

North Pacific Fishery Management Council

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NEWSLETTER

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COUNCIL SPENDS WEEK IN SITKA

"Sitka By the Sea" was the scene of the week-long NPFMC activities as the Council conducted its October meeting concurrently with a meeting of the Pacific Marine Fisheries Council and hosted a public comment session.

The Council meeting was held Oct. 4-5 in the Centennial Building, winding up a series of meetings that started Tuesday with the SSC and AP and included a day-long public hearing on Wednesday during which the Council received comments on proposed amendments to the Troll Salmon FMP, halibut limited entry, Tanner crab and Gulf of Alaska Groundfish.

JAPAN PHASES OUT OF TANNER CRAB SCENE

The Council, hewing to the sentiment of Chairman Clement V. Tillion that "This Council's role is to replace foreign fishermen in the FCZ with Americans," reduced the TALFF for the Japanese Tanner crab fishery by half and put the Japanese on notice that it most likely would be the final step in a phase-out in that fishery. The 1978-79 TALFF was 15,000 mt.

The NMFS estimate of C. opilio in the Eastern Bering Sea of 126 million pounds is below the DAH of 130 million accepted by the Council. The AP had suggested no TALFF, but the Council set a 7,500 mt foreign catch, stipulated that it had to be harvested north of 58 degrees N. latitude and said it would include all Tanner crab species (bairdi-opilio-hybrid) and if predictions for the fishery were borne out, would be the final TALFF allowed the Japanese.

Information presented to the Council by Dr. Jerry Reeves (NMFS) show the surveys for 1979 indicate a continuing decline in bairdi which was noted in 1978 and fewer pre-recruits in the opilio stocks. ABC for bairdi in the Eastern Bering Sea was set at 22-33 million pounds.

SPECKING RESIGNS AP CHAIRMAN SLOT

Keith Specking, Advisory Panel Chairman, tendered his resignation to the Council on Oct. 4, citing an increased workload and his personal assessment that he would be unable to devote the time necessary to perform as chairman. The resignation was accepted with regret and noted with appropriate expressions for the service Specking has rendered the Council in the past several years.

BURGNER - MARASCO TO SSC

Chairman Tillion presented Drs. Robert Burgner and Richard Marasco with certificates of membership to the Scientific & Statistical Committee during the Council meeting. The two scientists succeed Drs. James Crutchfield and Donald Bevan. Dr. Crutchfield resigned due to schedule conflicts and Dr. Bevan has been appointed to the Council.

TROLL SALMON PUBLIC HEARING

Extensive public comments on troll salmon subjects during the Wednesday public hearing left the Council with little to consider formally during its meeting agenda item on Thursday. The purpose of the hearing and the agenda item both was to discuss proposed amendment material for the Troll Salmon FMP when it is extended for the coming fishing year.

Proposed amendments from the PDT include the prohibition of hand trolling and limited entry for power trolling. Proposals for a 4-line limit, time and area closures above and below the Dangerous River for the protection of coho and shaker chinook, filleting of salmon at sea and possession of coho in a closed area are advanced for Council consideration by the ADF&G staff. No decisions were to have been made at either meeting pending action by the Alaska Board of Fisheries during its December meeting.

One result of the public hearing was the establishment of additional hearings to be held in cooperation with area advisory committees in Ketchikan, Petersburg, Sitka (tentative) and Juneau. The Council staff is at work now putting together a schedule for publication when all the dates are final.

Proposals for FMP amendments are the result of recently completed work by the ADF&G staff on the "1980 Regulatory Program for the Southeast Alaska Salmon Troll Fishery" and consist for the most part of complementary regulations which tend to meld management philosophies between the two fisheries conducted in State and Federal waters in Southeast Alaska. The regulatory program will be presented to the Board of Fisheries by the ADF&G staff at the December meeting. Council action will follow.

KING CRAB FISHERY

ADF&G reports the king crab fishery is off to a blazing start this year, compared to the past season. The season opened on Sept. 17 with 226 vessels registered to fish. This compares to 162 for last year. The previous year CPUE average was 33 and to date this year ranges from 60-80. Average weight last year was 5.8 lbs., and this year is up to 6.5 lbs. Deliveries to date total nearly 45 million pounds and there is an estimated 23 million pounds aboard vessels at sea. Deadloss so far totals nearly two million pounds and is apparently being aggravated by slowdowns in the unloading schedules for ships delivering to shore-based processors. The harvest level for this year is expected to run about 116 million pounds and a notice of closure was given Monday, Oct. 8 for a closure effective the 14th. ADF&G will consider opening a 7½-inch season but no details are available at this time.

FOREIGN FISHERY SLOWS

NMFS reports a seasonal decline in the number of foreign vessels off the coast of Alaska. There were 350 vessels fishing in August and 257 in September, of which 219 were Japanese, 15 Russian and 17 South Korean. The Marine Resources, Inc., joint venture suspended operations in late August; KMIDC (Korean/U.S./Mexico) joint ventures continue with two KORMEX vessels and two U.S. vessels delivering. From two to four additional U.S. vessels will begin trawl operations for KMIDC soon.

Joint venture catches to date total some 1,500 mt, with 1,480 mt taken in the Central district, 62 in the Eastern district and 50 in the Western district. Cod (700 mt) and pollock (570 mt) make up the bulk of that catch. Sablefish makes up 1.2% of the total joint venture catch to date.

FACTORY VESSELS EYED BY USCG

USCG spokesman CMDR Pete Busick reported to the Council that a special effort is underway by the Guard to check five foreign factory vessels which are operating with catcher boats in the Bering Sea and Gulf of Alaska. Three Coast Guard cutters are presently on patrol off the coast (JARVIS, MONROE and CONFIDENCE) to board and inspect the ships.

The report to the Council also revealed that of the 18 most recent boardings conducted by the Guard, only one instance of underlogging was detected. On the 28th of September, the FUKUYOSHI MARU #8 was boarded by an inspection team from the cutter CONFIDENCE. A check of the vessel's hold revealed an apparent underlogging amounting to 25% of the total catch for its present trip. The vessel was escorted to Kodiak and the case was turned over to the U.S. Marshall's office for disposition.

ADVISORY PANEL NOMINATIONS TO BE SCREENED

Nominations for vacancies which exist on the Advisory Panel were closed at the end of the Friday Council meeting. Council member Chuck Meacham, chairman of the nominations sub-committee for the Advisory Panel, submitted a list of 20 names for consideration to the four vacancies on the Panel. Application materials will be reviewed and those chosen will be named at the December meeting.

An election for chairman will be conducted following the seating of new members, bringing the AP to its full complement of 25.

MARINE MAMMAL SPECIALIST TO SSC

The Council accepted a recommendation from the SSC that the SSC charter be changed to increase the membership from 10 to 11. The new member will be a marine mammal specialist, reflecting the emphasis placed on that aspect of fishery management plan development.

BERING SEA HERRING SYMPOSIUM

A three-day symposium has tentatively been set to start Feb. 19 in Anchorage on the subject of herring. Participation will be by invitation only, with 15 representatives from the U.S., Canada, USSR and Europe being invited to give papers. An additional 20 observers will be invited to attend. Objectives of the symposium are to provide a forum to review herring management in the Bering Sea and other parts of the world, to receive information on Bering Sea herring management, to discuss alternative management strategies and to set research priorities.

GoA GROUND FISH

The Council was given an update on the status of the Gulf of Alaska Groundfish FMP which included the possible adoption of Amendment #7. That amendment is both a comment on the Secretarial amendment and will, if adopted, supercede the SOC amendment, possibly in mid-January.

A request of some long-standing by the Japanese Fishery Agency to have certain groundfish species assigned a Gulf-wide OY was withdrawn. Presently, only Sebastolobus (shortspine and longspine thornyhead) is assigned such an OY.

Comment was given to the Council on the subject of blackcod. The Council will be considering aspects of that fishery which include the mixed trawl/longline directed fishery, reduction of the OY and localized depletion of stocks in the Gulf of Alaska. The U.S. blackcod longline catch so far this fishing year shows nearly 3,000 mt. This is considered an excellent performance by American fishermen off Southeast Alaska.

Proposals for Gulf of Alaska Groundfish Fishery Management Plan amendments should be submitted to the Council by mid-January for consideration in the amendment package.

JOINT MEETING SET FOR NPFMC-BoF

A joint meeting between the Council and the Board of Fisheries has been slated for Dec. 13 in Anchorage. The Board will be in Anchorage for its annual December meeting and Council members will be in town for the regular monthly meeting, affording an opportunity for some discussion in concert on fishery matters of mutual interest.

One of the mutual interests will be troll salmon proposals which will be presented to the Board by ADF&G staff. Another will be aspects of the Tanner crab fishery and a third will be herring considerations.

HERRING HEARINGS

A tentative schedule for public hearings concerning the herring FMP has been scheduled as follows:

Nov. 10-11	Bethel Tooksook Bay Hooper Bay
Nov. 12-16	Unalakleet Kotzebue Nome
Nov. 17-18	Dillingham Togiak
Nov. 29-30	Kodiak

The hearing schedule is subject to the vagaries of Alaskan weather during November but every attempt will be made to get the hearings conducted during the periods as shown.

FCMA OVERSIGHT HEARINGS

A second round of oversight hearings on the FCMA will be held Oct. 11-12 in Washington, D.C. The Council has agreed on testimony which will be offered by Chairman Tillion and Executive Director Branson during the hearings.

During its discussion the Council added the word "voluntary" to the testimony concerning logbook programs for fishermen. It is felt that logbook information can be a valuable addition to information concerning any fishery, but that the voluntary nature of the logbook program is more attractive to fishermen than mandatory requirements and is likely to yield better data.

Other testimony will include the minimum adequate coverage thought necessary for the observer program (20% is considered minimal) in all areas for all fisheries at all times.

In addition, comments will be offered on FCMA topics that range from research needs (drafting an FMP is often one of the better ways to identify research needs) to management and enforcement problems caused by adjacent State/Federal fisheries.

COUNCIL CO-OP AGREEMENT WITH THE MARINE MAMMAL COMMISSION

A letter of agreement has been signed between the NPFMC and the MMC transferring \$12,500 to the Council for use in supporting mutually agreed research on ecosystem modeling for use in fishery management plans.

JOINT VENTURE SUPPORT SHIPS

Applications from cargo and refrigerator ships to enter the FCZ in support of joint venture operations will be handled in the normal fashion and will come under full Council review only in the case of special circumstances, such as a history of violations of FCMA regulations.

Applications for permits to operate in the FCZ are normally processed by the Executive Director under guidelines set down by the Council.

1980 MEETING SCHEDULE SET

The NPFMC has scheduled 11 meetings for 1980 with the expectation that two, possibly April and July, will be cancelled if the workload permits. All meetings will be held in Anchorage except for Kodiak (May) and Sitka (October). The final Council meeting of 1979 will be held in Anchorage on Dec. 13 and 14.

COUNCIL NIXES PROPOSED OIL LEASE SALE

The proposed St. George Basin oil lease sale, scheduled for December, 1982, received a negative response from the Council during a discussion of the impacts oil drilling and production might have on the fishery area.

Council comments came as part of the NMFS comment package and included a recommendation that the sale should be postponed indefinitely, if not cancelled, and that if tracts go out to bid, four should be deleted. They are the St. George, St. Paul, Pribilof Canyon and Davidson Bank tracts.

The bid area supports one of the richest and most productive marine resource complexes in the world and is a critical habitat for many species of marine birds and the fur seal.

PRIBILOF ISLAND BOTTOMFISH MEETING

Chairman Tillion and Executive Director Branson attended a three-day bottomfish meeting in St. Paul sponsored by the Alaska Native Foundation and the office of the State Bottomfish Coordinator. The purpose of the meeting was to explore the problems that may arise from the expanded development of some of the smaller communities in the Bering Sea region.

HALIBUT FMP SURFACES AGAIN

The Council's halibut fishery management plan, prepared as a contingency pending the recently concluded halibut talks between the U.S. and Canada, and presently under review by the SOC, will be reactivated for work and updating. Among other considerations, the halibut plan development team will be charged with the task of bringing limited entry considerations to the Council at some later date. According to the testimony from fishermen, a crisis exists in the fishery so far as catch and effort is concerned. Halibut stocks are considered to be marginally "up" at the present but far below historical levels.

Included in the halibut discussion at the Sitka meeting was language of Section 5 (c) of the Halibut Convention Implementing Regulations (Draft).

The Council has proposed the following language to emphasize the Council's role in possible future management of the fishery, now administered under IPHC;

c. The Secretary, with the concurrence of the regional fishery management council having authority for the geographical area concerned, may promulgate regulations, including limited entry regulations, applicable to nationals or vessels of the United States, or both, which are in addition to, and not in conflict with, regulations adopted by the Commission.

Such regulations shall not discriminate between residents of different states.

If it becomes necessary to allocate or assign halibut fishing privileges among various United States fishermen, such allocations shall be

- (1) fair and equitable to all such fishermen,
- (2) reasonably calculated to promote conservation, and
- (3) carried out in such a manner that no particular individual, corporation, or other entity acquires an excessive share of the halibut fishing privileges.

One result of the Council discussion concerning halibut limited entry during the meeting was the reaffirmation of the Council position that the date of Dec. 1, 1978 is the date after which those who entered the halibut fishery accrue little credit toward participation under any limited entry scheme.

NEW STAFF POSITION TO COME

Advertisements for the addition of an economist to the NPFMC staff will be made as soon as final approval is received from NMFS for funding the position. The need for more complete socio-economic data as a part of the fishery management plan makes it necessary to have a full-time economist aboard.