North Pacific Fishery Management Council

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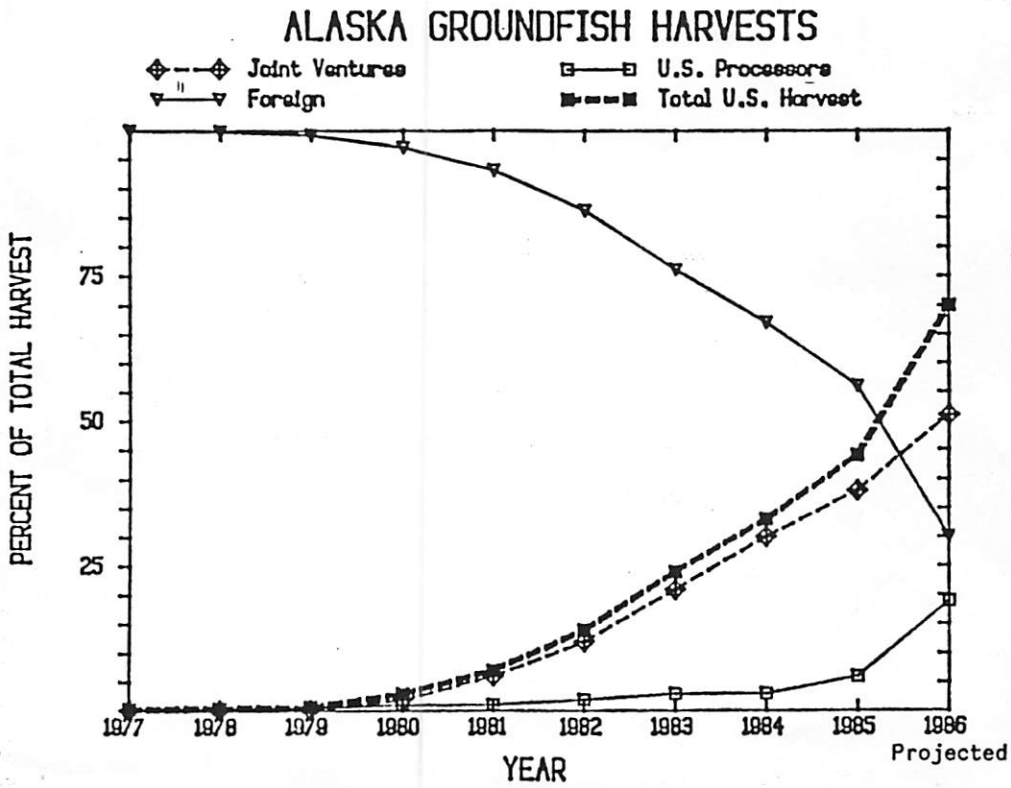
Stage Set for Banner Year in U.S. Groundfish Fisheries

Next year will be a milestone in the development of the U.S. groundfish fisheries off Alaska. For the first time U.S. harvesters will garner about 70% of the total groundfish catch, far exceeding that available to foreign fleets. U.S.-processed catch (DAP) should be triple the performance in 1985. Joint ventures (JVP) will break the one million metric ton mark.



These were the projections presented by U.S. fishermen and processors to the North Pacific Fishery Management Council meeting in Anchorage last week. It is estimated that U.S. industry will catch and process about 460,000 mt off Alaska. U.S. harvesters will deliver another 1.1 million metric tons to foreign processors. The total U.S. harvest of 1.5-1.6 million metric tons will be more than twice the tonnage available for foreign fisheries. The lion's share of the foreign fisheries will be in the Bering Sea management area; only a small foreign longline fishery for cod will be permitted in the Gulf of Alaska in 1986. Decisions made by the Council on groundfish and other issues for 1986 are detailed in the following articles.

Council to Meet Next in Sitka

The North Pacific Council will hold its next meeting January 15-17 at the Centennial Hall in Sitka. They will consider emergency actions to control crab and halibut interceptions by bottom trawlers in the Eastern Bering Sea and salmon and crab bycatch in the Gulf of Alaska. They will consider how to manage the harvest of the trawl share of sablefish in the Gulf of Alaska. The Council will review proposals for amendments to the Bering Sea/Aleutian Islands groundfish plan and determine which should be further developed by the Plan Team and presented at the March meeting. Final decisions on these proposed amendments will be made in May. There will also be staff reports on the salmon fisheries and Council review of regulatory actions taken by the Alaska Board of Fisheries concerning salmon off Southeast Alaska. Meetings of the Council's Scientific and Statistical Committee and Advisory Panel will be held on Monday and Tuesday, January 13-14.

Advisory Panel Appointments and Officers Announced

Chairman Campbell reappointed the existing Advisory Panel members for another year and appointed Rupe Andrews, a fishery consultant and outdoor writer living in Juneau, to fill the one opening on the Panel. Mr. Andrews previously worked in the Sport Fish Division for the Alaska Department of Fish and Game and has experience with both fresh and saltwater fisheries in Alaska.

The Panel re-elected Larry Cotter as Chairman and Bob Alverson as Vice-Chairman for 1986. Larry Cotter has been a member of the Advisory Panel since 1980 and is President of Local 200, International Longshoremen's and Warehousemen's Union in Juneau. Bob Alverson has been on the AP since 1976 and served as Chairman for five years. He is Manager of the Fishing Vessel Owners' Association in Seattle.

Crab/Halibut Proposals Go Out For Public Review

Last September the Council encouraged fishermen's groups to continue their efforts to find a mutually agreeable way to reduce the trawl bycatch of crab and halibut in the Eastern Bering Sea. By December no single proposal could be supported by all parties. However, all agreed that the bycatch of king crab was a critical conservation problem.

Based on industry testimony, the Council chose eleven alternative proposals to send out for public review. They range in severity from a closure of all trawling and crabbing in a large portion of the Southeastern Bering Sea to time-area closures that address only on-bottom trawling. The proposal package was mailed on December 17 and written public comment must be received by January 7, 1986. The Council intends to take final action for the 1986 fishery during their meeting in Sitka, January 15-17.

In the meantime the Council left the decision on closing the Bering Sea bairdi Tanner crab fishery scheduled to open January 15 up to the National Marine Fisheries Service and Alaska Department of Fish and Game. The Council's major concern was with the bycatch of king crabs.

Cut-off Date Accepted for Participation Credit in Hook-and-Line Sablefish Fishery

In approving Amendment 14 to the Gulf of Alaska Groundfish Fishery Management Plan the National Marine Fisheries Service offered to publish a notice in the Federal Register that anyone entering the Gulf of Alaska longline sablefish fishery after September 26, 1985 would not be assured of future participation should an access limitation system be implemented for that fishery. Last week the Council voted 7 to 4 to accept this offer and adopt the September 26, 1985 date. Over the coming months the Council will decide what further steps to take in sablefish management.

Council Sets 1986 Groundfish OYs, DAHs, TALFFs, and PSCs For the Gulf of Alaska

The Council revised harvest limits for most of the groundfish species in the Gulf of Alaska. Based on recent stock assessments, bycatch concerns and recommendations from industry and scientists, the Council adopted the following new optimum yields for 1986:

Species	1985	1986
Pollock	321,600 mt	166,600 mt
Pacific cod	60,000	75,000
Flounder	33,500	14,380
Pacific ocean perch	6,083	3,702
Sablefish	8,980	15,000
Other Species	22,430	14,656

The OYs for next year for each management area (Figure 1) are in Table 1 along with Council-approved estimates of the amounts of groundfish expected to be harvested by U.S. fishermen for U.S. processors (DAP), or sold over the side to foreign processors (JVP). The estimates are based on recent NMFS surveys of U.S. industry needs. DAP and JVP together equal the amount of fish required by U.S. fishermen. With optimum yield lower for most species and U.S. needs higher, and because of concern over bycatches of valuable species, the only foreign fishery allowed in the Gulf next year will be a longline fishery for Pacific cod during January-April. It may continue in the fall if a foreign allocation of cod remains.

U.S. demand for sablefish, Pacific ocean perch, and other rockfish, equals or exceeds the fish available for harvest and DAP estimates have been reduced to equal OY for these species. U.S. fishermen delivering to U.S. processors have priority and there cannot be any directed joint venture or foreign fishery on these fully U.S. utilized species.

The greatest OY change was for pollock which has declined in abundance since 1981. Scientists believe the pollock biomass will reach its lowest level in 1986 and then rebuild again over several years. This fluctuation in population size is common with most of the world's gadoid species. To protect the Shelikof Strait spawning stock, the OY for the Western and Central areas combined was reduced to 100,000 mt. The Council requested that the Shelikof Strait pollock roe fishery begin February 15 to encourage fishermen to explore outside of the Shelikof Strait area. A 50,000 mt exploratory fishery for

pollock January 15-April 10 outside of Shelikof Strait (see Figure 2) was established to determine if pollock concentrate elsewhere in the Western/Central Gulf. The April 10 cut-off for the "Outside Shelikof" fishery should minimize continued fishing mortality on the Shelikof stock as it disperses into the Western and Central Areas. This protection is essential if rebuilding is to occur beginning in 1987. Pollock harvested outside Shelikof Strait before January 15 will be counted against the Western/Central 100,000 mt OY. The Council recommended that the 20% reserves for the Outside Shelikof fishery be released by January 15. In the Eastern area, the OY remains at 16,600 mt.

Sablefish stocks have recovered and rebuilding is no longer necessary. The OY was increased to 15,000 mt and distributed among the five management districts based on the biomass distribution found in the 400-1,000 m depth zone.

In past years the Council has reduced the Pacific cod and flounder OYs well below their respective ABCs to minimize the incidental catch of halibut. However, with the recent implementation of a Prohibited Species Catch Limit (PSC) framework, the Council can control the incidental catch of halibut by setting an annual PSC. Presented with observer data indicating that halibut bycatch and mortality were highest in bottom-trawl flounder fisheries, the Council increased the Pacific cod OY to 75,000 mt to accommodate domestic and foreign requirements, but reduced the flounder OY to 14,380 mt, a level that would satisfy domestic industry needs. The rationale for decreasing the flounder OY was the insufficient amounts of pollock needed as bycatch in the flounder fishery and the high incidental catches of crab.

Pacific ocean perch is still depressed and shows no signs of rebuilding. Believing that *Sebastes aleutus* has the greatest chance of recovery, the Council set the Pacific ocean perch OY below the *S. aleutus* acceptable biological catch for rebuilding purposes.

With Amendment 14 implemented, the Council made use of the PSC framework by setting a bottom-trawl PSC catch limit for halibut of 1,885 mt for DAP fishermen and 322 mt for joint venture fishermen. Based on an analysis of halibut mortality rates associated with different modes of operations and observed bycatch rates, the Council believes that these catch limits will result in a total halibut mortality below the accepted maximum of 2,000 mt and maintain the halibut resource and directed fishery at its current high level. These limits provide adequate amounts of halibut for bottom trawl bycatch purposes while still allowing for significant growth in domestic groundfish fisheries beyond 1985 levels. If a halibut PSC limit is reached during the year, further on-bottom trawling will be prohibited unless new information is presented to the Regional Director indicating lower bycatch rates.

And finally, as last year, sablefish, Pacific ocean perch, and other rockfish were identified as fully U.S.-utilized fisheries. The Council recommends that an emergency rule be used to provide bycatch amounts of Pacific ocean perch and other rockfish to joint venture and foreign fisheries as necessary. The amounts needed can be subtracted from the buffer that exists between the optimum yield and acceptable biological catch levels for these species.

Total Allowable Catch for Bering Sea/Aleutians Again Set at 2 Million Metric Tons

Most groundfish stocks in the Bering Sea and Aleutian Islands remain healthy and the Council again set the total catch at 2.0 million mt, the maximum allowed by the fishery management plan. Catch levels were adjusted for various species within the groundfish complex and other changes were made as indicated in Table 2. The Council will manage Pacific ocean perch (*Sebastes aleutus*) separately from the four other species of red rockfish which will be transferred to the "Other Rockfish" complex. The two turbot species (Greenland turbot and arrowtooth flounder) will now be managed separately because the juvenile Greenland turbot population has declined substantially over the past few years and may be in jeopardy.

As shown in Table 2, joint ventures are projected to catch over 1 million metric tons or about 51% of the total harvest available. An additional 325,079 mt, mainly cod and pollock, will be U.S. harvested and processed.

Foreign Fishing Confined Mainly to Bering Sea

For 1986 directed foreign fishing in the Aleutians will be restricted to pollock; only small bycatches of U.S. fully-utilized species will be allowed. In the Bering Sea management area (Figure 3), pollock, flatfish and Pacific cod will be the main species available to foreign harvest. The Council recommended that about 21,980 mt of the cod TALFF be earmarked for a Japanese longline fishery north of 55°N and west of 170°W, ice conditions permitting.

Joint Ventures Approved for 1986

The Council reviewed 35 different joint venture operations proposing to harvest over 1.1 million mt in 1986. These operations represent partnerships between U.S. fishermen and six foreign countries including Japan, South Korea, the U.S.S.R, Taiwan, Poland and the People's Republic of China. Permit applications received at the Council meeting indicate the following tonnages of joint venture groundfish to be harvested in 1986:

Japan	582,500 mt	Taiwan	10,000 mt
Korea	252,950 mt	Poland	52,400 mt
U.S.S.R.	182,025 mt	China	35,000 mt

There are 12 different operations for Japan, 14 for Korea, 1 for the Soviet Union, 2 for Taiwan, 3 for Poland and 3 for the People's Republic of China. Because of the limited amounts of fish available to joint ventures in the Gulf for 1986 many of these operations will fish mainly in the Bering Sea and Aleutian Islands area. It is expected that by the January Council meeting the joint venture partners will have firmed up their plans for 1986. The Council will review these new estimated needs by area and consider bycatch restrictions for prohibited species and fully-U.S.-utilized groundfish species.

Council Voices Concern over High Seas Salmon Interceptions

Last week the Council unanimously recommended that no directed groundfish allocations be released to Japan in 1986 unless there is satisfactory progress in eliminating Japanese high seas interceptions of North American salmon and steelhead. The Council further recommended that the U.S. Dept. of State set aside 525,410 mt in unallocated TALFF which could be released to Japan on schedule if upcoming salmon negotiations proved successful.

The Council's action to restrict Japan's directed groundfish fisheries highlighted their grave concern over these interceptions. Japan is a major trading partner in Alaska fisheries products and the Council desires to maintain these good relations. However, the Government of Japan has yet to present a serious proposal to eliminate interceptions of North American stocks by its salmon fleet in the Fishery Conservation Zone, the Bering Sea, and other areas of the North Pacific. Their operations drastically impact fishermen from Alaska and the Pacific Northwest who depend on salmon resources for their livelihoods. The Council wants these interceptions terminated and a monitoring system established that will assure against any future interceptions by the Japanese salmon fleet.

Japan was among several countries vying for a share of the 682,350 mt groundfish expected to be available to foreign fishing next year. The amount set aside in unallocated TALFF for Japan (525,410 mt) is 77% of the total. The Council went on to recommend 22% (150,117 mt) for South Korea and 1% (6,824) for the People's Republic of China. No directed allocations were recommended for the Soviet Union, Taiwan or Poland.

Domestic Groundfish Processing Up For 1985

By mid-December U.S. industry harvested and processed about 105,000 mt of groundfish off Alaska. As shown below, Pacific cod accounted for nearly 52,000 mt, pollock for 35,000 mt and sablefish for nearly 15,000 mt.

	Eastern Gulf	Central Gulf	Western Gulf	Bering Sea	Aleutians	Total
Pollock	0	2,583	6,497	25,817	257	35,154
Sablefish	5,607	3,785	2,040	2,318	820	14,570
Pacific cod	58	893	778	44,386	5,792	51,907
Flounder	38	52	8	38	10	146
P. ocean perch	31	1	658	756	89	1,535
Rockfish	590	40	70	119	48	867
Other	76	22	175	479	4	756
Total	6,400	7,376	10,226	73,913	7,020	104,935

(All in round weight in metric tons)

These figures do not include joint venture harvests by U.S. trawlers delivering to foreign processing vessels in over-the-side sales off Alaska. This 105,000 mt domestic annual processed (DAP) harvest for 1985 is an increase over past years: 49,851 mt in 1984; 46,651 mt in 1983; 26,491 mt in 1982; 20,672 mt in 1981; 11,023 mt in 1980 and less than 10,000 mt in earlier years.

Joint Venture Update

The total joint venture catch off Alaska through mid-December was 879,882 mt. In the Gulf of Alaska joint venture trawlers harvested 237,354 mt pollock, 2,376 mt of flatfish, 2,248 mt Pacific cod, and 1,851 mt of Atka mackerel. In the Bering Sea and Aleutians, the harvest was 375,922 mt pollock, 171,819 mt flatfish including yellowfin sole, 40,840 mt Pacific cod, and 37,766 mt Atka mackerel.

During 1985 there were 28 different joint venture company arrangements employing over 100 U.S. trawlers off Alaska. This year's joint venture catch increased significantly over previous years: 581,168 mt in 1984; 350,901 mt in 1983; 179,556 mt in 1982; 95,501 mt in 1981; 33,425 mt in 1980 and 1,507 mt in 1979. Joint venture harvests probably will exceed one million metric tons in 1986.

Foreign Fisheries Update

By mid-December the foreign fleets in the Gulf of Alaska harvested 37,541 mt of groundfish, including 28,000 mt pollock and 9,000 mt cod. In the Bering Sea and Aleutians the foreign harvest was 933,919 mt, which included 741,228 mt pollock, 48,000 mt cod, 93,000 mt yellowfin sole, 24,000 mt other flatfish, and 21,000 mt turbots.

Enforcement Activities Reported by U.S. Coast Guard

Through December 1 Coast Guard enforcement effort off Alaska totaled 773 cutter days and 1,996 aircraft patrol hours covering over 7.5 million square miles of ocean. Since their last report to the Council in September Coast Guard efforts have resulted in one vessel seizure, three reports of violation, and six written warnings to foreign fishing vessels.

The Taiwanese processor GOLDEN DRAGON NO. 1 was seized on October 4 near Kodiak after boarding personnel found approximately 55 lbs of processed halibut and 150 lbs of processed and round sablefish secreted in the vessel's freezer holds. The vessel was assessed $100,000 of which $10,000 had to be paid before releasing the vessel. The remaining $75,000 is to be paid in three installments by the end of July 1986. The vessel will not be allowed to leave the FCZ until the full assessment is paid or an irrevocable letter of credit is provided.

The Coast Guard also reported that surveillance flights spotted four Taiwanese gillnet vessels near 47°30'N 160°15'E with salmon being processed on deck. A report with photographs provided to the State Department helped convince the American Institute of Taiwan to develop and enforce a mutually-agreeable high

seas gillnet fishery plan prohibiting gillnet vessels from fishing north of 35°N latitude. The Coast Guard made no further sightings of Taiwanese gillnet vessels.

Seven Coast Guard overflights in June and July sighted twelve Japanese gillnet vessels operating outside of agreed-upon areas for the Japanese high seas salmon fishery. Because of bad weather and several vessels covering their hull numbers, identifying the vessels was difficult. However, their description fits very closely the profile of the Japanese landbased salmon gillnet vessels. The Cutter JARVIS was diverted to this area but was unable to locate the vessels. Additional flights in late July produced no further sightings. Four flights and eleven cutter days were committed to observe the Japanese mothership gillnet fleet but no infractions were observed.

C130 flights were used last summer to monitor the high seas squid gillnet fleets from Japan, South Korea and Taiwan. Eleven missions were flown and with the exception of the Taiwanese vessels mentioned above and one Korean squid gillnet vessel, all vessels sighted were Japanese. Several were sighted north of the agreed-upon northern boundary for this fishery and some had obscured their hull markings. Photos were taken and forwarded to the State Department. The Coast Guard STORIS was diverted to the area but there was no evidence of salmon being caught or retained on the fifteen Japanese squid gillnet vessels boarded.

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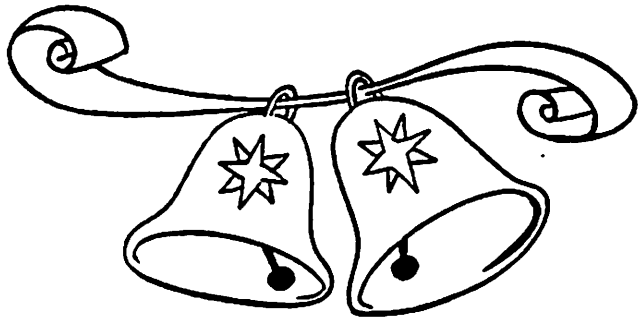
From the Council staff to all of you, HAPPY HOLIDAYS!!!



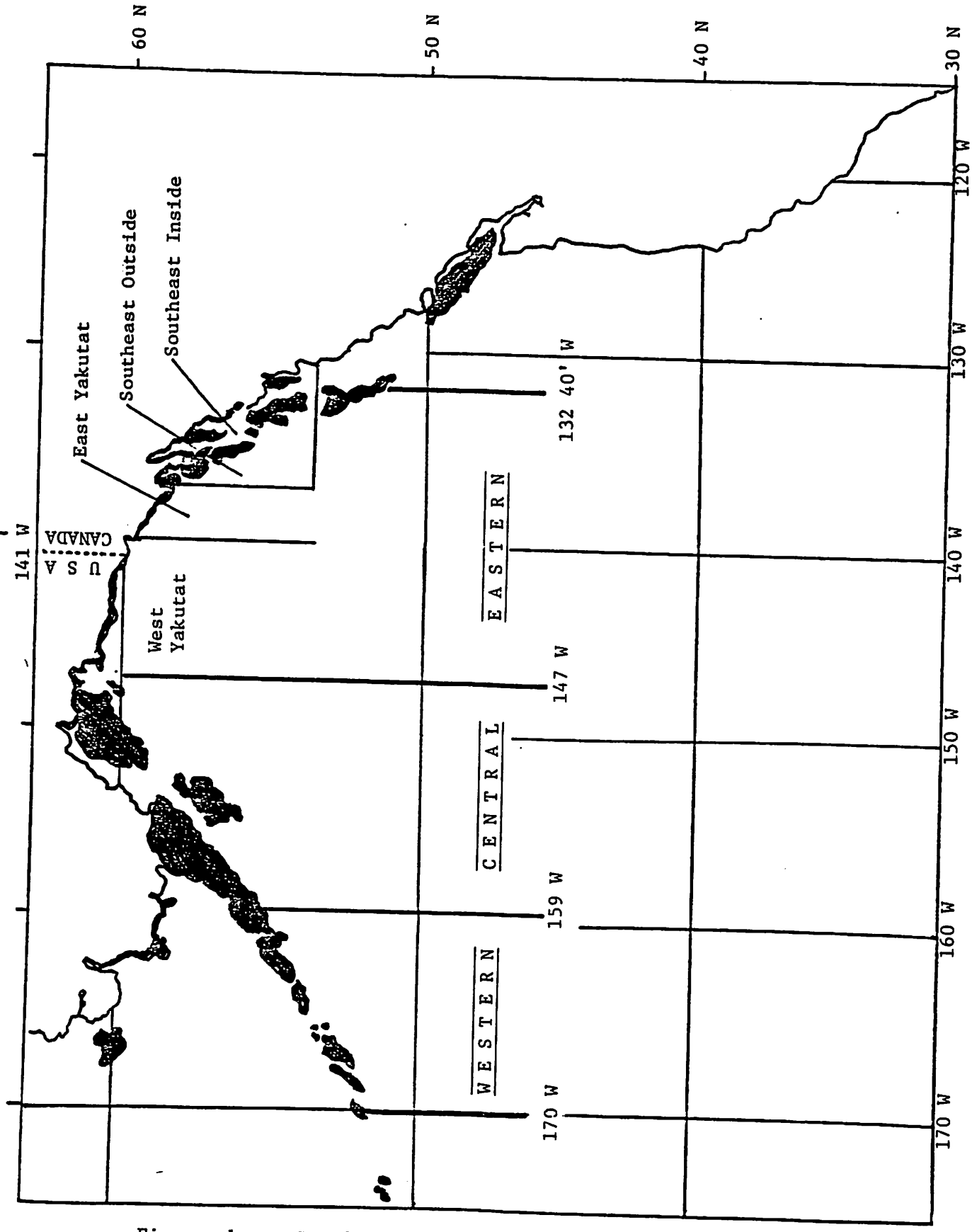


Figure 1. Regulatory Areas of the Gulf of Alaska (FMP)

FIGURE 2.

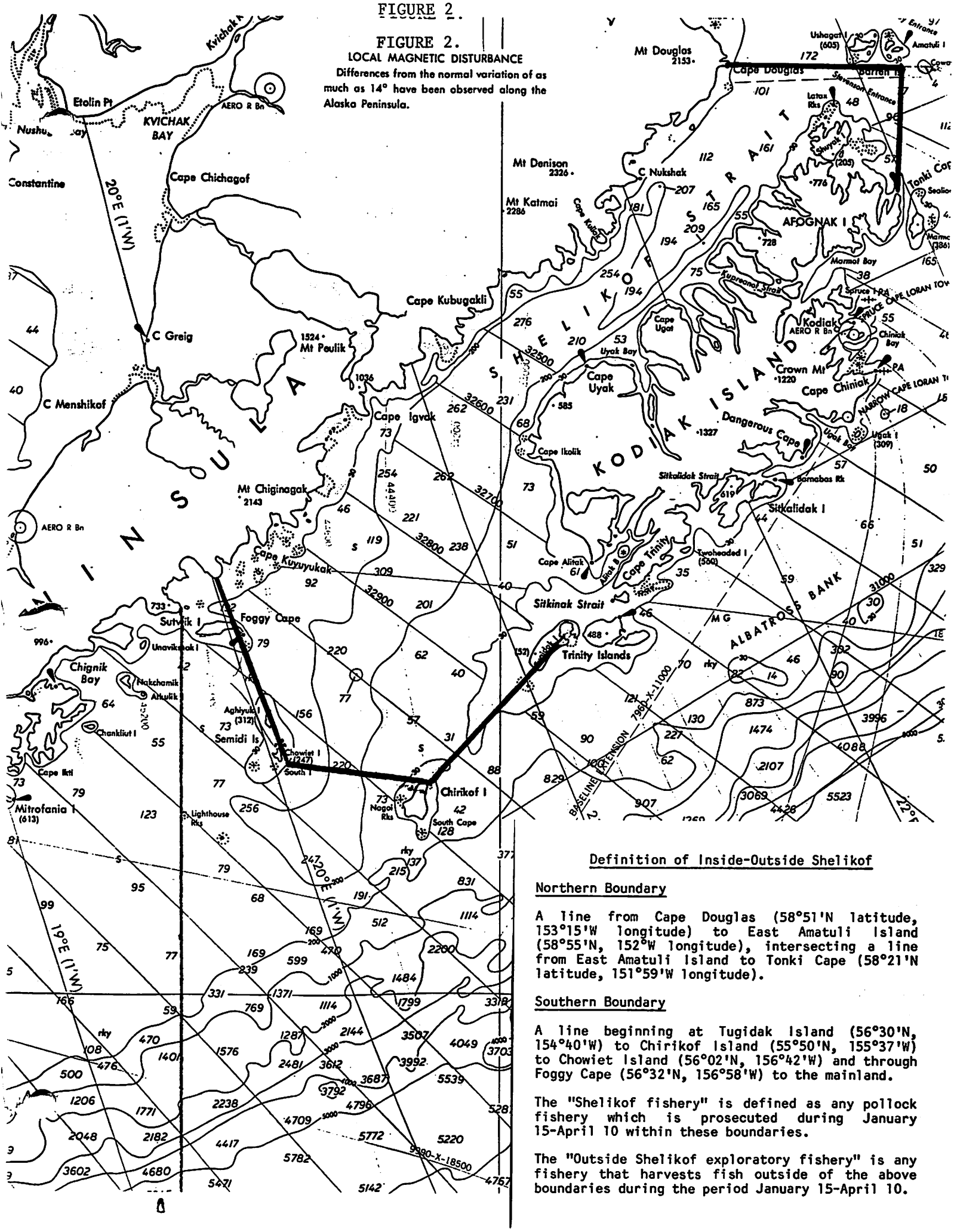


FIGURE 2.

LOCAL MAGNETIC DISTURBANCE

Differences from the normal variation of as much as 14° have been observed along the Alaska Peninsula.

Definition of Inside-Outside Shelikof

Northern Boundary

A line from Cape Douglas (58°51'N latitude, 153°15'W longitude) to East Amatuli Island (58°55'N, 152°W longitude), intersecting a line from East Amatuli Island to Tonki Cape (58°21'N latitude, 151°59'W longitude).

Southern Boundary

A line beginning at Tugidak Island (56°30'N, 154°40'W) to Chirikof Island (55°50'N, 155°37'W) to Chowiet Island (56°02'N, 156°42'W) and through Foggy Cape (56°32'N, 156°58'W) to the mainland.

The "Shelikof fishery" is defined as any pollock fishery which is prosecuted during January 15-April 10 within these boundaries.

The "Outside Shelikof exploratory fishery" is any fishery that harvests fish outside of the above boundaries during the period January 15-April 10.

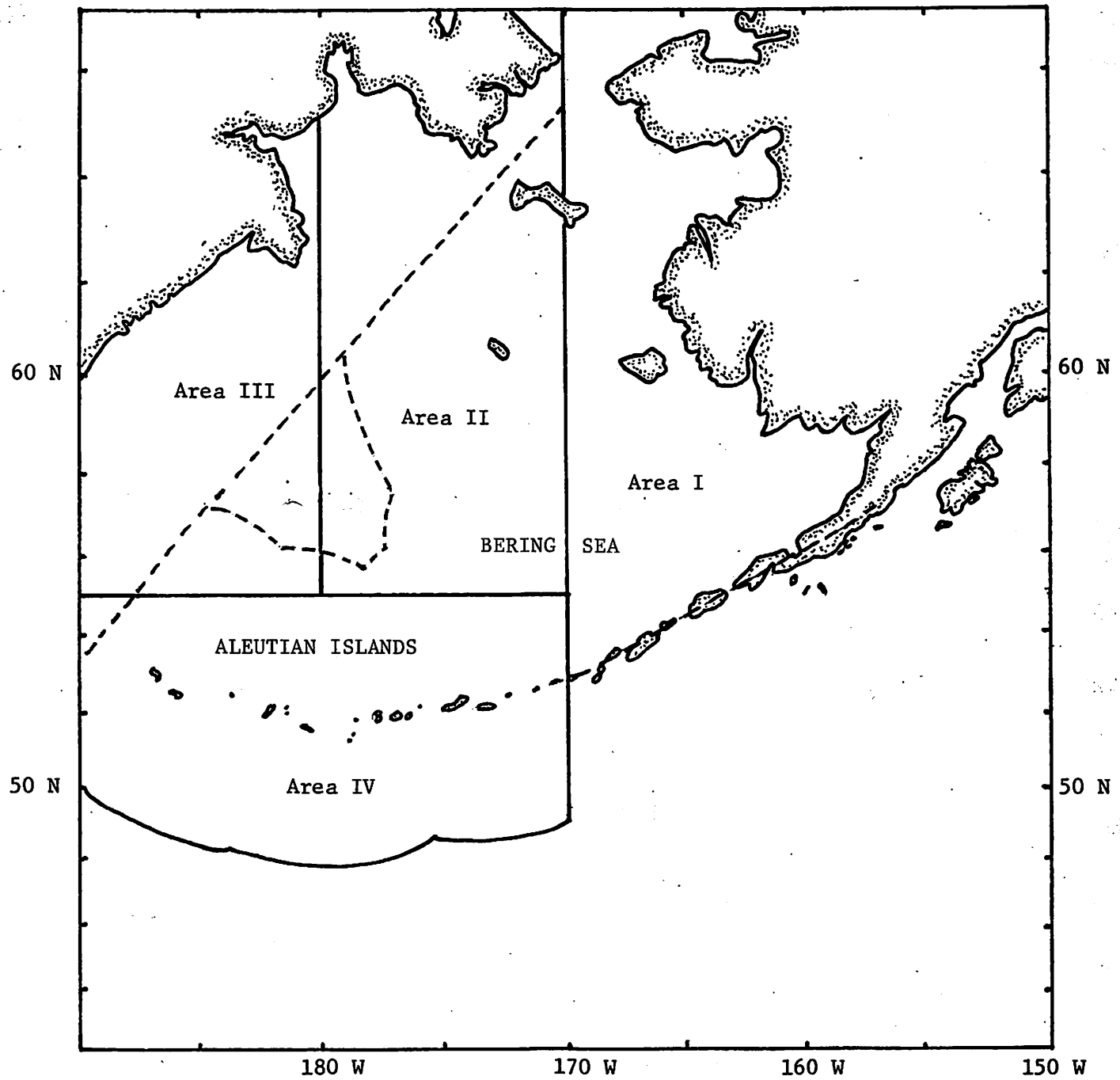


Fig. 3 Fishing areas in the Bering Sea and Aleutians.

T E 1

GULF OF ALASKA GROUNDFISH 1986 ABCs, OYS, DAPs, JVPs, TALFF, and PSCs (MT) Approved by NPFMC 12/14/85

Species	Area	1986 ABC	1986 OY	Reserves 20% OY	1986 DAP	1986 JVP	1986 DAH	TALFF
Pollock	Western/Central	100,000	100,000	20,000	40,000	40,000	80,000	0
	Out. Shel.(1/15-4/10)		50,000	10,000	5,000	35,000	40,000	0
	Eastern	16,600	16,600	3,320	13,280	0	13,280	0
	Total	116,600	166,600	33,320	58,280	75,000	133,280	0
Pacific Cod	W	37,500	29,951	5,990	9,800	2,521	12,321	11,640
	C	76,000	33,049	6,610	19,600	2,959	22,559	3,880
	E	22,500	12,000	2,400	9,600	0	9,600	0
	Total	136,000	75,000	15,000	39,000	5,480	44,480	15,520
Flounders	W	23,000	5,360	1,072	3,252	1,036	4,288	0
	C	101,000	5,000	1,000	2,916	1,084	4,000	0
	E	17,000	4,020	804	3,216	0	3,216	0
	Total	141,000	14,380	2,876	9,384	2,120	11,504	0
Pacific ocean perch	W	2,800	1,316	0	1,316	0	1,316	0
	C	3,300	1,511	0	1,511	0	1,511	0
	E	4,400	875	0	875	0	875	0
	Total	10,500	3,702	0	3,702	0	3,702	0
Sablefish	W	2,500	2,850	0	2,850	0	2,850	0
	C	11,600	6,150	0	6,150	0	6,150	0
	W. Yakutat	2,200	2,550	0	2,550	0	2,550	0
	E. Yakutat	800	1,104	0	1,104	0	1,104	0
	S.E.Outside	1,700	2,346	0	2,346	0	2,346	0
	Total	18,800	15,000	0	15,000	0	15,000	0
Atka Mackerel	W	4,700	4,678	936	0	3,742	3,742	0
	C	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
	E	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
	Total	4,700	4,678	936	0	3,742	3,742	0
Rockfish	S.E.Central Outside	n/a	600	0	600	0	600	0
	Remaining Gulf	n/a	4,400	0	4,400	0	4,400	0
	Total		5,000	0	5,000	0	5,000	0
Thornyhead	GW	n/a	3,750	750	1,500	1,500	3,000	0
Squid	GW	n/a	5,000	1,000	2,000	2,000	4,000	0
Other Species	GW	n/a	14,656	2,931	5,862	5,862	11,724	0
TOTAL			307,766	56,813	139,728	95,704	235,432	15,520

TABLE 2.

NPFMC Approved OY, TACs and Apportionments for the Combined Bering Sea and Aleutian Groundfish in 1986 (all in metric tons).12/14/85 9:30am

Species	Area	1986 TAC	DAP	JVP	DAH	Potential ITALFF1/	15% RESERVE
Pollock	BS	1,200,000	141,755	690,000	831,755	188,245	
	AI	100,000	18,039	10,804	28,843	56,157	
Pacific	BS	825	576	194	770	55 2/	
ocean perch	AI	6,800	6,340	460	6,800	0 2/	
Rockfish	BS	825	648	143	791	34 2/	
	AI	5,800	5,791	9	5,800	0 2/	
Sablefish	BS	2,250	1,826	246	2,072	178 2/	
	AI	4,200	4,159	28	4,187	13 2/	
Pacific cod	BSAI	229,000	133,394	50,830	184,224	32,406 3/	
Yellowfin sole	BSAI	209,500	1,030	127,300	128,330	49,745	
Greenland turbot	BSAI	33,000	5,414	5,000	10,414	17,636	
Arrowtooth flounder	BSAI	20,000	1,805 4/	1,667 4/	3,471 4/	13,529	
Other flatfish	BSAI	124,200	4,192	89,550	93,742	11,828	
Atka mackerel	BSAI	30,800	0	30,790	30,790	10 2/	
Squid	BSAI	5,000	0	0	0	4,250	
Other species	BSAI	27,800	110	1,071	1,181	22,449	
TOTAL		2,000,000	325,079	1,008,092	1,333,170	400,555	266,275 5/

1/ ITALFF = TAC - Reserve - DAH.

2/ Bycatch TALFFs will be adjusted from the Reserve.

3/ Pacific cod ITALFF includes 21,980 mt from Reserve for foreign longliners. An additional 2,000 mt from Reserve may be needed for bycatch. Longline TALFF must be taken north of 55°N and west of 170°W, ice conditions permitting (same restrictions as 1985).

4/ The Greenland turbot fishery takes approximately 1/3 arrowtooth flounder. DAP and JVP have been adjusted accordingly.

5/ Reserve has been adjusted downward for Pacific cod and other species. The remainder is unspecified as to species.

COM1/JG

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December 31, 1985

ADDENDUM TO NPFMC DECEMBER 1985 NEWSLETTER

In our December 20, 1985 Newsletter we reported that "The Council requested that the Shelikof Strait pollock roe fishery begin February 15 to encourage fishermen to explore outside of the Shelikof Strait area." (p. 3, last paragraph) This should be clarified to refer to joint ventures only.

U.S. factory trawlers and U.S. trawlers delivering to domestic processors may fish pollock inside or outside Shelikof at any time until DAP or OY is reached. Their operations are only constrained by any bycatch limits that may exist for prohibited species such as halibut.

In contrast, joint ventures must move outside Shelikof from January 15 to February 14. On February 15 they can return to Shelikof to fish pollock until the 40,000 mt JVP is reached.

All pollock caught inside Shelikof count against the Western/Central 100,000 mt OY. All pollock taken outside Shelikof from January 15 to April 10 count against the 50,000 mt OY. At other times the outside Shelikof catch counts against the 100,000 mt OY.

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DEC85/CM