

North Pacific Fishery Management Council

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MINUTES

Scientific and Statistical Committee
April 11-12, 1988
Anchorage, Alaska

The Scientific and Statistical Committee met April 11-12 at the Sheraton Hotel in Anchorage, Alaska. Members present were:

Richard Marasco, Chairman	Doug Eggers, Vice Chairman
Don Rosenberg	Robert Burgner
Larry Hreha	Bill Clark
Don Bevan	Terry Quinn
Dana Schmidt	John Burns
Jim Balsiger for Bill Aron	

D-2 King and Tanner Crab FMP

Council staff indicated that the Crab Management Committee received a request suggesting that the release of the FMP be delayed to allow the crab industry time to resolve differences over some of the provisions in the plan. Accommodation of the request will delay initial review of the FMP until June.

D-3 Gulf of Alaska Groundfish FMP

Amendment 17

The SSC reviewed and discussed the Draft Environmental Assessment and Regulatory Impact Review/Initial Regulatory Flexibility Analysis for the following two issues covered in Amendment 17:

- (1) Delay sablefish opening.
- (2) Federal permit requirements.

(1) Delay sablefish opening.

Data available for evaluating the alternatives are extremely limited and exhibit substantial variability. There is a critical need to collect pertinent data on halibut bycatch in the

sablefish fishery. These data are needed by depth and by month. An observer program would make it possible to collect these data.

The SSC recommends that this portion of Amendment 17 go out for public review taking into account the following comments:

Alternative 4. This alternative specifies a depth restriction of 500m. The analysis suggests that other depth restrictions (300m, 400m) also could be considered.

Alternative 5. This alternative, the fishing season framework for sablefish, is a strong candidate because of uncertainties associated with the bycatch data. Therefore, the associated discussion should be strengthened. The description of this alternative should state that split seasons could be allowed and a version for concurrent halibut/sablefish fisheries should be examined.

The SSC also made several other editorial comments.

(2) Federal permit requirements.

It is recommended that this portion of the amendment package be sent out for public review. The SSC wants to go on record supporting timely submission of accurate catch data by both floating and shore-based processors.

Proposed Regulatory Amendment to Limit the Bycatch of Sablefish in the Hook-and-Longline Fishery

The SSC received a presentation from the NMFS Regional Office on the proposed regulatory amendment to remedy the hook-and-longline sablefish bycatch problem. The proposal will establish a 4% or higher limit on the bycatch allocation. The SSC could not find any scientific justification for the 4% level, noting that the data provided in Table 1 were not "bycatch rates" but instead "landing percentages".

D-4 Bering Sea/Aleutian Islands Groundfish FMP

Amendment 12

The SSC reviewed and discussed the Draft Environmental Assessment and Regulatory Impact Review/Initial Regulatory Flexibility Analysis for the following five issues:

- (1) Bycatch controls.
- (2) Federal permit requirements.
- (3) Non-retainable groundfish catch limits.
- (4) Resource Assessment Document (RAD) deadline.
- (5) JVP prohibition on roe rock sole.

It also reviewed and discussed the Draft Supplemental Environmental Impact Statement and Regulatory Review/Initial

Regulatory Flexibility Analysis for the proposal to increase the optimum yield (OY) range.

(1) Bycatch control.

The SSC concurred with the Team's findings that all of the bycatch control alternatives had limited biological consequences and that allocation was the main issue. However, recommendations were made to the plan team to describe further the biological information upon which the limited biological impact assertions rest. It was also suggested that the socioeconomic impact section be expanded to provide more detail on how various fisheries might be affected by the proposed options. Comments were also raised restating that the 1% value was based on an industry compromise and not founded on identifiable biological or economic objectives.

Application of Alternatives 2 and 3 to the expanding DAP fishery would require an observer program. The SSC also noted that the statement concerning 100% observer coverage should be modified to reflect a more realistic coverage requirement.

The SSC recommends this amendment be distributed for public comment after the suggested modifications are made.

(2) Federal permit requirements.

This proposal is the same as for the GOA and is discussed in that section.

(3) Non-retainable groundfish catch limits.

The SSC recommends that this portion of the Amendment 12 be released for public review. However, it is argued in Section 4.4.3 that the marginal cost of data collection and monitoring systems would be minimal. The SSC disagrees with this statement. A satisfactory system does not exist for the DAP fisheries.

(4) Resource Assessment Document deadline.

It is recommended that this portion of the amendment package be released for public comment.

(5) JVP prohibition on roe-bearing rock sole.

It was apparent that a lack of information hampered the Team in its attempt to develop the supporting documents for this proposal. Prior to releasing this proposal for public review the SSC believes that the problem statement should be refined and the alternatives further developed and analyzed. An outline of what the SSC would like to see in a reworked analysis follows.

The SSC feels that the following is a better description of the problem and indication of need for action (Section 6.1).

"Roe-bearing rock sole has become an important fishery for domestic (DAP) fishermen. While roe-bearing rock sole had once been harvested by foreign fisheries (TALFF), the JVP fisheries had, prior to 1988, only taken rock sole incidental to target fisheries on yellowfin sole. This proposed amendment is to enable domestic operators to exercise the domestic processor preference by limiting the JVP harvest of rock sole during a portion of the spawning period. It is estimated by the current DAP fishermen that the original market in Japan for roe-bearing rock sole is 15,000 mt. Two proposed alternatives, in addition to the status quo, are provided. Alternative 2 would limit the retention of rock sole by the JVP fisheries to no more than 30% of the total catch during the period January 1 to April 1. Alternative 3 would separate rock sole from the "Other flatfish" category, establish a TAC specifically for rock sole, and allow the Council to establish a split-season apportionment in order to isolate the roe-bearing harvest from harvest outside the spawning season."

Section 6.4 needs to be expanded to include an analysis of the impact of each alternative. For example, Alternative 1, Status Quo, the analysis should provide estimates of how large the JVP catch of roe-bearing rock sole could be in the absence of any action. Alternative 3 should be expanded to indicate how JV's would be affected by the inability to retain rock sole caught early in the year.

(6) Optimum yield (OY) range.

The SSC reviewed the draft SEIS/RIR/IRFA and discussed it in detail with the plan team. The proposal addresses the issue of the upper end of the OY range. The Team's analysis describes the probable impacts of higher TAC's that could result from an increased upper end of the OY range. The SSC commended the Team for preparing such an extensive document in the short period of time that was available. Numerous technical and editorial suggestions were made. It was also recommended that an analysis of probable market effects of catch levels that would be possible given higher TAC's be expanded to include a discussion of market access.

The document should be released for public review and comment.

C-4 Donut Fisheries

The SSC received a report of the recent NMFS acoustic survey in the donut hole, and a study of the possible effect of catch underestimates on the population model by which pollock ABC's are calculated. The latter study pointed out the close agreement of acoustic and analytic estimates of eastern Bering Sea stock size through 1985, which indicates that at least until that time, it was realistic to treat the EBS stock separately and to regard the

reported EBS catches as a reasonably accurate measure of fishery removals from that stock.

The SSC intends to review the available information on pollock stock structure this fall, but it expects that definitive answers will have to await the results of a few years of coordinated international scientific work.

C-10 Other Business

NMFS 602-603 Guidelines

Several members of the SSC attended a two-day meeting which was held in Seattle, during the first part of February, to discuss the Draft 602-603 Guidelines. In attendance at the meetings were members of the North Pacific, Pacific and Western Pacific SSC's and NMFS staff. Topics of discussion included definitions of ABC and threshold, default specification of threshold, and contents of the SAFE document. Views of each of the SSC's were given on each of these items. After NMFS has similar meetings in New England and Florida a new draft of the 602-603 guidelines will be circulated for review and comment.

Sablefish Limited Entry Data Request

Dr. John Harville requested assistance from the SSC in obtaining data that is needed to support the Council's efforts to explore limited entry options for the sablefish fishery. Drs. Marasco and Eggers agreed to meet with Dr. Harville at 2 p.m. on April 19, 1988 at the Northwest and Alaska Fisheries Center to formulate a course of action.

Reports

The SSC received the following reports:

1. The Northwest and Alaska Fisheries Center reported on a port sampling program based in Kodiak to determine age composition of the DAP pollock catch. Reports on the following subjects were also given: scientific sampling of the Polish pollock fishery in the Donut, and research survey activities in the Aleutian Basin and Shelikof Strait.
2. Terry Quinn reported on the NMFS Ecosystem Workshop.
3. Don Rosenberg reported on the Arctic Data Meeting that he attended.