

Public Testimony

AGENDA D-2      King and Tanner Crab

Alvin Osterback, Chairman, Sand Point Advisory Committee. The Sand Point Advisory Committee rejected the proposal for management of crab by size, sex and season because of the resulting increased handling mortality rate. The Sand Point Advisory Committee submitted the proposal to open all "J" districts concurrently to help prevent a large build-up of vessels in one area. The Committee also opposed the repeal of super-exclusive registration for the Chignik/Sand Point areas. Stocks are down to such a point that it is important to protect stocks for the local fishermen. The Sand Point Advisory Committee also opposed the proposal to allow additional fishing time for vessels who have given aid to vessels in distress.

Mr. Osterback said that the Sand Point Advisory Committee has always opposed bottom trawling in their area; their main objective is to protect the crab stocks.

Barry Collier, Dennis Petersen, and Arnie Aadland, North Pacific Fishing Vessel Owners' Assn. NPFVOA feels that a new management regime for crab should be considered. They do not feel that recruitment would be hindered under the 3-S management regime and suggested a two-year trial period to evaluate this method. The Association remains opposed to exclusive registration areas and pot limits in the FCZ and state waters because they feel these are purely allocative measures with no biological or conservation reasons backing them up. They also opposed the elimination of the 116-hour bait-up period for safety reasons.

The Association felt that the proposal to allow additional fishing time for vessels that aid distressed vessels did not provide for adequate enforcement and should be more explicit about the procedures required.

Barry Collier said that they feel there is not enough data at this time to support the proposed trawl closure. There are several reports due to be released soon which may affect Council/Board decisions on this matter. They would support observers on domestic vessels to determine specific areas of high concentrations of prohibited species. These areas could be closed if data supported a closure for conservation reasons. Also supports the availability of statistics to all management agencies on a timely basis.

Dave Herrnsteen, Fisherman, Kodiak. He's opposed to 3-S management because of the increased handling mortality and danger to rebuilding stocks. He also felt that the 5-day bait-up period wouldn't work in Kodiak because of price negotiations. Mr. Herrnsteen also did not agree with the proposed trawl closures to protect king crab; he felt it was not fair to close all areas because of problems in some.

Oliver Holm, Kodiak Advisory Board. The Kodiak Advisory Board recommended rejection of the 3-S management proposal because of the higher biological risk in managing the fishery. The Advisory Board also rejected the proposed 5-day bait-up period and voted to support the repeal of the super-exclusive area for Chignik/South Peninsula and the proposal for make-up fishing time for aiding vessels in distress. They supported the concurrent season openings for District J and supported the 200-pot limit now in effect in Kodiak.

The Advisory Board voted to support the trawl closure, but suggested that the areas concerned have a permit system so that areas could be open by permit only. Vessels could go into an area by permit and if they demonstrated that there was not need for a closure, they could remain.

David Harville disagreed with Mr. Holm's statement that the Advisory Board voted in favor of the proposed trawl closures. He said he thought they voted against the proposal.

Paul Gronholdt, Peninsula Marketing Assn., Sand Point. He thinks the conflict between federal and state management is going to be a continuing problem in Alaska. The original request for the exclusive registration areas was to protect areas for smaller, less mobile, local boats. This year, 85% of the boats in Kodiak were local and they still were not as profitable as they need to be to make a living. Mr. Gronholdt said he is not in favor of the 3-S management system, but is in favor of multi-species management. He also testified against the bait-up period proposal.

David Harville, Alaska Draggers Assn. Mr. Harville first read a letter into the record from Oral Burch, Kodiak. Mr. Burch told Board and Council members that there is no biological reason or proven facts to support the proposed trawl closure around Kodiak and that if it was passed there would be serious harm done to the shore-based operations in the State.

Mr. Harville also opposed the trawl closure stating that there are no biological reasons for doing so. He urged the Board to recommend observers get incidental catch data from all fisheries.

Al Burch, Alaska Draggers Assn. Mr. Burch is also opposed to the proposed trawl closure saying that the data used is not based on any trawl data from the trawl fleet. Many of the problems in the fishery are being worked on by industry groups--prohibited species, gear modification, joint venture guidelines, and management should not take this sort of action without waiting for results of these studies.

Barry Fisher, Highliner, MRC fleet. He is against the trawl closure proposal as written. Closure of discrete areas where data show a need would be acceptable. He feels ADF&G did not look at economic data, analyses, and current work on incidental catches, etc., before developing this proposal. He has 20 years' worth of logbooks that show that the incidental catch of crab is insignificant in the areas being discussed.

Phil Chitwood, Marine Resources Company. They are also concerned about the incidental catch, but the proposed trawl closure area is too wide and includes the area where their yellowfin sole joint venture takes place. They have four years' of observer data available for the area. Of 19,000 mt of groundfish taken in the Aleutian Islands area, only 1.3 ton of king crab were taken.

Dennis Petersen, Ocean Spray Fisheries. Industry is working on the incidental catch problem. They all agree that some method is needed to gather good statistics. They would support closures of areas where data indicates the need for them. Observer coverage on domestic boats is important although he doesn't think 100% coverage is necessary.

Bernie Burkholder, North Star Seafoods. The proposed closures would cause problems for him because he ships fresh product. This type of closure would eliminate shoreside development in Kodiak. Gathering data is the most important thing at this point and this couldn't be done if the area was completely closed. A standardized data gathering system needs to be developed by state and federal agencies.

Mickey Serwald, Alaska Draggers Assn. Mr. Serwald read a letter from the Kodiak Chamber of Commerce into the record. The letter supported effective development and management of fisheries, but felt that the proposed trawl closures are not based on sufficient data and they opposed it as currently written.

Mr. Serwald said the Alaska Draggers Assn. also opposes the proposal as written. Their organization is totally committed to an observer program that would provide needed data.

Bill Alwert, Gary Painter, Ted Painter. The potential exists to further decimate the crab fishery. Mandatory observer and logbook programs for domestic vessels might be the answer to gather data to solve the problems of the fishery. Gary Painter suggested that critical areas be defined and only those areas closed.

Vern Hall, Kodiak. He is more worried that there will be regulations that will eliminate efficient trawls through gear designs rather than closures. By-catches in the Bering Sea were alarming, but industry is working on the problem by themselves.

Oscar Dyson, Kodiak. He doesn't agree with forcing closures on one fishery based on a fear of what might happen to another. Research and development must determine what incidental catch rate is feasible for all concerned.