MEMORANDUM

TO: Council, AP and SSC Members

FROM: Clarence G. Pautzke
Executive Director

DATE: January 10, 1992

SUBJECT: Pollock Season Delays

ACTION REQUIRED

(a) Review comments on a proposed delay in the BSAI pollock "B" season and determine whether to task staff with an analysis of such an amendment for the 1993 fishery.

(b) Receive NMFS report on possible delay of 2nd quarter pollock fishery in the Gulf of Alaska and take action as necessary.

BACKGROUND

Bering Sea/Aleutian Islands 'B' Season Delay

At the December meeting the Council indicated that there may be merit in changing the BSAI pollock "B" season start date from June 1 to a later date. Some of the issues raised during public comment in December included optimal timing of the fishery to improve value, quality and safety; impacts on Gulf of Alaska fisheries; implications of the inshore/offshore allocation, if approved; and the opportunity for pollock processors to process salmon during the summer. Because a delay could have far ranging ramifications on fish harvesting, primary and secondary processing, and markets, the Council recommended that individuals interested in this issue submit comments prior to the January Council meeting. Item D-2(d)(1) summarizes issues raised.

Changing the BSAI pollock "B" season would require a regulatory amendment. After review of the comments, the Council needs to give the staff direction on developing such an amendment.

Gulf of Alaska 2nd Quarter Pollock Opening

An issue related to the above proposal is the timing of the release of the 2nd quarter pollock quota in the Gulf of Alaska (GOA). In December, the Council discussed the issue of postponing the 2nd quarter pollock release in the GOA until June 1, to be concurrent with the start of the BS/AI 'B' season. Assuming a 1992 opening of June 1 for the BS/AI 'B' season, this delay would help protect against a large shift in effort from the Bering Sea in April and May. NMFS requested the Council to postpone action until January so they could research the feasibility of such a delay in light of marine mammal protective measures which would mandate a quarterly release of the quota. They will report to the Council at this meeting on the potential for such a season delay and the possibility of implementation by an emergency rule.

Delay of the BSAI Pollock Non-Roe Season
Summary of Public Comments Received

To assist the Council in developing a recommendation on the start date of the Bering Sea/Aleutian Islands pollock non-roe season, the Council requested interested individuals and companies to submit comments. As of January 10, 1992, the Council received 21 written comments regarding the "B" season delay. This report summarizes these comments by categorizing them into recommended start dates and the various factors supporting the recommendations.

Regarding the overall delay issue, of the responses received, two support the status quo, or a June 1 opening, while the other 19 support a "B" season delay. Of those recommending a delay, one supports July 1, two support July 15, one supports August 1, 12 support September 1, and two support a delay, but recommended no specific date.

A. Summarizing, those expressing opposition to a delay presented the following points.

1. Groundfish processors would compete heavily with the existing salmon processing industry which is already in distress.

2. Factory trawlers would flood existing markets with product, rather than create new markets.

B. Those voicing support listed the following points. Comments in parentheses indicate which starting date that relates to the preceding point.

1. Minimize the bycatch of herring and chum salmon. Herring and chum salmon bycatch in the pollock trawl fishery peaked in June for the past two years. (all delay dates)

2. Maximize value from pollock resource. Delay would allow the harvest of pollock when product recovery rates and flesh quality are higher. (all delay dates)

3. Maximize seasonal market conditions. Optimal time to sell surimi to Japan is October through December. "B" season delay would reduce storage time and costs and increase quality due to fresher surimi. (all delay dates)

   A response supporting July 15 argues that an opening of the "B" season later than this date would limit the amount of U.S. surimi that could reach the Japanese market in time to capitalize on a seasonal increase in value.

4. Vessel safety. Weather generally turns worse as winter low pressure systems move through the BSAI area. Best weather experienced during the late summer. (July 15 only)

5. Better utilization of support service. The delay would enable support services, like shipping companies, to better utilize their capacities and serve the industry more in a more efficient and timely manner. (Sept. 1)

6. New salmon processing and marketing opportunities. The need for additional primary and new secondary processing capability in Alaska salmon fisheries during summer months. Would benefit salmon fishermen by providing additional buyers and markets. Would provide opportunity for trawlers to diversify their operations, utilize excess salmon, and develop new product forms and markets for salmon. (Sept. 1 or later)

7. Maximize trawl fishing. Allow the trawl fleet to utilize other fisheries that open during the summer months, like yellowfin sole and other flatfish, and the whiting fishery off the Pacific Coast. (Sept. 1)

C. Other Concerns

1. Reallocation of catch. In addition, a number of responses favoring a delay support some form of action to synchronize openings in the Gulf of Alaska and the Bering Sea/Aleutian Islands. The responses argue that the Bering Sea trawl fleet will redistribute itself to the Gulf of Alaska if fishing opportunities are available in this area.

2. Effects of the pending inshore/offshore amendment. Optimal timing of the "B" season can be a function of whether or not the exclusive inshore operational zone is implemented, due to seasonal availability of pollock outside the operational zone. (one response supports August 1)

I/0

Observed first quarter pollock catch within 10 and 20 nm of Akun, Akutan, and Sea Lion Rocks in metric tons, expanded to total catch, and as percent of first quarter catch.

	Within 10			Within 20		
Year	OBS Catch	EXP Catch	Percent	OBS Catch	EXP Catch	Percent
1982	1	7	<1	10	71	<1
1983	22	65	<1	36	106	<1
1984	44	47	<1	2,267	2,432	3.0
1985	17	22	<1	1,040	1,368	1.4
1986	88	154	<1	5,036	9,378	3.8
1987	514	1028	<1	10,381	20,929	3.3
1988	296	643	<1	7,334	15,806	0.4
1989	50	455	<1	1,029	9,528	2.5
1990	1,166	1,555	<1	27,900	37,450	13.0
1991	2,353	3,201	<1	50,808	69,600	15.0

Within 15

1990	9400	12533	4.2	in 1990 big increase between 15 & 20
1991	37839	51482	11.2	in 1991 big increase between 10 & 15

juveniles - feed on pollock up to 25 cm pollock
adults - 18 cm & larger

Observed first quarter Pacific cod catch within 10 and 20 nm of Akun, Akutan, and Sea Lion Rocks in metric tons, expanded to total catch, and as percent of first quarter catch.

	Within 10			Within 20		
Year	OBS Catch	EXP Catch	Percent	OBS Catch	EXP Catch	Percent
1982	78	190	12.4	299	729	47.2
1983	52	171	2.6	113	372	5.7
1984	260	520	2.7	1471	2942	15.7
1985	212	719	3.6	456	1546	7.8
1986	86	211	1.0	312	765	3.9
1987	11	29	0.1	128	340	0.9
1988	149	303	0.3	692	1409	1.6
1989	342	1159	1.4	871	2952	3.7
1990	635	1526	3.8	2351	5651	14.0
1991	1803	3467	6.7	4016	7723	14.9

Within 15

1990	1378	3313	6.5
1991	2626	5050	9.8

AP - M-2 voted against rule to prohibit Pollock-retention in the 5 rookeries
AP - better coordination within NMFS about MOR proposals. & more active [illegible]
Council roles in developing MOR protection measures.
- Not an attack on NMFS. - approval / objection - Dave [illegible]

Observed Catches of Pollock and Cod by Catcher boats that deliver to Shoreside Processors.

Catches were accumulated within and outside of 20 nm of Steller Sea Lion rookeries; not expanded to total catch.

'All five' refers to Akun, Akutan, Sea lion Rocks, Seguam and Agligadak Rookeries

'ALL' refers to all BS/AI rookeries

YEAR	QUARTER	ROOKERY	POLLOCK	COD
90	1	AKUN	14,958	475
90	1	AKUTAN	1,158	15
		TOTAL	16,116	490
		PERCENT	46.8	19.5
		All five	16,207	490
		PERCENT	47.0	19.5
90	1	ALL IN 20 M	18,032	490
90	1	OUT 20 m	16,436	2,029
90	1	TOTAL	34,468	2,519
90	1	ALL PERCENT	52.3	19.5
91	1	AKUN	36,323	2,591
91	1	AKUTAN	3,545	292
		TOTAL	39,868	2,883
		PERCENT	54.5	23.3
		All five	39,918	2,931
		PERCENT	54.6	23.7
91	1	ALL IN 20 m	40,185	3,002
91	1	OUT 20 m	32,911	9,355
91	1	TOTAL	73,096	12,357
91	1	ALL PERCENT	55.0	24.3

1991 Cooperative Survey Catch of Principal Species

lbs.- round weight

	Aleutians	EBS	Aleutians + EBS
Sablefish	33,434	26,195	59,629
Pacific cod	248,067	359,890	607,957
Greenland turbot	10,654	41,280	51,934
Shortraker rockfish	6,481	1,421	7,902
Rougheye rockfish	9,519	724	10,243
Shortspine thornyheads	3,904	880	4,784

	Gulf of Alaska	All Areas Combined
Sablefish	487,929	526,078 *
Pacific cod	53,997	661,954
Greenland turbot	53	51,988
Shortraker rockfish	15,588	23,490
Rougheye rockfish	9,407	19,650
Shortspine thornyheads	6,207	10,991

* Note that this value is 21,479 lbs less the sablefish tagged during the entire 1991 survey.

885,214 lbs of sablefish were caught on the domestic survey. The domestic survey samples 62 stations in the Gulf compared to 47 stations sampled by the cooperative survey.

Estimated value of the catch of principal species from the 1991 cooperative survey

	Product conversion factor to obtain dressed wt. (Eastern cut)	$/lb dressed wt.
Sablefish	.63	$ 2.44
Pacific cod	.58	$ .81
Greenland turbot	.62	$ .72
Shortraker rockfish	.50	$ .87
Rougheye rockfish	.50	$ .87
Shortspine thornyheads	.53	$ 1.25

Value ($)

~~Sablefish~~	EBS/AL	GOA	All Areas
Sablefish	$ 91,661.70	$ 750,044.46	$ 808,687.10*
Pacific cod	$ 285,618.20	$ 25,367.79	$ 310,985.99
Greenland turbot	$ 23[illegible],183.34	$ [illegible] 23.66	$ 23,207.44
Shortraker rockfish	$ 3,437,37	$ 6,780.78	$ 10,218.15
Rougheye rockfish	$ 4,455.70	$ 4,092.05	$ 8,547.75
Shortspine Thornyheads	$ 3,169.40	$ 4,112.14	$ 7,281.54
	$ 411,525.71	$ 790,420.88	$ 1,168,927.97*

* Note that this value is less the value of the tagged sablefish from all areas in the 1991 survey of $ 33,017.52

The cooperative longline survey provides a platform and the manpower for sablefish tagging and the collection of otoliths. Currently, no tagging or the collection of biological samples are being done on the domestic survey due to lack of manpower. The domestic survey would require an additional scientist per leg to undertake any additional tasks. The cooperative survey has tagged an average of 6,081 fish per survey since not 1987, and as many as 25,000 in 1982. This data is critical to our understanding of sablefish migration and stock structure. Research is ongoing to determine migration rates; with the goal of incorporating these estimates into our modeling techniques. Tagging data from cooperative survey have revealed extensive rates of migration. Based on this data, the Bering Sea/Aleutian Islands and Gulf of Alaska sablefish are considered one population and combined in the stock assessment. Thus, these data have great implications for our assessments and recommendations.

AKON

UNITED STATES DEPARTMENT OF COMMERCE
National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration
NATIONAL MARINE FISHERIES SERVICE

Alaska Fisheries Science Center
Resource Assessment and Conservation
Engineering Division
7600 Sand Point Way Northeast
BIN C15700, Building 4
Seattle, Washington 98115-0070

January 11, 1992 F/AKC1:GS

MEMORANDUM FOR: F/AKC2 - Richard Marasco
F/AKC4 - George Snyder

FROM: F/AKC1 - Gary Stauffer

SUBJECT: Continuation of the Cooperative US-Japan Longline survey

Our scientists responsible for the assessment and surveys of sablefish in Alaska and I have discussed the options for the sablefish longline surveys along the continental slope of the Gulf of Alaska, eastern Bering Sea, and the Aleutian Islands. Currently, we have two surveys per year. The Japanese initiated the first cooperative longline survey in 1978 in the Gulf of Alaska which was later expanded to include the slope regions of the eastern Bering Sea and the Aleutian Islands. This survey has generated a time series on the distribution and relative abundance of sablefish, in particular, that is the basis for our annual status of stock reports. In the mid-1980's Auke Bay Lab and RACE initiated a domestic longline survey for the Gulf of Alaska sablefish resource in expectation that the Japanese would discontinue their participation in the cooperative survey. It was critical that the two surveys be conducted concurrently for a few years to calibrate the catch rates for the surveys so as to not loose the utility of the time series on sablefish abundance derived from the cooperative surveys. The issue of terminating the cooperative survey was raised at the December 1991 meeting of the NPFMC meeting.

Under the existing longline survey strategy, the cooperative survey has the responsibility for sampling stations in the eastern Bering Sea and Aleutian Island regions, tagging of sablefish and (starting in 1992) shortspine thornyheads, collection of otoliths, and sampling the comparative stations in the Gulf of Alaska. The domestic survey has the responsibility for sampling the comparative stations in the Gulf of Alaska plus the additional gully and trough stations for monitoring

recruitment. The cooperative survey is approximately 130 days long and the domestic charter is for 75 days. We place one scientist on the cooperative survey and three scientist on the domestic survey. The Japanese provide all of the longline fishing gear constructed according to the survey standards established in 1979, bait, and chief scientist and sampling technicians. On the domestic survey, the vessel provides the buoys, buoy line, anchors and bait, we provide 480 skates of standardized groundline, hooks, and all of the scientific field party. Given that the vessel is procured annually through government's competitive bidding process, it is absolutely critical to the time series that we have full control over the gear construction and maintenance to insure that the standards are maintained to compare annual catch rates and abundance levels in case the vessel changes. Both vessels can keep the catch once the scientific data have been collected from the fish. On the cooperative survey, a fraction of the catch is tagged and released.

There are a number of considerations that must be taken into consideration in making a decision to change the existing two-vessel survey strategy. The first is the impact a change may have on our time series and assessment of the sablefish resource and the second is the impact on survey costs, including personnel, gear, and potential vessel charter. With respect to the first, the 1984 cooperative survey and the 1984 triennial Gulf bottom trawl survey were designed to calibrate the two survey methodologies to provide a mechanism for relating the longline survey catch rate to area-swept trawl biomass estimate. Any change that would eliminate the cooperative survey in the Gulf would impact the utility of this 1984 calibration in future sablefish assessments for the Gulf region. In the past two years the comparison of the data from the cooperative and domestic survey produced rather divergent results for the Gulf. The cause of this discrepancy is currently being studied. The outcome of the research may suggest the need for a change in our current design and sampling methods. Any change in survey strategy prior to this may greatly disrupt the time series. In the case of the Bering Sea and the Aleutian Islands, the sablefish abundance index from the cooperative longline survey has dropped dramatically in the past three years and the ABC's have declined accordingly. Any change at this date will leave unanswerable questions about future changes in the trend being due to change in survey technology or change in stock conditions. This added uncertainty would impact the decisions on the level of future ABC's and their geographic apportionment and potentially IFQ's. It would be preferable to make changes in technology when the status of the population is considered to be stable.

The increase in costs to our Center resulting from an elimination of the cooperative survey could be as high as $500 K. The exact cost cannot be determined without going through the vessel charter procurement process to add sea days to sample the standard longline survey stations in the eastern Bering Sea and

Aleutian Islands. Our best estimate of the ex-vessel value of the catch for the 69 standard Bering Sea/Aleutian stations at current abundance level or catch rate is on the average $6 K per station or one third of that in the Gulf. If we were to add 60 to 70 vessel days to the domestic vessel charter, it would be my opinion that we would have to supplement the daily charter costs by as much as $6 K to come close to matching the vessel's opportunity costs. This totals to $360 - $420 K in charter costs which would have to come from programmatic funds. Our labor costs for staffing the vessel would have a marginal increase of about $50 K. Our gear loss at the Bering Sea and Aleutian Island stations would be expected to increase considerably given the slope and current conditions of the area. I estimate that additional gear maintenance and replacement cost would be at least $50 K annually.

Based on the above, our group recommends that we maintain the existing two vessel survey strategy for now. If the financial and manpower resources are available to replace the cooperative survey, it may be better to commit these funds to other surveys or research needs rather than to replace the existing cooperative survey which is done for little cost to the Center. Although the replacement of the cooperative survey is a reasonable goal, this is not the time given the above arguments, but we should re-evaluate this decision in the future, particularly if circumstances change or we get new or updated information.

cc. W. Aron
S. Pennoyer
H. Zenger
M. Sigler
S. Lowe
R. Methot
D. Somerton

Alaska Groundfish Data Bank

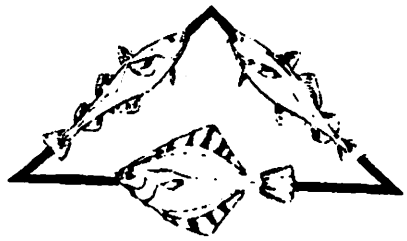
AGENDA D-2(d)
SUPPLEMENTAL

TO: RICK LAUBER, CHAIRMAN
NORTH PACIFIC FISHERY MANAGEMENT COUNCIL

RE: BERING SEA POLLOCK "B" SEASON OPENING DATE

DATE: JAN. 10, 1992

SENT BY FAX: 2 PP



BERING SEA OPENING DATES SEVERELY IMPACT GOA POLLOCK FISHERY

The members of the Alaska Groundfish Data Bank's primary concern with the Bering Sea pollock "B" season opening date is effect on the Gulf of Alaska pollock fishery.

As was demonstrated in October 1991, if a Gulf of Alaska pollock fishery opens when the Bering Sea is not open, the amount of effort moving into the Gulf from the Bering Sea creates an unmanageable fishery. The fourth quarter Gulf fishery lasted four days and left 7,000 MT (7% of the total quota) on the grounds.

Further, the necessity for tight monitoring of this pulse fishery made 100% observer coverage necessary for all vessels participating. For a number of smaller Gulf trawlers, built for the Gulf's small quotas, the cost of 100% observer coverage was prohibitive and they did not fish the fourth quarter pollock season. The larger Gulf trawlers did fish, but again the observer costs were substantial.

GULF POLLOCK FISHERY APPEARS LOCKED INTO FOUR QUARTERLY OPENINGS

At least until the sea lion population makes a substantial recovery it appears that the Gulf of Alaska is locked into four quarterly pollock openings with a limitation on the amount of fish which can be rolled over from one quarter to the next.

We understand the importance of these restrictions and also realize it will take at least four years, if the pollock fishery is a contributor to the sea lion decline, before we will know if the restrictions are effective.

We are certainly willing to consider other options for management of the Gulf pollock fishery to make changing the opening date of the Bering Sea "B" season feasible and still maintain synchronous Bering Sea/Gulf of Alaska pollock openings -- but we haven't been able to think of any alternative management schemes that will give sea lions as much protection as the current management scheme.

Even with the current Bering Sea "B" season opening date the Gulf second quarter pollock opening has to be delayed until June 1. Fortunately second quarter is in the spring and the delay until June 1 actually creates an April-May window when the sea lions are arriving on the rookeries and does not impact the critical winter feeding period.

Chris Blackburn • Director • P.O. Box 2298 • Kodiak, Alaska 99615 • (907) 486-3033 • FAX (907) 486-3461

AGDB COMMENTS ON BS "B" SEASON DATE - PAGE 2 OF 2

PROTECTION OF THE GULF FROM INFLUX OF BERING SEA EFFORT APPEARS THE ONLY ALTERNATIVE

The only realistic approach we can think of which will allow a delay of the Bering Sea pollock "B" season past June 1 is some type of prohibition which prevents motherships and factory trawlers from moving into the Gulf during the period from June 1 to the Bering Sea "B" season opening.

The Inshore/Offshore allocation would accomplish this, as would some type of exclusive registration. Within the catcher-boat fleet an inshore/offshore allocative method is less restrictive as it allows vessels to change processors. Exclusive registration would prevent a catcher-boat which had fished the Bering Sea from switching to the Gulf to replace a catcher-boat which was unable to complete its commitment to a processor.

The potential for an influx of effort from Dutch Harbor shorebased processors has been greatly reduced by the three-area quota system and will be further reduced when the Aleutian District boundaries are redrawn to reflect the fact that Aleutian stocks move back and forth through the passes and do not stay on one side or the other of the Aleutian/Gulf line.

We thank you for the opportunity to comment on this issue.

Sincerely,

Chris Blackburn, Director
Alaska Groundfish Data Bank

HFI FOODS, INC.

17360 N.E. 67th Court
Redmond, Washington 98052

Tel: 206-885-3358
Fax: 206-881-5946

Courtesy Copy
Previously Sent
By Telecopy

January 13, 1992

North Pacific Fishery Management Council
605 West 4th Avenue
Anchorage, Alaska 99501

Dear Council Members:

HFI Foods, Incorporated is a food manufacturing facility with plants in Redmond, Washington and Raleigh, North Carolina. Our primary product is crab analogue which uses surimi as its primary ingredient. We want to make several comments regarding a delayed Pollock "B" season.

A delayed opening in 1992 would be catastrophic. It is impossible for us to buy enough surimi in the "A" season to last until four weeks after the delayed opening date. This four weeks allows for transportation from Dutch Harbor to Seattle or Tacoma.

If you tell us now that you will delay the "B" season 1993 until August 20, 1993 we can try to buy our needs during the "B" season 1992 and the "A" season 1993. If you do not give our industry an adequate amount of time to buy the needed material you will cause us to temporarily down size our organizations to adjust for the supply shortage.

We are against any change in the "A" and "B" seasons unless it can be justified on a biological basis. When you delay the season from June, you cause us to spend more money for storage, to commit operating cash sooner than is needed, and to store surimi for a longer time than would be necessary under a June 1 scenario. All of these issues tend to put us in a less favorable position as it relates to the capture of the consumer's dollar.

In conclusion it is our belief at HFI Foods, Incorporated that it would be a serious mistake to fix something that isn't broken. If you find that compelling biological evidence requires you to make a change then do so. However, keep in mind that proper timing is imperative. We must have time to buy what we need to last us through the closed season.

Thank you for your time.

Sincerely,

Al Womac

Al Womac
Purchasing Manger
HFI Foods, Inc.

AW:jc/079/92