

Pacific Northwest Crab Industry Advisory Committee (PNCIAC)

Meeting Minutes and Recommendations

Sept 21, 2022 9-11am AKT

Link to the eAgenda: <https://meetings.npfmc.org/Meeting/Details/2953>

ATTENDEES

Committee Members: Steve Minor (Chair), Jamie Goen (Secretary, non-voting), Sean Dwyer, Lance Farr, Erling (Jake) Jacobsen, Gary Painter, Edward Poulsen, Mark Casto, and Elizabeth Reed
(Committee members not in attendance: Dean Fasnacht, Mike Simpson, Brett Reasor)

Others in Attendance:

Sarah Marrinan, Sarah Rheinsmith, Jon McCracken, Kendall Henry, Mateo Paz-Seldon, Frank Kelty, Lenny Herzog, Tom Meyer, Diana Evans, Ernie Weiss

AGENDA

1. Opilio/Snow Crab Rebuilding
2. Red King Crab Measures
3. Crab Rationalization Program Review General Discussion
4. Other Business

MINUTES

1. Opilio/Snow Crab Rebuilding

Council staff Sara Rheinsmith explained the status of the snow crab rebuilding plan. The updated projections were brought forward at the most recent Crab Plan Team meeting; the minutes and projections should be posted today. At the Oct meeting the SSC will review the updated projections and hopefully approve what is needed to establish a T min and T max. This will provide staff what is needed to start the Initial Review Analysis. The current schedule is that this analysis will be brought to the Council in December for Initial Review and with Final Action in February.

It was noted that there is no analysis for PNCIAC to comment directly on at this point.

There was a question of whether the paper had been pushed back from its original time frame. Staff clarified that the SSC has to recommend a model projection that will be used to establish T min (the min time to rebuild) and at the June meeting the SSC wasn't satisfied with the parameters that were brought forward to establish a projection model that would be used to determine T min. So that was delayed to the Oct meeting so the SSC can provide feedback and hopefully approve the parameters. This is why Initial Review was pushed back to December.

Given this timeline, PNCIAC plans to schedule another meeting closer to December to discuss the Snow Crab Rebuilding Analysis.

It was noted that the CPT, as well as other scientists and managers would like to hear from industry regarding the value of opening a fishery, however small. The question is, if the snow crab fishery was able to be open during a rebuilding plan, whether a threshold of magnitude was needed in order for the fishery to be worthwhile for participants. Several members voiced their support for any opportunity to have a fishery. Members noted that they were already losing market shares in Japan and other places

and there is valuable scientific data that could be gathered by having a small season. Fishermen will individually decide whether it makes sense financially to go fishing, but as long as it does not affect the timeframe of the rebuilding plan, having a fishery (however small) would be valuable to the sector. Comment that the CPT review of rebuilding plan scenarios seemed to indicate that there was no difference in the time to rebuild whether there was or was not a direct crab fishery. Members made the following motion:

PNCIAC recommends to the management (CPT, SSC, Council) that if it available to have a season, a season occurs regardless of size of the TAC. This may allow for additional collection of data for assessment and scientific information as well as the continuation of important crab markets. MOTION PASSED unanimously

2. Red King Crab Measures

In addition to crab specifications, there are two actions related to Bristol Bay Red king crab for the upcoming October Council meeting: 1) an industry request for information (RFI) on voluntary measures that could be employed to avoid and protect BBRKC and/ or EBS snow crab, reduce directed fishing discard mortality, and informational needs to develop more flexible and effective spatial management measures and 2) a discussion paper which addresses a host of specific Council requests on BBRKC. Sara Rheinsmith reported that the request for information is out, published on the eAgenda, with a comment period that closes this Friday, 9/23. The BBRKC expanded discussion paper should be published later this week.

Again, the group observed that there is no discussion paper to review at this time. The group discussed organizing a small working group to draft PNCIAC comments to the Council offline which would be later circulated to all members.¹

There was some discussion about the RFI and voluntary measures all sectors could take to reduce crab mortality. At this point, three comments had been submitted from the public and none yet from trade associations. **PNCIAC members expressed deep concern about the status of the red king crab and re-emphasized the importance of this species and voluntary measures by sectors to reduce mortality of BBRKC.**

The group discussed who would testify on behalf of PNCIAC at the SSC, AP, and Council meeting. In addition to D2 BBRKC measures, the group may wish to comment under C1 Crab specifications. It was noted that testifiers could be remote.

3. Crab Rationalization Program Review General Discussion

The BSAI Crab Rationalization Program is scheduled to be reviewed again in 2023. It was noted that this review may be happening in a time of low TAC, potentially closed fisheries, and an uncertain future. It will likely be complex and not business as usual. As a committee that represents both harvesters and processors, PNCIAC will have a unique role in this review. The group usually comes to the forefront on issues like this.

¹ Given the short timeframe, a working group was not organized and therefore PNCIAC did not provide separate comments to the Council.

Steve gave notice that he does not intend to serve as chair after the end of this year and therefore PNCIAC would need to identify a new chair to lead during this process.

Sarah Marrinan (Council staff) quickly reviewed the process for program reviews. Likely there will be a workplan stage where PNCIAC and the public could weigh in on areas of particular focus. This stage helps set expectations. The review looks at the program holistically, but it's not really an "action" document. If the Council wants to make changes to the program once it has seen the document, that would typically happen through following discussion papers or amendments.

4. Other Business

No other business was discussed.

Meeting adjourned 9:43am AKT.