

North Pacific Fishery Management Council

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

#1-91

NEWSLETTER

1/23/91

Council Sets Work Plan for 1991

The North Pacific Fishery Management Council met January 15-16 in Anchorage and established a heavy work schedule for 1991. The Council will be considering a wide array of issues over the coming months including groundfish amendments, inshore-offshore allocations, limited access for sablefish and halibut, a moratorium on entry into all fisheries under Council jurisdiction, and a draft North Pacific Fisheries Research Plan, newly authorized by the Magnuson Act to recover costs of the observer program from industry. All will be on the agenda when the Council meets next on April 23-26 in Kodiak. The Council's Advisory Panel and Scientific and Statistical Committee probably will commence meeting on Sunday, April 21. Below are some of the highlights of last week's meeting.

In This Newsletter

Advisory Panel Elects New Officers	2
Inshore-Offshore Analysis on Schedule	2
Groundfish Amendments Analyzed for April	2
Council Approves Observer Fee Program for Fast Track	3
Moratorium and Sablefish and Halibut Limited Access	3
Donut Hole Activities Cause Concern	4
Fisheries Research Priorities for 1992	4
Upcoming Meetings	6

Tentative Council Meeting Dates for 1992-93

The Council approved the following tentative dates and locations for meetings in 1992 and 1993:

	<u>1992</u>	<u>1993</u>
Week of	January 13 (Portland)	January 11 (Anchorage)
	April 20 (Sitka) ANCHORAGE	April 19 (Anchorage)
	June 22 (Anchorage) SITKA	June 21 (Anchorage) UNDECIDED
	September 21 (Anchorage)	September 20 (Anchorage)
	December 7 (Anchorage)	December 6 (Seattle)

Advisory Panel Elects New Officers

The Advisory Panel elected John Woodruff as Chairman and Dave Fraser as Vice Chairman for 1991. Mr. Woodruff, Manager of Icicle Seafoods in Seward, Alaska, was appointed to the Advisory Panel in 1985 and has served as Vice Chairman since 1988. He also participates on the Council's Plan Amendment Advisory Group, Halibut Regulatory Amendment Advisory Group, and Data Committee. Mr. Fraser, a Washington trawler, was appointed to the Panel in 1989 and has participated in Advisory Panel/industry workgroups on bycatch issues, as well as serving on the Data Committee.

Inshore-Offshore Analysis on Schedule

The Council received a progress report from its analytical team on the analysis of the inshore-offshore allocation issue. All facets of the analysis, including the potential biological, economic, and social impacts of proposed alternatives, remain on schedule for presentation to the Council in April. The Fishery Planning Committee will meet twice to review preliminary results of the analysis and to provide further guidance. Meetings are scheduled for Wednesday, February 27, in Juneau and Tuesday, March 19, in Seattle. For more information on these meetings and on other Committee agenda items, contact Steve Davis at the Council office (907-271-2809).

Groundfish Amendments Analyzed for April

Several proposed groundfish amendments are being analyzed and will be available for initial Council review in April. They include measures to delete certain reporting areas in the Shelikof area of the Gulf of Alaska, a requirement for reports of all species caught, changes in the stock assessment and plan amendment schedules, criteria for defining experimental fisheries, protection for walrus near Round Island and Cape Peirce, a separate harvest limit for pollock in the Bogoslof area, an exemption for minor species from the overfishing definition, and a regulatory amendment to define pot gear that may be used for groundfish, but not crab. These proposed amendments will be available for public review in May and final Council action in June. If approved, the amendments will take effect in 1992.

As workloads permit, several other issues may be analyzed this year to be effective in 1992. These include seasonal allocations of Pacific cod in the Bering Sea and Aleutians, a delay until June 1 of the second quarter pollock fishery in the Western and Central Gulf of Alaska, and further adjustments to the Council's program to reduce the bycatch of prohibited species such as halibut, crab, herring and salmon in the groundfish fisheries.

In more immediate action, the Council reaffirmed its December 1990 request for emergency action to divide the Bering Sea and Aleutians Pacific cod harvests into seasonal allowances. The Council expressed concerns that a rapid harvest of the resource early in the year may impact the productivity of the stocks, increase gear conflicts, diminish product quality, and increase costs of the product to consumers. If the Secretary approves the measure, 35% of the harvest will be available in the first quarter, 25% in the second, and 40% the rest of 1991.

Council Approves Observer Fee Program for Fast Track

On November 28, 1990 the President approved the Fishery Conservation Amendments of 1990 which reauthorized the Magnuson Fishery Conservation and Management Act. One amendment authorized the Council to develop a program to recover costs of implementing the federal observer program from industry. The Council and its Data Committee have reviewed the legislation and have initiated the preparation of a fee program for public review in April. The goal of the Council is to have a fair and equitable program in place by January 1, 1992. Fees collected from fishermen and processors will be used to meet the costs of stationing observers on vessels and at processing plants, inputting the collected data, and, if feasible, to generate funds necessary to establish a risk-sharing insurance pool to protect vessels, processing plants, and owners from the liability associated with the placement of observers.

Moratorium and Sablefish and Halibut Limited Access

Moratorium. The Council has tasked its Fishery Planning Committee to draft alternatives for a moratorium on entry into all fisheries under Council jurisdiction and come back with recommendations at the April Council meeting. If staff is available, analysis of the alternatives likely will occur over the spring and summer and initial review will be scheduled for September, with final action in December. Emergency action then could have the moratorium in place sometime in 1992. The Fishery Planning Committee will discuss the contents of the moratorium when it meets in Seattle on March 19.

Work on the moratorium began last year. A notice was published in the Federal Register on September 5, 1990 (FR 36382) notifying 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.

Both of the control dates for contracts, September 15, 1990, and January 1, 1991, have passed. It is unlikely that vessels contracted after January 1, 1991, will be allowed to participate in the fisheries during the four years of the moratorium that may commence in 1992. The Council has not specified yet how to treat replacements of vessels that are lost through fire or sinking. Those issues and others will be discussed at the Committee meeting on March 19 and the Council meeting the week of April 23.

Sablefish and Halibut. Sablefish limited access using individual fishing quotas (IFQs) is scheduled for initial review in April, final action in June, and, if approved, implementation in 1993. Several variations of IFQ systems, including one with an open access feature, will be analyzed for the April meeting. The Council is considering similar systems for halibut which will be reviewed by the Fishery Planning Committee at its February 27 meeting in Juneau. Initial Council review of halibut limited access is scheduled for June and final action for September 1991. If approved, the halibut system will be implemented along with sablefish in 1993.

Donut Hole Activities Cause Concern

Last September the Council adopted a policy strictly prohibiting all fishing activity in the Central Bering Sea (Donut Hole) outside the U.S. Exclusive Economic Zone, including by U.S. vessels, and requested that the Secretary of Commerce take all actions necessary to support the policy. At last week's meeting, the Coast Guard presented a detailed list of 250 foreign vessels that operated in the Donut Hole in 1990. They included 8 Chinese, 137 Japanese, 28 South Korean, 65 Polish, 8 Russian, 2 Panamanian, and 2 Indonesian ships. In addition, 18 U.S. vessels operated there in November and December.

The Council remains very concerned that these operations may be impacting pollock stocks in the U.S. zone and is pressing for a ban on all such harvests outside 200 miles. In April the Council will consider the preparation of appropriate plan amendments to regulate U.S. activities in the Donut Hole. Measures could range from disincentives to fish in the Donut, to managing such effort using harvest limits, observer requirements, real-time satellite vessel location devices, catch reporting, check in and out provisions, and prohibited species restrictions for bycatch of salmon and other species. Approved provisions could be in place as early as this fall using emergency action and for 1992 with a full plan amendment.

Fisheries Research Priorities for 1992

Each year the Council makes recommendations to the National Marine Fisheries Service on high priority fishery research needs for the North Pacific. The Council's recommendations are included in the NMFS budget planning process. The Council adopted the following priority research needs based on the SSC's recommendations:

1. Alaska Fishery Monitoring Data Entry, Storage and Analysis System
2. Expanded Ecosystem Studies
3. Critical Assessment Problems
 - a. Pollock Stock Structure, Assessment and Management
 - b. Groundfish Stock Assessment and Management
 - c. Crab Assessment and Management
 - d. Behavior of Fish to Fishing Gear
4. Expand Survey Activities in the Gulf of Alaska and Bering Sea/Aleutian Islands.
5. Socioeconomic Research and Regulatory Analysis

The Council also placed high priority on research on pollock stocks in the Western and Central Gulf of Alaska, and on studies of mortality of halibut and crab taken in groundfish trawls.

WORKSHOP ANNOUNCEMENT

INTERNATIONAL WORKSHOP ON BERING SEA POLLOCK ASSESSMENT

DATES: February 4-8, 1991
LOCATION: Alaska Fisheries Science Center
U.S. National Marine Fisheries Service
7600 Sand Point Way NE
Seattle, Washington

THEME OF THE WORKSHOP

This workshop was recommended at the International Pollock Symposium held in April 1990 at Khabarovsk, USSR. It was agreed that the United States will hold the stock assessment workshop in Seattle to address wide differences in estimates and views on the biomass and potential yield of pollock resources in the Bering Sea.

Fisheries scientists from Canada, Japan, Poland, the People's Republic of China, the Republic of Korea, the Union of Soviet Socialist's Republics, and the United States are invited and expected to attend.

The theme of the workshop is to gather scientists from these countries and bring together all the data for analyses at a single scientific forum to determine the biological status of pollock stocks in the Bering Sea, with particular emphasis in the Aleutian Basin. Fisheries and research data are expected to be integrated for analyses through several stock assessment computer models under various assumptions about biological parameters and stock inter-relationships.

The results from this workshop would contribute important information on the status of pollock stocks and impacts of exploitation by commercial fisheries.

Questions concerning this Workshop may be directed to:

*Dr. William Aron
Science and Research Director
Alaska Fisheries Science Center
7600 Sand Point Way NE
Seattle, Wa 98115-0070*

*Phone: (206) 526-4000
FAX: (206) 526-4004*

FIRST CLASS MAIL

**NORTH PACIFIC FISHERY
MANAGEMENT COUNCIL
P.O. BOX 103136
ANCHORAGE, AK 99510**

Upcoming Meetings

Meeting	Date/Time	Location
Int'l Pacific Halibut Commission Annual Meeting	Jan. 28-31, 1991	Vancouver, B.C. Canada
Bering Sea Pollock Stock Assessment Workshop	Feb. 4-8, 1991	Alaska Fisheries Science Center Seattle, WA
Pacific Salmon Commission Annual Meeting	Feb. 4-8, 1991	Bellevue, WA
Six Country Meeting on Bering Sea Donut Convention	Feb. 19-21, 1991	Washington, DC
NPFMC Fishery Planning Committee	Feb. 27, 1991	Juneau Airport Travelodge Juneau, AK
NPFMC Fishery Planning Committee	March 19, 1991	Alaska Fisheries Science Center Seattle, WA
Meeting of North Pacific Fishery Management Council, Advisory Panel, and Scientific and Statistical Committee	Week of April 21	Kodiak, AK