



NORTH PACIFIC FISHERY MANAGEMENT COUNCIL

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Action Memo

File Number: REP 15-144

Agenda Date 10/5/2015

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Dan Hull, Chairman
Chris Oliver, Executive Director

SUBJECT:

Executive Director's Report (including Halibut Management Framework outline and update on deck sorting EFP)

Staff and personnel news

Welcome back Dr. Stram! Diana returned to us in August from her 4 month Fulbright scholarship program in Chile. During her Fulbright, Diana worked with the Chilean Undersecretariat of Fisheries conducting workshops on fisheries management provisions in the North Pacific and collaborating with Undersecretariat staff on projects geared towards understanding and meeting provisions of the new Chilean Fisheries Law. Following this, she taught a graduate course at the University of Concepcion on Fisheries Management, using the North Pacific as a case study for effective fisheries management. Diana is working on two manuscripts with colleagues from both institutions on this work, and plans to submit them for publication before the end of the year.

You may recall that late last year we agreed to be a host agency for the inaugural Alaska Sea Grant Fellowship Program. After the application and interview process, Mr. Matt Robinson (recent graduate with an M.A. in Northern Studies and Environmental Policy, UAF) was paired with the Council for a one-year Fellowship which began in August. Matt will be working primarily on observer program/EM development and the Bering Sea FEP under the mentorship of Diana Evans. I would note that another Fellow, Marysia Szymkowiak, was placed with the NMFS Regional Office and she will be working on the halibut/sablefish IFQ program review and other issues. Sea Grant Director Paula Cullenberg is on hand today to provide a brief introduction of the Program and the inaugural Fellows.

I would like to welcome Ms. Kari Fenske to the Council's SSC as the representative for the Washington Department of Fish and Wildlife. Chairman Hull has approved her appointment for this meeting, pending Council approval for the remainder of 2015. Ms. Fenske is currently completing her doctorate at UAF, working under Dr. Terry Quinn. And, I would also welcome Dr. Lew Coggins, who was approved by Chairman Hull as an interim appointment to replace Dr. Terry Quinn, while Terry is on sabbatical through the April 2016 meeting. Dr. Coggins' resume is also attached for your reference. He is currently a Fishery Biologist with the USFWS, Yukon Delta National Wildlife Refuge. Both resumes are **attached (1)**.

I would also like to welcome two new AP members: Daniel Donich has been appointed by Chairman Hull to replace Andy Mezirow for the remainder of 2015, and Art Nelson has been appointed to fill the remainder of Becca Robbins-Gisclair's term, also through 2015. Welcome aboard!

And, a farewell to former Council member Doug McBride (USFWS) who has moved to a new position within

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his agency, and has resigned as Alternate for the USFWS Regional Director. Doug's letter of resignation is **attached (2)**. A replacement for that Council seat has yet to be named.

Legislative update

There have been no developments of any significance on the MSA legislative front since our June meeting, and we are awaiting further progress on MSA reauthorization. We did provide comments on HR1335 earlier this year, and that bill passed the House in June. It is uncertain when this bill will be considered by the Senate, or whether the Senate will start with a different bill. When necessary, Chairman Hull will convene the Council's Legislative Committee to address this or other relevant legislation.

HR330 (**attached, 3**) was recently introduced by Congressmen Young - the Marine Access and State Transparency (MAST) Act is very similar to the Improved National Monument Designation Process Act introduced last year by Senator Murkowski, and essentially would require Congressional and State approval prior to any national monument designation by the President. At Senator Murkowski's request, we wrote a letter last year supporting the intent of that legislation. On September 16 I was invited to testify at a hearing on September 29 of the House Natural Resource Committee, Subcommittee on Water, Power, and Oceans related to HR330 and the use of monument designation authorities (invitation and my written testimony are **attached 4, 5**). A related Saving Seafood article is also **attached (6)** which provides additional background. My message was essentially focused around the numerous closure areas that we and other Councils have established using the science-based, participatory Council process, and the potentially negative aspects of unilateral closure (monument) designations.

CCC meeting

In late June, the Council Coordination Committee (CCC) held its annual meeting in Florida, hosted by the Gulf of Mexico Fishery Management Council. The agenda for that meeting, and a short summary of the meeting, are **attached (7)**. Among the items discussed, as our Council requested in June, was the Council member recusal issue. A memo on this issue that I wrote to the CCC, as well as a follow-up letter I wrote to NMFS HQ following the CCC discussion, are **attached (8)** for your reference. Mr. Rauch, on behalf of the agency, committed to reviewing this issue, and his follow-up email in that regard is also **included in the attachment**. We expect to have further discussion of this at our interim CCC meeting in early 2016.

Bycatch Reduction Engineering Program

NOAA recently announced more than \$2.5 million in grants to 16 different projects (**attached, 9**), including two Alaska projects - (1) a halibut bycatch project to evaluate excluder testing and EM application for bycatch tracking, and (2) use of video and acoustics to observe and track bycatch interactions with demersal longline gear.

2016 S-K Solicitation

In early September NOAA announced the availability of approximately \$10 million in competitive grants through the 2016 Saltonstall-Kennedy (S-K) Grant Program. The S-K priorities include rebuilding fish stocks, maintaining and restoring healthy ocean and coastal ecosystems, and promoting the economic vitality of fishery working waterfront communities. There is also an emphasis on projects related to community-based

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bridge plans to help coastal communities retool fishing fleets, shore services, and port facilities into sustainable and innovative businesses. To be considered for funding, projects should advance research in one of the following focus areas:

- Aquaculture
- Fishery Data Collection
- Techniques for Reducing Bycatch and other Adverse Impacts
- Adapting to Climate Change & Other Long Term Ecosystem Change
- Promotion, Development, and Marketing
- Socio-Economic Research
- Territorial Science

Applications close November 2. Links to the application information are posted on the NOAA Fisheries website and on Grants.gov. We expect to be involved in the S-K review process again this year, with a bit more advance notice and coordination than in 2015.

Draft Guidance for Catch Share Program Reviews

Last week NOAA Fisheries released their draft guidance for conducting 5/7 year catch share program reviews, as mandated by the MSA (**attached, 10**). As you know we have a few of these program reviews now on our radar screen (crab, AFA, and halibut/sablefish IFQ), and this document is intended to identify key elements and identify important questions and issues associated with each, and provide some consistency across regions. Comments on the draft are due by November 20.

Ecosystem-based Fisheries Management Policy

Also last week, NOAA Fisheries released a draft ecosystem-based fisheries management policy, which is open for comment until December 16 (**attached, 11**). Because our Ecosystem Committee is meeting in November, it may make sense to have them review this document and provide recommended comments for Council consideration at our December meeting, in time for the comment deadline. NMFS will have a more detailed report on this under B-2.

Staff and Council member activities

Over the summer and into this fall, our staff have continued to provide information and review to the Responsible Fisheries Management (RFM) Certification Program, who is working with ASMI towards completion of the Global Sustainable Seafood Initiative (GSSI), which aims to benchmark various certification programs (MSC, RFM, etc) to provide industry and the marketplace with a choice for certification programs of equal and credible value. In September we also provided review and feedback to NOAA Fisheries on their internal draft, 5 year Strategic Plans for both the Alaska Region and the HQ Office of Sustainable Fisheries.

In late August, myself and other members of the Council family had the privilege to attend the GLACIER conference in Anchorage, hosted by U.S. Secretary of State John Kerry, and attended by President Obama. The GLACIER conference highlighted the U.S. Chairmanship of the Arctic Council, and the pending role of the U.S. in future Arctic Council discussions and Arctic issues generally. Also in August, I attended the annual meeting of the Pacific States Marine Fisheries Commission in Girdwood, and along with Dr. Balsiger,

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presented a summary of North Pacific issues.

In early September, along with a number of North Pacific fisheries representatives, I participated in the 26th Session of the U.S.-Russia Intergovernmental Consultative Committee on Fisheries (ICC) in Portland, Oregon. In addition to the standard topics related to joint research and enforcement, including a special focus on data exchange related to salmon stocks and bycatch, the two governments took a historic step by signing an agreement of Cooperation for the Purposes of Preventing, Deterring, and Eliminating Illegal, Unreported, and Unregulated Fishing - aka the IUU Agreement. We have been asked to withhold distribution of that agreement until it has been reported to Congress and entered into force.

Also in early September, Chairman Dan Hull represented our Council at the 1st Meeting of the North Pacific Fisheries Commission (NPFC) in Tokyo, Japan. We have also participated in previous, preparatory meetings of the NPFC. Mr. Hull, or Mr. Merrill, may have additional information to report on this meeting and the NPFC process overall. Since our June Council meeting, Mr. Hull was also named to the Arctic Council Task Force on Arctic Marine Cooperation, partly in response to our request to the State Department to be more directly involved in relevant Arctic initiatives. That Task Force is currently in the formative stages - Mr. Hull may have additional information to report. He may also wish to update the Council on developments with the IPHC MSAB process, as well as the North Pacific Research Board (NPRB) which met in late September in Kodiak, Alaska.

Stemming from one of our CCC discussion topics, a Habitat Summit (workshop) is being planned for 2016, to discuss the integration of habitat and EBFM, review best practices, and assist in the EFH review process being undertaken by all Councils. Steve Maclean will be on the Steering Committee for that workshop (to help sort out the details), and Bill Tweit will be on the Advisory Group (which will provide overarching guidance on development of the workshop).

The Fisheries Leadership and Sustainability Forum has also established an Advisory Group to help chart its developing direction and mission - both David Witherell and Bill Tweit have been asked to serve on that Advisory Group.

Halibut Deck Sorting - update

While we do not have a specific agenda item, or EFP to review, at this meeting, it has come to our attention that it may be useful to receive an update at this meeting regarding progress to date on the 2015 EFP, and on discussions with NMFS for future operationalization of deck sorting. We have asked Mr. John Gauvin to provide the Council with an update at this time, in order to address any questions the Council may have regarding how the EFP is going this year, and where we are relative to eventual implementation of deck sorting.

Halibut Framework

At our June meeting, following Council action on reduction of Bering Sea halibut PSC caps, the Council discussed several aspects of halibut management, and committed to developing a more explicit 'framework' for consideration of halibut management overall, including enhanced coordination with the IPHC process. While not intended to be a major agenda item at this October meeting, Chairman Hull committed to bring a draft document to the Council at this time, with the intent of soliciting public input and conducting a more

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focused discussion by the Council at a subsequent meeting (either a separate scoping session in November, or as a specific agenda item in December). The **attached (12)** draft Framework is our initial attempt to provide the Council with a starting point for that commitment. With Chairman Hull's assistance I will walk through the main aspects of the draft Framework and incorporate any initial Council feedback for the next iteration of this document.

Events this week

On Tuesday evening, October 6, staff from the IPHC will provide an evening presentation titled 'Reconciling halibut fisheries with PSC limits'. This is related to work they are doing on the abundance-based PSC limit discussion paper to be presented at the December Council meeting. The presentation will begin at 5:30 pm in the Aleutian Room.

On Wednesday evening, October 7, Dr. Franz Mueter will lead a presentation on a new research project funded by the Belmont Forum - 'Resilience and Adaptive Capacity of Arctic Marine Systems under a Changing Climate'. This program will begin at 6 pm. A flyer is **attached (13)** which provides more information on this project.

Council family pictures will be conducted Wednesday, October 7, in the Fireweed Room, according to the following schedule:

SSC @ 11:30 am, AP @ 12:00 pm, Council @ 12:30 pm, Staff @ 12:45 pm