

North Pacific Fishery Management Council

Clement V. Tillion, Chairman
Jim H. Branson, Executive Director

Mailing Address: P.O. Box 3136DT
Anchorage, Alaska 99510

Suite 32, 333 West 4th Avenue
Post Office Mall Building



Telephone: (907) 274-4563
FTS 271-4064

#7-82

October 11, 1982

NEWSLETTER

Council Holds Fiftieth Meeting in Sitka

Sitka-by-the-sea was the site of the North Pacific Fishery Management Council's fiftieth meeting held on September 21-23. Though fraught with the problems of autumn air travel in Southeast Alaska, the meeting was well attended by Sitkans, Southeasters, Anchorage/Southcentral residents, and Seattle folks alike. Highlights of the meeting follow.

Tillion and Lokken Re-Elected Chairman and Vice-Chairman

Clem Tillion and Harold Lokken were re-elected Council Chairman and Vice-Chairman, each for the third term. Tillion, Director of International Fisheries and External Affairs for the State of Alaska, was formerly President of the Alaska State Senate and a long-time fisherman and charter boat operator. Lokken served for 52 years as Executive Secretary and Manager of the Fishing Vessel Owners Association, Seattle. Both Tillion and Lokken have served on the Council since its inception in 1976.

December Council/Board Meeting Scheduled for Anchorage

The next meeting of the North Pacific Council will be December 7-9, 1982 at the Westward Hilton Hotel in Anchorage. Exact meeting schedules have not yet been finalized, but will be announced as soon as available.

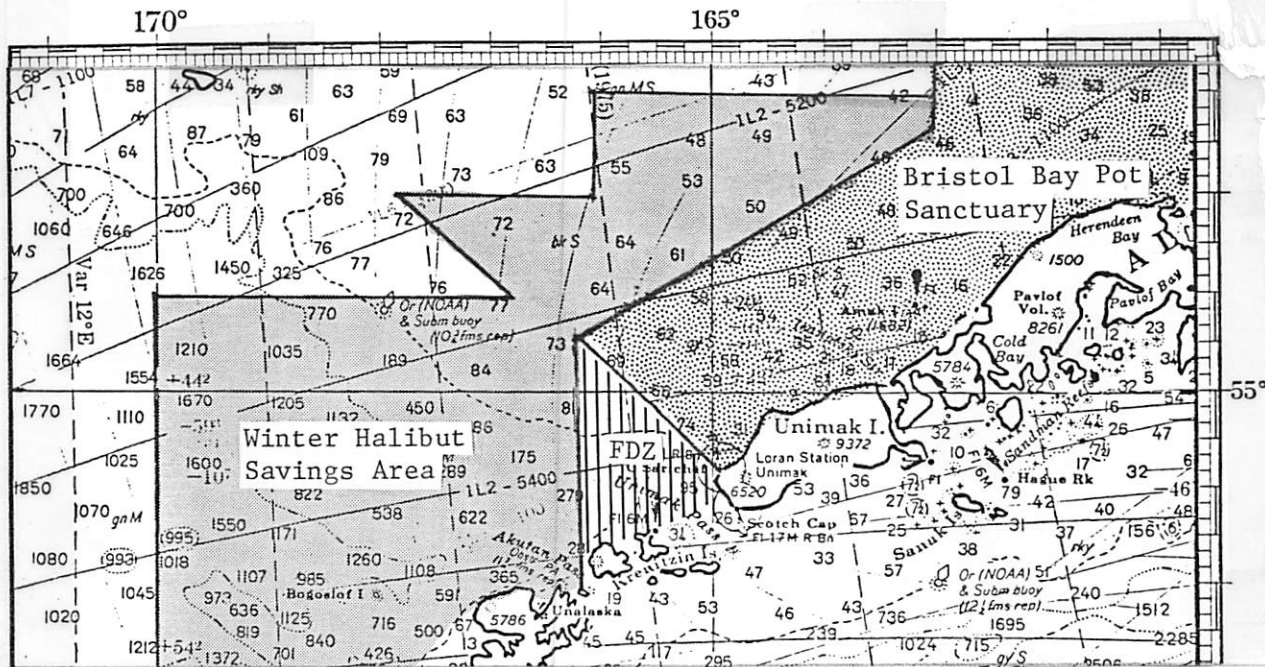
The Council will meet in joint session with the Alaska Board of Fisheries for part of the meeting to hear public testimony and discuss fisheries of mutual concern, primarily Gulf of Alaska groundfish and Bering Sea herring. The Council will review the question of banning the use of pot gear for sablefish in the Gulf of Alaska from Cape Addington to 140°W longitude, review and possibly approve the revised Bering-Chukchi Sea Herring FMP for resubmission to the Secretary of Commerce, and consider final adoption of a Pacific Council/North Pacific Council coastwide natural chinook stock policy.

Dates, times, and locations for the Advisory Panel and Scientific and Statistical Committee meetings will also be announced as soon as information is available.

Fishery Development Zone Approved

A proposal to create a domestic "Fishery Development Zone" (FDZ) in the Bering Sea north of Unimak Pass won Council approval and will be sent to the Secretary of Commerce as Amendment #6 to the Bering Sea/Aleutian Islands Groundfish Fishery Management Plan. All foreign fishing would be prohibited in this area to encourage the development and enhancement of new and existing domestic fisheries, including joint ventures with foreign processors, and

provide the opportunity for full utilization of existing U.S. processing facilities. The amendment package is undergoing final preparation and will be submitted to the Secretary before year-end.



Foreign Longliners Exempted From Bering Sea FMP Depth Restriction

The Council voted to allow foreign longliners to fish at depths shallower than 500 meters year-round in the Winter Halibut Savings Area. Before implementation of the Bering Sea Groundfish FMP in January 1982, foreign longliners fished without depth restriction in the Winter Halibut Savings Area. In making its decision to lift the depth restriction for foreign longline vessels, the Council stipulated that if the by-catch of Pacific halibut by foreign longliners reaches 75% of the 1978-81 by-catch level (105 mt), the depth restriction will again be imposed.

Council Reaffirms Intent for Halibut Moratorium

January 1, 1978 was reaffirmed by the Council as the date to be used for determining "current participation" when the proposed three-year moratorium on participation in the halibut fishery is implemented, now targeted for January 1983. Under the proposed regulation only those persons who harvested and sold halibut between January 1, 1978 and December 31, 1982 would be allowed to continue fishing once the moratorium is in place. After the Notice of Proposed Rulemaking is published in the Federal Register there will be a 30-day public comment period followed by a 30-day "cooling off" period before the regulations are implemented.

Bering-Chukchi Sea Herring FMP Goes Back to Public Review

Revisions to the Bering-Chukchi Sea Herring FMP mandated by the Council at its July meeting have been incorporated into the document and a summary of the revised Plan will once again go back to the public for review. The major changes are in the section dealing with Optimum Yield (OY). OY will have two components: one for the winter fishery and one for the summer fishery in the Aleutian Islands area. Both components of OY are available only to domestic fishermen and joint ventures.

The proposed revision which addresses the summer fishery provides for an adjustment to Allowable Biological Catch (ABC) to take into account herring stocks which spawn in the Aleutians and Alaska Peninsula areas. Also included is an apportionment not to exceed 2,000 mt in the FCZ for the summer food and bait fishery. Additional harvest in State waters would be at the discretion of ADF&G and would not be affected by the FMP; however, the FMP would take into account the actual harvest when the winter apportionment is determined. Other revisions provide additional safeguards for northern stocks found offshore by reducing the potential surplus left after the spring inshore fishery before making allocations to the winter offshore fishery.

Revised sections of the Plan will be mailed to the public by October 15. The Council will hold public hearings on the proposed revisions from 10 a.m. to 7 p.m. on November 10, 1982 at the Kuskokwim Valley Native Association Building in Bethel, Alaska and during the December Council/Board meeting in Anchorage. Final action on the Plan is scheduled for December.

Tanner Crab Amendment #8 Moves on to the Secretary

Inconsistencies between State and Federal Tanner crab regulations have caused confusion over the last several years among fishermen, processors, enforcement agents, and managers alike. Amendment #8 to the Tanner Crab FMP, acted upon by the Council at the September meeting, was designed to eliminate most of these inconsistencies and will be followed by a proposed major amendment to "framework" the FMP, improve the Plan's sensitivity and response time, and remove any remaining inconsistencies.

Specific Council decisions on the various proposals contained in Amendment #8 are as follows:

Pot Limits. Federal pot limits will be brought into conformity with State regulations; i.e., 175 pots in Prince William Sound, 250 pots in the Kodiak area, and no pot limit for the Cook Inlet area. The Council did not duplicate State pot limits for the Southeast Area, however, because the fishery occurs entirely in State waters.

Gear Placement. The 72-hour provision for on-the-grounds pot storage prior to the season opening was deleted statewide.

Size Limit. A minimum size limit of 3.1 inches (78 mm) carapace width was established for male C. opilio Tanner crab.

Gear Restrictions. The use of side-loading Tanner crab pots will be prohibited in the Yakutat District within the Southeastern Management Area.

Fishing Seasons. Seasons in the FMP will be brought into conformity with State regulations as follows:

<u>Area</u>	<u>Season</u>
Chignik	2/10 - 5/15
South Peninsula	2/10 - 5/15
Kodiak	2/10 - 4/30
Western Aleutians	11/01 - 6/15
Eastern Aleutians	2/15 - 6/15
Bering Sea - <u>bairdi</u>	2/15 - 6/15
- <u>opilio</u>	2/15 - 8/01
Nome Section/ <u>Norton</u> Sound	closed to Tanner crab fishing

The Council voted to set the Tanner crab OY equal to Domestic Annual Harvest (DAH) so long as DAH is less than or equal to Allowable Biological Catch (ABC). The OY/ABC proposal will be severed from Amendment #8 and included in the frameworking amendment.

Amendment #8 and supporting documents are now undergoing final preparation and will be forwarded to the Secretary of Commerce for review.

Gulf of Alaska Update

At the December meeting the Council will review the question of banning the use of pot gear for sablefish in the Gulf of Alaska from Cape Addington to 140°W longitude. The remainder of Amendment #11 to the Gulf of Alaska Groundfish FMP, approved at the July meeting, is undergoing final preparation for submission to the Secretary of Commerce.

Council Issues Call for Advisory Panel Nominations

Terms of current Advisory Panel members will expire in December and the Council has issued a call for nominations for AP membership. Advisory Panel members may succeed themselves, and the incumbents have been asked to indicate whether they wish to serve another two-year term.

Resumes of nominees will be reviewed by the AP Nominating Committee just before the December Council meeting and the Council will make appointments during its meeting. Appointments will become effective with the January meeting, when the new AP will reorganize itself with the election of officers and appointments to subcommittees.

Persons who wish to be considered for Advisory Panel membership should submit a resume to the North Pacific Fishery Management Council, P. O. Box 3136 DT, Anchorage, AK 99510, attention Judy Willoughby, before Monday, November 15, 1982.

Sitka Troll Salmon Hearing Draws a Good Crowd

Over 140 members of the public attended a hearing on troll salmon management on Tuesday night, September 21, in Sitka. Thirty persons signed up to testify and the hearing had to be continued on Wednesday morning.

The 1982 troll season for chinook ended on July 29 and for other salmon on September 20. Preliminary data indicate that coastwide salmon harvests were approximately 10% over 1981 levels despite conservation measures. The Council and Alaska Board of Fisheries are scheduled to take action on 1983 troll salmon management measures at their joint meeting in Juneau on January 4-6, 1983. Detailed summaries of 1982 catch and escapement data are being prepared for the January meeting.

NMFS Crab Survey Results Bleak

Results of the 1982 NMFS eastern Bering Sea crab survey can be termed "bleak" at best, with all stocks except St. Matthew blue king crab showing significant declines in abundance.

Bristol Bay and Pribilof Islands red king crab stocks are at the lowest abundance level on record with a 1982 estimate of 4.4 million legal males, compared to 46.6 million as recently as 1978. The projected catch of 10 to 20 million pounds from the preliminary survey results was much too high. A very high incidence of barren females, up to 50 percent among the larger animals, prompted ADF&G to revise earlier estimates downward and then close the season by emergency order at noon on October 10, when the catch was still well under the earlier projection. The catch was 130 million pounds in 1980 and 33 million in 1981.

The abundance of legal Pribilof Island blue king crab is estimated at 2.2 million animals, about half the 1978-81 average. Although distribution is similar to previous years, trends in abundance of pre-recruits and size frequency information indicate declining abundance in the future. The projected 1982 catch is 6 million pounds, one-third less than the 9 million pounds taken in 1981.

On the brighter side, the 1982 St. Matthew blue king crab fishery, which occurred in August, took a record 9 million pounds compared to only 4.6 million pounds taken in 1981. The NMFS survey estimate for this stock is 6.8 million legal males, more than twice the 3.1 million estimated for 1981. Distribution of legal crab was similar to that of 1981, though size frequency information indicates declining recruitment; however, abundance is expected to be above average in 1983.

Both C. bairdi and C. opilio Tanner crab stocks show trends toward diminishing stock abundance. Abundance of C. bairdi is estimated at 10.1 million legal males, down about 30% from 14 million in 1981. The number of pre-recruits and size frequency data indicate increasing recruitment that may be reflected in the 1983 fishery. The 1982 fishery produced 11 million pounds compared to 30 million pounds in 1981.

Abundance of large C. opilio is estimated at 10.8 million animals in the area south of 58°N, down from 15.7 million in 1981. The Northern District, however, showed a 50% increase in large males, 10.9 million in 1982 over 6.5 million in 1981. Pre-recruit abundance and size frequency information tentatively indicate increasing recruitment north of 58°N, although recruitment patterns for this species are somewhat unknown due to localized differences in growth rates.

Korean hair crab abundance in the Pribilof District, Bristol Bay, and Northern District is estimated at 7.7 million animals, down more than 50% from the 1981 level of 15.9 million. The 1982 catch is projected to be less than half the 2.4 million pounds taken in 1981, primarily because of poor market conditions rather than changes in abundance. Distribution of hair crab shows that the vast majority of the stock is located near the Pribilofs and most are landed as incidental catch in the Tanner crab fisheries.

Incidental Catch Study Funded for Second Year

A study to determine the feasibility of using scale analysis to identify the stream or area of origin of chinook salmon caught incidentally in the foreign trawl fisheries off Alaska received Council approval for a second year's funding. The contractor reported that the first year of the study showed that freshwater-marine growth patterns on the scales of selected major natural and hatchery coastal chinook stocks can be used to determine stream-of-origin. Further, scale samples from incidentally-caught chinook salmon collected by U.S. observers on foreign fishing vessels are adequate for stock separation analysis. Chinook salmon, the least abundant species of Pacific salmon in Alaska, comprise over 90% of the incidental salmon catch by foreign trawlers in the Bering Sea/Aleutians area and Gulf of Alaska.

Marine Mammal Workshop Postponed

The University of Alaska Sea Grant/North Pacific Council/Marine Mammal Commission workshop on the biological interaction of marine mammals and commercial fisheries in the Bering Sea, originally scheduled for this winter, has been postponed until the fall of 1983. The new schedule will allow full participation by U.S. scientists as well as the opportunity to invite foreign scientists to participate.

Council and Board Hold Work Session on Joint Meetings

Several Council and Board members and their respective staffs met in Juneau on September 30 to develop methods for streamlining joint meetings of the two bodies. Under the new format oral staff reports presented to the joint body will be much abbreviated, augmented by advance copies of the full text. The Council and Board will restrict the scope of public testimony received during joint hearings to only those proposals and subjects of mutual concern. These items will be set out in detail for the public in the Council/Board agenda.

The Council and Board feel that these time-saving measures will allow them to operate more efficiently and in the best interest of the public and the resource.

Yellowfin Sole on Natural High

Yellowfin sole is a major fishery resource of the eastern Bering Sea, ranking second in abundance only to walleye pollock. Using a numeric population simulator, the Northwest and Alaska Fisheries Center examined the response of the yellowfin sole population to various levels of exploitation. The results indicated that population biomass will remain high at least through 1985, with abundance of primary age groups in the fishable stock (ages 8 through 17) expected to range between 1.4 and 2 million mt in 1985.

Long-term equilibrium yields were also examined using the PROBUB ecosystem model. Calculations based on the model indicated that the equilibrium biomass of yellowfin sole, that which is in equilibrium with other components of the ecosystem, ranges from 880,000 to 1,328,000 mt. Annual catches of as much as 175,000 mt were found to maintain the population within this range and was considered an estimate of the long-term EY.

The Center report concluded that the biomass of yellowfin sole is currently at the upper end of a natural cycle in abundance and exceeds the intermediate levels of abundance which keep the overall ecosystem in equilibrium. Catches of 200,000 mt or more were recommended to take advantage of the current surplus. Copies of the yellowfin sole report may be obtained from the Northwest and Alaska Fisheries Center.

Domestic Fisheries Report

The first closure of a Pacific coast domestic groundfish fishery in the FCZ occurred in Southeast Alaska on August 2 after approximately 1,250 mt of sablefish had been harvested. Following the closure effort shifted substantially to the Yakutat area. Inside the Southeastern archipelago the sablefish fishery in Chatham Strait closed on September 15 and in Clarence Strait on September 30. Preliminary catch figures as of September 17 were: Chatham Strait, 400 mt; Clarence Strait, 150 mt; Southeastern outside, 1,250 mt; Yakutat east of 140°W, 370 mt; and Yakutat west of 140°W, 200 mt.

The fledgling eastern Aleutian Islands herring fishery, which first occurred last year with a total catch of 704 mt, has already taken more than four times that amount since it opened on August 5. Roughly 60% of the 3,240 mt catch to date has been processed for human consumption, with the remainder utilized as bait for the local crab fisheries. The harvest was taken by seven purse seine vessels fishing in State waters. The average price paid to the fishermen was \$300 per ton.

The king crab fishery opened on September 15. Due to poor abundance levels, the projected harvest is 43.4 million pounds, less than half the 88.8 million pounds taken in 1981.

Foreign Fisheries Update

Foreign catches in the Bering Sea through August 1982 were 680,073 mt, just over 51% of the 1,328,016 mt TALFF. Pollock comprised 82.8% of the catch, flounders 11.7%, Pacific cod 1.9%, Atka mackerel 0.4%, and all other species 3.2%.

Foreign catches in the Gulf of Alaska through August totaled 66,895 mt, slightly less than 27% of the 250,660 mt TALFF. The majority of the catch was pollock and Pacific cod, at 56.1% and 20.7% respectively, followed by 8.5% flounders, 6.3% rockfish, 2.6% sablefish, and 5.8% other species.

The number of foreign vessels operating off Alaska peaked at 484 during July, but dropped to 308, mostly Japanese, after the high seas salmon fleet departed in late August. As of September 15 only 239 foreign vessels remained, primarily the Japanese groundfish fleet.

As of September 20 there were 65 observers aboard foreign vessels off Alaska. Forty were in the Bering Sea, six in the Aleutians, and 19 in the Gulf of Alaska.

Fisheries Enforcement Activities

Since the July Council meeting the Coast Guard issued five reports of violation and five citations to six Japanese, one Taiwanese, and two South Korean vessels and seized one Japanese vessel.

The Japanese stern trawler KORYO MARU NO. 23 was seized on July 29 in the central Bering Sea for underlogging its catch by 139 mt, 43%. The most severe logging discrepancies were found in Pacific cod and turbot.

Infractions for which the reports of violation and citations were issued included failure to submit required activity messages 24 hours before departure from the FCZ; failure to return prohibited species to the sea in a timely manner; and failure to properly maintain readability of International Radio Call Signs.

Joint Venture Update

Through August 28, joint ventures had harvested 95,676 mt in the Bering Sea and Aleutians and 74,503 mt in the Gulf of Alaska. Thirty American vessels and 16 foreign vessels worked for the eight individual operations in the Bering Sea; the six Gulf of Alaska operations employed 23 U.S. and 25 foreign vessels.

By mid-September Marine Resources Company's yellowfin sole fishery, which began in April, had taken 34,500 mt, about 80% target species. The eight U.S. catchers and four to five Soviet processors employed in the operation expected to take their total 37,000 mt by September 30. The Atka mackerel fishery was scheduled to end in late September with a projected catch of about 16,5000 mt, 60% Atka mackerel.

The second Universal Seafoods/Nippon Suisan joint venture ended on August 23 with a total catch of 11,400 mt, mostly pollock. Three U.S. trawlers, GOLDEN FLEECE, STARWARD, and NEAHKAHNIE, fished in this operation from Unimak Pass to the Pribilofs.

The third Westward Trawlers/Taiyo Fishery Company joint venture began on September 25 with four to five U.S. trawlers and one Japanese processor. They hope to catch and process 10,000 mt of pollock in the Bering Sea.

The joint venture between Swiftsure Fisheries and Chong Shing Enterprises of Taiwan has not yet begun for lack of a vessel permit, still under processing in Washington, D.C.

Council Staff Settles Into New Headquarters

The headquarters office of the North Pacific Council has moved to 605 West Fourth Avenue, two blocks west of its former location. Our mailing address and telephone numbers will remain the same. The staff is almost settled in, so drop by any time for the grand tour!

Fishing Community Saddened by the Loss of Truman Emberg

The members and staff of the North Pacific Council extend their most sincere sympathy to Maxine Emberg of Dillingham, Alaska in the loss of her husband, Truman. A 45-year resident of Bristol Bay, Mr. Emberg was well known in the fishing industry, having been a fisherman, advisor to the U.S. commissioners for the International North Pacific Fisheries Convention, member of the Alaska Board of Fish and Game, business manager for the Western Alaska Cooperative Marketing Association, and member of the Advisory Panel for the North Pacific Council until his retirement in 1982.