

# North Pacific Fishery Management Council

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NEWSLETTER

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## Proposals for Groundfish Amendments Given Preliminary Review; Next Review Scheduled for April

At its January 20-22 meeting the Council screened 33 proposed changes to the Gulf of Alaska and Bering Sea/Aleutian Islands Groundfish Fishery Management Plans and forwarded 14 to the plan teams for development and analysis. In April the Council will review the proposals and decide which should go out for public review. The final decision on the proposals is scheduled for June. The Council also received a report from industry on illegal foreign fishing in the Exclusive Economic Zone (EEZ) off Alaska and made recommendations to the Secretaries of Commerce, State, and Transportation on monitoring and controlling foreign fisheries that harvest salmon and groundfish in the Bering Sea EEZ and international waters.

The Council meets next the week of April 11 in Anchorage. In addition to reviewing proposed amendments to the Gulf of Alaska and Bering Sea/Aleutian Islands groundfish plans before sending them out for public review, they will receive their regular reports on foreign and domestic fisheries, Coast Guard enforcement, and joint venture activity. A revised crab plan for the Bering Sea should be ready for initial Council review. The Council's Advisory Panel and Scientific Committee will begin on Monday, April 11, and the Council will begin on Wednesday, April 13. All meetings will be held at the Sheraton Hotel in Anchorage.

## Council Announces New Executive Director

The Council announced the appointment of Clarence Pautzke as their new Executive Director, effective April 1, 1988. Dr. Pautzke has been Deputy Director for the Council since July 1980 and for two years before that was Assistant to the Executive Director of the Pacific Marine Fisheries Commission in Portland, Oregon. He holds a doctorate in oceanography from the University of Washington and is a Commander in the Naval Reserves, heading up a local unit in the Anchorage area.

Jim Branson, Executive Director since the Council was formed in 1976, will retire, after 39 years in fisheries management and enforcement, to his home in Halibut Cove. A retirement party honoring him is tentatively scheduled for the evening of April 12 at the Sheraton Hotel in Anchorage.

SSC and AP Elect Officers for 1988

The Scientific and Statistical Committee and Advisory Panel re-elected their current officers for the coming year. Drs. Richard Marasco and Douglas Eggers continue as Chairman and Vice Chairman of the SSC and Nancy Munro and Robert Alverson will continue as Chairman and Vice Chairman of the AP.

Dr. Marasco is Director of the Resource Ecology and Fisheries Management Division of the Northwest & Alaska Fisheries Center in Seattle. Dr. Eggers is the Chief Fisheries Scientist with the Alaska Department of Fish and Game in Juneau, Alaska. Ms. Munro is the owner of Salt Water Productions in Anchorage and Mr. Alverson is Director of the Fishing Vessel Owners' Association in Seattle.

New SSC Member Confirmed

Dr. Dana Schmidt was confirmed as a new member of the SSC, replacing Dr. Phil Mundy who now works for the Columbia River Intertribal Fisheries Commission. Dr. Schmidt is the Regional Research Biologist for the Westward Region in the Alaska Department of Fish and Game and has served previously on the Council's plan team for crab and the Bycatch Committee.

Council Plans Workshops on Sablefish Management Measures

The Council will take the discussion of limited access in the sablefish longline fishery to the public with a series of five workshops designed to gather public input on the structure of limited access systems best suited to the fishery. The Council will consider the workshop results when designing a management system which it hopes to have in place for the 1989 season. Each workshop will last a day and a half and start with a general overview of the types of limited access systems followed by small group discussions to develop specifics. The results of the workshops and a set of management options will be reported to the Council in April.

The workshops are tentatively scheduled as follows:

February 23-24	Seattle, WA
March 14-15	Homer, AK
March 17-18	Kodiak, AK
March 22-23	Petersburg, AK
March 25-26	Sitka, AK

The Kodiak and Sitka workshops coincide with the fisheries trade fairs. Additional information will be mailed to sablefish permit holders and others in February.

The Future of Groundfish Fisheries Committee

The Future of Groundfish Fisheries (FOG) Committee met December 17-18 and January 11-12, to learn about effort limitation programs used in other fisheries, develop criteria to evaluate groundfish management alternatives, and discuss their application to Alaska's groundfish fisheries. The Committee is charged with developing a recommendation by June for the long-term management of groundfish. They will meet next at the Northwest & Alaska Fisheries Center in Seattle on February 25-26, 1988, and again on March 14-15 in Anchorage. Please contact the Council office if you wish to receive meeting notices and minutes.

### Legislative Update

President Reagan recently signed two bills impacting the fishing industry. H.R. 3674, signed on December 29, renews for two years the Governing International Fisheries Agreement between the U.S. and Japan, and implements Annex V of MARPOL (International Convention for the Prevention of Pollution from Ships) which prohibits the dumping at sea of all garbage within 12 miles of the U.S. shore and the dumping of plastic garbage anywhere in the U.S. 200-mile zone. U.S. vessels are prohibited from dumping plastic even outside 200 miles and ports are required to provide onshore disposal facilities. Additionally, NOAA must identify the damaging effects of plastics on the marine environment and the Environmental Protection Agency must identify landbased sources of plastic pollution and other garbage and recommend methods of reducing them. The bill also reauthorizes the Sea Grant Program for \$45 million in FY1988, \$58 million in FY1989, and \$64 million in FY1990, and creates a grant program to improve marine affairs and resource management curricula at colleges and universities. A Strategic Marine Research Program also is created to concentrate on critical resource and environment areas not currently provided with adequate funding. Finally, the bill implements the Driftnet Fishing Control Act of 1987 which requires the Secretary of Commerce, through the Secretary of State, to negotiate monitoring and enforcement agreements with foreign countries whose fleets fish with high seas driftnets in the North Pacific, and to develop recommendations on a driftnet marking and registration system, a driftnet fishing vessel tracking system, and the use of biodegradable materials in driftnets.

H.R. 2598, the Commercial Fishing Industry Vessel Anti-Reflagging Act of 1987, was signed by the President on January 11, 1988. The bill includes provisions to prohibit foreign-built vessels applying for U.S. documentation after July 28, 1987 to be used for fish processing and places restrictions on foreign ownership and crews aboard U.S. fishing, fish processing and fish tendering vessels engaged in the fisheries in the navigable waters of the U.S.

### Bering Sea and Aleutians Groundfish SEIS Work/Scoping Meeting

The National Marine Fisheries Service has determined that a Supplemental Environmental Impact Statement (SEIS) will be required to analyze the effect of raising the upper limit of the optimum yield range for groundfish in the Bering Sea and Aleutian Islands. The SEIS will be prepared by a workgroup composed of scientists from the National Marine Fisheries Service, U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service, Minerals Management Service, and North Pacific Fishery Management Council. A combined working session and National Environmental Policy Act scoping meeting will be held on February 16 in Anchorage and the concerned public is encouraged to attend. Please contact Denby Lloyd at the Council office for further details.

### Joint Ventures May Fish Roe-bearing Rock Sole This Year

The Council was asked by the Alaska Factory Trawlers' Association to use permit conditions this year to restrict joint ventures from targeting on roe-bearing rock sole in the Bering Sea before April 1. This is a very valuable fishery for U.S. catcher/processors and the market apparently is limited to around 15,000 mt. Implementing such a permit condition based solely on economic allocation may require a 30-day public comment period which

would delay any restrictions on the joint ventures until early March. Therefore, the Council determined that emergency action was not warranted but did give the issue high priority for consideration in this year's groundfish amendment cycle. If approved, the restriction would affect the fishery beginning in 1989.

#### Gulf of Alaska Longline Fishery for Sablefish Begins April 1

The Council was requested to take emergency action delaying the 1988 opening of the directed longline fishery for sablefish in the Gulf of Alaska until the halibut season first opens (usually in May) to reduce the high incidental catch of halibut. After taking public testimony and reviewing available bycatch information, the Council agreed with its Advisory Panel and Scientific and Statistical Committee that no conservation emergency exists to warrant such a delay. However, the Council recognizes the importance of minimizing halibut bycatch and will be exploring the issue in depth during this year's groundfish amendment cycle.

#### Sablefish Bycatch in Pacific Cod Longline Fishery

In January NMFS asked the Council to clarify its intent regarding sablefish bycatch before the longline season begins April 1 in the Gulf of Alaska. Before the season, fishermen targeting other groundfish, such as Pacific cod, can retain up to 20% bycatch of sablefish under current regulations. The Council wants to minimize wastage by allowing some retention of sablefish taken as bycatch, but agreed with the Advisory Panel that 20% was too high and would encourage targeting on sablefish ahead of the season opening. Preliminary analysis of observer data suggests that a more appropriate bycatch percentage for the longline Pacific cod fishery would fall between 1% and 5% and the Council took emergency action to reduce the percentage to that range for 1988 only, leaving the determination of the exact amount to NMFS. The Council also asked NMFS to prepare a regulatory amendment to permanently change the regulations. It will be reviewed by the Council in April before submission to the Secretary of Commerce.

#### Groundfish Proposals Selected for Further Study

The Council reviewed proposals for amendments to the Gulf of Alaska and Bering Sea/Aleutian Islands Groundfish Fishery Management Plans for processing on either the current or extended amendment cycle. Proposals chosen for the current cycle will be prepared as amendments and presented to the Council in April for approval for public review. The Council will make a final decision in June and forward them to the Secretary of Commerce for review and implementation in the 1989 season.

Proposals on the extended cycle are similarly prepared, but are on a longer schedule with a completed amendment package due by April 1989 or earlier if possible. Those amendments are not expected to take effect until January 1990.

The Council told the plan teams to analyze 14 of the 33 proposals reviewed, eight on the current cycle and five (some of them combined by subject area) on the extended cycle. Proposals selected for further consideration are summarized below:

GULF OF ALASKACurrent Cycle:

1. Delay the opening of the sablefish season to coincide with the first halibut opening. Other alternatives include a series of sablefish openings, depth restrictions, and the development of a fishing season framework.
2. Revise federal permit requirements to require all processing vessels receiving groundfish from the EEZ to report weekly regardless of where they are operating.

Extended Cycle:

3. Examine shared management of rockfish by state and federal agencies in Southeast Alaska. Alternatives include deferring all rockfish management to the State of Alaska; transferring all management responsibilities to NMFS; and more clearly specifying the current roles of ADFG and NMFS (under the status quo). An additional alternative will include maintaining the existing management program but allocating the directed demersal shelf rockfish quota to hook and longline gear.
4. Revise the definition of directed fishing. This amendment will examine the percentage currently used to define directed fishing (20%), as well as the applicability of the definition on a haul-by-haul basis.

BERING SEA/ALEUTIAN ISLANDSCurrent Cycle:

1. Implement the Bycatch Committee plan for controlling trawl bycatch of halibut, C. bairdi, C. opilio, and red king crab in the BS/AI. Alternatives include simplifying the Bycatch Committee's plan while maintaining its integrity.
2. Revise federal permit requirements to require all processing vessels receiving groundfish from the EEZ to report weekly regardless of where they are operating.
3. Clarify management of bycatch for JVP and TALFF fisheries. The development of a bycatch or PSC framework will be explored as an alternative. Alternatives to a plan amendment include developing regulatory amendments to clarify the relationship of JVP and TALFF bycatch to DAP fisheries and TAC.
4. Change the July 1 deadline for the Resource Assessment Document (RAD) to require a draft RAD by the September Council meeting and final RAD by the December Council meeting.

5. Change the current 2.0 million metric ton upper limit to the optimum yield (OY). Alternatives for a new upper limit include consideration of a numerical limit, the sum of the annual acceptable biological catches (ABCs) with or without a limit of a 5% increase in any one year, and the sum of the groundfish species maximum sustainable yields (MSYs).
6. Prohibit joint venture processors from accepting deliveries consisting of more than 30% rock sole (as a portion of total groundfish) during the roe-bearing period from January 1 through April 1.

#### Extended Cycle:

7. Revise the definition of directed fishing. This amendment will examine the percentage (20%) currently used to define directed fishing as well as the applicability of the definition on a haul-by-haul basis.

The Council also took action on several other proposals. One requesting an overhaul of the federal reporting and data gathering system was assigned to a Workgroup; a pollock mesh size proposal was deferred to a Workgroup that will seek Saltonstall-Kennedy funding; several bycatch proposals and multi-species longline proposals were deferred to the Council's Bycatch and Future of Groundfish committees; and a proposal to give the U.S. support industry preference over foreign operations was deferred until the April Council meeting when a NOAA General Counsel legal analysis should be available. The Council established an industry workgroup to examine the support services issue in detail. They will meet on February 11 in Seattle, the exact time and place to be announced.

#### Halibut Trip Limits Referred to IPHC

The staff of the International Pacific Halibut Commission has proposed several options for managing the fishery in 1988 including trip limits by vessel size on all boats fishing Areas 2C, 3A, and 3B (the Gulf of Alaska). Four fishermen's associations wrote the Commission expressing their views that trip limits clearly are economic allocations among U.S. commercial user groups and such measures come under the purview of the North Pacific Council. NMFS and NOAA in Washington DC asked the Council what their opinion was. After testimony from IPHC Director McCaughran and the public, the Council decided that trip limits as proposed by the IPHC staff are primarily conservation and management measures and not so allocative in nature that they should be before the Council.

#### Spotlight on Foreign Fisheries in Bering Sea

U.S. industry representatives gave the Council information verifying allegations that part of the extensive foreign fleet purportedly fishing in international waters in the Bering Sea was in fact fishing in U.S. waters. The Council was greatly disturbed by this illegal activity which could cause both biological harm to the resource and economic harm to the domestic industry. They sent letters to the U.S. Secretary of Transportation requesting adequate funding for increased Coast Guard surveillance and counter-intelligence measures and to the State Department asking them to

consider extending U.S. fisheries jurisdiction in the Bering Sea westward to the 1867 U.S.-U.S.S.R. Convention Line and to ask the Japanese Government in the strongest terms possible to:

1. Provide a full explanation of the recently sighted illegal fishing activity and identify the vessels involved as well as an explanation of sanctions it intends to impose on those vessels.
2. Assist the U.S. in enforcement actions against the suspected vessels.
3. Conduct patrols in the international waters of the Bering Sea to ensure vessels owned and operated by Japanese nationals do not fish illegally in the U.S. EEZ.

In related action, the Council endorsed, with some changes, a petition by the Bering Sea Fishermen's Association requesting the Secretary of Commerce to adopt regulations affecting foreign fishing for U.S. origin anadromous stocks in the international waters of the North Pacific and Bering Sea. The interception of these stocks by foreign fleets substantially reduces the numbers of fish available to subsistence, commercial, and sports fishermen in Alaska and on the west coast of the U.S.

The petition originally tied approval of operating permits for foreign processors in joint ventures to a nation's compliance with whatever measures are implemented by the Secretary to protect anadromous stocks on the high seas. The Council recommended that this provision be discretionary rather than mandatory because U.S. fishermen are involved. The Council also added a provision that foreign vessels pay for U.S. observers on their operations in the international waters of the Bering Sea.

#### Japan to Continue IQ Program for 1988

The North Pacific Longline Association (NPLA) of Japan has announced renewal of its import quota (IQ) program for the 1988 fishing year. Under NPLA's IQ program, which was initiated in 1987, a 10,000 mt "pool" of Japanese cod IQ has been set aside for the exclusive use of U.S. cod producers. This IQ will be made available on a first-come, first-served basis to any Japanese buyer of U.S.-processed cod who does not otherwise have sufficient IQ to accommodate imports of U.S. products. The IQ will be provided free of charge. U.S. sellers wishing further information regarding this program should contact Mr. T.J. Ohyama, the NPLA's representative in Anchorage, at (907) 277-0654; or have their Japanese buyers contact Mr. Kuroki at the NPLA's office in Tokyo, 505-6561.

#### Pilot Domestic Observer Program Data Important for Fisheries Management

The Council's pilot observer program recommences in mid-February emphasizing coverage in the Gulf of Alaska of domestic longlining and trawling for sablefish, trawling for pollock in Shelikof Strait and for rockfish. In the Bering Sea and Aleutians, trawling for rock sole, and all gears for the spring cod fishery will be emphasized.

The data collected from this program have many uses in management, including: helping to assess the status of the stocks, estimating the bycatch rates of nontarget and prohibited species, investigating population interrelationships, assessing the impacts of proposed fishery management plan amendments, assessing the impacts on fisheries of proposed actions by other federal agencies (e.g., oil leasing), assisting fishery development activities, and analyzing fishery-marine mammal interactions.

Data obtained by the observers on catch size and species composition gives a measure of the catch per unit effort, an important factor in determining the status of the stocks. Length frequencies and age structure of the target species in the catch are also vital in determining the condition of a fishery resource, and hence, of determining how much is available to be caught. Mathematical models used to assess certain fish populations (such as Shelikof Strait pollock, Bering Sea pollock, yellowfin sole, Greenland turbot, and others) are dependant upon measuring the current age composition of the commercial catch. Without these data and models the ability of fishery scientists to determine the condition of important stocks of fish is diminished. Resulting decisions will be based on a higher degree of uncertainty and probably more conservative.

Observer data is also used to estimate the percentage of bycatch in each of the domestic fisheries. As one fisherman's discarded bycatch may be another fisherman's target species, the determination of bycatch rates is important in calculating the total removal of each species. These data, along with individual size, average weight, viability, and distribution data can help determine the impact the groundfish fisheries have on the shellfish, salmon, and halibut fisheries and provide information about ways of reducing that impact. As a step in that direction the Council's Bycatch Committee has recommended that each fishery's bycatch requirements be estimated annually based upon the bycatch rates from each target fisheries. These data do not exist for most domestic groundfish fisheries so data from other sources such as joint ventures will have to be used to set the bycatch caps by which DAP fisheries are managed. Bycatch data collected by the domestic observer program will help both the industry and fishery managers in determining realistic DAP bycatch needs.

Data obtained by pilot program observers also should be useful in studying particular fisheries questions, such as the stock relationships between pollock caught in the Shelikof Straits and those caught off East Kodiak. Pilot program observers may play a part in the study analyzing the interaction between killer whales and sablefish longliners. There are many other uses of data including estimating the impact of impending oil lease sales on the commercial fisheries or the location of marine cables or closed military activity areas.



Meeting Dates to Note

MFCMA Workshop	February 1-2	Juneau, AK
MAFAC	February 2-3	San Diego, CA
Joint SSCs 603 Standards	February 4-5	Seattle Airport Hilton
Bycatch Committee	February 9-10	Room 2079, NWAFC Seattle, WA
Marine Fisheries Related Debris Conf.	February 9-11	Portland, OR
Salmon Plan Team	February 12	NWAFC Seattle, WA
Pacific Salmon Comm.	February 13-19	Vancouver, BC
Economists Workshop	February 18-19	La Jolla, CA
Sablefish Management Workshop	February 23-24	Seattle, WA
Future of Groundfish Fisheries Committee	February 25-26	Room 2079, NWAFC Seattle, WA
Alaska Board of Fish	March 1	Anchorage, AK
Future of Groundfish Fisheries Committee	March 10-11	Anchorage, AK
Sablefish Management Workshop	March 14-15*	Homer, AK
Sablefish Management Workshop	March 17-18*	Kodiak, AK
COMFISH AK-Trade Fair	March 18-20	Kodiak, AK
Sablefish Management Workshop	March 22-23*	Petersburg, AK
NOAA Ecosystem Workshop	March 22-23	Not Determined
Sablefish Management Workshop	March 25-26*	Sitka, AK

\*These are tentative dates.