

North Pacific Fishery

Management Council

Appendix O
May 1977

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The Honorable Juanita Kreps
Secretary of Commerce
United States Department of Commerce
Commerce Building
Washington, D.C. 20230

Dear Madam Secretary:

At its meeting May 26th and 27th in Anchorage, the North Pacific Council unanimously adopted the following motion.

"It is now a certainty that the U.S. harvest of herring in the Bering Sea will far exceed the 1,000 metric tons estimated in the preliminary management plan. Should the foreign allocation be harvested, it will exceed the total allowable catch (TAC). At the present time 9,000 tons of this foreign allocation remain to be taken, but no further catch effort is expected before November. Therefore, the Council feels it essential that all or part of the unfilled foreign allocation be cancelled. Specific recommendations relative to such action will be developed at the regular June Council meeting based on the performance of the U.S. fishery as of that time."

At the time the preliminary management plan was developed by your department governing the herring fishery in the eastern Bering Sea, there was no evidence to indicate there would be a substantial U.S. fishery on that stock of fish. Of the 21,000 metric ton TAC set by the management plan, 1,000 metric tons was expected to be used by U.S. fishermen, primarily in the subsistence fisheries of the villages along the Bering Sea coast. Of the remaining 20,000 tons, 19,400 were assigned to foreign nations and 600 tons were left unassigned.

Since that plan was approved, a large U.S. fishing effort has developed on these stocks of fish that will continue through late June. It is apparent at this time that they will take well over the 1,000 tons originally expected to be taken by U.S. subsistence fishermen. Most of the foreign catch from these stocks occurs from November through February.

The best information available at this time is that they have taken approximately 9,500 metric tons since the first of the year of the 19,400 allotted. That winter trawl fishery will not begin again until November.

The Council believes that the total allowable catch should not be exceeded under any circumstances. By the time of the next Council meeting on June 23rd and 24th, catch figures for the American fishery should be complete. At that time they will propose a specific figure for reduction of the foreign allocation in 1977. Since there is approximately 9,000 tons left to be caught of the foreign allocation this year and the fishery will not start before November, a reduction of their allocation should not upset their planned fishing operations, since they will have plenty of time to readjust their effort prior to the time the fish again become available.

To recapitulate briefly, the TAC for herring in the eastern Bering Sea was calculated at 21,000 metric tons in the preliminary management plan, 20,000 tons of this was considered surplus and available for foreign allocation. It was felt the 1,000 metric tons not available for allocation would be used by the eskimo villages along the Bering Sea coast for subsistence purposes.

Of the 20,000 tons available for foreign allocation, 19,400 tons were assigned, 5,800 tons to Japan and 13,600 tons to the Soviet Union. Current catch figures (1 January to March 1977) are 1,277 MT by Japan and 8,257 MT by the Soviet Union.

An ongoing U.S. commercial fishery has taken at least 2,500 MT to date and will continue to mid-June. The 1,000 MT subsistence fishery is being conducted at this time also.

In order to stay within the TAC it will be necessary to reduce the foreign allocation of herring before that fishery resumes in November.

The North Pacific Council will forward its' recommendations to you by early July for the exact amount the foreign allocation should be reduced.

Since the concept of mid-year reduction of foreign catch allocation has not previously been explored the Council is taking this opportunity to alert you to the impending request. They feel very strongly that the TAC set by the PMP should not be exceeded, and are anxious to work closely with you to solve this problem.

Sincerely,

Jim H. Branson
Executive Director