

North Pacific Fishery

Management Council

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Report to North Pacific Fishery Management Council
 on
 Scientific and Statistical Committee Meeting
 May 24-25, 1978

Mr. Chairman:

The Scientific and Statistical Committee met starting at 10:00 a.m. on May 24th and terminated its business in the morning of May 25. Drs. Miles, Rogers, and Rosenberg and Mr. Carl Rosier were unable to attend the sessions. It was noted that it was the last meeting in which Dr. Woelke would participate and that we are recommending that he be replaced by Mr. Al Milliken of the Washington Department of Fisheries. The Committee applauds the efforts and dedication of Dr. Woelke during his tenure as a member of the Scientific and Statistical Committee. Membership tenure of SSC Members is two years and a large number of the Scientific and Statistical Committee will have completed their 2-year period by the September meeting. Hence, the Council should carefully consider future membership of the Committee, its structure and composition.

The major topics discussed at the Scientific and Statistical Committee meeting included (1) a review of the High-Seas Salmon Plan; (2) the incidental capture of halibut in the Japanese line fishery conducted in the Eastern Gulf; (3) Joint Ventures; (4) the schedule of management plans; (5) a request for Gulf Trawl Plan modifications by the Japanese Longline Association; (6) the SSC Charter; and (7) scientific studies being conducted on clam dredging in the Bering Sea.

High Seas Salmon Management Plan

The Committee had the opportunity to review and comment on the May 25th revision of the High Seas Salmon Fishery Plan for Alaska. The Committee was of the opinion that the draft plan should not, at this point in time, be considered by the Council as a whole but should be returned to the drafting team for substantive changes and further editing. The SSC felt that an MSY calculation for the area south and north of Cape Suckling should be treated independently (separately); that the allowable biological catch (ABC) as calculated was inappropriate; and that there was insufficient biological and/or statistical data in, or referenced in, the plan to evaluate some of its conclusions. The Committee also felt that certain conclusions regarding the merits of the Limited Entry Program were unjustified without adopting a mechanism to control overall effort and limitations on the fleet's harvesting rate.



Mr. Chairman, we would like to specifically point out that the SSC and the Council should not feel that the management team has done an inadequate job; quite to the contrary, the plan as presented is very readable. Many of its deficiencies lie with the failure of the Council and the SSC to provide specific guidelines to the team on what was expected in the way of plan revision.

In order to avert further confusion in this regard, the SSC will submit to the Council and the management team a memorandum outlining specific changes and data requirements necessary to improve the plan. Each member of the SSC will, in addition, send the team suggestions for editorial changes. In addition to the underlying technical problems inherent in the present plan, there is a need for specific guidance from the Council as it relates to the future of the High Seas Salmon Troll Fishery. This problem was brought to the attention of the Council in Mr. Branson's letter of May 9. It is particularly important that a clear statement be issued to the management team as regards the options identified in Mr. Branson's letter. That is, should the fishery be allowed to grow; should it be stabilized, both in terms of efforts and participating vessels; or should it be stabilized at a somewhat lower level of effort?

In our opinion, a continued escalation of the fishery will increasingly complicate the achievement of conservation and management goals as well as increase the risk of unintentionally overfishing certain stocks. This will be particularly true for those stocks which are fully utilized by the inshore net and/or line fishery or represent less viable units in the complex of stocks which comprise the resource. This should not be taken to imply that a troll fishery cannot be successfully regulated but should be considered in light of increasing technical difficulties associated with managing mixed stock fisheries and the problems associated with re-allocation of the surplus between extant user groups. We are not in a position to determine whether or not there are economic advantages associated with further growth of the fishery which might offset the problems identified above. The issue is basically related to OY--it is an important concept to be resolved before the re-drafting of the plan can proceed. The decision as to future role of the troll fishery in the overall salmon fishery in the area under regional council control must be taken by the Council and specific guidelines provided the drafting team. If it is the regional council's intention to stabilize the fishery, the OY should be established within the context of historical ranges and a limited entry program designed with a built in mechanism to control overall effort. The Committee notes that, over the 5-year period, 1972-1976, the average catches in the chinook and coho troll fishery were 45,248 and 35,511, respectively. The standard error for these averages is 10,357 and 7,664, respectively. These could establish guideline catch ranges of 34,891 to 55,605 for chinook and 27,847 to 43,175 for coho. These catch guidelines should be kept in mind in terms of monitoring the future troll fishery and its overall fishing effort. More specific guidelines will be suggested to the management team concerned with effort and catch limitations.

The Committee examined Agenda Item 10, including the letter to the Council written by Mr. Bob Alverson and Mr. Sandvick. The SSC agreed that the letter did reflect a potential problem in terms of the growing line fishery for cod to the westward; however, the Committee felt that it was difficult to fully assess the reality of the fear expressed in the letter, inasmuch as the data submitted were based on Bering Sea line catches and were confined to only two vessels early in the season. The example raised, however, represents another problem associated with the capture of incidental species and/or non-target species. Admiral Hayes recently suggested to the Council that a specific study be undertaken concerning the Council handling of incidental species. At that time the SSC recommended the establishment of a committee made up of Council members, the Advisory Panel and the SSC to study the matter. We again recommend you consider the establishment of such a committee. In addition, Mr. Chairman, it is recommended that the NMFS maintain close observation over the growing line fishery to the westward and provide any relevant information concerning the incidental capture of halibut in the fishery.

The Committee examined the preliminary joint venture report submitted to the Council but we have no specific comments to make at this time. It will recommend that the individual members of the Committee direct their reviews to the authors of the report.

The Committee also examined the new schedule for management plans but reported to the Council late in the meeting. The SSC felt that the schedule was more realistic but still represented a rather substantial commitment of time on the parts of both Council and the SSC and the Advisory Panel.

An itemized list of comments presented by the North Pacific Longline and Gillnet Association of Japan was reviewed by the SSC. The matter largely involved proposed changes in the various management plans for groundfish in the Gulf of Alaska. The following seven items were reviewed:

1. Sablefish Quota
2. Increase in Pacific Cod quota
3. Opening of the proposed closures:
 - a. Reopening of Davidson Bank
 - b. Area between 169-170° West, within 3 miles and 12 miles
 - c. Opening of the area east of: 140° West; 141° West; 137° West
4. Discontinuation of using INPFC Statistical Areas

5. Lift the limit in taking national quota less than 25% of the total from December 1 - May 31.
6. Withdrawal of the provision to the effect that if a foreign nation has caught its allocation of any species apportioned to each major statistical area, all further fishing by that nation be terminated in the area for the remainder of the calendar year.
7. Relaxation of restriction on fishing in the waters landward of 500 m. countour to, for example, 400 m., east of 157° West.

Item 1.--The sablefish foreign allowable catch (FAC) in the fishery management plan for the Gulf will constitute a total allocation of 9,000 metric ton rather than 8,000, as requested by the Line Association. The difference between 6,400 metric ton, as called for in the FMP regulation, and 9,000 metric ton (total FAC) is made up by 2,600 tons held in reserve. The Line Association should be notified that the reserve will probably be allocated if there is evidence that the U.S. fishery will not use the reserve.

Item 2.--We understand that the Council will proceed with this request and it is a matter of following appropriate administrative procedure.

Item 3.--The SSC felt that the request for open areas largely dealt with OY considerations and should be addressed directly to the Council.

Item 4.--The SSC did not agree with the request as regards discontinuation of allocating by statistical areas and thought there was merit in distributing fishing effort over time and space to minimize the possibilities of localized depletion.

Item 5.--The SSC agreed that the limit concerning not taking more than 25% of the catches in the period December 31-May 31 was meant to apply to the trawl fishery and should not be applied to the line fishery.

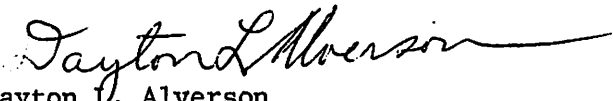
Item 6.--It was also felt that the provision to close down a fishing activity as a nation had caught its allocation was meant to apply specifically to a nation's trawl fishery and not to line operations and/or domestic fishing activities.

Item 7.--The Committee disagreed with the request to authorize fishing inside of 500 meters in the Eastern Gulf on the basis that there was a greater potential for a conflict between fisheries and some problems associated with incidental halibut catches in this area.

The Scientific and Statistical Committee reviewed the Charter for its activities as issued by the Washington Office. The Committee felt that major and important changes recommended by the Council had not been made and the scientists on the Committee did not feel the Charter was appropriate. The scientists were adamant that they should not and would not be involved in the drafting of regulatory measures.

The SSC appointed a subcommittee to review the subject contract proposal document. It did so, and found the proposed study to be in satisfactory order and adequate to our expectations.

The SSC does wish to emphasize its desire that the project review on June 21 include, among other details of the study specifics, the experimental design of this study, especially those items listed in Item 2, p. 6. We also suggest to the Council that it consider adding a provision to the contract withholding some portion of the contract payment until full and satisfactory performance of the contract is completed.



Dayton L. Alverson
Chairman, Scientific and Statistical Committee

cc:
Members, SSC