

EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR'S REPORT

It's only been three weeks since the last Council meeting so this report should be mercifully short. Attachment B-1(a) under this agenda item is a narrative report by Steve Davis of his trip to Japan and the Soviet Union. It supplements the formal reports of the bilateral meetings with Japan and the Soviet Union which are available at the Council office for those of you who would like to have copies.

Attachment B-1(b) is the usual status of fishery management plans. Plans that require action will be covered under specific agenda items as well.

The first meeting of the Crisis Committee for the Gulf of Alaska groundfish plan was held by teleconference on May 4. A report on that call, which puts some of the Gulf groundfish items originally on the May agenda into the regular amendment cycle established by the Council in April, is Attachment B-1(c). Based on this single experience I think the system developed by you in April has great merit and utility.

You will recall that at the April meeting during the Price Waterhouse exit interview on the audit four recommendations were made to improve the Council's internal control and administrative efficiency. We have effected three of those: revising bookkeeping procedures to provide conventional recording of revenues and fund balance; developed a system to compare airline invoices under the GTR system with the GTR logbook to verify receipt of services; and updated and formalized the Council's accounting and administrative policies and procedures. The latter is a handbook to be used by Council staff. The fourth recommendation, that we require receipts for all expenses over \$25 for expense claims, is not going to implemented since we are on an established per diem rate and that procedure would only add an unnecessary paper burden.

You've probably all heard that the Alaska Board of Fisheries was finally confirmed by the Legislature. Bob Blake, the member from Cordova, resigned so that Governor Sheffield could appoint a second sport fish representative; in this case, a Mr. Ernie Carter from Fairbanks. Now that Beth Stewart finally has a permanent Board, she has developed a meeting schedule for them (Attachment B-1(d)) which should be enough to make them all resign. We'll meet with them in September in Anchorage and January in Sitka under the currently contemplated Council schedule.

One of the legislative proposals (S.2324) amending the Coastal Zone Management Act was passed out of the Senate Commerce Committee on May 9, 1984, and is headed for consideration by the full Senate. As you may recall from Ron Miller's March 13, 1984 memorandum, this bill and companion legislation in the House, H.R.4589, require that all federal activities affecting a state's coastal zone in any manner must be fully consistent with the state's approved coastal management program. Because of concern that such a requirement could hamper management by the Regional Fishery Management Councils, S.2324 was amended in Committee to exempt federal fisheries management from the consistency requirement. Copies of the amended bill will be sent to you as soon as they are available.

One item that does not appear on the agenda this time is a report from George Snyder, Director of the Auke Bay Laboratory for National Marine Fisheries Service, on their activity in inventorying and collating information on marine debris, particularly discarded fishing gear. Their field program is in full swing and we felt that it would be possible to make a much fuller report at the September meeting. In the meantime, we are working with the Marine Mammal Commission disbursing the \$4,000 they have contributed toward this program. The money will be spent primarily on travel for beach inventories.

There are representatives from Poland present today who will be making a presentation to the Council on their plans for fishing effort in the FCZ off Alaska.

In personnel matters, we have two Sea Grant interns for the summer. The first, Steve Brooks, came to work a week ago Monday and will be with us until August 17. The second, Ron Rognes, starts June 7. Steve will be updating all of the background material in the Gulf of Alaska Fishery Management Plan as well as working with the Plan Team in preparing analysis of material for the September meeting. Ron Rognes will be doing a similar job on the Tanner Crab FMP and will assist in plan team analysis of material for our September joint meeting with the Board of Fisheries.

Don Bevan is not here. He underwent bypass surgery on the 17th and as of this writing things looked very hopeful for him.

I'd like to remind you that since we don't have a Council meeting in July this is the last full meeting, for a while a least, that Keith Specking will attend as a Council member. I hope that we can keep him working on his subcommittee to the bitter end, however.

And, finally, I'd like to remind you that there are committee meetings during the Council meeting. The Finance Committee will meet this evening at the Tea Leaf for dinner and Keith's Joint Venture and Permit Subcommittee will meet Thursday morning at 7:00 a.m. in this room.

M E M O R A N D U M

TO: Jim Branson
FROM: Steve Davis *SD*
DATE: May 15, 1984
SUBJECT: Summary of the 1984 U.S.-Japan and U.S.-U.S.S.R. Bilateral Meetings

Following the March Joint Council/Board meeting, I immediately left for Japan and the U.S.S.R. to observe and participate in the 1984 bilateral meetings on assessment of North Pacific fisheries resources. These meetings between fishery scientists are held annually between the U.S. and foreign nations participating in cooperative research in the Fishery Conservation Zone. Such cooperative research, while not a requirement under the MFCMA, is encouraged by the Act and is looked favorably upon when the U.S. makes its foreign fishery allocations.

A report on each of the bilateral meetings has been prepared and these are provided as attachments to this memo. The reports represent the official protocol developed by the U.S. and foreign delegations at the meetings. They describe in detail the meeting, the scientific papers presented, plans for future cooperative research, and participants involved.

My summary, derived from my meeting notes, will focus on my personal observations and comments on the meetings and is intended to complement the attached protocols.

U.S.-JAPAN BILATERAL MEETING - APRIL 2-6, 1984 - TOKYO, JAPAN

On April 2, at the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, the seventh U.S.-Japan bilateral meeting in as many years began with Dr. Otaki, Director, Division of Oceanography, Far Seas Fisheries Research Laboratory of Japan welcoming the U.S. participants to Japan. Dr. Otaki reviewed the joint U.S.-Japan research survey effort and his desire for continuation of the program. He also took this opportunity to express his concern over recent changes in U.S. management policy which is attempting to quickly reduce foreign fishing operations. Dr. Otaki expressed his hope that management policy be continued with sound biological data as the primary basis.

Dr. John Gissberg, Fishery Attache, American Embassy, Tokyo, thanked the Japanese delegation for hosting this year's meeting. John is a familiar face to many of us associated with the Council and Alaska.

As you probably know, John was assigned to his current post last fall for a four-year term. One of his goals while in Japan is to expand the role of the Attache position of the embassy and to become more active in fishery negotiations. Primary issues facing John in April were the Japanese reaction to the April 1984 groundfish allocation, building pressure by U.S. processors for increased Japanese imports of American produced surimi, and future trends in Japanese supply and demand of fisheries products.

The meeting then progressed over the next several days with the review and discussion of Japanese papers. Lists of U.S., Japan and U.S.S.R. papers are provided in the official report. I brought back copies of all reports received by the U.S. delegation and they will be put in our library. The following are selected comments on the individual reports presented by the Japanese delegation.

Status of Bering Sea Pollock Stocks.

- In the Fall, 1983, the Japanese encountered some difficulty surveying various stations around St. Matthew Island due to the presence of crab pots.
- The Japanese found more fish in medium depths (100-150 m) as compared to previous years where high concentrations were found in depths as shallow as 80 m.
- They observed an increase in bottom water temperature on the continental shelf in 1983 as compared to prior years.
- The age composition of the pollock sampled showed that in 1983, the majority of fish were 4 years old.
- The Japanese argued that Bering Sea pollock biomass is around 10 million metric tons. (Current U.S. estimates are 7.8 million mt.)

Status of Bering Sea/Aleutian Island Flounder, Yellowfin sole, Turbot, and Arrowtooth Flounders.

- There is a general agreement between the U.S. and Japan on the status of this resource. Flounder stocks in general are considered to be at a high level with individual species either stable or increasing in biomass.
- The Japanese consider the BS/AI turbot population as one stock.
- The U.S. manages both turbot and arrowtooth flounders as a group. The Japanese believe that the arrowtooth harvest is incidental to Greenland turbot (the target and more valuable species), so it is satisfactory to manage both species together even though the ecology of both species differ.
- During 1978-1980 both pollock and Greenland turbot year classes were weak in the Bering Sea. Both of these species spawn on the fringes of the continental shelf. The Japanese suggest that environmental conditions may have been detrimental for these species.
- The Japanese noted that in 1983 yellowfin sole and other flounders were more abundant in deep water, slope edge areas. This may in part be attributed to movement by these species to deeper waters in response to a warming trend inshore.

Condition of the Pacific Cod Stock in the Bering Sea and Aleutian Islands.

- There was agreement among the delegations that Pacific cod is in good to excellent condition with current biomass estimates ranging from 1.1-1.3 million mt.
- The Japanese proposed (based on work done earlier by Forrester) that a strong year class in cod might result if sea surface temperatures are

high (5.5°C) during the spawning period. Both U.S. and Japanese scientists have reported increasing temperatures in the Bering Sea.

Condition of Sablefish Stocks in the Bering Sea and Aleutians.

- The Japanese believe sablefish biomass estimates used by the U.S. are too low.
- They believe the trawl estimates are generally more reliable than longline derived estimates. The Japanese had problems with killer whale attacks during longline surveys around the Pribilof Islands.

Review of Bering Sea/Aleutian Island Groundfish FMP and Amendments.

- The Japanese expressed their concerns about Amendment 1 to the BS/AI FMP which implements the ecosystem management approach in determining TACs. They believe the knowledge necessary to implement this system is not yet available and that the species-by-species management system should be retained until this knowledge becomes available. The Japanese asked that they be provided with the ecosystem model and its parameters so that they can reach an understanding of the model and participate in the development of the data required for the model.

Condition of Pollock, Cod, POP, Rockfish and Flatfish Stocks in the Gulf of Alaska.

- The Japanese were surprised that the pollock OY was increased so dramatically.
- They are concerned that too much of the OY will be taken from the spawning stock (JV operations) and that maybe more of the OY should be taken during non-spawning periods. Overall, they feel the new pollock OY is a safe ceiling on pollock harvest.

Condition of Sablefish Stocks in the Gulf of Alaska.

- The primary difference between the U.S. and Japanese scientists was the abundance trend of the stock. The Japanese claim that the resource is increasing and fully recovered in the Gulf of Alaska, while the U.S. believes that the resource, while showing some signs of improvement, is still at a low level.

Review of Gulf of Alaska Groundfish FMP and Amendments.

- The Japanese expressed their concerns over the timing of the reserve releases to TALFF and the apparent inflexibility of the plan. I mentioned the primary issues that are currently under study in regard to this plan and the Council's goal to framework this plan sometime in the near future.
- One of the topics discussed was the current examination by the U.S. and Japan of ways to reduce incidental catch of prohibited species by foreign and domestic vessels by utilizing gear modifications and/or time-area-depth restrictions. The Japanese mentioned that they have been conducting two experiments with modified trawl gear. One of the experiments examines the use of hanging ropes attached to the ground rope

which help fishermen keep the trawl off the bottom during towing. Preliminary results show a significant decrease in flatfish catches while fishing for pollock using this gear modification. A final report is expected by the next bilateral meeting. I mentioned the Council's interest in receiving that report.

Informal Discussions on Status of North Pacific Crab Stocks.

On the evening of April 3, Dr. Murray Hayes and I met with representatives of the Japan Fisheries Agency and Dr. Hiroshi Kurata, Director of the Hokkaido Regional Fisheries Research Laboratory, who is a specialist on shellfish for a discussion of North Pacific crab stocks. We learned that the Japanese no longer harvest red king crab in Soviet waters and that they only receive allocations for brown king crab and C. opilio Tanner crab. Japanese harvests of red king crab occur around the island of Hokkaido, where they also harvest hair crab. Tanner crab (C. opilio and C. japonicus) are found off the west coast of Honshu (the main island) and Hokkaido.

When asked, Dr. Kurata mentioned that the Japanese have no joint venture or distant water crab fisheries at the present time. Japanese crab imports have been on the increase with 34,500 mt (76 million pounds) of crab imported in 1982. The U.S. provided 12,000 mt of crab with other major suppliers being Canada, Korea and U.S.S.R.

We discussed the status and management of Japanese crab stocks and learned that there are really no stock assessment surveys done off Japan; therefore, examining stock fluctuations or long term trends is difficult. Murray and I were particularly interested in knowing if the Japanese have seen instances of extreme fluctuations in their crab stock size as we have observed off Alaska. Dr. Kurata explained that he hadn't seen such fluctuations and that Japanese king and Tanner crab stocks have been in a steady decline for many years. He also mentioned that the waters off Hokkaido have been getting warmer in the last several years.

We also discussed the variety of gear types used in the Japanese crab fisheries. Pots are used in the Hokkaido king crab and hair crab fisheries, while tangle nets are used in the blue crab (Portunus sp.) fishery. Both gear types are still used in the crab fisheries conducted in Soviet waters.

And finally, while I was in Japan, the U.S. delegation was invited to a small reception hosted by the Japanese fishing industry. While at the reception I learned that the Japanese are interested in renewing their effort toward a Tanner crab (C. opilio) allocation off Alaska, north of 58°N. latitude. I was lead to believe that this request might be made sometime in the near future.

Other Observations While in Japan.

Tsukiji Fish Market.

Probably one of the most interesting things I did while in Tokyo was visit the Tsukiji Fish Market. What an amazing place! This fish market specializing in fresh fish is the largest in Japan and provides the opportunity to observe probably the most extensive exhibit of fish species (alive in many cases)

anywhere in the world. The care in processing and presenting the fish for display is truly remarkable and like I've never seen before. All the fish, including shellfish, look like they were just caught that day. We have a lot to learn about preparing our fish for presentation to the consumer.

The best time of day to view the market is 5 a.m. when the fish arrive and are put on display. Watching men unload Atlantic bluefin tuna and Pacific yellowfin tuna, fish that have been stored on dry ice, gave the area a surrealistic feeling as the dry ice fog slowly moved throughout the market. At 6 a.m., the auction begins with buyers from all over Japan bidding on all types of tuna. At one point I actually followed a tuna, from the original unloading, through the auction, to a hand cart where it was taken to a booth, cut into large chunks and then sold. From there a large chunk was taken to another booth and "processed" further, winding up no doubt in the local sushi bar that afternoon! I recommend that no one pass up the fish market when travelling to Japan. It will be a memorable experience.

Bullet Train.

On April 9, the U.S. delegation left Tokyo for Niigata where we were to spend a day prior to our flight to Russia. There is no convenient airline service to this coastal city, so we took the bullet train. I've always wanted to ride on one of these trains and in addition to being fast (over 150 mph), they are extremely comfortable and quiet. Our trip to Niigata took only 2½ hours, which included several stops and a crossing of the Japanese Alps. The train is a good way to view the country, and it's relatively inexpensive.

Japan Sea Regional Fisheries Research Laboratory, Niigata, Japan

Upon arriving in Niigata, we were graciously received by Dr. Fujya, Director, and his staff of the regional fisheries laboratory. We spent a full day touring the laboratory and research vessel, talking with researchers, and experiencing genuine Japanese hospitality. The laboratory is engaged in biological and statistical studies on the surface - and bottom-living fishes, crustaceans, and mollusks, covering a variety of areas in the Sea of Japan. I asked one of the salmon biologists if he had seen any net-marked salmon or if he had noticed old netting and other debris washing up onshore. He told me that he hadn't seen any salmon with net scars and that outside Tokyo Bay, Japan doesn't really have a problem with entangling debris washing up onshore. Apparently, the prevailing currents take any debris away from the islands. An open invitation was made to the Council family to visit their facility, an offer I would recommend accepting if you are in the Niigata area.

U.S.-U.S.S.R. BILATERAL MEETING - APRIL 11-20, 1984 - NAKHODKA, U.S.S.R.

On April 11 the U.S.-USSR bilateral meeting began. This was the first bilateral held in Nakhodka, and the first bilateral held in Russia since 1974. Mr. Pautov, Director of TINRO, and Dr. Aron opened the meeting with comments on the spirit of scientific cooperation and expressing hope that our meeting would facilitate a better mutual understanding of fisheries between our countries.

The main goals of the meeting were to exchange data on condition of commercial fish stocks in the Northeast Pacific, to exchange views on trends of abundance

and variation, and to discuss the impact of ecological factors and fisheries on condition of stocks. Unfortunately, it soon became clear to me that the exchange of data and other fishery information would be essentially one-sided. We learned that for one reason or another, the Soviet government is reluctant to release fishery statistics or hard data. The reports and papers presented by Soviet scientists were, in my opinion, similar to our "abstracts" and would include strong statements that couldn't be supported by any data that was provided. I also discovered to my surprise that the Soviet scientific community work in essentially a vacuum, with little (or out-of-date) knowledge of what is happening elsewhere in the scientific world. This must be in part due to an internal review of all incoming documents and journals by TINRO (The Pacific Research Institute of Fisheries and Oceanography). Following review of a document, TINRO will either retain the document or release some or all of it for translation before sending it to the scientists. Talking with the Soviets about this problem I was told that they have problems dealing with their Central Office too.

As with my Japanese meeting summary, the specific details of the meeting, the papers presented and the list of participants are included in the attached formal report prepared by our delegation at the meeting. I will base my summary on just my personal notes and observations.

Review of Bering Sea and Gulf of Alaska Groundfish Investigations.

- The U.S.S.R. has been conducting joint groundfish surveys over the last four years off the coasts of Alaska, Washington and Oregon. Unlike the American counterparts, the Soviets conduct ichthyoplankton surveys (study of larvae and eggs) instead of trawl surveys.
- In general the Soviet estimates of stock condition and abundance were extremely close to U.S. estimates, remarkable since the methods of surveying are so radically different.
- The Soviets believe that there are two spawning groups (races) of pollock in the eastern Bering Sea: the winter group, which spawn off the shelf edge and over great depths; and the spring group, which spawn over the continental shelf. They are able through their studies to subdivide these two races into 7 separate populations. The Soviets have made this determination based on identified differences between eggs and larvae for each population.
- Maximum spring spawning of Bering Sea pollock began two weeks earlier than normal in 1983. The Soviets believe this was due to an increase in water temperatures and in the proportion of old females in the spawning stock.
- The Soviets have seen in some years a large spawning concentration of pollock in the Yakutat area in addition to Shelikof Strait. The last year they saw such a concentration was in 1976 during a hydroacoustic survey.
- The Pacific cod resource is presently at high levels in both the Bering Sea and Gulf of Alaska. This is due to the presence of a strong 1977 year class. As this year class dies off naturally, abundance in 1985 and 1986 is expected to decline.

- The Soviets are very interested in obtaining a copy of our computer program used to generate the Bering Sea estimates of population growth, mortality rates, and recruitment.
- The Soviet delegation raised questions about their research efforts in the FCZ and what benefits the Soviets might expect for their efforts. It was obvious to me that the Soviets were hinting that some allocation of groundfish should be made as a reimbursement of the Soviet research effort.

Joint Discussion of Herring Fisheries and Management off Alaska

- The ongoing high seas herring scale analysis was presented to the Soviet scientists. The U.S. stressed the importance of identifying individual stocks and areas of origin for proper management of this resource in the Bering Sea. The U.S. requested herring scale samples and information on location of herring spawning sites along the Soviet coast. The Soviets said that they would try to have a herring report at next year's meeting.
- The Soviets mentioned that in the Sea of Okhotsk they have been doing aerial spawning stock surveys for 25 years and they feel the methods are quite accurate. The U.S. delegation expressed their interest in learning more about Soviet experiences with aerial surveys and requested a report at the next meeting.

Joint Discussions on King Crab.

While not a formal part of the meeting, an afternoon session was spent discussing the current status of Alaskan crab stocks, their cyclic fluctuations and possible factors contributing towards the resource decline, and management practices. The Soviet crab specialist was Dr. Slizkin. The following are points of interest from that meeting.

- We discussed the possible effects of trawling on king crab. We noted that king crab stocks increased dramatically in the late 1970s when trawling was extensive throughout the Bering Sea.
- Dr. Slizkin stated that he feels that cod are the primary predator of small king crab. He has observed juvenile king crab and Tanner crab in cod stomachs; but no large king crab (over 80 mm carapace length).
- In Peter the Great Bay, Soviet studies which started in the 1930s (benthic surveys) have shown a gradual change in the benthic community.
- Soviet king crab stocks were reported in stable and healthy condition, unlike Alaskan stocks. No cyclic fluctuations in abundance or bottom temperature increases have been observed.
- Dr. Slizkin said that there must be more than one reason for the king crab decline off Alaska. He believes that our exploitation rates (of 40-60%) have been too high. The Soviets use a 10% exploitation rate on their stocks. They also have established "no crab fishing zones" around East Kamchatka Peninsula to protect growing and reproducing crab. "Fishing areas" are established outside of these areas, with increasing quotas set the further you move away from the protected zones.

Other Topics Discussed with the U.S.S.R. Delegation.

- Three and a half days were spent discussing joint high seas salmon research which included studies of population biology, ocean migrations, ecology, and genetics of salmon stocks utilizing the ocean feeding areas of the North Pacific and the Bering Sea. Details of this portion of the meeting are provided in the formal report.
- On the average, 12% of returning pink salmon to Russia have some signs of hook injury, most likely as a result of the Japanese longline fishery. High seas salmon from the North Pacific occasionally have net marks.
- "Gear entanglement" was not pursued with the Soviet delegation since they actually gillnet salmon during the season so salmon appearing with net marks are not unusual.
- The Soviets told me that they have not seen much debris washing up on their beaches.

Other Observations While in Russia.

Trans-Siberian Railroad.

On April 10-11, the U.S. delegation flew to Khabarovsk on the weekly JAL flight and then went on to Nakhodka by train. Unlike the bullet train, the "Nakhodka Flyer" made the 400-mile journey in 15 hours. The train itself was reasonably comfortable and the food typically "Russian". This is the only way for a foreigner to get to Nakhodka unless by ship.

Nakhodka and Vicinity.

This ice-free port is one of the largest in the eastern Soviet Union. It receives ships flying a variety of flags although all were Russian at this time of the year. The city itself reminded me of a city in Turkey; the buildings looking rundown, the layout of the city somewhat archaic, coal smoke everywhere and the countryside brown and desolate looking. Similar to Alaska as well at this time of the year, Nakhodka was undergoing "break-up" and so I had to imagine how it might look in the summer and fall. I would expect that, like Alaska, it would be quite beautiful and I would recommend that time of the year if you were to visit.

Vodka.

I am under the impression that the Russians are hoping that vodka drinking will become an Olympic event. While in Nakhodka I observed daily training sessions and frequent sparring with the U.S. delegation. Dr. Aron, our "coach", spent considerable time showing us the virtues of proper consumption strategy.

Tour of Soviet Factoryship.

The U.S. delegation was invited to tour a mothership in port after 14 months of participating in various groundfish fisheries off Japan and Kamchatka Peninsula. This 450-foot processing and canning vessel, its name the Fishing Industry, had a crew of over 400 people, a library, movie theatre, impressive medical and dental facilities and all the comforts of home. The Captain and

his officers were most gracious and after the very impressive tour we had our best meal in Russia. Tied up next to the factoryship were two large Soviet trawlers of approximately 250 feet in length used to fish groundfish in depths of up to 1,000 m. Such an operation, both harvesting and processing, must be an impressive sight.

Cruise Ship.

Since JAL only has one flight per week to the Soviet Union, the remaining U.S. participants who stayed for the crab and salmon discussions chose to take a Soviet cruise ship from Nakhodka to Yokohama instead of waiting four extra days for the plane. While not the most luxurious, it was very comfortable and it was a relaxing way to travel back to Japan. We arrived in Yokohama two and a half days later so it was a quicker way home as well.

Conclusion.

Traveling to Japan and the U.S.S.R. to discuss fishery research is a rare opportunity for U.S. scientists. I am especially appreciative to you and the Council for giving me the opportunity to visit these countries and participate at the bilateral meetings. I found that the information gained, especially the work on assessment of U.S. groundfish resources, will be extremely useful to me as I delve deeper into the the Gulf of Alaska Groundfish Plan. I also found discussing the current condition of North Pacific crab stocks as they relate to environmental changes, predators, and fishing most interesting and I am sure the information will be valuable as I continue my work on crab. And finally, I would like to add that I feel it is extremely important for Council staff members to participate at this type of meetings. My appreciation of the complexity of fishery problems, be it biological, economic or managerial, is only enhanced by involvement in INPFC, symposia, and meetings such as the bilaterals. I would encourage continued Council involvement at these meetings.

STATUS OF FISHERY MANAGEMENT PLANS

1. Salmon FMP

No formal action is required by the Council at this meeting. In February the Council met with the Board of Fisheries and continued the chinook harvest range at 243,000 to 272,000 fish for the 1984 season. The Council's intention is to manage for the low end of this range if Canada matches this action in conservatively managing their fisheries. No plan amendments will be needed as a result of Council action in February.

2. Herring FMP

The Council will review an RFP for offshore herring research and will consider in what direction to go with the herring plan. NOAA legal counsel has found some problems with the current FMP which would make it unapprovable if submitted for Secretarial review. The Council gave final approval to the plan in September 1983 but voted at the March meeting to withhold it from Secretarial review.

3. King Crab FMP

The Council will review the actions taken by the Board in March. A summary of these actions was sent to the Council in early April. The Council will also consider the issue of permits under the framework FMP.

The FMP and supporting documents were readopted by the Council in September 1983 and forwarded on October 25 to commence fast-track Secretarial review. The start of the review clock has been delayed because of Central Office requests for additional material in the review package.

4. Tanner Crab FMP

The Council and Board will review Board actions taken in March.

Amendment 9 which will update ABC/OYs with numerical ranges, framework seasons, revise the in-season adjustment section, and add a new section on pre-season adjustments, was approved by the Council in July 1983. The amendment package was forwarded on December 21. NMFS Central Office notified the Region on January 19, 1984 that their initial review indicated the amendment package was not structurally complete. A revised RIR was sent to Washington on May 9 to enable starting Secretarial review.

5. Gulf of Alaska Groundfish FMP

The Council needs to extend two emergency rules:

- (1) raising pollock OY to 400,000 mt, and
- (2) closing the sablefish fishery in intrusions in Southeast Alaska.

These two rules were originally passed by the Council in December 1983 and February 1984, respectively.

The Council will also hear informational reports on draft regulations for observers on U.S. trawlers in sensitive crab areas, prohibited species problems and solutions, and groundfish monitoring programs.

Amendment 13, which combines the Western and Central areas for pollock management and sets the OY at 400,000 mt, was reapproved by the Council in February after severing the foreign bottom trawl restriction. The amendment began Secretarial review on March 26, 1984. It is scheduled for implementation on August 16, 1984.

Amendment 12, which would ban pots in the Southeast sablefish fishery, is being prepared for submission to Secretarial review.

6. Bering Sea/Aleutian Islands Groundfish FMP

No formal action is required at this meeting. There will be an industry workgroup report on prohibited species problems and solutions in the Southeast Bering Sea.

Amendment 9 establishing field order authority for conservation closures, was approved in July for public review. Final Council action may come this fall after more background information is developed.

MINUTES

Crisis Committee Telephone Conference Call
May 4, 1984

Participants: Don Rosenberg, Robert Alverson, Gary Stauffer, Jim Branson (for Jim Campbell), Jeff Povolny, Steve Davis, and Clarence Pautzke.

Subject: Gulf of Alaska Groundfish action items for the May Council meeting.

ISSUE 1 - FCZ "intrusions" into the Southeast Alaska Archipelago and their effect on State of Alaska sablefish management in the area.

On January 1, 1984, the FCZ intrusions into the Southeast Alaska archipelago opened to sablefish fishing, along with all other waters of the FCZ off Alaska. Historically, these areas had not opened until March 15 (southern areas) and September 1 (northern areas), the resource in the areas was included in the state's guideline harvest levels, not in the FCZ OY.

At the February 1984 meeting the Council unanimously voted to close the four intrusions by emergency rule until the traditional opening dates. This closure solved the problem for 1984 for the southern area (Iphegenia Bay - Sumner Strait), which reopened on March 15. However, the emergency rule for the northern areas (lower Chatham Strait - Frederick Sound, Sitka Sound, Cross Sound), will expire on June 4, 1984.

The Committee discussed three ways to address this situation: (1) extend the emergency rule for the northern areas which would require only a Council reaffirmation of the February action; (2) amend the FMP as soon as possible; the earliest the Council could take a final vote on an amendment would be at the December meeting; (3) amend the FMP as part of the groundfish amendment cycle which starts in December.

It was the opinion of the Committee that an amendment to address the problem was necessary, but that it should be put into the groundfish amendment cycle. This means that the amendment would not be in effect until October 1985 and the Council would have to vote for another emergency rule at the September Council meeting to close the intrusions until their historic opening dates in 1985. The Committee recommended that the Council extend the current emergency rule closure to September 1 for the northern areas at the May meeting. Therefore, the extension of the emergency rule closure will be an item for action on the May agenda.

ISSUE 2 - Sablefish, percent retention restriction in joint venture fisheries.

At the December 1983 meeting the Council was asked to raise the sablefish retention restriction on joint venture permits from 1.5% to 5%. The Council referred the problem to the plan team, which is analyzing the effect of higher joint venture sablefish catches and the overall effect of increased trawl catches of sablefish on the stock and on the set line fishery.

The Committee noted that it is a relatively simple administrative action to change the retention restriction on the joint venture permits, that it can be accomplished by the National Marine Fisheries Service without any action on the part of the Council. The Committee noted that the Council is currently developing long and short term management goals. These goals as they pertain to sablefish have not yet been articulated. Because this is a question of allocation between domestic fishermen, the Committee felt the Council should establish its goals before dealing with the specific issue of the joint venture retention rate. The Committee noted that the plan team was actively studying the issue and that technical information will be available at the start of the regular groundfish amendment cycle. The Committee recommended that this issue not be an action item on the May agenda.

The Committee noted that fishermen who want the permit restriction changed this year could petition the Regional Director, who could ask the Council for guidance, if needed.

ISSUE 3 - Domestic trawl fishery halibut by-catch limits in the Central and Western Gulf of Alaska.

At the December 1983 meeting the Council voted for an emergency rule to raise the halibut by-catch limits from 29 t to 270 t in the western area, from 52 t to 768 t in the Central area, and to exempt domestic fishermen from the by-catch limits when they are fishing with off bottom (pelagic) gear. The limits apply during the period December 1 to May 31; the emergency rule will expire on May 31 this year. Without further action the old limits will go into effect on December 1.

The Committee discussed the possibility of a comprehensive prohibited species amendment which would include this issue, but concluded that while this would be desirable, the prohibited species working group may not have such an amendment prepared in time for the annual groundfish cycle. The Committee recommended that the plan team prepare an amendment specifically for this issue for the start of the cycle in December, and that the Council consider another emergency rule at the September meeting to address the problem for the period December 1, 1984 to May 31, 1985.

ISSUE 4 - Pollock OY in the Gulf of Alaska.

At the December 1983 and February 1984 meetings the Council voted to combine the Western and Central areas for pollock management and to set the OY for the area at 400,000 mt. The Council also voted for an emergency rule to implement their decision in time for the 1984 Shelikof fishery. The amendment will be effective on August 16, the emergency rule will expire on June 21. Therefore, there is approximately a two-month period when the previous OY of 143,000 t for the Central area would be in effect. Because the catch in the Shelikof fishery was about 180,000 t, this situation could force the shut down of foreign pollock fishing in the Central area for two months.

The Committee agreed that the Council should consider extending the emergency rule to the implementation date of Amendment 13. This action should be viewed

as being consistent with the intent of Amendment 13 and the emergency rule. Therefore, extending the emergency rule will be an item for action on the May agenda.

RESULTS

Two items were recommended for action on the May agenda by the Crisis Committee:

1. Extend the emergency rule closure until September 1 for the FCZ intrusions in the Southeast archipelago, specifically lower Chatham Strait - Frederick Sound, Sitka Sound, and Cross Sound.
2. Extend the emergency rule for pollock OY in the Western and Central Gulf of Alaska to the implementation date of Amendment 13.

BOARD OF FISH SCHEDULE

September 20 - 24	Sitka
September 24 - 30	Anchorage (Sheraton)
November 1 - 14	Fairbanks
November 16 - 21	Anchorage
November 27 - December 15	Anchorage
January 3 - 18	Sitka
March 18 - April 6	Anchorage (Capt. Cook)