

Executive Director's Report

AP Officers

The AP will select their Chairman and Vice-Chairman at this meeting and the Council needs to confirm the new officers for 1994.

Chairmen's Meeting

There is a good chance that the Regional Council Chairmen will meet in Washington, D.C. May 14-16 to consider Magnuson Act amendments and administrative matters of mutual concern. We have already delayed from a previous meeting date because amendment language was not ready for review. Apparently the Marine Mammal Protection Act has taken substantial time, thus delaying progress on the Magnuson Act.

Research Priorities

Research priorities is a holdover topic from the December and January meetings. The Plan Teams' recommendations are included here as B-1(a), along with SSC comments from January, our policy, and public comments received. Please look them over and then, before the end of this meeting, we should develop our recommendations.

Halibut Discard Mortality Rates

Item B-1(b) is a letter from IPHC recommending that annual Council consideration of halibut discard mortality rates be delayed from June to September so that more data can be included from most of the year's fisheries. If you concur, I will schedule the topic for September rather than our next meeting.

June Council Meetings

Our June Council meeting for 1994 will be held at the Anchorage Hilton. The AP and SSC will begin on Monday, June 6, and the Council will begin Wednesday, June 8 and run through June 11. Because of the halibut season before the meeting, and salmon fisheries afterward, and there being no sleeping rooms for Saturday night, this will be a tight squeeze with no flexibility to run into Sunday. To help those Council members that participate in the halibut opening, I will endeavor to place agenda items of most concern to them toward the middle or last part of the agenda. I will be working on that as the agenda for June develops during and after this meeting.

We still need a meeting place for June 1995. Dutch Harbor has been suggested, and Judy will present some cost figures for your consideration. We also need to work out the meeting schedule for 1996. Approximate dates of the 1995 and 1996 meetings are as follows:

<u>1995</u>		<u>Tentative for 1996</u>	
Week of:	Location:	Week of:	Location:
January 9	Anchorage	January 8	_____
April 17	Anchorage	April 22	_____
June 19 ¹	_____	June 17 ¹	_____
September 18 ²	Seattle	September 23 ²	_____
December 4	Anchorage	December 9	_____

¹ Usually around third week; this year it is earlier to avoid salmon fisheries; should this continue to be scheduled earlier in the month?

² Usually the fourth week; this year delayed to early October because of fishing seasons.

Observer Committee Changes

The Observer Committee membership (item B-1(c)) list needs updating. Phil Chitwood and Tyson Vogeler no longer are in their indicated positions, and Andy Hollenbeck's Arctic Observer Corp. has gone out of business. We need replacements for the first two. I would suggest that we move Michael Lake from second alternate to first alternate, and not worry about a second alternate.

Rats II!

Last year at the April meeting, I included a brochure published by USFWS concerning the need to stop rats from jumping ship onto the Aleutian Islands. Item B-1(d) is a recent story of interest from the Anchorage Daily News about the Board's rejection of a federal plan to poison rats.

New England Fisheries Disaster Relief

Item B-1(e) has several articles from the Commercial Fisheries News, published out of Stonington, Maine, describing the major shock therapy the New England fishing industry is going through for lack of fish. As you will recall, John Bullard, Director of the Commerce Department's Office of Sustainable Development and Intergovernmental Affairs, toured Alaska last fall, asking many questions about our fisheries and procedures. He has spearheaded a move to put together the aid package to New England worth over \$30 million to see them through the collapse of the fish stocks. The components of the aid package are detailed in the news report, as are fishermen's reactions to the emergency closures.

1995

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**Priority Research Topics
GOA and BSAI Groundfish Plan Teams**

The following research areas were recommended by the Plan Teams at their November 1993 meeting. The list is not in priority order.

Groundfish in general: Expansion of existing trawl and longline surveys into deeper water would improve biomass estimates for thornyheads and flatfish, particularly Dover sole and Greenland turbot. New or expanded surveys would improve abundance estimates of juvenile and adult pollock, and other groundfish. The effectiveness of survey strategies in assessing abundance of rockfish and Atka mackerel should be further evaluated. Seasonal sampling would allow collection of maturity and behavior information, perhaps by the Observer Program.

Pollock: Predator-prey relationships for Steller sea lions and pollock should be further evaluated. Stock assessments could be improved with additional surveys, and on survey selectivity. Additional information on maturity, stock structure, reliable recruitment indices, and areal contribution to recruitment is required.

Pacific cod: Maturity information is lacking, and will be required for stock synthesis. Questions remain concerning survey selectivity, and cod migration and natural mortality.

Sablefish: Verify longline survey abundance indices with direct observations. Additional information on maturity and areal contribution to recruitment would be helpful.

Flatfish: Age and growth data are lacking for Dover sole in the GOA. Maturity data are needed for all species. The 1994 ABC recommendations are based on $F_{35\%}$, and maturity information is only available for BS/AI yellowfin sole. Predator-prey interactions for arrowtooth flounder should be explored.

Rockfish, in general: Age and growth data need to be collected, and estimates of natural mortality refined. Stock structure investigations may determine whether regionalizing overfishing levels are necessary. Habitat stratification would help to improve surveys for several species. Additional surveys are necessary to better assess abundance, stock structure, and distribution. For black rockfish, a near shore survey would resolve questions concerning population abundance and distribution. Before stock synthesis can be used to assess thornyheads, differences between the domestic and cooperative longline surveys need to be reconciled. Bycatch and discard of thornyheads need to be evaluated.

Atka mackerel: Maturity data for this species are lacking. Improved surveys would better assess abundance, distribution, stock structure, and migration. A survey of the Aleutian Islands is needed to verify the abundance and distribution of Atka mackerel; the last survey was in 1991.

Ecosystems considerations: Because marine mammals and seabirds are an important consideration in fisheries management, further studies are needed on interactions among fisheries, marine mammals, and seabird populations. The Team recommends that surveys be developed to assess the distribution

and abundance of small pelagic prey. Specifically these surveys should target small fish (capelin, sandlance, and juvenile fish), shrimp and euphasiids. The Team recommends that efforts are initiated to describe seasonal and long term shifts in the physical environment of the Gulf of Alaska. Specific efforts should be made to describe subsurface water masses, fluctuations in the depth of the upper mixed layer and identification of regions of high nutrient concentration and upwelling.

Socioeconomic considerations: The Plan Team recommends that economic databases on the groundfish fisheries be developed and maintained. This information provides a baseline to evaluate the impacts of proposed alternative management measures. Cost data for fleets, in particular, are needed for these evaluations.

Bycatch considerations: The Plan Team recommends evaluation of methods to reduce bycatch, such as selective gear types or time/area closures. Discard mortality rates for PSCs and other discards need to be better quantified.

Excerpted from January 1994 SSC Minutes

management regime will require weighing all catch components. The SSC notes that this requirement will represent significant economic and allocative impacts to various fleet components. These issues need to be addressed in the CRP analysis.

C-1(c) PROPOSED PLAN AMENDMENT

Given the problems with economic cost data mentioned above, the SSC believes that an amendment to the groundfish data plan is needed. Analysis of the monetary benefits of plan amendments has been and continues to be crippled by the lack of accurate data regarding the costs and performance characteristics of fishing operations. Surveys and focus group interviews are a poor substitute for a comprehensive database. The SSC urges the Council to prepare an amendment requiring annual submission of cost and performance data for all sectors of the fishing industry. These data will enable Council and Center staff to predict the local, regional, and national impacts of proposed plan amendments with much greater accuracy.

C-2 HALIBUT MANAGEMENT

Council staff summarized contents of the Environmental Assessment and Regulatory Impact Review/Initial Regulatory Flexibility Analysis for the IPHC Area 4B management proposal submitted by the Atka Fishermen's Association. The SSC notes that the alternatives under consideration were analyzed appropriately within limits of available data. The summary on page 2 gives good account of the merits and drawbacks of the various alternatives. The SSC has no preferred alternative.

C-4 RESEARCH PRIORITIES

The SSC reviewed research recommendations made by the groundfish and crab teams. The SSC drew from these and last year's Research Priorities in developing this year's list. The SSC emphasizes that this selection of projects is in addition to the ongoing NMFS programs. There is no suggestion that programs NMFS considers as baseline work should be curtailed. The SSC requests 2 or 3 pages of comment on research progress from agencies responding to these priorities. It would be useful to have this report prior to the January, 1995 SSC meeting.

A. Critical Assessment Problems

1. Rockfish. There is a general need for better assessment data, particularly investigation of stock structure and biological variables. These activities are included in the AFSC Rockfish Research Plan.
2. Walleye pollock. There is a continuing need for research on stock structure as it relates to assessment. Also, an age-structured analysis of the Aleutian Island stock should be done. An age structure analysis has not yet been presented, though requests were previously made. Assessment of the status of the Gulf of Alaska resource is critically dependent upon results of resource surveys. Currently, these surveys are conducted every three years. The usefulness of various ways of supplementing the triennial survey data should be evaluated.
3. Crab research. Research should be expanded on handling mortality, stock structure and life history parameters.

4. **Age- and length-structured assessments:** These assessments integrate several data sources using some weighing scheme. Little research has gone into evaluation of different weighing schemes, although the weight can have a large effect on the assessment results. Research is needed on which weighing schemes are robust to uncertainties among the different data sources.
5. **Maturity data are lacking and will be required for application of the stock synthesis model, and determination of ABC and overfishing on the following:** Pacific cod, Dover sole, other flatfish, sablefish.

The SSC notes also that additional studies are needed on ageing techniques and age validation of several species. Stock identification research should be conducted on Atka mackerel, walleye pollock, POP and other rockfish.

B. Improved stock surveys

1. Improvements in surveys can sometimes be made without great increase in cost. Rockfish, Atka mackerel, and pollock surveys are in the category for which improved statistical sampling design may result in improved data.
2. Calibrations should be carried out between the two longline surveys for sablefish, and between trawl survey data and longline survey data.
3. Explore the possibility of fishing surveys by organizing joint agency and commercial fishing effort.
4. Increased emphasis should be put on deepwater longline surveys for Greenland turbot, and also thornyheads.
5. Develop a new trawl/pot survey for Bering Sea crab complimentary to the existing Bering Sea crab/groundfish survey. There are many problems with the current survey's ability to assess crab, since the surveys were designed primarily to assess groundfish. These problems can be addressed with a separate survey designed to assess crab. The new survey will enable the use of gear designed to assess crabs, provide the ability to assess stocks currently not surveyed (i.e., stocks associated with the Alaska Peninsula and Aleutian Island areas), expand surveys for stocks that are currently incompletely assessed (Island stocks and Norton Sound), and complement current surveys of red king crab, Bairdi crab, and Opilio crabs by providing estimates of catchability for these species.
6. There is need to verify longline survey abundance indices with direct observation.

C. Expanded Ecosystem Studies

1. Because of the importance of marine mammal and seabird considerations in fisheries management, further studies are needed on interactions among fisheries, marine mammals, and seabird populations. In particular relationships should be explored between oceanographic conditions and feeding conditions in relation to animal condition and health. Research should be done on age-specific mortality. Effort is

needed on status of stocks and distribution of forage fishes, such as capelin, eulachon, and sand lance.

2. Trophic dynamics research should be undertaken on the relationships among critical species, e.g. Pacific cod and its prey (shrimp and crabs); and particularly the possibility that the large arrowtooth flounder stocks may interfere with the productivity of more valuable species. There may also be a linkage between population increases of arrowtooth flounder and pinniped declines due to competition for prey.
3. Groups of species in the rockfish and flatfish families are now managed as "species complexes." Research should be expanded on the question of biological linkages among the components of "species complexes" that justify this management approach. Further, are there other, unidentified groups of species that are ecologically related and could be managed as a unit? Assemblage management has to be evaluated to determine its ecological validity.

D. Socioeconomic research

1. There is a critical need for the development and continued maintenance of basic economic information databases on the fisheries of GOA and BS/AI. This information is required for establishing a baseline to be used in the evaluation of the impacts of alternative management measures (see SSC recommendation in section C-1(a) of these minutes). At a minimum there is a need for reliable information on:
 - (a) the cost and revenues of fishing operations,
 - (b) the nature, magnitude and location of where goods and services are purchased,
 - (c) the nature of markets for various fish products,
 - (d) ownership of fishing and processing operations,
 - (e) and the nature of relationships between harvesting and processing sectors.
2. Research pertinent to assessment of the social impacts of actions contemplated by the Council include:
 - (a) Social Assessments: Selected community and industry assessments should be conducted to establish baseline conditions underlying social problems identified by, the Council and the Advisory Panel. As appropriate, these projects can be extended to generate time series information.
 - (b) Social Impacts: Social impact and policy research should be conducted regarding the identification and potential effects of alternative management actions.

E. Bycatch problems

1. Gear research should be expanded on methods of reducing bycatch, and fishing gear design that would make fishing methods more selective. Trawl mesh experiments are one area of promise, but gear design engineering and biology should be conducted within the broadest and most imaginative context.

2. A better quantification of discard mortality rates of Pacific halibut is needed.
3. Fisheries catch and effort data should be reviewed to determine whether selected time/area closures could reduce bycatch.

F. Alaska Fishery Monitoring

1. An analysis of the utility of fishery logbook information should be conducted.
2. Observer data would be more credible in stock assessments if NMFS were authorized to determine the dates and localities for observer coverage of vessels in the 30% coverage category. More meaningful analysis could then be pursued.

D-1 NORTON SOUND CRAB

The SSC reviewed the EA/RIR/IRFA for area registration in the Norton Sound red king crab fishery. The analysts have addressed the issues identified in our December 1993 minutes by conducting additional analyses assuming that large and small vessels faced identical prices. In addition, the analysts have provided a more detailed discussion of management and enforcement costs under the different alternatives.

The SSC agrees with the summary and conclusion section of the draft document that there are major differences between alternatives regarding who will participate in the fishery. Under Alternative 2, the fishery is likely to be prosecuted over a relatively long season by small locally-based vessels. Under either the status quo or Alternative 3, large Bering Sea crab vessels are likely to take the GHJ in a short season of a few days.

Costs to manage the fishery are likely to be less under the superexclusive regime of Alternative 2. This fishery would be managed by existing staff in Nome, and would likely not require costly aerial enforcement efforts or other expenditures not included in the base budget of existing staff.

The summary paragraph of the document asserts that "superexclusive registration is expected to result in greater benefits to the nation than either the status quo or exclusive registration". The SSC believes that this conclusion is overstated. The representativeness of data contained in Table 17 (in particular, CPUE and price data) used in the net revenue analysis is a concern. The results of the sensitivity analysis contained in Table 20 indicate that the model is sensitive to these two inputs. Therefore, caution is warranted in using the results. The SSC has no preferred alternative.

D-2(a)(1) TERRA MARINE'S EXPERIMENTAL FISHING PERMIT

Shari Gross, HANA, provided testimony indicating a desire to have data collected during the experimental fishery analyzed to determine if retention reduces bycatch. The SSC believes that such an analysis would be useful.

D-2 SALMON BYCATCH

The SSC heard a report by the Alaska Department of Fish and Game on the status of Western Alaska-Bering Sea chum salmon stocks. The SSC notes that chum salmon runs throughout Western Alaska and Bering Sea areas were low in 1993. Fishery management actions to conserve stocks in

NORTH PACIFIC FISHERY MANAGEMENT COUNCIL

Policy on Development of Research Priorities*

The Council adopted an annual schedule for the development of fishery research priorities. The following schedule is intended to provide NOAA Fisheries with the Council's research priorities as they prepare their agency budget and research plan.

- | | |
|-----------------|--|
| Early September | Plan teams prepare list of research topics. These topics would be influenced by ongoing research programs, stock assessment surveys, problems with management of fisheries, industry proposals, and prior Council discussion. |
| October | Research topics are more fully developed and costs estimated (this work could be performed by the plan teams and representatives of NOAA Fisheries (Alaska Region), Alaska Fisheries Science Center, and the Alaska Department of Fish and Game who are knowledgeable with the proposed work). |
| November | Plan teams review topics, finalize list and make priority recommendations. |
| December | Recommended research priorities are presented to the Council, SSC and NOAA Fisheries Regional Office for review. |
| January | Council reviews research topics and comments, and develops their priority recommendations. |
| Late January | Council recommendations for fishery research are forwarded to the NOAA Fisheries Regional Director for use in preparing its annual budget. |

The long lead time in the NOAA Fisheries budget planning process means that major research initiatives approved by the Council in January of one year will not be incorporated by NOAA Fisheries until two years later.

*Approved in January 1989.



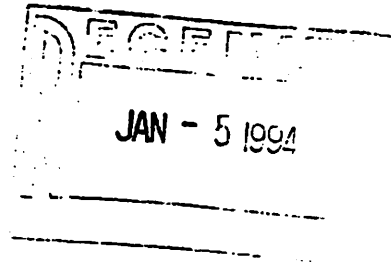
Fishermen's
Finest

North Pacific Fishing, Inc.

4039 21st Ave. W. #201 ■ Seattle, WA 98199
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January 5, 1994

Richard B. Lauber, Chairman
North Pacific Fisheries Management Council
605 West 4th Avenue
Anchorage, AK 99501



RE: Research Priorities GOA & BSAI, Agenda Item C-5

Dear Chairman Lauber:

North Pacific Fishing, Inc. operates a trawl vessel in the Bering Sea and Gulf of Alaska and is effected by the research priorities pursued by the National Marine Fisheries Service. I am writing to suggest my thoughts for the council's consideration when making recommendations to the National Marine Fisheries Service on its research priorities.

Following the passionate deliberation at the December 1993 council meeting over the status of the several of the BSAI and GOA stocks, I strongly suggest that the council recommend that NMFS place more priority on surveys to determine the status of the various Gulf of Alaska rockfish, BSAI Greenland turbot, and Atka mackerel in both the BSAI and GOA. There is a lack of data available to resolve the disparity between the catch per unit of effort put forth by the industry and the assessment of the research surveys.

I continue to emphasize the importance of the use of industry vessels capable of deep sea fishing in rough weather for the deepwater species assessments. Preliminary work has been done in conducting research using commercial vessels and obtaining funding from the resource itself by allowing retention of groundfish by the vessel. Mr. Ito's rockfish survey in the Gulf of Alaska and the summer longline surveys are examples of this approach.

I also suggest that National Marine Fisheries Service and the International Pacific Halibut Commission develop a plan, such as a tagging program, to determine how many halibut are caught and released more than once when fishing. Perhaps it would not be wise to tag all halibut which are released and considered alive, but it seems wise that a program tagging those fish that are considered dead so that dead fish are not considered as having been killed two or more times for the purposes of managing the halibut mortality caps.

Thank you for your attention to these concerns.

Sincerely,

Rudy A. Petersen
President

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INTERNATIONAL PACIFIC HALIBUT COMMISSION

ESTABLISHED BY A CONVENTION BETWEEN CANADA
AND THE UNITED STATES OF AMERICA

March 11, 1994

AGENDA B-1(b)
APRIL 1994

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MAR 15 1994

Mr. Rick Lauber
North Pacific Fishery Management Council
P.O. Box 103136
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Dear Rick:

At the December meeting in Seattle, the Council accepted an Advisory Panel recommendation that discard mortality rates of halibut bycatch from the groundfish fisheries be brought to the Council for discussion in June of each year. The AP wanted to be sure that enough time would be available for full discussion of the rates before the industry began to negotiate allocation of halibut bycatch.

We agree with the AP that the discard mortality rate discussion should be on a regular schedule. However, we suggest that the date be delayed from the June meeting to the September meeting. The September meeting offers two substantial advantages. First, the September analysis will be able to include data from most of the year. Data from very little of the year would be available for June. Second, the Groundfish Teams should review the results, which could happen only with the September timing.

If the discard mortality rate analysis, which is prepared by IPHC and AFSC scientists, is available to the Groundfish Teams before their meetings, the fishing industry will have time to discuss the results with the teams and the analysts and suggest modifications if necessary before the September Council meeting. Joe Blum of AFTA has indicated no problem with the September timing. I hope you will agree that moving the discard mortality rate discussion to September will benefit the Council with more data and better review, while still affording the industry ample time for planning.

Sincerely yours,



Robert J. Trumble
Senior Biologist

cc. Steve Pennoyer, NMFS AK Region

OBSERVER COMMITTEE

Revised 7/21/92

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**Alternates

Squabble spares rats for now

Game Board rejects feds' plan to poison Aleutians' pests

By CHRIS GRYGIEL
The Associated Press

The Board of Game has rejected a federal proposal that would allow rats to be poisoned in the Aleutians, but U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service officials are weighing whether they even need the state's approval.

Bruce Batten, U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service spokesman, said his agency is trying to determine whether it needs state permission to use the poisons on federal land.

"We don't know; that's the sort of thing we're sorting out," he said.

The federal agency presented its plan to the state Game Board during meetings this week.

Game Board Chairman Dick Burley said the plan was rejected because it was too broad and members were

Please see Page B-2, **RATS**

RATS: Poison debated

Continued from Page B-1

concerned that wildlife such as eagles and sea lions could inadvertently be poisoned by eating the rats.

"They were asking for blanket approval up and down the (Aleutian) chain. ... We just felt they needed to come back with a more specific plan," Burley said.

He said that, according to Alaska law, permission must be obtained in writing from the Game Board before poisons are used in the state.

Fish and Wildlife Service biologists want to be able to use poisons to eradicate rats if and when they are introduced to Alaska islands by passing ships. Biologists say the rodents could decimate the fragile island ecosystems and could be more destructive to wildlife than the Exxon Valdez oil spill.

The state Game Board wants federal biologists to consider using drugs that would keep the rats from reproducing in lieu of poisons.

Fish and Wildlife biologists want to use poisons instead of "immuno-contraceptives" because they say the poisons have worked against rats in New Zealand and Hawaii.

"It's got a good track record," Batten said.

Stephen Wells, executive director of the Alaska Wildlife Alliance, said the dangers of using poisons to get rid of rats have been addressed in environmental assessments and that the risk is an acceptable one.

Wells said the rats can do far more damage to the ecosystem than the poisons used to eradicate them.

"There are some inherent dangers, but the goal here is to get the rats off the islands," Wells said.

Batten said the Fish and Wildlife Service hadn't planned to implement the plan this year, so there is time for the agency to address the Game Board's concerns.

Feds deliver \$30 million in fishing industry aid

Money available as direct grants, loans

BOSTON, MA - The commercial fishing industry is still reeling from the news. On March 21, Secretary of Commerce Ron Brown announced a \$30 million package of emergency assistance to help Northeast fishermen and fishing communities "affected by the collapse of major fish stocks in the region."

The money is real — and the scramble is on to spend it. There will be loans, community development projects, and in some cases, outright grants to fishermen who have good ideas that will make a difference.

The money came from the Presidential Contingency Disaster Fund provided by Congress in Public Law 103-211, the Emergency Supplemental Appropriations Act of 1994.

Brown, using the authority of the Interjurisdictional Fisheries Act of 1986, determined that "a fishing disaster exists" — and was therefore able to access disaster relief money.

Even though fishermen demanded help from the government (see timeline page 16A), the news was still stunning. Never before has money on this grand a scale been allocated to address the financial needs of commercial fishermen.

"This administration plans to continue serious efforts to rebuild depleted fish stocks," said John Bullard, director of the Commerce Department's Office of Sustainable Development and Intergovernmental Affairs.

"What's different," he explained, "is
See DISASTER RELIEF, next page

2A • COMMERCIAL FISHERIES NEWS • APRIL 1994

Disaster relief *Continued from previous page*

that this administration is willing to provide some economic assistance to the people impacted by those efforts. For the first time, the Department of Commerce is focusing a lot on the human aspect of this."

NOAA, EDA roles

In all, there is \$32.5 million available for economic assistance — \$30 million of new money announced by Brown and the \$2.5 million previously authorized to help fishermen adjust to the new groundfish and scallop amendments.

The two biggest players in distributing the money are the National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration (NOAA) and the Economic Development Administration (EDA).

Money is available for all kinds of projects — everything from vessel conversions to gear technology, financial restructuring to stress management. The trick is to access the right pool of money for the right project.

Direct grants

The biggest pool of money available to individual fishermen is the \$12 million that's in the hands of NOAA.

Of that total, \$9 million will be distributed "through an expedited Saltonstall-Kennedy (S-K) grant program." Grants will be made to individual fishermen, associations, co-ops, and similar groups.

Projects that eliminate pressure on groundfish stocks, address market development of underutilized species, or test new gear are all good candidates for funding, according to Bullard.

Fishermen interested in starting up an aquaculture venture — maybe a small salmon or oyster farm — or who would

like to test a whiting separator trawl or pingers on gillnets, would also fall into this category.

Those familiar with the formality of the lengthy S-K application process might be groaning at this point, but late in March Bullard offered assurances that the money would be effectively and efficiently distributed.

"We are hoping for a 60-day turnaround," he said. "We want this money to get out quicker — and we want it to involve a lot more working fishermen."

Underutilized species

The issue of underutilized species is a sensitive one in Southern New England and the Mid-Atlantic. Many fishermen there have sweated — physically and financially — to make a living off so-called underutilized and other non-groundfish species.

"Our major concern is that the administration not develop a policy that pushes boats south," said Jim O'Malley, executive director of the Rhode Island-based East Coast Fisheries Federation.

According to Bullard, NOAA is sensitive to that concern.

"We are mindful of the fact that there aren't many underutilized species, and we don't want to provide subsidies to new participants in ways that harm old participants," he said. "Our first money would go into market development, not capacity development."

For more information or for S-K application forms, call Phyllis Keiser at (301) 713-2358.

FVOG program

In a nutshell, NOAA is also allocating:
● \$1 million to the Fishing Vessel Obligation Guarantee (FVOG) program.

which will be used to guarantee approximately \$20 million in loans.

Fishermen needing to reduce vessel mortgage payments, lower debt burdens, and stretch out repayment schedules might be able to do so through the FVOG program.

Call Leo Erwin at (508) 281-9202 for more information.

- \$1 million to establish four permanent fishing family assistance centers — in Gloucester, New Bedford, Provincetown, and Portland — and two mobile centers to cover Eastern Maine, New Hampshire, Connecticut, and Rhode Island. The centers are expected to provide financial counseling, help with stress management, retraining information, and referrals to other public assistance programs.
- \$1 million for administrative purposes.

... and still more

Last year, Congress appropriated \$1.5 million for the Northwest Atlantic Ocean Fisheries Reinvestment Program. That money was released early this year and is available for projects similar to the ones that will be funded through the S-K process.

The Clinton Administration has also proposed an additional \$3.5 million for that program in its fiscal year '95 budget, but the \$1.5 million is available now.

To speed up the grant application and approval process, NOAA has decided to channel this money through the National Fish and Wildlife Foundation. The Washington, DC-based foundation is a private organization established by Congress in 1984, which is dedicated to the conservation of natural resources.

To date the foundation, which operates with both private and government funding, has awarded more than 900 grants that have leveraged approximately \$123 million for conservation projects nationwide and in 16 countries.

For more information call the foundation at (202) 857-0166.

EDA

Of the \$30 million aid package that Brown announced in Boston, \$18 million is being funneled through EDA, as is an additional \$1 million that was allocated to help the fishing industry earlier this year. Grand total: \$19 million.

But — and EDA officials stress this — this is not the kind of money that individual fishermen can access directly. The money is first allocated to state and local governments or non-profit agencies, which must put up 25% in matching funds or in-kind services.

EDA intends to utilize this money to enhance the industry's long-term survivability. The agency hopes to allocate funds toward projects that strengthen and alter the existing

conditions in the industry.

"We're not in the business of bailing out fishermen," said Paul Matyskiela, chief of EDA's economic adjustment division in Philadelphia. "The idea is to make loans that would make fishermen more competitive and viable — not to put them one step ahead of the bank."

At press time, individual states had just taken the first step toward accessing the available funds by putting together "pre-application" proposals.

At a March 24 meeting in Philadelphia, officials from each state made their pitch for how they would use the money.

Maine, for example, proposed to utilize \$3.5 million of EDA money with a local match of \$1.168 million to implement a seven-part program.

Components of the program, which are still in flux, include: money for a revolving loan fund; staffing and coordination; technical assistance for technology studies; technical assistance for appropriate readjustment activities, conversions, and alternative enterprises; statewide economic studies; strategic economic planning within individual communities; and a major infrastructure project on the Portland Fish Pier.

According to EDA's Sandy Blitz in Augusta, ME, the package was well-received in Philadelphia, and the state was given the go ahead to put together a formal application.

But, Blitz stressed, nothing is cast in stone until the final applications are acted upon, and the dollar value of Maine's proposed package could go up or down.

Once the money is issued to individual states, probably by the third week of May, more details will become available on a state-by-state basis.

Vessel buyback

The buzz about a vessel buyback program has only intensified since news of this \$30 million aid package was announced.

"It's not in this proposal," said Bullard, "but it's still very much on the table. We feel — long-term — that it's essential. I would love to see an S-K proposal on how to design and finance a buyback program."

This administration is, indeed, thinking long-term. Despite stressing the agency's willingness to work with fishermen and improve the lines of communications, NOAA's Doug Hall is standing firm on the Commerce Department's commitment to rebuild depleted stocks.

"I think we need to get the fishing pressure off of the water," said Hall. "Even if Amendment 5 works exactly as advertised, it will only stabilize the catch over the next 5-7 years. Then we have to begin the rebuilding."

Janice M. Plante

New rules, small scallops challenge fleet

PEABODY, MA - Scallopers who put to sea during the month of March, were working under new rules and extenuating circumstances that were enough to try the best of them.

As scheduled, Amendment 4 to the Atlantic Sea Scallop Fishery Management Plan went into effect March 1. But two key provisions of the plan were delayed — one at the very last minute — which only added to the confusion that was inevitable with such a major shift in management strategies.

First, the vessel tracking system (VTS) requirement for full-time and part-time scallop vessels was delayed "until further notice," which means that every single vessel in the limited access program is now telephoning the National Marine Fisheries Service (NMFS) to record their days-at-sea.

Second, one day after the amendment went into effect, NMFS announced that it was delaying the 3-1/4" minimum ring size requirement until May 1. Although the reprieve was a blessing for many scallopers who found it nearly impossible to buy bigger rings, it also further complicated the rules.

Now, vessels have to make a choice:

fish with 3-1/4" rings and no meat count; or fish with smaller rings and comply with the 33 meats-per-pound standard.

Small scallop limits

Meanwhile, the New England Fishery Management Council is searching for ways to minimize the damage that heavy fishing pressure could have on small scallops, particularly off the Mid-Atlantic where the biomass is huge.

Since the existing resource of large scallops is mixed within big beds of small stuff, fishermen continue to work the region, often bringing up deck loads of small

scallops that are eventually shoveled overboard.

According to some fishermen who are using them, the 3-1/4" rings are helping, especially during rough weather when the smaller shells shake out of the bag. But the concentrations of small scallops are so thick right now that bags get clogged and product too small to shuck still ends up on deck.

Most boats and docks were grading meats and it's not hard to see why: Scallops in the 20- to 40-count range were drawing the highest prices; 40- to 60-counts earned less; and the market was not easily handling 60-plus count scallops, which

were selling for \$3 a pound and less.

The council's scallop industry advisory committee met March 21 in Warwick, RI to discuss the feasibility of using closed areas to protect concentrations of small scallops.

The council is also exploring the concept of "banking" days-at-sea, an idea it plans to flesh out in the near future. Right now, the thought is that any vessel owner willing to give up one day of fishing during 1994 to let small scallops grow could earn 1-1/2 days for 1995.

7-man crew

The New England council has already taken one action it hopes will reduce the pressure. At a March 17 meeting in Peabody, the council voted to cut the crew size limit by two.

A 9-man limit went into effect March 1. However, the council, through a framework adjustment to the amendment, agreed to further reduce the crew size to a 7-man maximum until Dec. 31, 1994.

Industry members at the meeting supported the provision, saying, "If you don't have the shucking power, you can't bring in large volumes of small scallops."

But a few associations and fishermen who provided written comments to the council opposed the idea, including the East Coast Fisheries Association and the Independent Fishermen's Association, both based in Virginia. Some opposed a

7-man crew for safety reasons; others wanted to give the plan a chance to work before making more modifications.

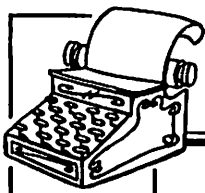
New fishing year

The council endorsed four other provisions for Framework 1:

- An adjustment to the days-at-sea allocation schedule so that "Year 1" runs from March 1, 1994 to Feb. 28, 1995;
 - A definition of dredge configuration that says "dredge rings may be attached via links to no more than four adjacent rings" so that "when a series of adjacent rings are held horizontally, the neighboring rings form a pattern of horizontal rows and vertical columns";
 - A modification to the "no more than double linking" requirement that allows fishermen to use triple links on the bottom half of the dredge bag and diamonds to accommodate normal repairs (broken links or "hangers" would still be allowed); and
 - A modification to the 30' maximum dredge width requirement to allow vessels to carry a spare dredge on board, "if it is stored in an unfishable condition." One properly stowed spare trawl net will also be permitted.
- The above framework adjustments must now be submitted to NMFS for review and to the secretary of commerce for approval before they can take effect.

Janice M. Plante

Industry asks about transferability of scallop days-at-sea, page 32A



EDITORIAL

Bailout money could do more harm than good

The \$30 million aid package announced this week by Commerce Secretary Ron Brown is a quick fix meant to quell the recent uproar over the new groundfish and scallop regulations.

Faster than the federal government can close a spawning area it has managed to distribute \$18 million to the states — before anyone has figured out what to do with it.

If this money is spent poorly, not only will it be wasted, it could end up actually preventing groundfish stock rebuilding by propping up boats and people who don't belong in the fishery. This money will only do the industry some good if we grapple with the basic questions of how to become a more responsible, sustainable, and profitable industry.

There is a curious irony to the politics here. The same NMFS people and politicians who have said there are too many fishermen chasing too few fish now support using government money to keep fishermen in business and to protect fishing jobs. You can't have it both ways.

Are there too many boats? Between the boats built to fish Canadian waters and the Northeast Peak of Georges that we lost to the Hague line and the investor boats built for financial not fishing reasons, the answer is clearly yes.

We also have people who have no intention of changing their ways, those who persist in targeting spawning fish, towing liners, discarding tons of small fish, fishing in ecologically damaging ways. These are fishermen who shouldn't be in the business.

At the same time, we have good fishermen going broke who would be successful if they were working in a well-managed fishery where they did not have to compete against others who cheat, slam the stocks, and glut the market. These are the people who deserve the bailouts and bridge loans.

Some fishermen need help coming ashore while others need help to maintain their operation while the

stocks rebuild. These are the distinctions that we must make to keep the transition and mortgage assistance monies from becoming merely a bank bailout program and grease on the squeaky wheel.

Despite the wishful thinking, underutilized species are not the answer. It is unrealistic to expect the stocks or the market for squid, mackerel, herring, and dogfish to sustain surplus groundfish effort. And it would be grossly unfair to the boats who have risked their necks in recent years developing those fisheries to bury them with government-supported competition.

Much is made of retraining. The question here is, for what? On the water, a fisherman's skills give him autonomy, satisfaction, and the chance to make good

money. Ashore, those same skills may pay minimum wage.

What we really need is not a \$30 million political bandage, but good fishery management and a fleet with the flexibility to successfully adapt to the inevitable changes in resources and market. We need rules that require this fleet to harvest fish responsibly at a level that the resources can sustain over time.

Amendment 5 does none of that. It will reward the lawbreakers and undermine the quality of the industry. And without a clearer vision and better rules, \$30 million in aid — or even a fleet buyout — won't get us any closer either.

Robin Alden

Buyback is next step

It may come as a surprise to many people, but some industry and conservation interests are already discussing the design of a fishing vessel buyback program. And Commerce Secretary Ron Brown has said that the next shot of money will go for buyback. It is, apparently, inevitable.

A buyback is a powerful tool. It will create the fleet of the future, with the trade-off likely to be single-fishery limited entry. It has tremendous potential for corruption. It could also be a way for the government or conservation interests to eliminate a troublesome industry.

A buyback can take one of two forms and that means a fundamental choice must be made: A buyback for conservation reasons, to reduce fishing effort fast and speed restoration of groundfish stocks; or a buyback for humanitarian reasons, to ease marginal fishing operations out of the business. Each has vastly different consequences.

To reduce fishing effort fast, the buyback would have to target the most powerful fishing vessels. One

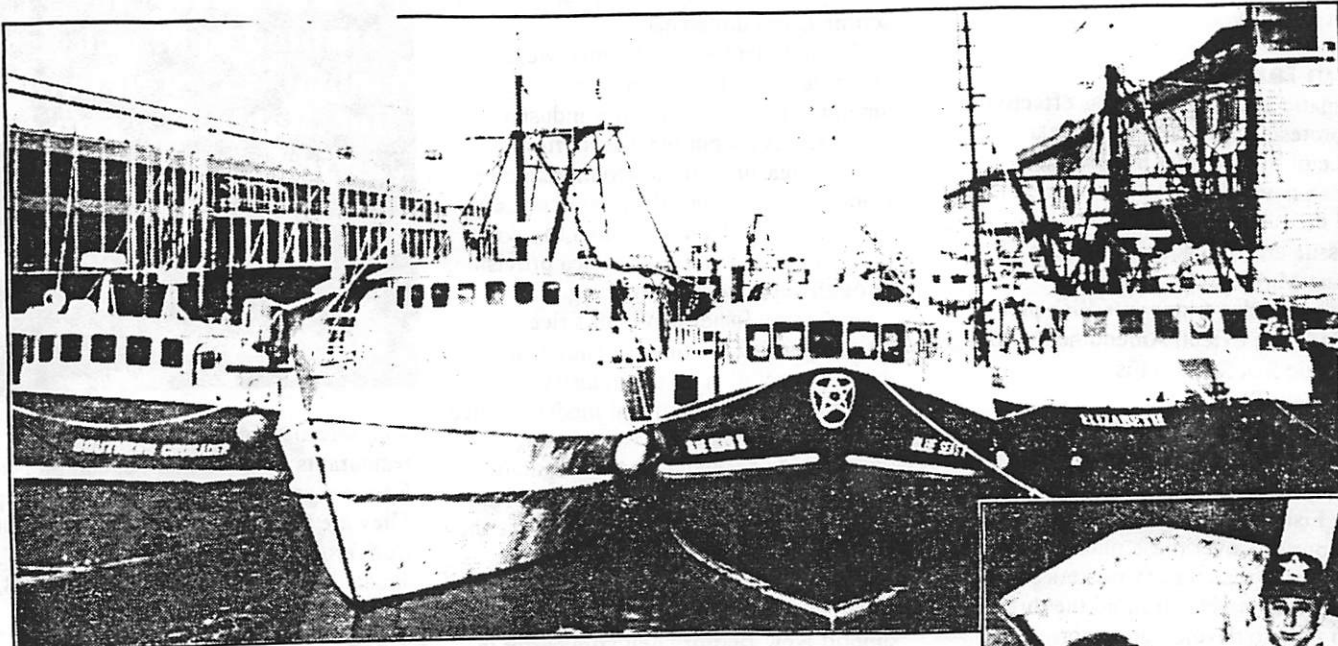
suggestion is to take out the 200 boats over 85' which were built since 1976. This means compensating the owners who have probably done the most damage to the resource, although the payoff for the remaining boats could be a lifetime of fishing.

A mercy-killing approach, on the other hand, means buying out marginal boats that are likely headed for bankruptcy. These tend to be older and represent less fishing effort. This approach will help families, communities, and banks. It does far less good for the resource and the remaining fleet.

A buyback raises uncomfortable, explicit questions that would otherwise be answered by the market. What should the fleet look like after the buyback? How many boats, of what size, represent a sustainable level of effort on groundfish or scallops? Should these be owner/operator or investor-owned boats? Should they be inshore or offshore? How do we design a fleet that can adjust to natural resource abundances fluctuations?

We ignore these questions at our peril.

Robin Alden



Photos courtesy of Seafarers International Union

Draggers and scallopers staged an orderly protest parade — a "symbolic blockade" — of Boston's inner harbor on March 1. The Coast Guard reported 67 fishing vessels moored at the Boston Fish Pier, including the above New Bedford draggers.

Industry in turmoil: Protests lead to aid but at what cost?

On Feb. 28, 50 New Bedford vessels stopped fishing and sailed to Boston Harbor, triggering a ground swell of protest that soon consumed

NEWS ANALYSIS

New England's major groundfish ports as fishermen suddenly began to understand the impact of new federal groundfish and scallop rules on their day-to-day lives.

The events culminated on March 21 when Commerce Secretary Ron Brown traveled to Boston to announce \$30 million in financial aid to the region's fishermen and coastal fishing communities (see related story this page).

The days in between were filled with protests, demonstrations,

meetings, and demands, all covered intensively by the general media. Boats, primarily from Gloucester and New Bedford, refused to fish until, at the very least, they got an extended reprieve from the new 6" mesh and 3-1-4" ring size requirements.

To many fishermen this was a proud moment. They were elated by the idea that people of diverse backgrounds from competing ports could pull together to dramatize the industry's need for help. When, in recent memory, had New Bedford and Gloucester bonded so solidly?

But away from the picketing, the moment was far from proud. Vessel owners who chose not to participate in the tie-up were threatened. Fishermen who tried to fish feared for the safety

See PROTEST, page 15A



New Bedford leaders of the two-week protest effort, pictured at a demonstration at the Hastings Keith Federal Building, were Judy Ramos, vessel owner and president of the Offshore Mariners' Association, and vessel owner Tony Santos. More than 300 New Bedford fishermen took part in the March 11 demonstration.

Continued from page 1A

of their vessels and crew. Many smaller vessels not restricted by the effort control measures imposed on bigger vessels attempted to work as usual, often under a cloud of hostility.

System failure

Dramatic and, ultimately, as effective as the protests were, they were clear evidence of the fact that hundreds of fishermen never followed the process that created the rules to begin with.

At issue are Amendment 5 to the Northeast Multispecies Fishery Management Plan (the groundfish plan) and, to a lesser extent, Amendment 4 to the Atlantic Sea Scallop Fishery Management Plan.

Both were created by the New England Fishery Management Council and are now being implemented by the National Marine Fisheries Service (NMFS).

The protests over these plans sobered even the most realistic lawmakers and industry leaders. Never mind the three years it took to develop and approve the groundfish plan. Never mind the two rounds of public hearings that were held in every major port, in addition to dozens and dozens of open-to-the-public groundfish committee meetings.

To hundreds of fishermen, these plans came from nowhere, imposed upon them by an unfathomable federal bureaucracy.

The protesting fishermen were so removed from the fisheries management process that they directed their demands at Washington instead of at the council, which is responsible for developing — and changing — the rules.

Somewhere, the system failed miserably.

Some say this breakdown of communication and public process is inevitable in a democratic system — that it happens to local, state, and federal governments all the time. Planning boards work on new rules for years, and then, at the eleventh hour, the community rallies in opposition.

But here in the fishing community, the opposition got ugly. Fishermen who followed the development of the groundfish plan, who tried to affect change through proper channels, who attempted to work with the council, and who refused to participate in the tie-up were targeted by their neighbors for criticism and intimidation.

Individual fishermen in Gloucester and New Bedford suffered this abuse, but in Maine, many fishermen were singled out, scorned, and threatened.

It's not that these fishermen were enamored with the groundfish amendment. Maine's major industry associations fought the direct effort control measures of the groundfish plan from the beginning. Even now they are trying to get federal regulators to revisit the moratorium and days-at-sea provisions through negotiated rulemaking.

But many fishermen in this fleet saw no good end to the tie-up. They feared that the credibility of the industry would be damaged as the national media zoomed in on events and broadcasted, yet again, images of fishermen resisting regulation even as stocks continue to decline. That "just-let-us-go-fishing" attitude is one the public will no longer tolerate.

Dozens of other Maine vessels, however, believed it was essential to support New Bedford and Gloucester in this movement, that a unified industry

could achieve some immediate results.

This rift has divided the fleet as never before in Maine and it will take time to heal the wounds.

What next?

Industry leaders and managers who now want to bring industry back to the New England council table face a formidable challenge. This protest captured the attention of the region's most powerful lawmakers on the state and federal levels. The bottom line is that all the hoopla yielded \$30 million in federal aid and promises of more. Who wouldn't try it again next time?

The fishing industry's problems go far beyond Amendment 5 to the groundfish plan and Amendment 4 to the scallop plan, although many fishermen have so far failed to grasp this.

Fish suppliers — the big ones, the ones

The protests that erupted in March might very well be the inevitable reaction of an industry that is undergoing major transition — one that knows it must downsize.

who sell to supermarket chains and restaurants — no longer depend on New England groundfish as a source of supply. They are filling their orders with product from around the world and from aquaculture sources (see story page 23A).

So when the New England groundfish fleet does hit on fish, the market can't absorb it, not like it used to. Instead of scarcity leading to more money, fishermen are seeing prices drop dramatically whenever there's volume in any major port.

People are on edge. The financial stakes are high. Boats and homes are on the line.

The protests that erupted in March might very well be the inevitable reaction of an industry that is undergoing major transition — one that knows it must downsize.

With the talk of vessel buyback programs spreading and with many vessel owners facing the ominous challenge of converting to other fisheries to fill gaps of time no longer spent groundfishing, it is obvious that the uncertainty — and very likely the unrest — is far from over.

Janice M. Plante
Lorelei Stevens

Fishery managers: Make hard decisions

To the Editor:

I have been following the plight of the New England fishing fleet as covered by the news media in recent weeks. Certain aspects of the story leave me with an uneasy feeling. While we are aware that government regulations are presenting a hardship to the fleet as a whole, isn't it also true that it is the responsibility of government agencies to protect the wild stocks of fish which are in fact the property of the population at large? Fishermen are the harvesters of this public resource and are privileged, not entitled, to reap its financial rewards. Is there no one willing to admit this: that the problem of the industry is self-made, that overfishing by capture-oriented fishermen is the problem? Have the fishery managers or the fish boat captains been out catching the fish? Could it be that fishing as it is done today is at the root of the problem? The simple truth is the many modern, technologically advanced fishing machines of today have outpaced the fish populations; they get caught faster than they can spawn, grow, and give rise to the next generation.

Is someone killing the goose that has been laying the golden eggs? Every important marine scientific community involved in studying the problem states that if left unchecked, the New England groundfish resource (cod, haddock, and the flounders) will be commercially extinct by the end of this century. Does this industry really expect the fish to return by turning their collective backs on fishery managers? The new regulations will put some people out of business, they have to, they must or the problem of overfishing will never be solved. It will create hardships for all and separate the efficient, flexible, and thrifty operators from those who will fail to alter and adjust for the future. We all would like to see anyone who wants to fish for a living do just that.

Reality for the late 20th century and the foreseeable future indicates this may no longer be possible. That doesn't

sound all-American, in fact, it sounds un-American, but it happens to be true.

To clarify some misunderstandings which are beginning to take on the shape of fact, and contrary to what some fishery organizations have been saying to the media, regulations are not new. Laws regulating the industry have been created since 1976 when the 200-mile limit was established and responsibility for managing the fish came under the National Marine Fisheries Service. The laws have become more all-encompassing and drastic as the fishery continues to be depleted. What is true is that every time the government managers tried to curb and slow the rate of catch, the industry responded by figuring out ways around it. Sometimes this was accomplished legally, sometimes not. This is not the time or place to point the finger of guilt. What it is, however, is the time to admit some responsibility and go about fixing the problem.

Finally, many in the fishing industry blame the government for the lack of fish, followed by the inevitable: a call for financial assistance. The assistance asked for has ranged from \$50 million to help the New Bedford fleet pay mortgages and toward relief, to grants and help in setting up fish farms on Cape Cod. The government under the National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration is working with the fishermen to help them through the tough times ahead and has pledged to assist where there is a legitimate need. If ways are found to develop and sustain new mariculture operations, the government has the responsibility to help; if a fisherman can demonstrate that NMFS took away his ability to make a living from the sea, he should be assisted in finding a new way to make a living. If a fisherman chose to enter an industry in decline, if he invested unwisely, or if he failed to see the economic warning signs, then he has to deal with the consequences just as the restaurant owner, builder, computer manufacturer, or any other entrepreneur must.

These are the worst of times for both fishermen and fish. Stocks around the world are at all-time lows and the decline shows little sign of recovery. Daily,

fishermen are taking unwise and dangerous risks just to hold on. We may also be at a time when trends and mistakes of the past could be addressed and reversed. The livelihood of a vibrant and historic industry is at stake as is an irreplaceable, renewable natural resource. It is the responsibility of each and every fisherman to look within for his own way to help. It is also the responsibility of all fishery managers to make the hard decisions that will help restore fish populations, despite the difficulty of making those decisions.

William H. Amaru
South Orleans, MA