

North Pacific Fishery Management Council

Richard B. Lauber, Chairman
Clarence G. Pautzke, Executive Director
605 West 4th Avenue
Anchorage, Alaska 99501



Mailing Address: P.O. Box 103136
Anchorage, Alaska 99510
Telephone: (907) 271-2809
FAX (907) 271-2817

#5-93 **NEWSLETTER** 10/05/93

North Pacific Fishery Management Council Met September 21 - 26

During their September meeting in Anchorage, the Council addressed fishery management plan and regulatory amendments submitted for the current groundfish plan amendment cycle, set initial groundfish specifications for 1994, approved a rebuilding schedule for Pacific ocean perch, and addressed several other current management subjects. These and other issues are detailed in this newsletter.

The next meeting of the Council will be held at the Downtown Hilton in Seattle, Washington, the week of December 6. At that meeting the Council will finalize the 1994 groundfish harvest quotas as well as review fishery management plan and regulatory amendments in progress. A draft agenda for that meeting should be available by November 19. The tentative schedule is for the SSC and AP to begin meeting at 8:00 a.m. on Monday, December 6, and for the Council to start at 8:00 a.m. on Tuesday, and meet through Friday afternoon.

Council Holds Elections

By unanimous consent, Council members re-elected **Rick Lauber** and **Bob Alverson** to serve as Chairman and Vice Chairman, respectively, for another one-year term. First elected chairman in 1991, Mr. Lauber has been a member of the Council "family" since its inception in 1976, serving as an Advisory Panel member until his appointment to the Council in 1991. Mr. Lauber lives in Juneau and represents the Pacific Seafood Processors Association.

Bob Alverson, serving his fifth term as Vice Chairman, also served previously on the Advisory Panel from 1981 until appointed to the Council in 1988. Mr. Alverson is the Executive Director for the Fishing Vessel Owners Association, Seattle.

New and Reappointed Council Members Take Oath of Office

As reported in the July newsletter, the Secretary of Commerce in June announced the reappointment of Wally Pereyra to his second three-year Council term and the appointment of Robin Samuelson to his first three-year term. Both members were given the oath of office by

IN THE NEWSLETTER

NPFMC MET SEPT. 21-26 1
COUNCIL HOLDS ELECTIONS 1
NEW & REAPPOINTED COUNCIL MEMBERS 1
NOMINATIONS DUE FOR AP, SSC, & PNCIAC 2
AP & SSC MEMBER APPOINTMENTS 2
SABLEFISH/HALIBUT IFQ FINAL RULE 2
HALIBUT CHARTER BOATS 3
POP REBUILDING 3
DIRECTED FISHING STANDARDS 4
SCALLOP MANAGEMENT 4
GOA SPECIFICATIONS FOR 1994 5
CRAB MANAGEMENT 8
OBSERVER PROGRAM 10
COMPREHENSIVE PLANNING 10
BSAI GROUND FISH SPECS FOR 1994 11
MARINE MAMMALS & GROUND FISH ACTIVITIES . 15
NO-TRAWL ZONE AROUND PRIBILOF ISLANDS ... 15
SALMON BYCATCH MANAGEMENT 15
COUNCIL APPROVES POLLOCK CDQ FOR 1994-95 .. 16
DONUT HOLE FISHERIES STILL GREAT CONCERN 16
ISSUES AT A GLANCE 17

NMFS Regional Director Steve Pennoyer. Mr. Samuelson has served on the Alaska State Board of Fisheries as well as being active in fisheries issues in his community of Dillingham, Alaska. He fishes commercially for salmon and herring. Dr. Pereyra is Chairman and Chief Executive Officer for ProFish International.

**Nominations Due For Advisory Panel,
Scientific and Statistical Committee
and Pacific Northwest Crab Industry
Advisory Committee**

One-year terms of the Council's Scientific and Statistical Committee (SSC) and Advisory Panel (AP) members expire in December. The SSC advises the Council on scientific and other technical matters relating to Council functions and the AP is composed of representatives of the major segments of the fishing industry. Members of these panels are expected to attend up to six meetings, three to four days in length, per year.

The Pacific Northwest Crab Industry Advisory Committee was formed in 1989 to provide the Bering Sea crab industry from the Pacific Northwest access to the Alaska regulatory process, similar to that of Alaskan residents. The committee meets several times a year to review proposed changes in crab fishery regulations.

Resumes for persons who wish to be considered for these committees should be sent to the attention of Judy Willoughby, North Pacific Fishery Management Council, P.O. Box 103136, Anchorage, AK 99510, to arrive no later than 5:00 p.m., November 19, 1993. Appointments will be announced at the Council's December meeting at the Hilton Hotel in Seattle, Washington, and will become effective in January 1994. For more information, contact Judy Willoughby at the Council office.

New AP and SSC Member Appointments

Hal Weeks, a representative for the Oregon Department of Fish & Wildlife, is the newest member of the Scientific and Statistical Committee for 1993. Dr. Weeks was appointed to fill the seat vacated by Larry Hreha. *Dave Benson*, a representative for Arctic Alaska Fisheries Corp., was appointed to the Advisory Panel through December to fill the seat vacated by Phil Chitwood.

Sablefish and Halibut IFQ Final Rule in Last Stage of Review

The final rule implementing fixed gear sablefish and halibut IFQs (Amendment 15 to the Fishery Management Plan for the Groundfish Fishery of the Bering Sea/Aleutian Islands, Amendment 20 to the Fishery Management Plan for the Groundfish Fishery of the Gulf of Alaska, and a Pacific Halibut Regulatory Amendment) has passed reviews at NMFS, NOAA, and the Department of Commerce in Washington, DC. As of this writing the Final Rule is in review at the Office of Management and Budget (OMB). If OMB decides to publish the final rule, it will be submitted to the Office of the Federal Register. Once a *Federal Register* notice is published there will be a 30-day delayed effectiveness (cooling off) period. After the cooling off period, barring court-ordered injunctions, the rule will become effective. Fishing under the sablefish and halibut IFQ program is still anticipated to begin in 1995.

Council Approves Sablefish And Halibut Blocks

The Council approved a modified quota share (QS) block proposal under the sablefish and halibut IFQ program. The Council's program modifies the "Full/Partial Block Proposal" which had been reviewed by the public. Under the Council's QS Block program, all provisions of the original IFQ rule will be implemented except for the following changes:

Initial Allocation

- (1) All initial allocations of sablefish and halibut under the IFQ program which would result in IFQs of 20,000 lbs or more in the first year of the program will be issued as regular quota shares as originally specified in the sablefish and halibut IFQ program.
- (2) All initial allocations of sablefish and halibut under the IFQ program which would result in IFQs of less than 20,000 lbs in the first year of the program will be issued as "QS blocks".

Transfers

- (1) Regular QS may be transferred in any unit as small as 1 QS.
- (2) Blocks may only be transferred as blocks; Blocks may not be divided into smaller QS units.
- (3) Blocks of QS representing IFQs of less than 1,000 lbs in the initial allocation, may be combined or "swept up" to form larger blocks, as long as the consolidated block is no greater than 1,000 lbs of IFQ.

Ownership Caps

- (1) A person may own and use up to two blocks in each management area.
- (2) A person who owns two blocks in a given management area may not use regular QS in that area. Note: Persons owning two blocks may acquire additional blocks or regular QS only under operation of law, for example through inheritance or court-order, but would not be allowed to use such blocks or regular QS.
- (3) Persons who own less than two blocks in an area may own and use regular QS up to the limits specified in the original IFQ rule. Note: this cap applies to both QS imbedded in the blocks and regular QS.

Halibut Charter Boats

The Council reviewed a proposal from the Alaska Longline Fishermen's Association (ALFA) for a Regulatory Amendment that would cap the guided sport halibut fishery in Alaska at 1992 catch levels. The proposal specifies that the need for action is a recent increase in the recreational halibut fishery, which has in turn, reduced halibut available to the directed fishery. ALFA's justification for this proposal is that the sport catch, along with mortality from waste, bycatch, and personal use, are taken off the top of the overall halibut quota. The directed setline fishery is allocated the remainder. The proposal states that only the guided sport fishery should be constrained, and that capping all sport halibut fisheries is unnecessary.

Substantial public testimony was received on this issue. The Council was presented information that indicated the charter industry was fully capitalized in most areas, and that a license limitation or individual transferrable quota (ITQ) program might be appropriate to limit the growth of this fishery. A control date of September 23, 1993 was set to notice the industry that a moratorium on the guided sport fishery may be implemented. Fishermen and vessels not participating in the fishery by that date may not be guaranteed future access to the fishery. The Council also is establishing a working group comprised of staff, industry, and charter operators to develop traditional management tools and identify potential alternatives for limited access. This group will report back to the Council at the January meeting. It is tentatively scheduled to meet November 8 in Anchorage, but please call the Council office for confirmation.

Pacific Ocean Perch Rebuilding

The Council took final action on alternative policy options to rebuild the depleted Pacific ocean perch (POP) stock in the Gulf of Alaska. The analysis evaluated various harvest strategies, ranging from status quo to a bycatch only policy, to rebuild POP to a target biomass level (150,000 mt) that produces maximum sustainable yield. The spawner biomass is about half of that now. The Council chose a rebuilding strategy which will provide for the POP stock to recover in about 14 years, while minimizing discards and the risk of further stock declines. Other target fisheries will be controlled to minimize their

impacts on POP, especially those with high bycatch. To prevent localized depletion, and provide for Gulf-wide rebuilding, the Council also voted to apply the overfishing definition for POP on a regional basis.

Directed Fishing Standards

Directed fishing standards limit the amount of a species that may be retained on a vessel when fishing for that species is restricted to bycatch only. The standards are expressed as a percentage of the total amount of fish and fish products on board. Retention over that percentage is considered evidence of a directed fishery for that species. The current DFS, which are highly specific for bycatch species, areas, and gears, are complex and difficult to enforce. Last December, the Council requested that NMFS develop a regulatory amendment to address Directed Fishing Standards (DFS) for rockfish in the Gulf of Alaska that reflected true unavoidable bycatch of rockfish and prevented topping off. Further examination of the issue indicated that DFS regulations should be revised for all groundfish.

An analysis of proposed changes to directed fishing standards was reviewed at the September Council meeting. The alternatives included simplifying DFS by using: (1) 5%, 10%, or 20% as the DFS for all groundfish species; and (2) the same DFS for each species regardless of area, gear type, target fishery, or cause of the directed fishery closure. The analysis also examined the effects of in-season changes to DFS, and changing the basis for calculating retainable groundfish bycatch. The Council released the analysis for public review with revisions suggested by the Advisory Panel. These include setting up a matrix system to help fishermen identify the DFS by species, gear type, and area. This matrix would be updated as necessary on the NMFS bulletin board. The AP also recommended that additional rates of 1% and 15% be analyzed for DFS. The analysis will be available for public review in early November and the Council could take final action at the December meeting.

Scallop Management

The Council reviewed a draft analysis for a proposed Fishery Management Plan (FMP) for the scallop fishery in the Gulf of Alaska (GOA) and Bering Sea/Aleutian Islands (BSAI). Three alternatives were examined: Continuing State management (status quo), incorporating scallops into the GOA and BSAI groundfish FMPs, and developing a separate scallop FMP. Two options for management authority were considered for each of the alternatives to the status quo: (1) full Council (i.e. Federal) management, and (2) shared authority between Federal and State agencies. Under option 2 and a separate FMP, two categories of management measures proposed are: (Category 1) those that are specifically fixed in the proposed FMP and require an FMP amendment to change, and (Category 2) those measures that are neither rigidly specified nor frameworked in the FMP.

At the September meeting, the Council identified shared State-federal authority as its preferred alternative. In the plan, Category 1 measures would include permit requirements, Federal observer requirements, closed waters, bycatch limits, and limited access. Category 2 measures would include legal gear, minimum size limits, reporting requirements, guideline harvest levels, in-season adjustments, districts and sections, seasons, State observer requirements, registration areas, closed waters, efficiency limits, and other necessary measures consistent with the FMP. The Council is particularly interested in public comment on the category in which bycatch limits and closed waters should be placed. Superexclusive registration areas would not be authorized under the proposed plan unless formally amended through Council action.

Preferred moratorium options are listed below, however, the Council requested additional analysis to assist with determining appropriate qualifying criteria. This analysis, along with a draft FMP, will be available prior to final action in January.

Qualifying Criteria: Vessels must have participated (made landings) in either 1991 or 1992, or must have participated for at least four years between 1980 and 1993. An additional alternative to be considered would qualify any vessel which made landings in either 1990, 1991, 1992, or 1993 (through July 31).

Vessels that were in the "pipeline" to fish for Alaskan scallops (i.e., under construction, being refitted, relocated, etc.), but had not made landings during the qualifying period, would not qualify under the moratorium.

Length of Moratorium: The moratorium will remain in effect until the Council rescinds or replaces; not to exceed 3 years from date of implementation, but Council may extend for two years if a permanent limited access program is imminent.

Crossovers: Crossovers to other fisheries (groundfish, crab, or halibut) during the moratorium will not be allowed.

Reconstruction: Vessels may be reconstructed during the moratorium. If physical reconstruction started on or after January 20, 1993, the new size will be restricted to a 20% increase in vessel length; no more upgrades allowed.

Replacement: Qualifying vessels can be replaced with non-qualifying vessels as often as desired so long as the replaced vessel leaves the fishery or bumps another qualifying vessel out in the case of multiple transactions. Vessel size can be increased as many times as desired, but is restricted to an overall 20% maximum increase in original qualifying vessel length. For vessels lost or destroyed before or during the moratorium, qualifying vessels can be replaced with non-qualifying vessels subject to a 20% maximum increase in vessel length. Replaced vessels cannot be salvaged and come back into the fishery.

Exemptions: In the Gulf of Alaska, vessels 26 feet or less are exempted from the moratorium. In the Bering Sea/Aleutian Islands, vessels 32 feet or less are exempted from the moratorium.

Appeals: The appeals procedure will consist of an adjudication board of government persons and non-voting industry representatives.

Gulf of Alaska Specifications

The Council established interim Gulf of Alaska groundfish specifications for the 1994 fisheries, including Acceptable Biological Catches (ABCs), Total Allowable Catches (TACs), and Prohibited Species Catch (PSC) limits. Twenty-five percent of the preliminary TACs (set in September) will go forward as interim harvest limits for the first of the fishing year until superseded by the final specifications published in late January. The Council's preliminary recommendations for ABC, TAC, and apportionments are listed in Table 1. They were based on the most current stock assessment information contained in the preliminary Stock Assessment and Fishery Evaluation (SAFE) document that was released for public review, as well as recommendations from the Plan Team, Scientific and Statistical Committee, and Advisory Panel.

Specifications for pollock received considerable attention because the Plan Team's ABC recommendation was much higher than the 1993 ABC, despite no change in stock status. This recommendation was based on new analysis that indicated an optimal exploitation rate higher than 10% was appropriate for this species. The Council chose a lower initial ABC because of ecosystem concerns that were not addressed in the stock assessment model. It was noted that Steller sea lions, which feed extensively on juvenile pollock, have continued their population decline. The Council's initial TAC recommendation was 78,000 mt for the Western and Central regulatory areas.

Several other changes were recommended for the 1994 fishing year. Rex sole was split from the deepwater flatfish complex and assigned a separate initial TAC of 8,000 mt. A separate category of rex sole allows for better management of Pacific ocean perch (POP), which is caught as bycatch in the rex sole fishery. Both the rex sole and rockfish TACs may be modified in December to prevent overfishing and localized depletions of POP. The Council provided for additional protection of POP by recommending that overfishing levels for POP be apportioned by regulatory area. For Atka mackerel, the

Council recommended an initial TAC of 4,800 mt, as this species was split from the 'other species' category under Amendment 31. Consequently, the 'other species' category of groundfish was not apportioned by management area for 1994.

The Prohibited Species Catch (PSC) limits for halibut in the Gulf of Alaska are set by gear type and may be apportioned seasonally over the fishing year. For 1994, the Council recommended the following halibut PSC apportionments for the Gulf of Alaska groundfish fisheries:

<u>Trawl Gear</u>		<u>Hook and Line Gear</u>	
1st quarter	600 mt (30%)	1st trimester	200 mt (26.7%)
2nd quarter	600 mt (20%)	2nd trimester	500 mt (66.7%)
3rd quarter	400 mt (30%)	3rd trimester	<u>50</u> mt (06.7%)
4th quarter	<u>400</u> mt (20%)		
TOTALS	2000 mt		750 mt

The initial 1994 total halibut PSC limits for all fisheries and gear types were the same as 1993. For hook and line gear, the second trimester apportionment will be released coincidental with the opening of the sablefish season on May 15, and will end on August 31. The third trimester apportionment will be released on September 1. The Council is again recommending a separate PSC allowance of 10 mt for hook and line demersal shelf rockfish fisheries in the Southeast Outside District, to be taken from the 3rd trimester. As in 1993, pot gear would be exempt from the halibut PSC limits.

Crab Management

Several major issues have stimulated increased Council interest in current management of Bering Sea crab fisheries. These include the Alaska Board of Fisheries' actions on pot limits and superexclusive registration for the Norton Sound red king crab fishery, and the subsequent appeal and reversal of the latter provision.

The current management plan establishes a State/Federal cooperative management regime that maintains federal oversight, but defers Bering Sea crab management to the State of Alaska. Overall, the Council believes the management plan has efficiently guided management of the crab fisheries, despite recent controversy over Norton Sound. To help minimize future contentious problems, and to address industry concerns about current crab management, the Council endorsed an action plan formulated by NMFS and ADF&G to more formally implement state/federal cooperation in crab management. The action plan includes the following elements:

- (1) Research Planning Group. This group, comprised of NMFS, ADF&G and university crab biologists, will consider crab research priorities, activities and interests. The goal is the development of a long-term plan for applied crab research. The plan will focus on development of optimal long-term harvest policies.
- (2) Crab Plan Team. The role of the Plan Team will be expanded to formally incorporate its input into the Guideline Harvest Level (GHL) process, and provide the public with an opportunity to understand the annual establishment of the GHLs.
- (3) State/Federal Policy Group. The purpose of this group will be to review and discuss crab management issues prior to Board and/or Council review. This group will include agency staff and legal counsel. The intent in forming this group is to more easily resolve most issues through interagency agreements, rather than through amendments to the crab plan or an appeals process.
- (4) Council/Board Consultation Group. This subcommittee of Council and Board members will meet annually to focus on crab issues, and will be scheduled in coordination with existing annual meeting schedules for both the Council and the Board. It can review information from staff and provide guidance to the respective Council and Board on pertinent crab issues.

The Council also recommended staff begin analysis of a proposal to establish the Norton Sound red king crab area as a superexclusive registration area. Initial review may be at the December, 1993 Council meeting.

Results of the 1993 NMFS Bering Sea Crab Survey

Regarding the status of the crab stocks in the Bering Sea, and the recommended GHLs from the State of Alaska, the following table summarizes information for the fall 1993, and winter 1994 crab fisheries from this summer's trawl survey. More detailed information will be available in the NMFS "Report to Industry on the 1993 Eastern Bering Sea Crab Survey" which will be published sometime in October. For further information, contact Dr. Bradley G. Stevens or Dr. Robert Otto, NMFS, P.O. Box 1638, Kodiak, AK 99615. Phone (907) 487-4961.

<u>Red King Crab (<i>Paralithodes camtschatica</i>) Bristol Bay.</u>	
Legal Males:	7.3 million crabs; up 49%.
Pre-recruits:	100% increase.
Large Females:	28% increase.

Outlook: Increased estimates are largely due to concentration of crabs at few stations, and may not reflect a real increase in population. Juveniles are at an all-time low and declining.
GHL: 16.8 million lbs.

Red King Crab (Paralithodes camtschatica) Pribilof District.

Legal Males: 2.5 million crabs; up 212%.
Pre-recruits: No significant change.
Large Females: 112% increase.
Outlook: Increased estimates of legal crab reflect concentration at few stations, and should be viewed cautiously. Smaller crab are poorly estimated.
GHL: 3.4 million lbs.

Pribilof Islands Blue King Crab (P. platypus) Pribilof District.

Legal Males: 1.0 million; No significant change.
Pre-recruits: 29% decrease.
Large Females: No significant change.
Outlook: Population low and stable. Trends not detectable.
GHL: Fishery closed for 1993.

St. Matthew Blue King Crab (P. platypus) Northern District.

Legal Males: 3.6 million; 57% increase.
Pre-recruits: 36% increase.
Large Females: Not well estimated.
Outlook: Population high with good recruitment for future.
GHL: 4.4 million lbs.

Tanner Crab (Chionoecetes bairdi) Eastern District.

Legal Males: 20.6 million; 50% decrease.
Pre-recruits: 38% decrease.
Large Females: 58% decrease.
Outlook: Population average, but declining as strong year class expires.
GHL: 19.7 million lbs.

Snow Crab (C. Opilio) All districts combined.

Large Males: 135 million; 48% decrease.
Pre-recruits: 24% decrease.
Large Females: No significant change.
Outlook: Large crab will continue to decline as strong year class expires, but strong recruitment of juveniles should reach fishery in 2-4 years.
GHL: 105.8 million lbs.

Hair Crab (Erimacrus Isenbeckii)

Total Males: 11.8 million; 194% increase.
Large Females: 168% increase.
Outlook: Population increase probably reflects poor assessment in recent years, but is consistent with recruitment indices over last 5 years.
GHL: Pribilofs: 2.5 million lbs.
Bristol Bay: 0.5 million lbs.

Observer Program

The Council reviewed proposed changes to the existing Observer Program, which will remain in effect until replaced by full implementation of the fee-based North Pacific Fisheries Research Plan. When the Council took action last June to split the BSAI Pacific cod quota between trawl and fixed gear, they included a provision to require all vessels participating in the BSAI directed cod fisheries to carry an observer at least 30% of the time while in that fishery (though vessels less than 42' would be exempt from the requirement). This provision will be processed as a regulatory amendment to the Observer Plan, separate from the cod split plan amendment. The Council also discussed the issue of non-payment of observer costs, which has caused a hardship on observer contractors and, subsequently, to observers themselves. Part of the regulatory amendment package for 1994 changes to the Observer Plan may include a requirement that observer contractors' certification be contingent upon a contractor holding in escrow at all times the equivalent of one month of salaries to cover observers it employs.

In another action, the Council recommended that 100% observer coverage be required of all vessels over 60' fishing for any groundfish in Area 517 of the BSAI, from the start of the fishing year to the end of the directed cod fisheries. This action may be implemented as part of the regulatory amendment package, or it may be processed under existing authority of the NMFS Regional Director through a Notice and Comment action.

Other changes to the 1994 Observer Plan were recommended by the Council last December, but were not implemented for 1993. They are expected to be in place for 1994 and include:

1. Basing observer coverage requirements on fishing days, as opposed to fishing trip days, and defining a fishing day as any day in which groundfish are retained.
2. Changing the way in which 30% coverage vessels must meet their quarterly coverage requirements: these vessels will be required to carry an observer during 30% of their days during fishing trips in each calendar quarter in which they fish more than three days in the groundfish fishery. Additionally, each vessel must carry an observer during at least one fishing trip for each target fishery in which the vessel participates. Some of the groundfish target fishery categories will be aggregated to ease the logistical burdens of this requirement.
3. Longline vessels in the 30% category which fish in the Eastern Gulf of Alaska must carry an observer during at least one fishing trip in the Eastern Gulf.
4. Modified observer coverage requirements for vessels using pot gear so that 30% coverage requirements apply to all vessels 60 feet and greater.
5. Revision of conflict of interest standards for observers and observer contractors. Generally, these standards have been clarified so that observers and contractors may not have a personal or financial interest in the vessel or processing facility to which they are assigned. Financial or personal interest means any source of income to, or capital investment or other interest held by an individual, partnership, or corporation or an individual's spouse, immediate family member, parent, or significant other living within the same household.

Comprehensive Planning

The Council spent considerable time at this meeting on the Comprehensive Planning process. Some resolution was achieved on the specific components of an IFQ program for groundfish and crab fisheries, as well as on components of a license limitation program for the crab fisheries. The Council again is considering as a major alternative, a license limitation program for groundfish fisheries. They also added an alternative which combines an IFQ program for selected species with license limitation for all other

species. The details of these actions will be contained in a separate newsletter from the Council in mid-October.

Bering Sea/Aleutian Islands Groundfish Specifications for 1994

The Council adopted for public review the preliminary Stock Assessment and Fishery Evaluation (SAFE) document for the 1994 Bering Sea/Aleutian Islands (BSAI) fisheries. This document contains information on the current status of stocks for each groundfish species, including biomass estimates and recommended Acceptable Biological Catch (ABC) levels. The Council also set preliminary groundfish Total Allowable Catches (TAC) and bycatch allowances for the BSAI fisheries.

The recommended preliminary ABCs and TACs for the BSAI fisheries and seasonal apportionment of the pollock fishery are presented in Table 2. Stock assessments on which the ABCs and TACs are based do not include information from this past summer's trawl survey. Current survey data will be incorporated into the final SAFE document and will be reviewed by the groundfish Plan Team in mid-November.

The Council recommended a 45/55 split for the seasonal apportionment of pollock in the Eastern Bering Sea for the roe (January 20 - April 15) and non-roo seasons (August 15 - December 31), and adopted last year's pollock TACs for the EBS, AI, and Bogoslof district. The Bogoslof TAC of 1,000 mt will serve as bycatch in non-pollock fisheries. Regarding Pacific cod, the Council will have the authority to seasonally apportion the Pacific cod TAC allocated to vessels using hook-and-line gear or pot gear (44% of the cod TAC) when Amendment 24 to the BSAI Fishery Management Plan is adopted, sometime in early 1994. The Council recommended the fixed gear trimester apportionments as follows:

1st Trimester	Jan. 1 - April 30	90%
2nd Trimester	May 1 - August 31	10%
3rd Trimester	Sept. 1 - Dec. 31	Remainder

The Council also recommended that, in the event that the trawl gear component does not catch all of its 54% of the 1994 Pacific cod TAC, then the rollover of the TAC into the fixed gear component should be assigned as follows: 25% into the second trimester and the remainder into the third trimester.

Another change from last year is the ability for the Council to apportion the TACs in the Aleutian Islands management Area (540) into the Eastern, Central and Western districts. The Council recommended apportioning the initial 1994 Atka Mackerel TAC of 40,425 mt equally into the three districts (13,475 mt) and requested the Plan Team provide information in December on apportioning the Aleutian Islands sablefish TAC into the three districts.

Regarding apportionment of PSCs in the BSAI groundfish fisheries, the Council recommended bycatch allowances for Pacific halibut, herring, red king crab and Tanner crab as listed in Table 3. Note these apportionments will only be in place until the final recommendations, made by the Council in December, are adopted by the Secretary of Commerce. One change from last year is the Council's recommendation to apportion 95% of the fixed gear halibut PSC apportionment into the first trimester, 5% into the second trimester, and rollover any remainder into the third trimester. The Council again recommended that groundfish pot gear be exempt from the non-trawl halibut PSC program.

Lastly, the Council recommended standards for the Vessel Incentive Program (VIP) for the first two quarters of the 1994 Gulf and Bering Sea/Aleutian Islands trawl fisheries. These recommendations appear in Table 4.

TABLE 1. GULF OF ALASKA GROUND FISH
Initial 1994 Council recommendations and apportionments (metric tons)

Species	Area	1993			Council 1994 ABC	Council 1994 TAC
		ABC	TAC	Catch*		
Pollock	W (61)	34,068	24,087	20,540	16,930	16,930
	C (62)	36,737	25,974	20,603	18,250	18,250
	C (63)	86,195	60,939	45,649	42,820	42,820
	E	3,400	3,400	427	5,550	5,550
	Total	160,400	114,400	87,219	83,550	83,550
Pacific Cod	W	18,700	18,700	18,356	17,400	17,400
	C	35,200	35,200	33,152	32,700	32,700
	E	2,800	2,800	1,555	2,600	2,600
	Total	56,700	56,700	53,063	52,700	52,700
Flatfish, Deep	W	2,020	1,740	324	740	500
	C	35,580	15,000	5,917	20,680	8,000
	E	7,930	3,000	124	4,990	500
	Total	45,530	19,740	6,365	26,410	9,000
Rex sole	W				1,280	500
	C	included in deepwater flatfish			14,900	7,000
	E				2,940	500
	Total				19,120	8,000
Flathead sole	W	12,580	2000	607	12,580	2,000
	C	31,830	5,000	1,803	31,830	5,000
	E	5,040	3,000	7	5,040	3,000
	Total	49,450	10,000	2,417	49,450	10,000
Flatfish, Shallow	W	27,480	4,500	380	27,480	4,500
	C	21,260	10,000	4,820	21,260	10,000
	E	1,740	1,740	5	1,740	1,740
	Total	50,480	16,240	5,205	50,480	16,240
Arrowtooth	W	38,880	5,000	1,852	38,880	5,000
	C	253,330	20,000	15,656	253,330	20,000
	E	29,080	5,000	813	29,080	5,000
	Total	321,290	30,000	18,321	321,290	30,000
Sablefish	W	2,030	2,030	726	2,030	2,030
	C	9,610	9,610	11,945	9,610	9,610
	W. Yakutat	3,830	3,830	4,561	3,830	3,830
	E. Yak./SEO	5,430	5,430	5,367	5,430	5,430
	Total	20,900	20,900	22,599	20,900	20,900
Pacific Ocean	W	753	341	492	760	341
Perch	C	949	949	1,177	950	949
	E	1,676	1,270	511	1,670	1,270
	Total	3,378	2,560	2,180	3,380	2,560
	Shortraker / Rougheye	W	100	90	135	100
Rockfish (Other Slope)	C	1,290	1,161	1,190	1,290	1,161
	E	570	513	538	570	513
	Total	1,960	1,764	1,863	1,960	1,764
	Rockfish	W	330	214	444	330
Northern Rockfish	C	1,640	1,064	1,541	1,640	1,064
	E	6,330	4,105	1,455	6,330	4,105
	Total	8,300	5,383	3,440	8,300	5,383
	Rockfish (Pelagic Shelf)	W	1,000	1,000	798	1,000
C		4,720	4,720	3,822	4,720	4,720
E		40	40	61	40	40
Total		5,760	5,760	4,681	5,760	5,760
Rockfish (Pelagic Shelf)	W	1,010	1,010	260	1,010	1,010
	C	4,450	4,450	1,773	4,450	4,450
	E	1,280	1,280	1,058	1,280	1,280
	Total	6,740	6,740	3,091	6,740	6,740
DSR	S.E. Out.	800	800	524	943	800
Thornyhead	Gulfwide	1,180	1,062	1,395	1,180	1,062
Atka mackerel	Gulfwide	with other species			4,800	4,800
Other Species	Gulfwide	NA	14,602	9,299	NA	12,963
GULF OF ALASKA TOTAL		732,868	306,651	224,920	656,963	272,222

* Catch through August 21, 1993

TABLE 2. BERING SEA/ALEUTIAN ISLANDS GROUND FISH
Initial 1994 Council recommendations and apportionments (metric tons)

Species	Area	Council		Plan Team	ABC 1994	Seasonal	Council	ITAC	CDQ
		ABC 1993	TAC 1993	ABC 1994		Allowance	TAC 1994		
Pollock	EBS	1,340,000	1,300,000	1,340,000	1,340,000		1,300,000	1,105,000	97,500
	Roe					45% of ITAC		497,250	43,875
	Non-Roe					55% of ITAC		607,750	53,625
	AI	58,700	51,600	58,700	58,700		51,600	43,860	3,870
	518	42,000	1,000	156,000	32,000		1,000	850	75
Pacific cod	BS/AI	164,500	164,500	183,000	183,000		183,000	155,550	0
Yellowfin sole	BS/AI	238,000	220,000	238,000	238,000		193,075	164,114	0
Greenland turbot	BS/AI	7,000	7,000	18,800	7,000		7,000	5,950	0
Arrowtooth flounder	BS/AI	72,000	10,000	72,000	72,000		10,000	8,500	0
Rock sole	BS/AI	185,000	75,000	185,000	185,000		75,000	63,750	0
Other flatfish	BS/AI	191,000	79,000	191,000	191,000		79,000	67,150	0
Sablefish	EBS	1,500	1,500	1,500	1,500		1,500	1,275	0
	AI	2,600	2,600	2,600	2,600		2,600	2,210	0
POP complex								0	0
True POP	EBS	3,330	3,330	3,330	3,330		3,330	2,831	0
Other POP complex	EBS	1,400	1,200	1,400	1,400		1,200	1,020	0
True POP	AI	13,900	13,900	13,900	13,900		13,900	11,815	0
Sharp/Northern	AI	5,670	5,100	5,670	5,670		5,100	4,335	0
Short/Rougheye	AI	1,220	1,100	1,220	1,220		1,100	935	0
Other rockfish	EBS	400	360	400	400		360	306	0
	AI	925	830	925	925		830	706	0
Atka mackerel	BS/AI	117,100	32,000	245,000	122,500		40,425	34,361	0
	W			109,000	53,900		13,475	11,454	0
	C			109,000	55,125		13,475	11,454	0
	E			27,000	13,475		13,475	11,454	0
Squid	BS/AI	3,400	2,000	3,400	3,400		2,000	1,700	0
Other species	BS/AI	26,600	26,600	26,600	26,600		26,600	22,610	0
BS/AI TOTAL		2,476,245	1,998,620	2,748,445	2,490,145		1,998,620	1,698,827	101,445

Notes:

Roe Season for Pollock: January 20 to April 15. Non-Roe season: August 15 to December 31.

ITAC = recommended TAC less the 15% reserve.

CDQs equal half the reserve for Pollock, or 7.5% of the BSAI Pollock TAC.

The Council did not divide the Aleutian Islands Pollock TAC into roe and non-roe allowances.

Flatfish fisheries open May 1 (YFS, "other flats", ATF and turbot).

Table 3. Council Recommended Initial 1994 BSAI Trawl Fisheries PSC Apportionments and Seasonal Allowances

Fishery Group	Assumed Mortality\1	Halibut Mortality Cap (mt)	Herring (mt)	Red King Crab (animals) Zone1	C. bairdi Zone1	C. bairdi Zone2
Yellowfin sole	70%	592	359	40,000	175,000	1,225,000
Rocksole/other flatfish	70%	588		110,000	475,000	200,000
Turbot/arrowtooth/sablefish	40%	137				
Rockfish	60%	201	9			25,000
Jan. 1 - Mar. 29			0			
Mar. 30 - June 28			81			
June 29 - Dec. 31			120			
Pacific cod	60%	1,000	27	10,000	175,000	400,000
Pollock/mackerel/"o. species"	60%	1,257	193	40,000	175,000	1,150,000
7 MW Pollock (Herring)			1,534			
TOTAL		3,775	2,122	200,000	1,000,000	3,000,000

\1 Mortality rates based on IPHC assumed mortality rates for 1993.

Council Recommended 1994 Non-Trawl PSC Bycatch Allowances

Fishery Group	Halibut Mortality (mt)	Seasonal Apportion (mt)	%
Pacific Cod	825		
Jan 1 - April 30		784	95
May 1 - August 31		41	5
Sept. 1 - Dec. 31		Rollover	
Other Non-Trawl*	75		
Groundfish Pot	Exempt		
TOTAL	900 metric tons		

* Includes Hook & Line Sable Fish, Rock fish and Jig

**TABLE 4. Council Recommendations for 1994 VIP Rate Standards
For the First Two Quarters**

Incentive Program Rate Standards		
Fishery and quarter	Halibut	Zone 1 Red King Crab
	(kg halibut/mt groundfish)	(# of crab/mt groundfish)
<u>BSAI Midwater Pollock</u>		
First Quarter	1.0	n/a
Second Quarter	1.0	
<u>BSAI Bottom Pollock</u>		
First Quarter	7.5	
Second Quarter	5.0	
<u>BSAI Yellowfin Sole</u>		
First Quarter	5.0	2.5/mt
Second Quarter	5.0	2.5/mt
<u>BSAI Other Trawl Fisheries</u>		
First Quarter	30.0	2.5/mt
Second Quarter	30.0	2.5/mt
<u>GOA Midwater Pollock</u>		
First Quarter	1.0	n/a
Second Quarter	1.0	
<u>GOA Other Trawl Fisheries</u>		
First Quarter	40.0	n/a
Second Quarter	40.0	

Marine Mammals and Groundfish Fishery Activities

Biologists from the NMFS Marine Mammal Lab presented a summary of this past year's research. Immediate goals of on-going Steller sea lion research are: To identify factors that are limiting the population, to propose actions necessary to increase the population, and to propose actions that minimize human interactions with sea lions detrimental to survival or recovery of the population (Sea Lion Recovery Plan, Dec. 1992). Surveys conducted in 1993 indicate the sea lion population may still be declining in Alaska. The summer 1993 pup survey indicates that declines in Alaskan pup numbers during 1990-92 and 1991-93 appear to have been essentially the same. During the four years, 1990-93, pup numbers declined 10.7% per year in the Southeast Alaska to Eastern Aleutian Islands area, and 12.7% per year in the Kenai to Eastern Aleutian Islands area. Most of the decline occurred in the Kodiak area (Sugarloaf, Marmot, and Chirikof Islands), and in the Eastern Aleutian Islands. Pup numbers in Southeast Alaska and in Prince William Sound appeared relatively stable. Other research included a winter aerial survey in March 1993, tagging studies and foraging studies.

Northern fur seals are also of particular concern. Rookery surveys conducted at the Pribilof Islands in 1992 indicate the population remains stable, but at depressed levels. Finally, harbor seals, though not listed under either the Endangered Species Act or the Marine Mammal Protection Act, have also undergone large declines in the Gulf of Alaska. NMFS and ADF&G are conducting a statewide population assessment of harbor seals in Alaska. Survey work during 1992 indicates that a significant decline in harbor seal abundance in the central and western Gulf of Alaska is continuing.

No-Trawl Zone Around the Pribilof Islands

The Council once again reviewed a draft analysis of a proposal to implement a no-trawl zone around the Pribilof Islands. Previously, the Council reviewed this analysis at the December 1992 meeting and requested staff to provide additional analysis. The primary concern then was that proposed closure areas should relate more to the expressed problem of blue king crab and should encompass the important habitat of the blue king crab, marine mammals, and sea birds. In addition, the Council felt the analysis lacked sufficient economic evaluation of the proposed alternatives.

To address the Council's concerns, the analysis presents a new alternative which would establish a closed area surrounding the islands to protect the core distribution of blue king crab and essential habitat for juvenile crab between the 20 and 30 meter depth contours. The Council also recommended additional alternatives for consideration in the analysis. Specifically, staff will analyze the effects of an additional alternative that would permit trawling within the protection area until a king crab bycatch cap of 1% of the estimated blue king crab population is attained - at which time trawling would stop. Another "trigger" could be a fixed PSC cap of 20,000 blue king crab. In addition, the Council is considering closing a smaller area approximating the 30-meter contour prior to a cap triggering a closure of the larger area.

Staff will incorporate the Council's recommendations and have a public review document available as soon as possible. Council review of the updated analysis is tentatively scheduled for the January 1994 meeting. Please notify the Council office if you would like to receive a copy of the draft analysis when it becomes available.

Salmon Bycatch Management

The Council continued to address salmon bycatch management in the trawl groundfish fisheries by recommending some additions to the industry/terminal fisheries association's "Salmon Foundation" approach to bycatch management. The plan is comprised of a number of different components. NMFS rulemaking is going forth to implement regulations that will require mandatory retention of all salmon bycatch with a stiff penalty for discard. This will enable the observer to more accurately count salmon

bycatch plus provide accurate chinook bycatch amounts for which to apply the Foundation's \$20/chinook assessment. In addition, NMFS is going forward with rulemaking to publish chinook bycatch numbers (un-debriefed weekly observer data) on a vessel-by-vessel basis. Representatives from the trawl fleet testified that a majority of companies, both onshore and offshore, have signed up for the Salmon Foundation program, and are close to reaching a "critical mass" of vessel owners agreeing to pay an assessment of \$20 per chinook. Funds collected will go to a private research foundation to support development of data concerning marine chinook bycatch patterns and avoidance, and stream-of-origin identification. The Council expressed interest in pursuing the possibility of requiring all trawl vessels to sign up for the program. Two possibilities include conditioning federal fishing permits or requesting Congress to establish a fee for those who do not join the foundation if a majority of the fleet supports the foundation. Staff will have information on these issues at the December 1993 meeting.

The Council also adopted as a statement of intent a "Salmon Bycatch Control Policy." This policy builds upon the original salmon foundation proposal by endorsing the development of a research plan to address salmon bycatch, refinement and development of workable salmon VIP, development of regulations requiring retention of salmon for processing and delivery to food banks, and development of an in-season time/area "hotspot" authority to limit chinook salmon bycatch amounts. Staff will begin preparing analysis of these recommendations and present their results at the April 1994 Council meeting. Contact the Council office if you would like a copy of the complete "Salmon Bycatch Control Policy" statement.

Council Approves Pollock CDQs for 1994-1995

The Governor of Alaska's recommended Community Development Quotas for 1994-1995 were approved by the Council. His recommended apportionment by community group is as follows:

	<u>1992-93</u>	<u>1994-95</u>
Coastal Villages Fishing Cooperative	27%	27%
Norton Sound Economic Development Corp.	20%	20%
Bristol Bay Economic Development Corp.	20%	20%
Aleutian Pribilof Island Community Dev. Assn.	18%	18%
Central Bering Sea Fishermen's Assn.	10%	8%
Yukon Delta Fisheries Development Assn.	5%	7%

The total amount of pollock available for the program in 1994 is estimated at 97,500 mt based on initial specifications for the Bering Sea and Aleutian groundfish management areas for next year. The recommended percentages now will be forwarded to the U.S. Secretary of Commerce for approval. The exvessel value of the total quota exceeds \$17 million, based on an average price of \$0.081/lb for trawl-caught pollock in the Bering Sea in 1993.

Donut Hole Fisheries Still of Great Concern

The Council took a strong stand against uncontrolled foreign fisheries for pollock in the Donut Hole of the central Bering Sea outside the 200-mile jurisdictions of Russia and the U.S. Negotiators working on the issue are preparing for another in a long series of talks with other countries such as Japan, Korea, Poland and China, that have fished in the area and contributed to a major reduction in the stocks. The Council strongly supports a U.S. House of Representatives concurrent resolution that calls on the U.S. to take appropriated measures to conserve the fish resources, promote enforcement, and protect not only the Aleutian Basin pollock stock, but also its rights to fully utilize the stock within the U.S. Exclusive Economic Zone. The Council is urging the State Department to conclude a successful conservation and management agreement with other countries by the end of 1994.

Issues at a Glance

The following section of the newsletter provides a summary of current Council projects, timelines for Council action, and the contact person on our staff for further information.

Comprehensive Planning: Following Council direction at this meeting analyses will be prepared for several alternative plans, including individual fishing quotas for groundfish and crab, license limitation for groundfish and crab, and several hybrid alternatives. A special Council newsletter on this subject will be prepared by mid-October. Contact person is Chris Oliver.

Salmon Bycatch Management: The Council approved two regulatory amendments for high priority action: a regulation making retention of salmon mandatory, and provisions to allow release of observer data. The National Marine Fisheries Service will continue to develop a regulatory framework for a vessel incentive program and "hotspot" authority for salmon, although the Council has indicated it will not take further action unless updated bycatch data warrant the need. Contact person is Brent Paine.

Block Proposal Amendment and the Sablefish/Halibut IFQ Program: At this meeting the Council approved a modified block proposal which will amend the IFQ program. The IFQ program final rule is about to be published and implementation is still scheduled for 1995. Contact person is Marcus Hartley.

Proposed Halibut Cap on Charter Operations: The Council approved a recommendation of their Advisory Panel and representatives of the halibut charter industry to initiate a workgroup of halibut charter and commercial fishing interests, and staff from the Council, International Pacific Halibut Commission, Alaska Department of Fish & Game, and the National Marine Fisheries Service to develop recommendations for management alternatives for the halibut charter fleet. The workgroup's report is to be presented at the January 1994 Council meeting. At the same time, the Council set a control date of September 23, 1993 as the date after which participation in the halibut charter industry may not be recognized should a limited access program be implemented. Contact person is Dave Witherell.

Scallop Management: The Council reviewed a fishery management plan for scallops which would provide for shared federal/State management of the fishery. The fishery management plan will be more fully developed and returned to the Council for final approval in January 1994. Contact person is Dave Witherell.

General Groundfish and Crab Moratorium: Proposed regulations to implement the moratorium are pending. If approved by the Secretary, the moratorium could be in effect in 1994. Contact person is Chris Oliver.

Research Plan: Proposed regulations for the North Pacific Fisheries Research Plan (fee-based observer program) are still in preparation by NMFS and being reviewed by General Counsel. Because of the complexity of the regulations it now appears that the Proposed Rulemaking will not be submitted to the Secretary until later this fall. Contact person is Chris Oliver.

PSC Cap for Pelagic Trawl Fisheries: The Council has deferred action on this subject until their April 1994 meeting so data for the 1993 fisheries and possibly early 1994 data can be made available for Council review. Contact person is Brent Paine.

Rockfish Management: The Council approved a rebuilding plan for depressed Pacific ocean perch stocks and to protect thornyhead and shortraker/rougheye stocks. Reductions in the harvest of target fisheries with high bycatch of POP may be required. The schedule estimates a rebuilding period of approximately 14 years. Contact person is Dave Witherell.

Pribilof Trawl Closure: The Council received a draft analysis of a proposed trawl closure around the Pribilofs and requested inclusion of additional data before releasing it for public review. The document is being prepared by ADF&G staff and should be available for review prior to the Council's January 1994 meeting. Contact person is Brent Paine.

Directed Fishing Standards: NMFS staff is working with a subcommittee of the Council's Advisory Panel in developing a regulatory amendment which reevaluates existing directed fishing standards for rockfish and other groundfish species. A draft analysis may be available in December. Contact person is Dave Witherell.

Exclusive Registration: The Council deferred further action on this proposal indefinitely. The Council did take action to initiate a regulatory amendment to the Gulf of Alaska FMP which would allow the trawl halibut PSC cap to be apportioned to specific fisheries.

Total Weight Measurement: NMFS staff continues to gather data and prepare a groundfish plan amendment which would require accurate estimation and reporting of total catch by species for all groundfish fisheries in the Gulf of Alaska and Bering Sea/Aleutian Islands. Contact Person is Brent Paine.

Trawl Mesh Proposal: The Council discussed the issue of mesh size regulations for the cod and pollock fisheries. The analysis will be developed as mesh selectivity data and staff time become available. Contact person is Dave Witherell.

IPHC Area 4B Changes: The Council initiated a regulatory amendment which would implement a 5,000 lb. trip limit on the 12-hour halibut openings in area 4B, with a 20% set aside for vessels fishing under the trip limits. A preliminary analysis will be ready in December, and the Council could take final action in January. Contact person is Brent Paine.

Full Utilization: This item was postponed to the January meeting, but a meeting with industry may be scheduled during the December Council meeting in Seattle. Contact person is Brent Paine.