (c) **Selection of officers.** Officers (Plan Team chairpersons and work group leaders) will be selected at the meeting preceding the September Council meeting or as vacancies arise. The Plan

Team chairpersons will be selected for two-year terms. Work group leaders will be selected for one-year terms. There will be no limit on the number of consecutive terms that officers may serve.

4. **Functions.** The Plan Teams' primary function is to provide the Council with the best available scientific information, including scientifically based recommendations regarding appropriate measures for the conservation and management of the BS/AI and GOA groundfish fisheries.

(a) **SAFE report.** The Plan Teams compile SAFE reports for the BS/AI and GOA groundfish fisheries on an annual basis. The SAFE reports provide the Council with a summary of the most recent biological condition of the groundfish stocks and the social and economic condition of the fishing and processing industries. The SAFE reports summarize the best available scientific information concerning the past, present, and possible future condition of the groundfish stocks and fisheries, along with ecosystem concerns. This includes recommendation of acceptable biological catch and, where appropriate, total allowable catch levels. All recommendations must be designed to prevent overfishing while achieving optimum yield (National Standard 1). All recommendations must also be scientifically based (National Standard 2), drawing upon the Plan Teams' expertise in the areas of regulatory management, natural and social science, mathematics, and statistics. Finally, uncertainty must be taken into account wherever possible (National Standard 6).

(b) **Plan amendments.** The Plan Teams also play an integral role in the development and evaluation of amendments to the BS/AI and GOA groundfish fishery management plans.

(i) The Plan Teams evaluate all amendment proposals and forward their recommendations to the Plan Amendment Advisory Group, on which the Plan Team chairpersons serve.

(ii) In addition, the Plan Teams may develop their own amendment proposals.

(iii) Once an amendment proposal has been accepted for consideration by the Council, an analytical team is assembled by the responsible agencies. Every analytical team should include at least one member from one or both Plan Teams, drawn from the appropriate working group(s) whenever possible.

(iv) Once an amendment analysis has been completed, it may be reviewed by the Plan Teams. The Plan Teams' comments, if any, are then forwarded to the SSC, AP, and Council.

INTERNATIONAL PACIFIC HALIBUT COMMISSION

DIRECTOR
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ESTABLISHED BY A CONVENTION BETWEEN CANADA

AND THE UNITED STATES OF AMERICA

September 29, 1994

Mr. Steve Pennoyer
IPHC Commissioner
c/o National Marine Fisheries Service
P.O. Box 21668
Juneau, Alaska 99802-1668

Dear Steve:

The staff of the International Pacific Halibut Commission has reviewed your letter of September 23, 1994 to Rick Lauber recommending a procedure for halibut PSC limits when IFQs go into effect for halibut and sablefish. Our position is that total halibut bycatch mortality should go down. We would support removing the halibut bycatch limit from sablefish from the Bering Sea and Gulf of Alaska as long as sufficient bycatch mortality is set aside from the total mortality limit so the mortality from all fisheries stays the same or decreases.

The question is how much bycatch mortality will be needed in the sablefish fishery under IFQs. The GOA sablefish fishery used about 535 mt of halibut bycatch (750 mt minus 215 for other longline), according to the in season estimates. If the discard mortality rate for GOA sablefish is changed from the approximately 17% rate used in season to the average 25% rate experienced in 1992 and 1993, the halibut mortality increases to 790 mt. About 67% of the sablefish TAC was taken when sablefish closed, so about 1,200 mt of halibut mortality would have been required to harvest the TAC.

In a worst case, the sablefish fishery could require about 1,200 mt of halibut mortality to fully harvest its TAC in 1995. However, we expect a much smaller actual amount of bycatch mortality. Without the derby fishery, fishermen will more likely fish in prime sablefish habitat deeper that 300 fathoms where halibut, though uncommon, are all of legal size. We believe that most fisherman will have enough halibut IFQ saved for this fishery to retain all halibut encountered. If one-third to one-half of the current fishermen fishing on the edge move to deep water, the 1,200 mt halibut mortality requirement drops to 600-900 mt for fishermen who remain fishing on the edge. While all sablefish fishermen on the edge may not save halibut IFQ, It is reasonable to expect that at least one-half will. If so the halibut mortality requirement drops to 300-450 mt. A further reduction is possible if the fishermen on the edge reduce discard mortality rate to about 20% (near the 17% experienced by non-derby sablefish fishermen in the Bering Sea), or a range of about 250-350 mt.

Your suggestion to maintain a halibut bycatch mortality limit of 200-250 mt for other longline fisheries in the Gulf of Alaska leaves 500-550 mt of mortality to account for halibut mortality in the sablefish fishery. While we cannot predict that the scenarios described above will completely occur, we believe that the sablefish fishery will achieve its TAC with less than 500 mt of halibut bycatch mortality.

You identified in your letter the difficulties in making good estimates of the halibut bycatch that occurs in the sablefish fisheries. We believe that the bycatch estimates are a very serious problem. We recommend that the Alaska Region do everything possible to enhance observer coverage of the sablefish fishery in 1995. While you have the authority to place observers on more boats, we recognize that your budget may be strained by additional observer coverage.

The first year of IFQ fishing will start a series of changes that will continue for several years. Obtaining good information on the fishing practices under IFQs is an important requirement. We hope that the fishery can proceed without artificial modifications such as a race to harvest before a bycatch limit is reached. Fortunately, our assessment strongly suggests that the halibut bycatch mortality limit can be safely removed from the Gulf of Alaska sablefish fishery. However, we consider this step as a pilot to gather information. If the sablefish fishery cannot harvest its TAC without excessive halibut bycatch mortality, the Council may need to put bycatch mortality limits back in place.

Sincerely yours,

Donald A. McCaughran
Director

cc. Commissioners

RJT:ps

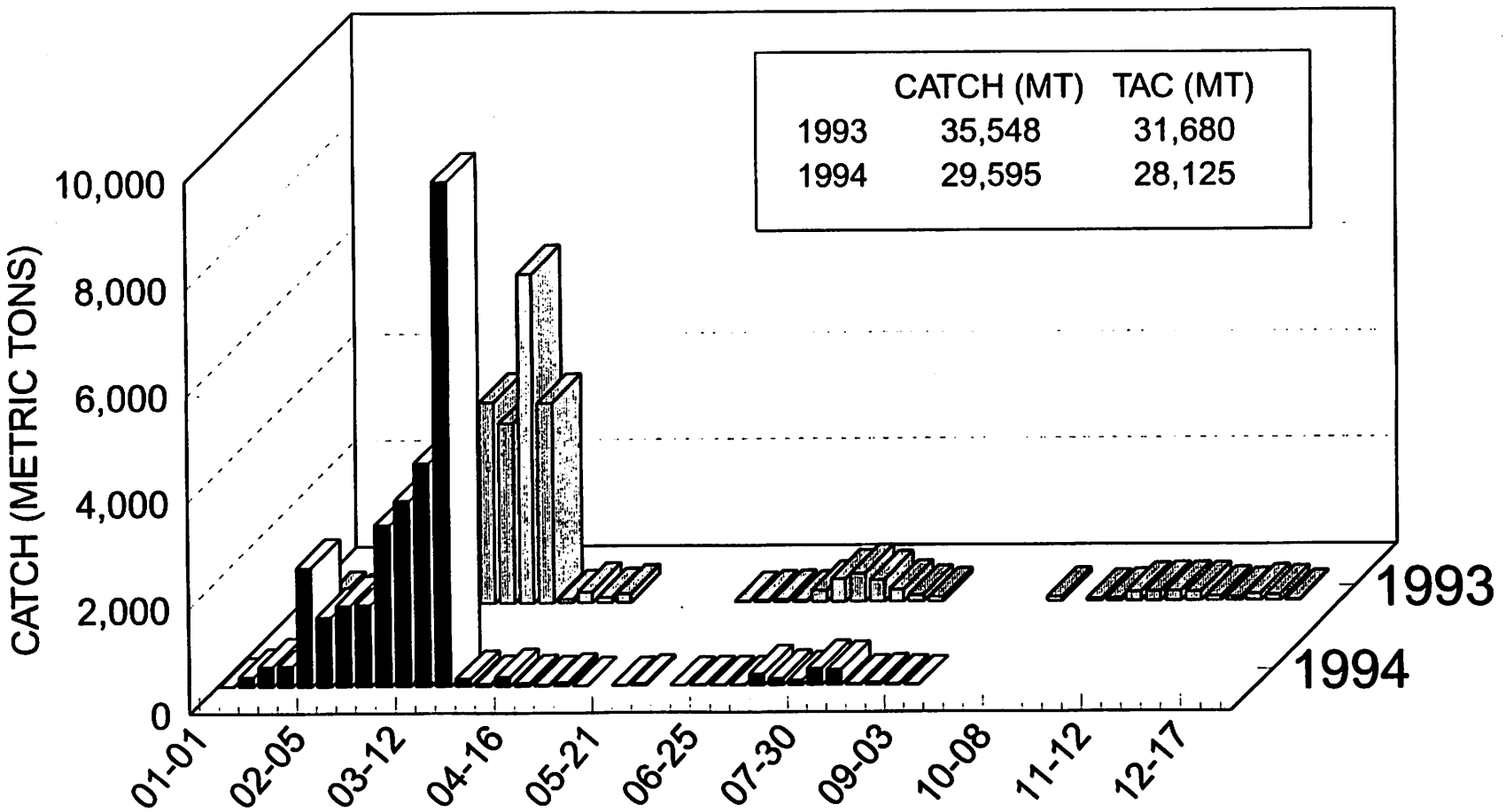
submitted by Tom CASEY

Timing the GOA Codfish Season

Ron Nanfelt, 54, founder of Kyler Seafoods in New Bedford (which purchases 13 million pounds of mixed Alaska species, mainly cod, pollock and flatfish) thinks the management of the cod fishery in Alaska is **"crazy"**. Last year, for example, longliners started fishing on January 1, capturing the entire quota by May 16. Roughly half that period (March through May) the cod were spawning and in their worst possible condition. **"It doesn't take a genius to figure out it's not right to target on spawning fish. Haven't they learned anything from us?"**

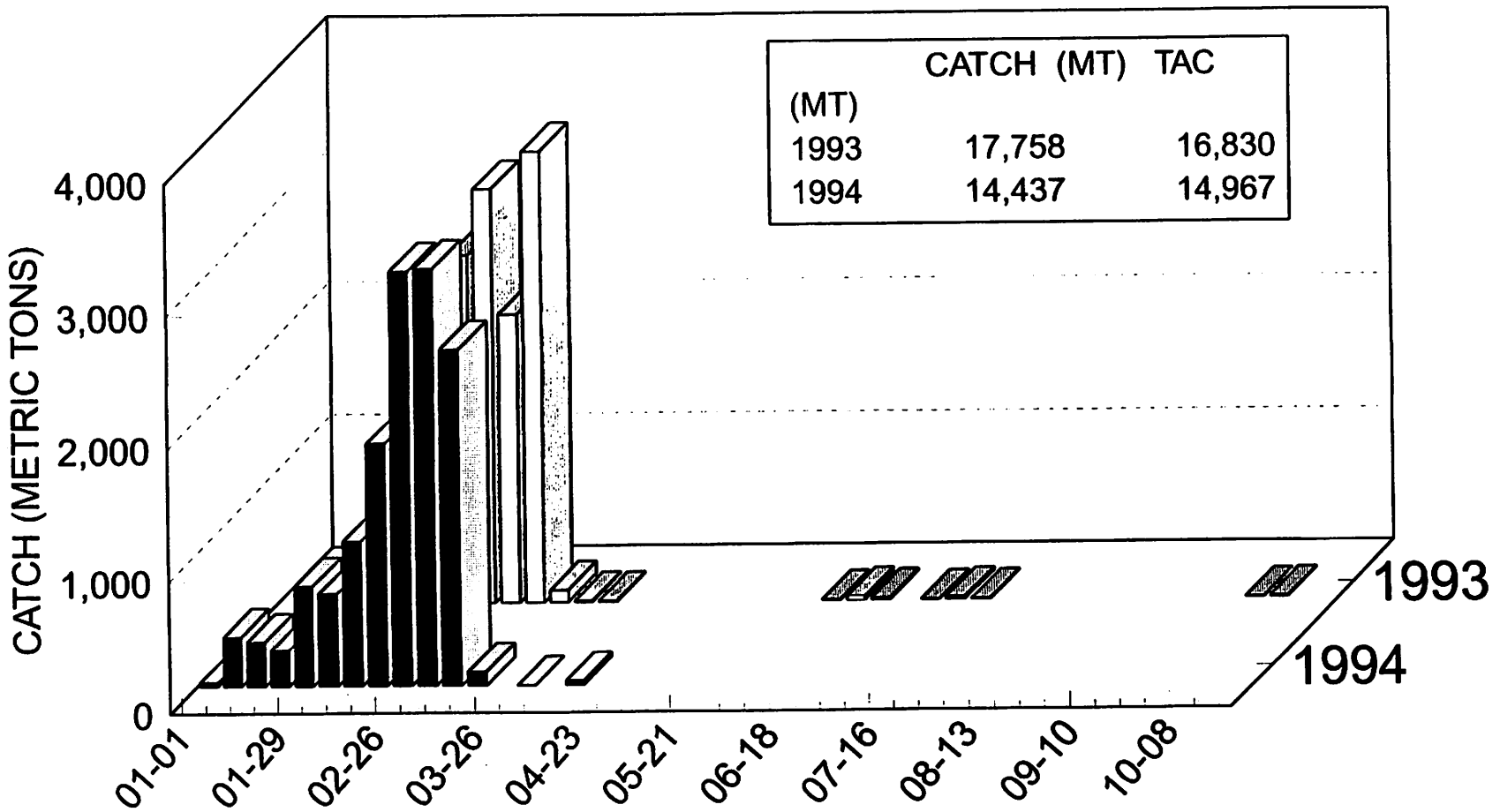
COPING WITH THE COD COLLAPSE
by Roger Fitzgerald.
Seafood LEADER May/June 1994

1993 & 1994 CENTRAL GOA INSHORE PCOD CATCH



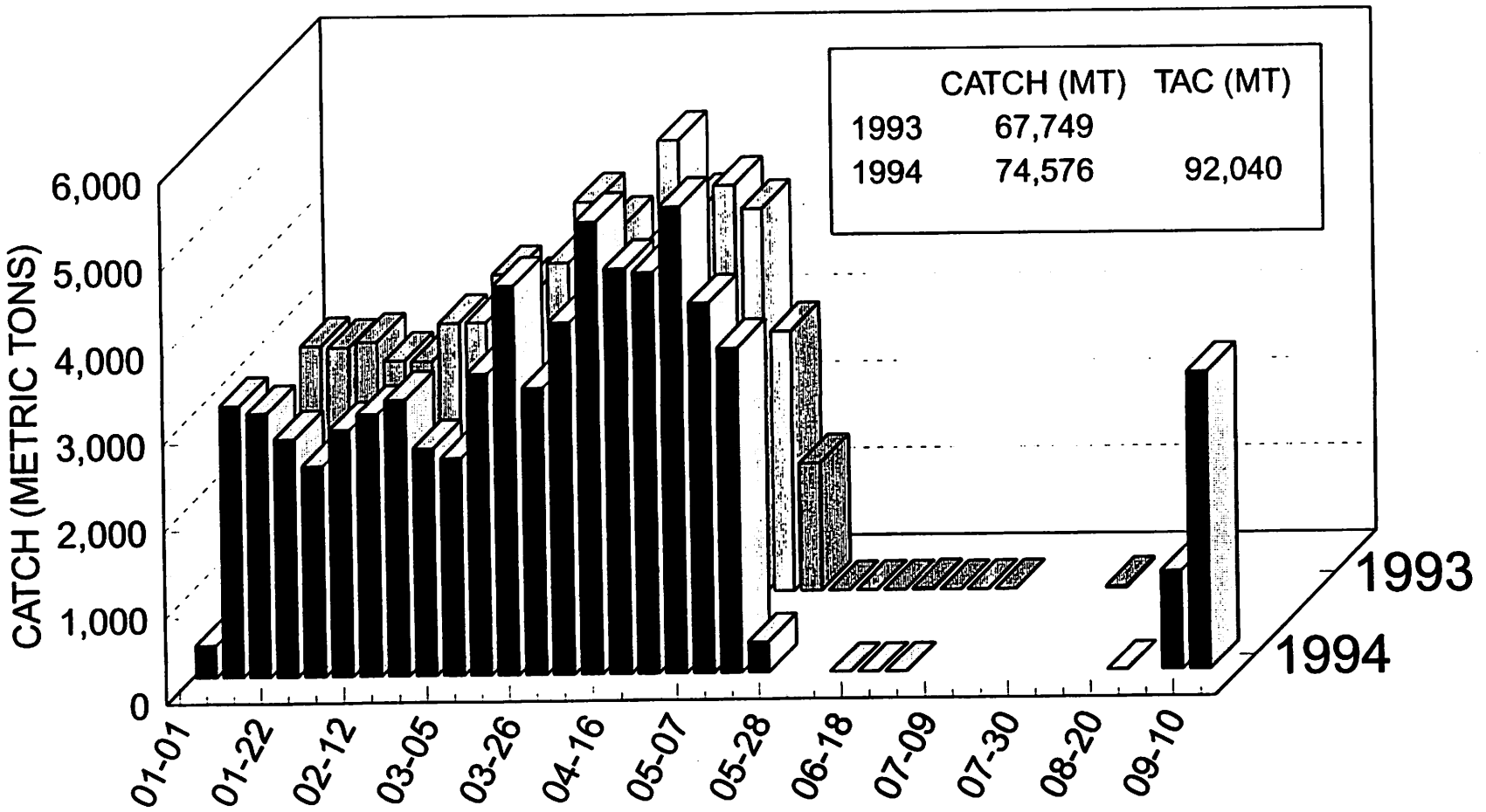
(through 9/10/94)

1993 & 1994 WESTERN GOA INSHORE PCOD CATCH



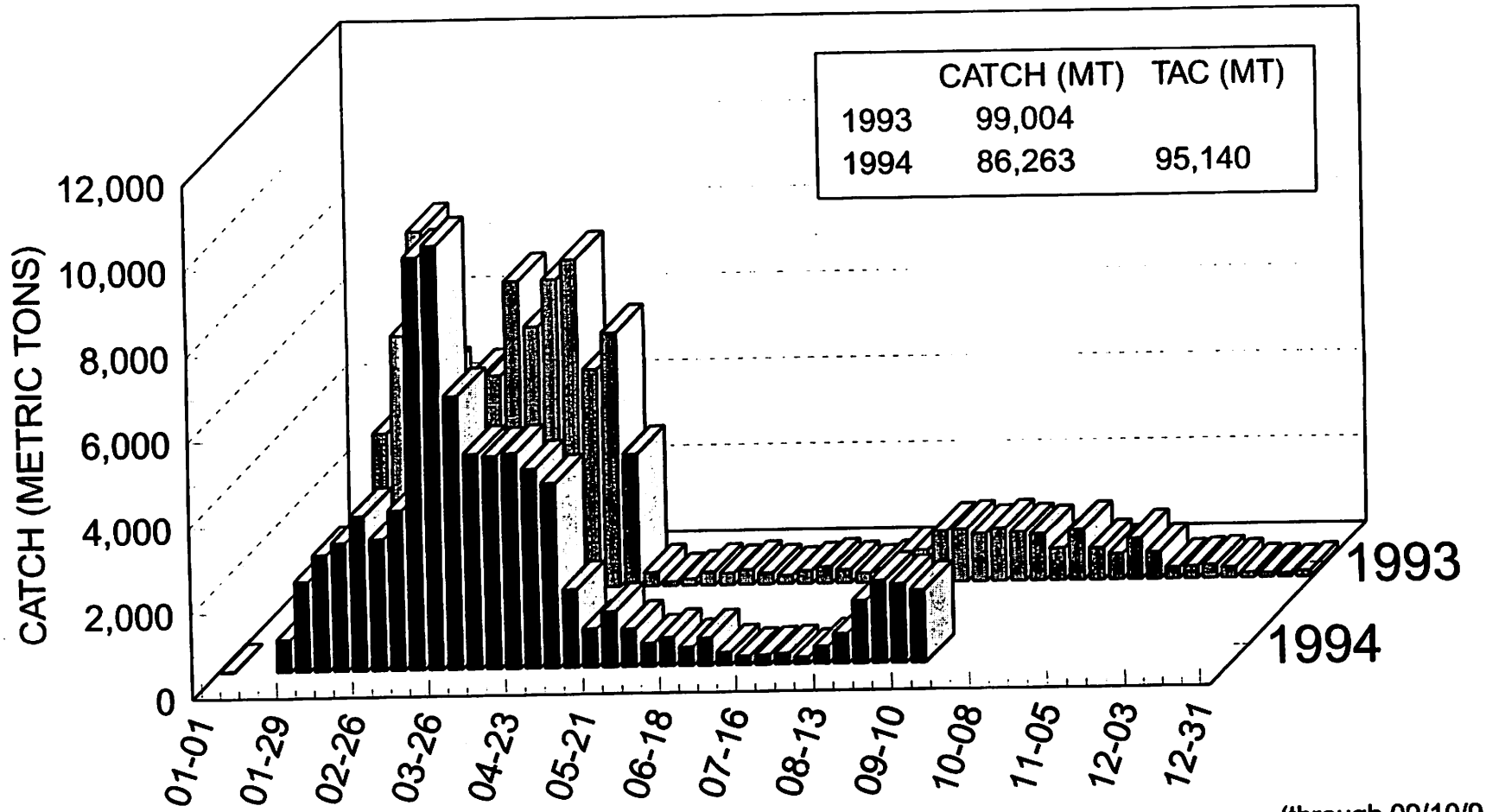
(through 9/10/94)

1993 & 1994 BSAI FIXED GEAR PCOD CATCH



(through 9/10/94)

1993 & 1994 BSAI TRAWL PCOD CATCH



(through 09/10/94)

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GULF OF ALASKA GROUNDFISH ABCs and TACs
Initial 1995 Plan Team, SSC, and AP recommendations (metric tons)

		1994			APPROVED BY COUNCIL FOR PUBLIC REVIEW		
					Plan Team	SSC	Advisory Panel
Species	Area	ABC	TAC	Catch*	1995 ABC	1995 ABC	1995 TAC
Pollock	W (61)	22,130	22,130	16,709	30,380	30,380	30,380
	C (62)	23,870	23,870	18,475	15,310	15,310	15,310
	C (63)	56,000	56,000	44,618	16,310	16,310	16,310
	E	7,300	7,300	6,848	3,360	3,360	3,360
	Total	109,300	109,300	86,650	65,360	65,360	65,360
Pacific Cod	W	16,630	16,630	14,679	29,900	16,630 - 29,900	29,900
	C	31,250	31,250	30,066	68,000	31,250 - 68,000	68,000
	E	2,520	2,520	1,646	5,100	2,520 - 5,100	5,100
	Total	50,400	50,400	46,391	103,000	50,400 -103,000	103,000
Flatfish, Deep Water	W	460	460	53	670	670	460
	C	12,930	7,500	2,344	8,150	8,150	7,500
	E	3,120	3,120	697	5,770	5,770	3,120
	Total	16,510	11,080	3,094	14,590	14,590	11,080
Rex Sole	W	800	800	50	1,350	1,350	1,350
	C	9,310	7,500	2,819	7,050	7,050	7,050
	E	1,840	1,840	5	2,810	2,810	2,810
	Total	11,950	10,140	2,874	11,210	11,210	11,210
Flathead Sole	W	9,120	2,000	495	8,880	8,880	2,000
	C	23,080	5,000	1,362	17,170	17,170	5,000
	E	3,650	3,000	2	2,740	2,740	3,000
	Total	35,850	10,000	1,859	28,790	28,790	10,000
Flatfish, Shallow Water	W	20,290	4,500	184	26,280	26,280	4,500
	C	12,950	12,950	2,549	23,140	23,140	12,950
	E	1,180	1,180	10	2,850	2,850	1,180
	Total	34,420	18,630	2,743	52,270	52,270	18,630
Arrowtooth	W	28,590	5,000	1,165	28,400	28,400	5,000
	C	186,270	20,000	14,141	141,290	141,290	25,000
	E	21,380	5,000	422	28,440	28,440	5,000
	Total	236,240	30,000	15,728	198,130	198,130	35,000
Sablefish	W	2,290	2,290	566	2,290	2,290	2,290
	C	11,220	11,220	8,112	11,220	11,220	11,220
	W. Yakutat	4,850	4,850	2,836	4,850	4,850	4,850
	E. Yak./SEO	7,140	7,140	6,292	7,140	7,140	7,140
	Total	25,500	25,500	17,806	25,500	25,500	25,500
Pacific Ocean Perch	W	680	571	170	1,370	1,780	1,195
	C	850	714	626	2,460	3,190	2,152
	E	1,500	1,265	121	2,970	3,860	2,630
	Total	3,030	2,550	917	6,800	8,830	5,977
Shortraker/Rougheye	W	100	100	77	170	170	170
	C	1,290	1,290	837	1,210	1,210	1,210
	E	570	570	554	530	530	530
	Total	1,960	1,960	1,468	1,910	1,910	1,910
Rockfish, Other Slope	W	330	199	74	170	170	170
	C	1,640	988	590	1,150	1,150	1,150
	E	6,330	1,048	726	5,610	5,610	5,610
	Total	8,300	2,235	1,390	6,930	6,930	2,235 - 6,930
Rockfish, Northern	W	1,000	1,000	1,610	640	640	640
	C	4,720	4,720	4,384	4,610	4,610	4,610
	E	40	40	49	20	20	20
	Total	5,760	5,760	6,043	5,270	5,270	5,270
Rockfish, Pelagic Shelf	W	1,030	1,030	253	910	910	910
	C	4,550	4,550	1,226	3,200	3,200	3,200
	E	1,310	1,310	888	1,080	1,080	1,080
	Total	6,890	6,890	2,367	5,190	5,190	5,190
Black Rockfish	Gulfwide	NA	NA	295	400	-	-
Rockfish, Demersal She	SEO	960	960	406	960	960	960
Thornyhead	Gulfwide	1,180	1,180	1,068	2,320	1,450	1,450
Atka Mackerel	W		2,500	2,658			2,500
	C		1,000	5			1,000
	E		5	0			5
	Gulfwide	4,800	3,505	2,663	6,480	4,300	3,505
Other Species	Gulfwide	NA	14,504	2,913	NA		15,315 - 15,549
GULF OF ALASKA	**TOTAL**	553,050	304,594	196,380	535,110	481,090 - 533,690	321,591 - 326,521

* Catch through August 6, 1994