

North Pacific Fishery Management Council

Don W. Collinsworth, Chairman
Clarence G. Pautzke, Executive Director

605 West 4th Avenue
Anchorage, Alaska 99501



Mailing Address: P.O. Box 103136
Anchorage, Alaska 99510

Telephone: (907) 271-2809
FAX (907) 271-2817

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NEWSLETTER

7/9/90

COUNCIL RECESSES 92nd PLENARY SESSION UNTIL AUGUST

At its June 25-30 meeting, the Council discovered that there were too many time-consuming agenda topics for the six days available. The Council, therefore, recessed on Saturday, June 30, and will continue the meeting next month in Juneau. The Council did find time to take final action on a pollock roe-stripping and quarterly apportionment amendment, approve a major groundfish amendment package for Secretary of Commerce review, and request the National Marine Fisheries Service to initiate several emergency and regulatory amendments for management of groundfish. These decisions are described in this newsletter.

The Council will reconvene the 92nd Plenary Session on August 7-9, in Room 117 of the Federal Office Building in Juneau, Alaska, to complete consideration of the following agenda topics:

- C-2 Revisions to domestic observer program for 1991.
- C-4 Sablefish fixed gear management - final consideration of IFQs.
- C-5 Proposed moratorium and limited entry schedules for other fisheries.
- C-6 Status report on analysis of inshore-offshore allocation proposal.
- D-1 Salmon plan amendment for overfishing definition.
- D-2 Crab plan amendment for overfishing definition.
- D-3 (a) Halibut/crab bycatch limits in the Bering Sea and Aleutians for 1991 (part of Amendment 16a).
- (b) Proposal for groundfish allocation to the Pribilofs.
- (c) Council role in vessel safety.
- (d) Management of U.S. fisheries outside 200 miles in the Central Bering Sea.

The Juneau meeting will begin at 8 a.m. on Tuesday, August 7, and is open to the public. However, because the Council has already taken public testimony on the agenda items, no additional public comments will be taken at the August meeting. Also, the Council's Ad Hoc Bycatch Committee will meet in Juneau on Monday, August 6, to begin developing a comprehensive bycatch amendment for the groundfish fisheries for the 1991 amendment cycle. Please contact the Council office for exact time and location.

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Pollock Roe-Stripping

The Council approved a ban on roe-stripping and issued a policy statement that the pollock harvest should be used for human consumption to the maximum extent possible. In addition, the Council voted to divide the Western and Central Gulf of Alaska pollock total allowable catch (TAC) into equal quarterly apportionments; any overages or shortfalls in a quarterly harvest will be applied equally to remaining quarters. In the Bering Sea/Aleutian Islands, the Council voted to divide the pollock TAC into roe and non-roe seasons: the roe season is defined as January 1 through April 15, and the non-roe season as June 1 through attainment of the TAC. Bering Sea/Aleutian Islands apportionments will be determined by the Council during the annual groundfish specifications process. These actions constitute Amendment 19 to the Gulf of Alaska Groundfish Fishery Management Plan and Amendment 14 to the Bering Sea/Aleutian Islands Groundfish Fishery Management Plan.

Groundfish Amendments

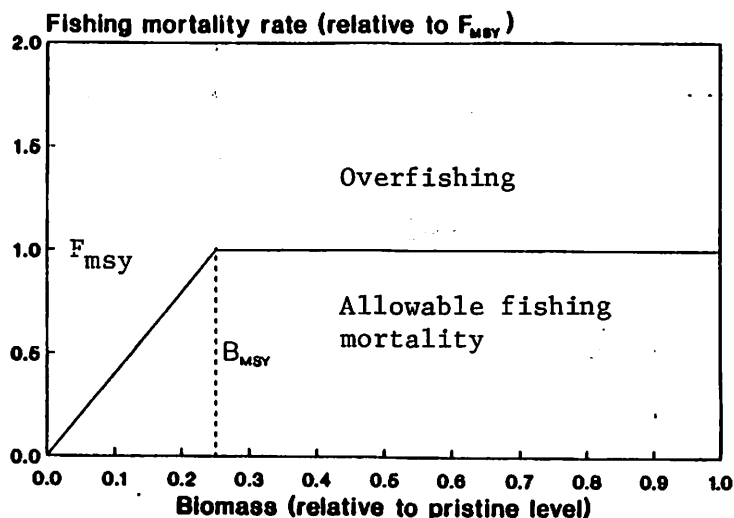
The Council chose its preferred alternatives for six topics in the Amendment 21/16 package for the Gulf of Alaska and Bering Sea/Aleutian Islands groundfish fishery management plans.

BSAI Crab and Halibut Bycatch Management

The Council approved a new Bering Sea bycatch management regime to replace Amendment 12a which will expire at the end of 1990. The new amendment will provide authority to apportion bycatch caps among bottom trawl fisheries. Implementing regulations would establish the following five categories: DAP flatfish, JVP flatfish, DAP rock sole, DAP deepwater (sablefish/turbot), and DAP 'other'. In addition, the amendment provides for seasonal apportionment of the prohibited species catch (PSC) caps and a 'penalty box' incentive program to reduce bycatch rates. Under the penalty box program, the bycatch rates of observed vessels in specified target fishery categories would be evaluated against the fleet average of all observed vessels in that fishery category for the preceding four weeks for a given prohibited species. Vessels with bycatch rates in excess of twice the fleet average for that fishery would be subject to suspension from fishing in any fishery under Council jurisdiction. Suspension periods would be five days for the first offense, two weeks for the second offense, and six weeks for the third offense. Unless otherwise required to do so by the domestic observer program, vessels returning to the fishery after suspension for a second offense would be required to carry an observer for the following two weeks. Vessels returning after a third offense would be required to carry an observer for the following four weeks. The period for accruing multiple offenses would be the most recent twelve months. Please see the item on Amendment 16a later in the newsletter for more information on Bering Sea bycatch management activities.

Overfishing

The Council approved a definition of overfishing as exceeding a fishing mortality rate (F) which varies with stock biomass. The maximum allowed fishing mortality rate for all stocks with biomass (B) exceeding that capable of providing maximum sustainable yield (MSY) would be F_{msy} . For stock sizes less than B_{msy} , the maximum allowable fishing mortality rate would decrease (see figure on page 3). In general, application of the F_{msy} fishing mortality rate will allow stocks to increase in size and its application is not expected to result in decreases in stock biomass due to fishing mortality.



Interim Groundfish Specifications

An amendment was approved to establish interim harvest levels for a new fishing year that are 25% of the initial total allowable catches (TAC) set by the Council in September. They will be replaced by final TACs after final Council consideration in December and subsequent publication in the Federal Register.

Demersal Shelf Rockfish Management

The Council voted to modify the Gulf of Alaska groundfish plan to allow the State of Alaska to manage demersal shelf rockfish in the Eastern Gulf. State regulations will apply only to vessels registered in the State of Alaska. The Council will provide oversight and will continue to set annual TAC for demersal shelf rockfish.

Fishing Gear Restrictions

The Council approved a general measure to allow legal fishing gear to be defined by regulatory amendment. In addition, the Council approved four specific measures to be included in the regulations: (1) a requirement for groundfish pots to have biodegradable panels, (2) a requirement for halibut excluder devices on groundfish pots, (3) a new definition of pelagic trawl gear, and (4) a requirement that owner identification be on groundfish pots, as well as buoys. These four measures are intended to decrease lost gear, deadloss due to ghost fishing by lost gear, crab and halibut bycatch, and gear conflicts.

Gulf of Alaska Halibut Bycatch Management

The Council approved measures to expand and clarify the existing framework for managing halibut bycatch in the Gulf of Alaska by apportioning seasonally the halibut PSC caps, and providing separate PSC caps for groundfish pots and longlines within the fixed gear category. In addition, the Council voted to adopt a 'penalty box' type of incentive program with similar provisions to that adopted for the BSAI. Target fishery categories will be developed by NMFS and will include the Pacific cod longline fishery. These will be presented for public comment when proposed rules to implement this amendment are published by the Secretary of Commerce later this summer.

Bering Sea/Aleutian Islands Groundfish Amendment 16a

Amendment 16a is a follow-up amendment to the Bering Sea/Aleutian Islands groundfish plan intended to expand or modify existing bycatch management measures. The proposed amendment consists of (1) provisions to manage the bycatch of herring in the Bering Sea/Aleutian Islands management area and (2) additional measures to manage crab and halibut bycatch in BSAI trawl fisheries. The latter include in-season authority for the Regional Director to close bycatch hot spots and authority for the Council to allocate specific portions of the BSAI pollock TAC to midwater gear. At its June meeting, the Council also tasked its Plan Teams to analyze modification of the BSAI crab and halibut bycatch caps at 50%, 100%, and 150% of the present Amendment 12a levels. The Council will review this analysis in August. It will be released for public review and comment in mid-August, comments will be due in mid-September, and the Council will take final action at its September meeting.

Regulatory Amendments

The Council requested that NMFS develop several regulatory amendments for 1991:

- (1) open the yellowfin sole, Greenland turbot, and other flatfish fisheries in the Bering Sea/Aleutian Islands management area on May 1 to reduce crab and halibut bycatch rates;
- (2) increase the allowable retention of yellowfin sole and other flatfish in the rock sole fishery from 20% to 35% to reduce discards;
- (3) groundfish pots must be fished on single lines;
- (4) apportion the Gulf of Alaska longline PSC cap for halibut among sablefish, Pacific cod, and other fisheries; and
- (5) close the entire Gulf of Alaska sablefish longline fishery when the Eastern area closes. The sablefish longline fishery in the Western and Central Gulf could then re-open July 1 if quota remains. In addition, the Council requested that sablefish opening dates of May 1 and June 1 be evaluated against the current date of April 1 for impacts on halibut bycatch.

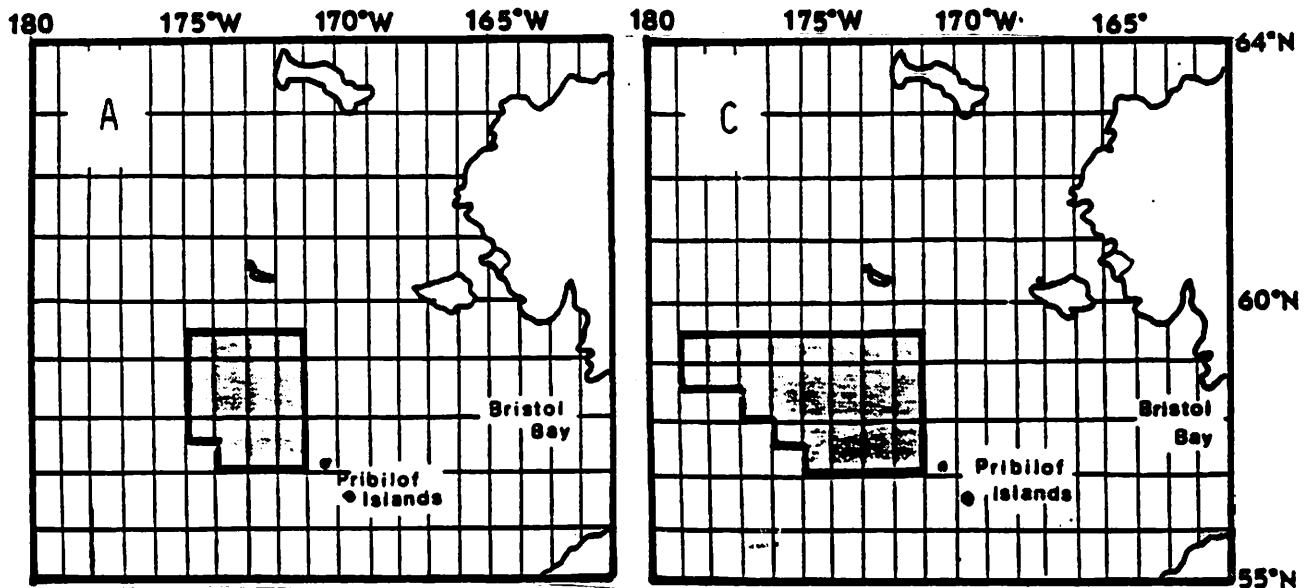
Next Meeting of the North Pacific Fishery Management Council:

September 25-28, 1990
Sheraton Hotel
Anchorage, Alaska

Emergency Actions

The Council requested the Secretary of Commerce to take several emergency actions for 1990:

- (1) Exempt groundfish pots equipped with halibut excluder devices and biodegradable panels, hook and line fisheries prosecuted with jigging machines, rod and reel gear, or hand troll gear, and the southeast Alaska demersal shelf rockfish hook and line fishery from closures caused by attainment of the 1990 Gulf of Alaska fixed gear halibut bycatch cap. The Council intends that pots be fished on single lines.
- (2) Implement a herring bycatch cap and closed area in the Bering Sea. Referring to the diagrams below, a 600 mt bycatch of herring in Area C will close Area A to trawl gear. The closure would begin September 1, even if the cap is reached earlier, and would remain in effect through the rest of 1990.



By a 9-2 vote, the Council decided not to request emergency action to raise the halibut PSC cap in the Bering Sea/Aleutian Islands. The Council cited concern for the decline in halibut biomass in the Bering Sea and elsewhere, and indicated that substantial portions of the unharvested groundfish TAC would likely be taken by fixed gear.

Groundfish Plan Amendment Proposal Deadline Changed to August 17

The Council modified its groundfish plan amendment cycle at the June meeting. Proposals will now be due by August 17, 1990. They will be screened by the Plan Teams and Plan Amendment Advisory Group in September, and the Council will select those topics to be addressed during the 1991 amendment cycle at its September 1990 meeting. Recent plan amendment analyses have grown increasingly complex and contentious. This change will allow the analysts additional time to identify data sources, develop appropriate alternatives, and complete the analyses. It also will provide added opportunity for the analysts to interact with the Council, SSC and AP. A call for proposals and a proposal form are attached.

MEMORANDUM

TO : [Illegible]

FROM : [Illegible]

SUBJECT : [Illegible]

[Illegible]

[Illegible]

[Illegible]

[Illegible]

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July 9, 1990

CALL FOR GROUND FISH PROPOSALS

The North Pacific Fishery Management Council invites proposals to amend groundfish fishery management plans (FMPs) to address pertinent fishery management problems and concerns. The Council has an annual amendment cycle and has formulated criteria for determination of completeness of proposals. To be eligible for Council consideration, proposals must satisfy the criteria outlined below.

PLEASE BE CERTAIN TO COMPLETE ALL PORTIONS OF THIS FORM. SUBMIT THE FORM AND SUPPORTING MATERIALS TO THE COUNCIL OFFICES BY AUGUST 17, 1990. ADDITIONAL SHEETS SHOULD BE ADDED TO THIS FORM AS NECESSARY.

Instructions: Although some requirements may be self-evident, the following summarizes Council expectations for each.

Brief Statement of Proposal - Provide a single, brief paragraph concisely describing the action to be taken. Details should be specified on additional sheets.

Objectives of Proposal - Begin with a concise statement of the problem to be solved by the proposal. Attach sheets as necessary to fully describe the problem, and the implications to American fisheries if the problem is not resolved.

Justification for Council Action - Briefly explain why action by the Council is necessary to address and solve the problem. Is there any other way the problem can be resolved?

Foreseeable Impacts of Proposal - Briefly outline the effects you think the proposed amendment will have, not only in solving the problem but also to other sectors of the fishery.

Possible Alternative Solutions - Even if Council action is required, there is probably more than one solution to the problem you have identified. Briefly list possible alternatives to the proposed action that the Council could consider.

Supportive Data and Other Information - Please provide any relevant data or other information available to you.

The North Pacific Fishery Management Council welcomes recommendations that will improve the management procedures used to regulate fisheries in the EEZ. Submission of a completed amendment proposal will enhance our ability to respond in a rapid and equitable fashion.

Groundfish proposals received by August 17, 1990 will be initially reviewed by the full Council on September 24-28, sent to public review in April and May 1991, and given final consideration by the Council in June 1991. Those proposals that are approved by the Council will be forwarded to the Secretary of Commerce for review. Those approved by the Secretary will be implemented for the 1992 fisheries.

For further information on groundfish proposals, please contact Hal Weeks at (907) 271-2809.

**GROUND FISH FISHERY MANAGEMENT PLAN AMENDMENT PROPOSAL
North Pacific Fishery Management Council**

Name of Proposer:

Date:

Address:

Telephone:

Fishery Management Plan:

Brief Statement of Proposal:

Objectives of Proposal: (What is the problem?)

Need and Justification for Council Action: (Why can't the problem be resolved through other channels?)

Foreseeable Impacts of Proposal: (Who wins, who loses?)

Are There Alternative Solutions? If so, what are they and why do you consider your proposal the best way of solving the problem?

Supportive Data & Other Information: What data are available and where can they be found?

Signature: