



AGENDA B-2
DECEMBER 1995

ALASKA DEPARTMENT OF FISH AND GAME

REPORT TO THE NORTH PACIFIC FISHERY MANAGEMENT COUNCIL

DECEMBER 6, 1995

Fisheries managed under delegated authority of the State of Alaska since the last council meeting include crab, salmon and demersal rockfish.

BERING SEA/ALEUTIAN ISLANDS KING AND TANNER CRAB FISHERIES:

Beginning with the Dutch Harbor brown king crab season, new State regulations require observers on all vessels participating in this and the Adak king crab fisheries. Regulations adopted by the Board of Fisheries in 1988 required observers only on processing vessels, that is, catcher processors and at sea processors. Due to the small number of processing vessels participating in the Adak king crab fisheries, and the lack of any processing vessels participating in the Dutch Harbor brown king crab fishery, the State had difficulty with inseason management and could not collect on the grounds catch and bycatch information

There are no surveys on either of these king crab stocks and the Board agreed that the use of observers to manage the fisheries and collect much needed stock information was justified. To assist managers with inseason catch information and to collect bycatch data from these fisheries, the Alaska Board of Fisheries approved 100% observer coverage.

The Dutch Harbor brown king crab season opened on September 1 with 16 vessels registering. With the opening of the Bering Sea king crab fisheries on September 15, 3 vessels left the Dutch Harbor fishery, but catches for the remaining vessels remained high, and the season was closed on October 9 with a preliminary harvest of 1.9 million pounds and valued at over \$5.0 million. Catches for the past 5 years have averaged 1.4 million pounds with an average value of \$4.0 million.

On November 1, the Adak red, brown and Tanner crab season opened. A total of 11 vessels registered for the Adak fisheries, all but one registering for both red and brown king crab. Observer reports indicate that very little fishing effort has occurred on the red king crab stocks, and to date only 14,000 pounds has been landed. The red king crab fishery is expected to continue for a few more weeks to allow vessels an opportunity to explore the grounds and for observers to collect biological information

on these stocks. The Adak brown king crab fishery currently has a harvest of 245,000 pounds and is expected to continue to the August 15 regulatory closure.

On November 1, the Bering Sea *C. bairdi* Tanner crab fishery opened with 196 vessels registering for the fishery. Because the Bristol Bay red king crab fishery did not open for the 1995/96 season, the area east of 163° W. long. was closed for the second year to the harvesting of *C. bairdi* Tanner crab, and the preseason GHLL of 10.1 million pounds was reduced accordingly by 45.5%, (4.6 million pounds) to approximately 5.5 million pounds. Due to poor fishery performance recorded from the daily reports received by managers, the fishery closed on November 16 with a preliminary catch of 4.5 million pounds valued at \$11.8 million. This catch is the lowest recorded since the fishery reopened in 1988.

During the 1994/95 season, when the area east of 163° was also closed due to the Bristol Bay red king crab closure, 7.5 million pounds, approximately half of the preseason estimate of 14.4 million pounds was harvested. The 1994/95 fishery was valued at over \$28.5 million.

The Bering Sea *C. bairdi* stocks as well as commercial fishery have declined during the last 5 years. The 1995 NMFS trawl survey indicates a continued decline in juveniles, pre-recruits and large males (legal crabs), as well as in the numbers of female. Preliminary indications from the 1995 summer survey and the performance of the 1995/96 commercial fishery show that this entire stock is at historic low levels and it may be necessary to curtail the commercial fishery for several years beginning with the 1996/97 season. *C. bairdi* stocks taken as bycatch in the winter trawl fisheries could receive additional protection during their mating and molting life stages if the Bristol Bay red king crab protection area are closed to year round trawling.

The *C. opilio* Tanner crab fishery will open on January 15, with a preseason GHLL of 50.7 million pounds. The 1994/95 fishery produced a catch of over 75 million pounds valued at \$185.2 million.

SALMON TROLL FISHERY:

The winter chinook fishery opened on October 11, 1995. The reported chinook harvest through November was 5,100 fish. Catch, effort and catch per landing are down from the same time period of last year. Continuing weather characterized by high winds and low temperatures is likely curtailing the troll effort.

SOUTHEAST ALASKA DEMERSAL SHELF ROCKFISH FISHERY:

The central and northern outside waters reopened to lingcod on October 1. To date, approximately 800,000 pounds (150,000 pounds as bycatch) has been landed by 60 vessels. Waters outside 3 miles, will close on December 1.

The Chatham Strait blackcod fishery opened on September 13, with a GHLL of 3 million pounds, dressed weight. There were 122 permit holders, and each permit holder was eligible for 24,500 pounds dressed weight. The 3.0 million pounds was harvested during the 30 day period.

DSR opened November due to the IFQ fishery, but effort has been low.