

North Pacific Fishery Management Council

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COUNCIL COMPLETES FIVE-DAY MEETING & SETS SIGHTS ON DECEMBER

At its September 25-29 meeting, the Council successfully completed its agenda, recommended initial 1991 groundfish specifications, approved a crab overfishing definition, identified several groundfish amendment proposals for analysis, took several emergency actions, and determined its work priorities for the rest of this year and into 1991. The Council anticipates that its December meeting will be another long one when it will review the status of stocks, determine the final 1991 groundfish harvest levels and industry apportionments, and possibly revisit the sablefish limited access issue. Actions at the September meeting are summarized in this newsletter.

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Council Chairman and Vice-Chairman Unanimously Reappointed

By unanimous consent, Council members reappointed Don Collinsworth and Bob Alverson to their second one-year term as Chairman and Vice Chairman, respectively. Mr. Collinsworth, Commissioner of Alaska Department of Fish and Game, has served on the Council as an alternate or designated representative since 1978. Mr. Alverson, Executive Director for the Fishing Vessel Owners Association, was appointed to the Council in 1988 after serving on the Advisory Panel since its inception in 1978.

Scientific and Statistical Committee and Advisory Panel Nominations Due

The one year-terms of the Council's Scientific and Statistical Committee (SSC) and Advisory Panel (AP) members expire in December. Resumes for persons wishing to be considered for SSC or AP membership should be sent to the attention of Judy Willoughby, North Pacific Fishery Management Council, P.O. Box 103136, Anchorage, AK 99510, to arrive no later than 5:00 p.m., November 9, 1990. Appointments will be announced at the Council's December 3-7 meeting at the Hilton Hotel in Anchorage, and will become effective in January 1991.

Moratorium News

Scoping and Control Date Notices Published in The Federal Register

Two notices were published in the Federal Register since the last Council meeting. The first, published on August 24, 1990 (FR 34724), noticed the public of the intent of the Council to prepare a supplemental environmental impact statement and requested scoping comments regarding a moratorium on new entry into fisheries off Alaska. The second, published on September 5, 1990 (FR 36382), notified the public of the Council's intent to develop measures to limit access to the groundfish, crab and halibut fisheries off Alaska, and to establish a control date of September 15, 1990 for entry into the fisheries. Vessels entering the fisheries after September 15, 1990 will not be assured of future access to the fisheries if a moratorium is imposed. However, "due consideration" will be given to vessels that harvest or process fish before January 15, 1992, if either:

- (1) they were under construction, reconstruction, or under contract for construction, reconstruction or purchase as of September 15, 1990, for purposes of participating in the fisheries; or
- (2) they were under written option or contract for purchase, or written contract for construction or reconstruction before September 15, 1990, but that option or contract was canceled because of the previously proposed January 19, 1990 control date, provided these vessels are placed again under written contract for such activities by January 1, 1991.

Scoping Period on Moratorium Ends

The public scoping period on the proposed moratorium began with scoping sessions in Seattle and Kodiak and ended on September 28 at the Council meeting. Much of the industry's concern focused on vessel replacement and whether purchases planned under existing capital construction funds would be limited under the proposed moratorium. Written comments were sent in also. All comments will be considered as the Council further develops the moratorium.

Fishery Planning Committee to Develop Moratorium Alternatives

The Council asked the Fishery Planning Committee to develop specific alternatives on the moratorium issue and to report back at the April 1991 meeting. No staff will be available to begin analysis until then. In anticipation of that analysis, the Council is requesting information on vessels which are considered in the "pipeline." The "pipeline" would include all vessels "under construction, reconstruction, or under contract for construction, reconstruction or purchase as of September 15, 1990," and are intending to participate in fisheries under the jurisdiction of the North Pacific Fishery Management Council. Vessels which have made landings in these fisheries before September 15, 1990, are considered existing vessels and need not submit information. The Council requests that if you think a vessel is in the pipeline, you send in your name, address, telephone number, and the number of vessels you think may be affected. Submission of such information is voluntary and not required for eligibility, but could help greatly in the development of the analysis. All submissions will be kept confidential. Please send the information to: NPFMC, P.O. Box 103136, Anchorage, AK 99510, ATTN: Pipeline.

Future Management Planning

Last June the Council tabled a motion to adopt a sablefish fixed-gear individual fishing quota (IFQ) management system. It was taken from the table at this meeting and tabled until the upcoming December meeting. The Council did not discuss limited access in any of the other groundfish, halibut, or crab fisheries. Such discussions are unlikely until decisions are reached concerning sablefish IFQs and the moratorium. The Fishery Planning Committee is not scheduled to meet between now and the December meeting.

Observer Program Refined for 1991

The Council approved regulatory changes to the NMFS Observer Plan for 1991. In general, the program has been running smoothly for the first year, but some problems have been identified by managers and the public. The regulatory changes will:

- (1) Delete the 1,000 to 10,000 mt and the 10,000 mt and over annual thresholds for requiring observers in shorebased processing plants, but retain the monthly thresholds of 500 mt for 30% coverage and 1,000 mt for 100% coverage;
- (2) Extend observer requirements of shorebased processors to mothership processors and floating processors; and
- (3) Require vessel operators in the groundfish fishery to allow their vessel's observed bycatch rates of prohibited species to be released publicly.

The Council also considered extending the vessel size category for 30% coverage from 60'-124' down to 54'-124'. However, preliminary catch data show that vessels 60 ft. and larger take 97-98% of the total catch and vessels 54-59' only about 1-2%. Requiring 30% coverage on the smaller vessels would place a disproportionate financial burden on them per weight of groundfish landed. Therefore, the Council did not expand the size category but did request some coverage of these smaller vessels to determine their bycatch levels in 1991.

The Council also considered whether to recommend expanding the federal observer program to the Bering Sea crab fisheries. Currently, the State of Alaska manages an observer program which focuses primarily on catcher/processor and processor operations. Following a review of the state program, the crab data collected and existing limitations of NMFS, the Council recommended that the federal program continue emphasizing groundfish and not be expanded to other fisheries.

Inshore-Offshore Update

The Council received a status report from its analytical team on progress on the amendment analysis. A comprehensive economic survey has been distributed to all permit holders of groundfish catcher boats, mothership processors, catcher/processors, and shorebased processing plants. Responses from the survey are beginning to arrive. The questionnaire deadline was October 6. [For those fishery participants who did not receive a questionnaire and would like one, please contact the Council office.] Analysts are currently developing the tools needed to process the economic information to fully evaluate the benefits and costs of inshore-offshore allocations on the groundfish fishery.

The Council voted to delete the Bering Sea Pacific cod fishery from the inshore-offshore amendment analysis. The analysis will thus focus on the Gulf of Alaska pollock and Pacific cod fisheries and the Bering Sea/Aleutian Islands pollock fishery. The Council also endorsed the addition of Ballard, Washington, as a component to the social impact analysis. This district of Seattle, along with St. Paul, Unalaska, Sand Point, and Kodiak (Alaska), Bellingham (Washington), and Newport (Oregon) will serve as the basis for the social impact evaluation of inshore-offshore allocation on fishing communities.

In reviewing all of the issues before the Council this year, inshore-offshore allocation remains a high priority. The Council has dedicated much of its available staff and resources to fully evaluate the allocation alternatives and complete the amendment package for public review by April 1991. With this work schedule, a final Council decision on inshore-offshore could occur at the June 1991 meeting.

Inshore-Offshore Survey Needs You!

The Council and NMFS are conducting a survey of all participants active in the groundfish fisheries off Alaska at any time during the period January 1, 1989 to June 30, 1990. Separate questionnaires concerning this activity have gone out to all segments of the industry: shoreside and at-sea processors, catcher/processors, and catcher boats. The main focus of this collection is to aid in the analysis of the inshore-offshore issue before the Council.

By now, all participants should have received the voluntary questionnaire. The announced deadline for responses was October 6 and completed questionnaires are requested as soon as possible. If you have not received a survey form, and you were active either in the harvesting or processing of groundfish during the survey period, please contact the Council offices; we will gladly send you the appropriate survey form. Any questions or requests should be directed to Marcus Hartley or Dick Tremaine. The Council's address and phone number are: P.O. Box 103136, Anchorage, AK 99510, (907) 271-2809.

Halibut Regulatory Proposals

The Council considered eighteen proposals submitted for allocative changes in the halibut fishery off Alaska. Tasking decisions were made considering the overall workload and Council priorities. The Council will address allocative concerns expressed by the Pribilof Islands by maintaining the existing 10,000-lb. trip limits all season in Area 4C and requesting that the International Pacific Halibut Commission (IPHC) set Area 4C openings concurrent with other fixed gear fisheries in the region to distribute the fleet more widely. For Area 4E around Nelson and Nunivak Islands, the Council requested IPHC to separate that area from the Bristol Bay fishery and set seasons and quotas for each area as appropriate. The 6,000-lb. trip limits would continue in Area 4E. Other proposals were not addressed because of staff limitations.

Salmon Overfishing Definition

The Secretary of Commerce has set a deadline of November 23, 1990 for all Regional Councils to submit an overfishing definition for any fishery for which it has a Fishery Management Plan. While the North Pacific Fishery Management Council does have a Salmon FMP, it has deferred regulation of that resource to the State of Alaska, while maintaining oversight. Consistent with this deferral, the Council will request the Secretary to waive the requirement for an overfishing definition for salmon. The Council notes that the policies and regulations of the State of Alaska and the Pacific Salmon Commission, who share stewardship of this resource, are more conservative than those required under NOAA guidelines; therefore, it is unnecessary to amend the Salmon FMP to include an overfishing definition.

Crab Overfishing Definition Approved

The Council approved a definition of overfishing for crab stocks off Alaska as harvesting at a rate which exceeds the rate that produces maximum sustainable yield. How the definition is applied will depend on the amount of data available for each of the seventeen king and Tanner crab stocks in the Bering Sea/Aleutian Islands area:

- (1) Data Level 1: Historical catch, sporadic inseason catch and effort data, and mortality.
Overfishing for stocks with level 1 data is defined as a fishing mortality rate in excess of F_{msy} where the maximum allowable fishing mortality rate is estimated to equal the natural mortality rate of mature male crab. Inseason fishing mortality rate may be based on a change in the inseason ratio of catch per unit effort (CPUE) of legal crab to CPUE of mature male crab, or a proportionate reduction in average weekly CPUE.

Bristol Bay brown king crab, Pribilof brown king crab, St. Lawrence blue king crab, Pribilof red king crab, Northern District brown king crab, and Adak C. bairdi Tanner crab are in this category. These stocks have intermittent fisheries and no assessment surveys. General mortality estimates for these stocks are based on mortality rates of the better known Bristol Bay red king crab and Eastern Bering Sea C. bairdi Tanner crab stocks.

- (2) Data Level 2: Historical catch, continuous inseason catch and effort data, and mortality. Overfishing for stocks with level 2 data is defined as a fishing mortality rate in excess of F_{msy} where the maximum allowable fishing mortality rate is estimated to equal the natural mortality rate of mature male crab. Inseason fishing mortality rate may be based on inseason CPUE and cumulative catch of legal male crab.

Adak brown king crab, Adak red king crab, Eastern Aleutian brown king crab, and Eastern Aleutian C. bairdi crab stocks are in this category. These stocks have directed fisheries but no assessment survey. As with Category 1 stocks, mortality estimates will be based on better known Bristol Bay red king crab and Eastern Bering Sea C. bairdi Tanner crab stocks.

- (3) Data Level 3: Historical catch, continuous inseason catch and effort data, stock assessment, stock-recruitment, growth, maturity, and mortality parameters. Overfishing for stocks with level 3 data is defined as a fishing mortality rate in excess of F_{msy} where the maximum allowable fishing mortality rate for these stocks cannot exceed F_{msy} estimated as $F_{0.1}$, based on the size of first maturity for male crabs. Guideline harvest levels are estimated annually for level 3 stocks, therefore the fishing mortality rate is established prior to a fishery.

Eastern Aleutian red king crab, Bristol Bay red king crab, Pribilof blue king crab, St. Matthew blue king crab, Norton Sound red king crab, Bering Sea C. bairdi Tanner crab, and C. opilio Tanner crab are in this category. These stocks have both a directed fishery and an assessment survey.

Though the definition recommended by the Council has no population threshold below which fishing is not allowed, harvest limits still may be reduced for crab stocks in poor condition. The constant fishing mortality rate, F_{msy} , in the definition is simply an upper bound which defines overfishing. Managers have the flexibility to reduce that rate if a stock is in poor condition.

Amendment 16a Approved

The Council approved Amendment 16a to the Bering Sea/Aleutian Islands groundfish plan addressing crab, halibut and herring bycatch in the BSAI. Amendment 16a, when approved by the Secretary of Commerce, will:

1. establish in-season authority for the Regional Director to temporarily close statistical areas, or portions thereof, to reduce high prohibited species bycatch rates,
2. authorize the Regional Director, in consultation with the Council, to set a limit on the proportion of the pollock TACs that may be taken with other than pelagic trawl gear,
3. maintain the halibut, red king crab, and C. bairdi Tanner crab PSC limits established under Amendment 16, and
4. establish a framework for determining the annual herring PSC limit at 1% of the estimated herring biomass. The herring PSC cap may be apportioned among fisheries expected to take herring as bycatch and attainment of a herring PSC apportionment would trigger trawl closures in the Herring Savings Areas along the north side of the Alaska Peninsula and northwest of the Pribilofs as depicted in Figure 1.

New Bycatch Incentive System to Be Developed on the Fast-Track

The Council heard a report from NMFS that the "penalty box" incentive system to reduce PSC bycatch rates in the groundfish fisheries could not be implemented as envisioned for 1991. Specific hurdles which could not be overcome in the short term included timely verification of observer data, statistical problems with basing performance standards on a moving fleet average, ineffectiveness of vessel suspensions as sanctions given inevitable time delays, and technical, administrative and data constraints. NMFS suggests that the portion of Amendment 16/21 addressing the penalty box concept for the BSAI and GOA be disapproved, thus clearing the way for a fast-track replacement program to be developed and implemented in early 1991. Recommended features of this alternative program include performance standards based on 1990 observed DAP fisheries and historical JVP fisheries data, and after-the-fact monetary sanctions against vessels found to have fished with excessive bycatch rates. Possible penalties include warnings, permit sanctions, civil penalties of up to \$25,000 for each violation, or even vessel forfeiture. Final Council action on the alternative incentive program is expected at the December meeting.

Extension of Emergency Rules

The Council recommended that the Secretary of Commerce extend until the end of the 1990 fishing year the emergency rule for the Gulf of Alaska which exempts pot gear, certain hook and line gear, and the Southeast Alaska demersal shelf rockfish fishery from the halibut PSC limit. Next year pot gear fisheries will receive their own halibut PSC apportionment as authorized by Amendment 21.

The following interim pelagic trawl definition also will be extended in the emergency rule:

"(a) a trawl which has stretched mesh size openings of at least 1 meter, as measured diagonally from knot to knot when opposite sides of the mesh are brought together, starting at the fishing line and extending aft for a distance of at least 10 meshes and going around the entire circumference of the trawl, and which webbing is tied to the fishing line with no less than 0.3 meter (12 inches) between knots around the circumference of the net; or, (b) a trawl with parallel lines with spaces of at least 1 meter, starting at the fishing line and extending aft for a distance of at least 10 meters and going around the entire circumference of the trawl."

The Secretary of Commerce is reviewing Amendment 16/21 which includes a pelagic trawl definition. This definition is the same as the emergency/interim definition except that it also "prohibits the use of plastic discs, bobbins, rollers, or other chafe-protection gear attached to the foot rope". If approved, this revised definition could be implemented in January 1991. The Council offered the following changes to the definition:

"a trawl which has stretched mesh size openings of at least 64 inches or parallel lines with spaces of at least 64 inches, starting at any point on the fishing line, head rope, and breast line and extending aft for a distance of at least 10 meshes from the fishing line and going around the entire circumference of the trawl, and which is tied to the fishing line with no less than 20 inches between knots around the circumference of the net, and which does not have plastic discs, bobbins, rollers, or other chafe-

protection gear attached to the foot rope, and which contains no inserts or collars or other methods intended to reduce the mesh size of the forward section, and which may have weights on the wing tips."

In addition to the above specifications, the Council requested NMFS to develop a performance-based definition of pelagic trawl, such as a limit on the bycatch rate of a PSC species, as part of the amendment package addressing the bycatch incentive program. This particular package will be brought back to the Council for review and approval in December.

Council Requests Emergency Reallocation of Flatfish to Pollock

The Council requested the Secretary of Commerce to respecify the total allowable catch (TAC) for Bering Sea/Aleutian Islands groundfish to make yellowfin sole and other flatfish, originally allocated to joint ventures but uncaught because of halibut bycatch, available as pollock to the total domestic (DAP) fishery at levels not to exceed the pollock acceptable biological catch. This transfer is consistent with the ecosystem basis for managing the Bering Sea and Aleutians groundfish resource as a complex, with the harvest yield for all species combined not to exceed 2 million metric tons. Proponents said this action was necessary because the pollock fishery will soon close upon attainment of the current TAC. It will also provide incentive to U.S. vessels not to head to the Central Bering Sea outside the U.S. 200-mile limit to fish pollock.

Status of Regulatory Amendments

The Council voted to proceed with development of regulatory amendments on sablefish seasons in the Gulf of Alaska and a ban on longlining of groundfish pots in the Gulf and Bering Sea. The Gulf of Alaska sablefish season now opens on April 1. These alternative opening dates will be analyzed: (1) April 1, with a Gulfwide closure when the Eastern Gulf closes and a reopening of the Western and Central Gulf areas on July 1, (2) May 1, and (3) June 1. The analysis will be completed for Council action in January and could affect the 1991 fishery. The season change could affect allocations of halibut PSC by fishery and season and the Council requests public comment on that issue.

Groundfish pots now can be fished on longlines and there have been a number of reports of gear conflicts between pot fishermen and trawlers. The Council requested NMFS to analyze a requirement that groundfish pots be fished on single lines for (a) the Bering Sea and Aleutians and Gulf of Alaska, and (b) just the Gulf of Alaska. The Council's final decision will be in December.

A regulatory amendment which would allow the apportionment of longline halibut PSC to species-specific fisheries in the Gulf of Alaska was put on hold pending development of other items of higher priority.

Recordkeeping and Reporting Requirements

A regulatory amendment is near completion which will allow implementation of the following changes to the existing recordkeeping and reporting requirements:

New reporting requirements: (1) Groundfish processors would be required to submit daily production reports, when requested to do so by the NMFS Regional Director, in order to allow inseason managers to more closely monitor groundfish harvests, and (2) Shoreside processing facilities would be required to submit a check-out report to notify the Regional Director of the date that the facility ceased to receive groundfish for either an intermittent period or for the year, whichever is applicable.

Revisions to existing requirements: (1) the time period that groundfish processors would have to submit weekly production reports would be reduced from one week to 48 hours after a week ending date (and this changed from midnight Saturday to midnight Sunday), (2) Add a new field to the daily logbook which would allow for recording whether or not an observer was onboard each day of a fishing trip or present each day a processor received or processed groundfish. Add a new field to the logbook requiring catcher vessels to record, upon offloading groundfish, the identification of the processor and the ADF&G fish ticket number for each delivery, and (3) Other industry recommended changes, including: 11 X 14 inch format; allow catcher vessels to record information on gear retrieval on same logbook page as gear deployment; allow for recording the code for the target species; provide space for catcher vessels to maintain cumulative discard amounts for each trip and for processors to separate vessel discards from discards due to processing operations; allow catcher vessel operators to remove original logbooks from a vessel provided all fish recorded in that logbook are offloaded from the vessel, and the operator submits copies of the logbook to NMFS within 7 days.

Miscellaneous changes: (1) Deletion of statistical areas 621 and 631 and redesignation of the Shelikof District from 620 to 621, and (2) Products produced from the retained catch within the "other species" category would be reported separately for each species group, rather than for the category as a whole.

OMB review and clearance of the revised logbook forms before January 1, 1991 will not be possible. Revised logbooks will be issued with groundfish permits, but enforcement of the new recordkeeping requirements will not begin until OMB has approved the revised forms.

Groundfish Specifications: Council Seeks Comments

The Council established preliminary groundfish total allowable catches (TAC) for the 1991 groundfish fisheries, of which 25% of each species will initially govern the fisheries that begin January 1, 1991. Final specifications for next year will be published after the Council meets in December.

Because Bering Sea/Aleutian Islands (BSAI) and Gulf of Alaska (GOA) groundfish surveys lasted well into the summer, new survey data were not available to reassess the status of stocks. The preliminary Stock Assessment and Fishery Evaluation (SAFE) documents now available have not been revised from last December and the preliminary specifications of TAC and DAP for 1991 are, with the exception of Pacific cod in the Gulf of Alaska, the 1990 final specifications. BSAI preliminary specifications are presented in Tables 1 and 2; GOA specifications are presented in Tables 3 and 4.

Several factors need to be emphasized in considering these preliminary specifications. First, incorporation of new survey information and application of the overfishing definition adopted under Amendment 16/21 may change the final groundfish specifications. Second, Amendment 14/19 provided for seasonal apportionments of pollock in the Bering Sea/Aleutian Islands (BSAI). Pollock may be split into roe (January 1 - April 15) and non-roe (June 1 - December 31) seasons. For the preliminary specifications, the Council is publishing a 25/75 split. However, the Council will also consider splits of 40/60, 60/40, and other divisions recommended by the public in making its final decision. In the Western/Central Gulf of Alaska pollock will be apportioned quarterly.

The Council also has a number of decisions to make in December concerning management of prohibited species such as crab, halibut and herring. In the Gulf of Alaska, the Council has set a preliminary halibut mortality cap of 2,750 mt with 2,000 mt for trawlers, 700 mt for hook and line gear, and 50 mt for pot fishermen. The trawl and hook and line caps will be split 20-30-30-20 percent by quarter. The pot cap will be split 50-50 percent to each semester.

In the BSAI, PSC caps may be seasonally apportioned to five different bottom trawl fisheries. The Council is publishing preliminary groundfish apportionments without seasonal PSC allowances, but desires public comment on distribution of the PSC by fishery and season in the BSAI. The Council has requested NMFS to prepare the regulations necessary to allow any unused PSC to be rolled over into subsequent quarters.

Public comments will be accepted for 30 days following the publication of the preliminary groundfish specifications in the FEDERAL REGISTER. Comments should be sent to Steven Pennoyer, Regional Director, National Marine Fisheries Service, P.O. Box 21668, Juneau, AK 99802.

Comments may also be sent to the Council offices prior to November 16, 1990. Public testimony on the groundfish specifications and PSC apportionments will be taken at the December Council meeting.

Groundfish Plan Amendment Topics Chosen

After substantial discussion of priorities and work assignments already tasked, the Council chose to pursue the following topics for analysis as groundfish plan amendments on the 1991 cycle:

1. Delete reporting areas 621, 631 and 68 in the Gulf of Alaska;
2. Require species specific reports of all fish retained;
3. Adopt a biennial or triennial cycle for SAFE reports, and possibly a biennial cycle for groundfish plan amendments;
4. Define criteria to be used in considering the authorization of experimental fisheries; and
5. Re-authorize the seasonal trawl closures around Round Island, the Twins and Cape Peirce to protect walrus in the Bering sea in 1992 and beyond.

In addition, the Council agreed to pursue a redefinition of groundfish pots to make them uniquely different from crab pots. This can be accomplished by regulatory amendment once Amendment 16/21 is implemented. Several other topics, most notably bycatch management, had to be deferred until staff is available to perform the appropriate analyses. The staff will keep the Council posted on availability as tasks mandated by statute, regulation or prior Council action are accomplished.

TABLE 1
BERING SEA/ALEUTIAN ISLANDS GROUND FISH

Preliminary 1991 Council Recommendations for ABCs, TACs and Apportionments (metric tons)¹

Species	Area	ABC	TAC	Reserve (15%)	Seasons ²	Seasonal Allowances ³	DAP	JVP ⁴
Pollock	EBS	1,450,000	1,280,000	192,000	Roe (1/1- 4/15)	EBS 25%	272,000	0
	AI	153,600	100,000	15,000		AI 25%	21,250	0
					Non-Roe (6/1 -12/31)	EBS 75%	816,000	22,451
						AI 75%	63,750	0
Pacific cod		417,000	227,000	34,050			192,950	7,025
Yellowfin sole		278,900	207,650	31,148			12,750	163,753
Greenland turbot		7,000	7,000	1,050			5,950	1
Arrowtooth flounder		106,500	10,000	1,500			8,500	33
Rock sole		216,300	60,000	9,000			51,000	16,359
Other flatfish		188,000	60,150	9,023			10,200	40,927
Sablefish	EBS	2,700	2,700	405			2,295	1
	AI	4,500	4,500	675			3,825	
Pacific ocean perch	EBS	6,300	6,300	945			5,355	1
	AI	16,600	6,600	990			5,610	
Other rockfish	EBS	500	500	75			425	1
	AI	1,100	1,100	165			935	
Atka mackerel		24,000	21,000	3,150			17,850	0
Squid		10,000	500	75			425	0
Other species		55,500	5,000	750			4,250	1,834
TOTALS		2,938,500	2,000,000	300,000			1,485,320	204,680

¹ Preliminary specifications subject to change upon incorporation of 1990 groundfish survey data and application of overfishing definition.

² Seasonal allowances of pollock TAC are made after deduction for reserves.

³ The Council will consider other possible seasonal allowances of the pollock TAC including but not limited to 40:60 and 60:40.

⁴ Directed JVP fishing for yellowfin sole and other flatfish only; other JVP allocations are re-allocations from reserves as retainable bycatch.

TABLE 2**Preliminary Bering Sea/Aleutian Islands PSC Apportionments**

	DAP Midwater Pollock	DAP Other	DAP Deepwater Turbot/ Sablefish	DAP Rocksole	DAP Flatfish	JVP Flatfish	TOTAL
Halibut (mt)	--	3,053	440	681	69	1,090	5,333
<u>C. bairdi</u> , Zone 1 (#)	--	295,910	0	557,077	55,543	91,470	1,000,000
<u>C. bairdi</u> , Zone 2 (#)	--	1,886,864	224,520	288,275	364,920	235,421	3,000,000
Red King Crab, Zone 1 (#)	--	5,982	3	150,584	21,007	22,424	200,000
Herring (mt)	542	75	0	0	32	129	778

TABLE 3
GULF OF ALASKA GROUND FISH

Preliminary 1991 Council recommendations for ABCs and TACs (metric tons)

Species	Area	ABC	TAC	DAP	JVP
Pollock ¹	W/C	63,750	63,750	63,750	0
	Shellkof	6,250	6,250	6,250	0
	E	3,400	3,400	3,400	0
	Total	73,400	73,400	73,400	0
Pacific Cod	W	29,500	19,831	19,831	0
	C	59,500	39,997	39,997	0
	E	1,000	672	672	0
	Total	90,000	60,500	60,500	0
Flatfish, Deep	W	16,300	3,650	3,650	0
	C	77,700	15,300	15,300	0
	E	14,400	3,050	3,050	0
	Total	108,400	22,000	22,000	0
Flatfish, Shallow	W	30,200	3,570	3,570	0
	C	52,200	6,180	6,180	0
	E	2,100	250	250	0
	Total	84,500	10,000	10,000	0
Arrowtooth	W	27,000	4,450	4,450	0
	C	141,000	23,170	23,170	0
	E	26,600	4,380	4,380	0
	Total	194,600	32,000	32,000	0
Sablefish	W	3,800	3,770	3,770	0
	C	11,800	11,700	11,700	0
	W. Yakutat	4,600	4,550	4,550	0
	E. Yak./S.E. Out.	6,000	5,980	5,980	0
	Total	26,200	26,000	26,000	0
Rockfish (Slope)	W	4,300	4,300	4,300	0
	C	7,700	7,700	7,700	0
	E	5,700	5,700	5,700	0
	Total	17,700	17,700	17,700	0
Rockfish (Pelagic Shelf)	W	1,400	1,400	1,400	0
	C	5,800	5,800	5,800	0
	E	1,000	1,000	1,000	0
	Total	8,200	8,200	8,200	0
Rockfish (Demersal Shelf)	S.E. Out.	unknown	470	470	0
Thornyhead	G W	3,800	3,800	3,800	0
Other Species	G W	30,340	14,179	14,179	0
GULF OF ALASKA TOTAL		637,140	268,249	268,249	0

¹ The pollock TAC in the Western/Central Gulf will be divided into equal quarterly apportionments.

TABLE 4

GULF OF ALASKA GROUND FISH
Initial PSC limits for 1991 fishing year

TOTAL PSC LIMIT = 2750 METRIC TONS

	<u>Trawl Gear</u> <u>2000 mt</u>	<u>Hook and Line</u> <u>700 mt</u>	<u>Pot Gear</u> <u>50 mt</u>
1st quarter - 20% - 400 mt		20% - 140 mt	50% - 25 mt
2nd quarter - 30% - 600 mt		30% - 210 mt	
3rd quarter - 30% - 600 mt		30% - 210 mt	50% - 25 mt
4th quarter - 20% - 400 mt		20% - 140 mt	

Bering Sea Donut Policy

The Council adopted the following policy statement concerning fishing in the international waters of the Central Bering Sea (the donut hole):

Policy on Fisheries in the Central Bering Sea outside the U.S. EEZ

The Magnuson Act charges the North Pacific Fishery Management Council with conservation and management of fisheries resources off Alaska. Of particular importance is the groundfish complex of the Bering Sea and Aleutian Islands. Pollock is a major component of that resource, contributing almost two thirds of the annual harvest. The species ranges widely in the Bering Sea, well beyond the U.S. 200-mile Exclusive Economic Zone.

A major policy goal of the Council and the Magnuson Act during the 1980s was to develop U.S. fisheries and displace foreign fisheries from the U.S. EEZ. Foreign fisheries ended in the Gulf of Alaska in 1987 and in the Bering Sea and Aleutians in 1988. Unfortunately, foreign fleets of five countries displaced from the U.S. zone moved to the Central Bering Sea to fish pollock.

The Council has grave concerns with the potential consequences that unregulated foreign fisheries in the Central Bering Sea may have on pollock stocks within the U.S. EEZ. No pollock stock is unique to the Central Bering Sea international waters. Pollock found there originate from adjacent continental shelves. Reported catches of 1.4 million metric tons exceed the U.S. catch within 200 miles and do not include discards. These uncontrolled foreign harvests may threaten long-term conservation of the pollock resource.

The Council has urged the U.S. State Department to negotiate a ban on fishing outside 200 miles. The Council supports the efforts of the U.S.-USSR Intergovernmental Consultative Committee on Fisheries and the U.S. -Soviet Bering Sea Fisheries Advisory Body in developing fishery conservation and management options for pollock in the Central Bering Sea.

There have been recent reports of U.S. fishing operations on pollock and increasing interest in such activity in the Central Bering Sea. Though the Council encourages optimal utilization of available resources, the unknown impacts of such activity on U.S. stocks and the sensitive international situation regarding the uncontrolled foreign fisheries dictate conservative management for U.S. fisheries attempting to develop outside 200 miles. Therefore, the Council has adopted the following policy:

The North Pacific Fishery Management Council's policy is to strictly prohibit all fishing activity in the Central Bering Sea outside the U.S. EEZ, including by U.S. vessels. Such a prohibition supports the efforts of the Council and the United States in seeking a ban on unregulated foreign fisheries that may be adversely affecting pollock stocks within the U.S. EEZ. The Council requests that the Secretary of Commerce take all actions necessary to support this policy. All vessels operating in the international waters of the Central Bering Sea should be required to carry observers and adhere to appropriate reporting requirements.

1990 Eastern Bering Sea Crab Survey

NMFS reported to the Council on its 1990 eastern Bering Sea crab survey which covered an area of approximately 145,000 square nautical miles and virtually all commercial crab fishing grounds with the exception of golden king crab. Survey results are summarized below:

Red king crab, Bristol Bay and Pribilof Districts. There are an estimated 9.4 million legal male crabs, a decrease of 22% from 1989. This change is not statistically significant. No significant change was observed in numbers of pre-recruits and female crabs. The populations are below average and stable. A change in management strategy resulted in an increased harvest in 1990.

Blue king crab, Pribilof Islands. This population remains depressed, and the fishery is closed in 1990 as it was in 1989. There may be increases coming: legal males were estimated at 409,000, up a non-significant 80% from 1989. Pre-recruits were up significantly, and female crabs nearly doubled from last year, although this latter increase was not statistically significant.

Blue king crab, St. Matthew Island, Northern District. There are an estimated 1.66 million legal male crabs, an insignificant increase from 1989. No significant change in pre-recruits was observed, but female crabs dropped 88% in number. Blue king crab females apparently prefer rocky habitat which is poorly sampled by trawl gear. Therefore, the large changes in estimated numbers of female king crabs must be interpreted with caution. Overall, the population appears average in abundance and stable.

Tanner crab, *C. bairdi*, Eastern District. Estimated abundance of legal males was 45.2 million crabs, a non-significant increase of 34% from 1989. Pre-recruits and females both dropped in abundance, but not significantly. Overall, the population is judged to be high in abundance and may be leveling off. The fishery is increasing due to growth of pre-recruits into legal size categories.

Tanner crab, *C. opilio*, all districts. Large males increased to 420 million animals, a significant 125% jump over 1989. Pre-recruits and female crabs both decreased, but not significantly. The overall population is high and stable with substantial recruitment of juveniles into large sizes. The fishery is expected to improve dramatically in the near term.

Hair crab. There are an estimated 600,000 large males, an increase of 40% from 1989. Pre-recruits and female crabs also increased over last year, but not significantly. The population is above average and improving due to recent recruitment. The fishery is nonexistent.

Note: Estimated increases or decreases in abundance are generally qualified with the term significant or non-significant. The high variability in crab numbers caught in trawl surveys mandates that statistical tests be used to compare numbers from one year to the next. Some changes which appear large may not be statistically significant due to large variances in the data.

The detailed written report concerning crab resources is available from B.G. Stevens and R.A. MacIntosh at the Kodiak Island Laboratory, NMFS/NOAA, P.O. Box 1638, Kodiak, AK 99615.

NOTICE OF AVAILABILITY

NORTH PACIFIC FISHERY MANAGEMENT COUNCIL

GROUND FISH FISHERIES OF THE BERING SEA/ALEUTIAN ISLANDS AND GULF OF ALASKA

PRELIMINARY STOCK ASSESSMENT AND FISHERY EVALUATION REPORTS

The North Pacific Fishery Management Council announces the availability of preliminary Stock Assessment and Fishery Evaluation (SAFE) reports for the groundfish fisheries of the Bering Sea/Aleutian Islands and Gulf of Alaska for public distribution as of October 10, 1990. Trawl surveys in both the Bering Sea and the Gulf of Alaska lasted well into the summer of 1990 and the new survey data could not be incorporated into new stock status evaluations for the preliminary 1990 SAFE reports. Consequently, the preliminary SAFE reports consist principally of the executive summaries of the 1989 SAFE reports. The entire 1989 SAFE reports are available upon request. 1990 survey information will be incorporated into the final 1990 SAFE reports; these will be prepared in mid-November.

The documents will be accompanied by the Council's preliminary specifications, including prohibited species catch (PSC) apportionments, for the 1991 fisheries. The Council is interested in receiving public comment on the preliminary 1991 groundfish specifications and PSC apportionments. Under Amendment 16/21 to the groundfish fishery management plans, 25% of the preliminary specifications will carry forward into 1991 as interim specifications until the Council's final specifications are published in the FEDERAL REGISTER. Generally, this occurs in mid-January. The Council wishes to call the public's attention to the fact that new survey information and application of the overfishing definition adopted under Amendments 16/21 may cause the final groundfish specifications to differ considerably from the preliminary specifications.

The Council is particularly interested in public comment concerning the apportionment of the BSAI pollock TAC between the roe (January 1 - April 15) and non-roe (June 1 - December 31) seasons. A split of 25/75 has been published in the preliminary specifications. The Council will also consider splits of 40/60 and 60/40, as well as other splits suggested by the public, for the final specifications for the 1991 fisheries. The Council is also especially interested in receiving public comment concerning the seasonal allowances of crab and halibut PSC apportionments among five bottom trawl fisheries in the Bering Sea/Aleutian Islands. The preliminary specifications are published without suggested seasonal allowances. The Council also seeks public comments on the anticipated quarterly apportionment of pollock in the Gulf of Alaska.

Formal comments on the groundfish specifications, including PSC apportionments, will be accepted for 30 days following their publication in the FEDERAL REGISTER and should be sent to Steven Pennoyer, Regional Director, National Marine Fisheries Service, P.O. Box 21668, Juneau, AK 99802.