# ALASKA DEPARTMENT OF FISH AND GAME

## REPORT TO THE NPFMC

## AT THE APRIL 1992 MEETING

Since the last meeting of the NPFMC, activities in the fisheries under joint management by the Alaska Board of Fisheries and the Council include Bering Sea and Aleutian Island crab and Troll Salmon.

**BSAI CRAB:**

ADAK RED KING CRAB - Closed on February 15, 1992 with a catch of 0.9 million pounds taken by 10 vessels. This catch is only slightly higher than the 1990/91 season.

ADAK BROWN KING CRAB - The season is still in progress, catch as of April 12 stands at 2.3 million pounds. Present effort is four to six vessels, but more are expected after the Tanner crab closure in the Bering Sea.

BERING SEA C. BAIRDI - Closed on March 31 with a preliminary catch of 29 million pounds. No, or little, directed effort occurred after the January C. opilio opening.

BERING SEA C. OPILIO - As of April 12, the catch was 296.7 million pounds. The closure was announced for April 22, with an expected harvest of 333 million pounds. Catches were generally quite high in this fishery during the 1992 season; though rates did drop after vessels started encountering ice in late February which has continued through last week. Approximately 250 vessels are participating in the fishery.

**TROLL SALMON**

This past season's winter troll salmon catch was the largest on record. Preliminary catch estimates indicate a harvest near 66,000 chinooks. Information on the hatchery component for the second half of the winter catch will not be complete until next week. But during the October through December period, Alaska hatchery fish made up 16.8 % of the harvest. During this same time period, Canadian hatchery fish were also quite prevalent; accounting for 21.5 % of the harvest - slightly more than half of which came from the Robinson Creek Hatchery.

AGENDA B-2
SUPPLEMENTAL

Alaska Longline Fishermen's Assoc.
P.O. Box 1229 Sitka, AK 99835 (907) 747-3400

April 15, 1992

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Chairmen Rick Lauber
North Pacific Fishery Management Council
P.O. Box 103136
Anchorage, AK 99510

Dear Rick,

Dan Falvey (ALFA) and Tory O'Connell (ADF&G) recently detected a calculation error in ADF&G's East Yakutat Demersal Shelf Rockfish (DSR) biomass estimate. This error resulted in the East Yakutat DSR TAC being set 75 MT below the appropriate level. Since the 1992 TAC for the East Yakutat DSR fishery is only 104 MT, the 75 MT of erroneously withheld quota is significant. At current prices, this 75 MT tons represents approximately $100,000 of forgone revenue to the rockfish fishermen, and $300,000 of forgone revenue to the fishing industry in general. As you know, this fishery is locally important and a significant source of income for the Southeast small boat longline fleet. This lost revenue will have an impact on a number of rockfish vessel owners and their crews.

To date, rockfish fishermen working in the East Yakutat area have primarily targeted the Fairweather Grounds, an extensive seamount in the East Yakutat area that supports relatively high concentrations of DSR. Earlier this month, ADF&G closed the Fairweather Grounds to directed DSR fishing to prevent an excessive amount of the East Yakutat DSR quota from being taken in the Fairweather subarea. ALFA recognizes the need to manage rockfish conservatively, and does not in any way wish to contest ADF&G "hot spot" authority; in other words, ALFA is not requesting that the Fairweather Grounds be re-opened. Clearly the Fairweather Grounds must be protected from excessive fishing pressure. However, given that DSR TACs are derived from density estimates and identification of available rockfish habitat, correcting the 75 MT error and allowing the rest of the East Yakutat region to remain open until the increased TAC is reached will provide rockfish fishermen with an opportunity to

prospect and identify additional rockfish habitat in the East Yakutat area. Since rockfish fishermen provide ADF&G with trip logbooks, the identification of additional rockfish habitat in the East Yakutat region will result in more accurate TACs being set in future years. For these reasons, ALFA requests that the 1992 DSR TAC for the East Yakutat region be corrected and increased by 75 MT.

I have enclosed a copy of a letter written by Tory O'Connell describing the calculation error. ALFA recognizes that the error was a simple mistake; Tory has always worked closely with the rockfish fishermen and is highly respected by our membership and the rockfish fleet in general. Mistakes are unavoidable. However, given that this mistake has been detected and that the error is significantly impacting a number of fishermen and processors in the small Southeast communities, ALFA requests that the Council address this issue at the June or August meeting and adjust the East Yakutat DSR TAC to include the 75 MT erroneously withheld.

Thank you for your time and attention.

Sincerely,

Linda Behnken

Linda Behnken
(exec. director, ALFA)

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To: Rick Lauber

# STATE OF ALASKA

**ALASKA DEPARTMENT OF FISH AND GAME**

WALTER J. HICKEL, GOVERNOR

304 LAKE STREET, ROOM 103
SITKA, ALASKA 99835-7563

April 10, 1992

Linda Behnken
Executive Director
Alaska Longline Fishermen's Association
Box 1229
Sitka, Alaska 99835

Dear Linda:

This letter is in response to your request for an accounting of the calculation error I made in the 1992 Status of Stock document for the Demersal Shelf Rockfish (DSR) TAC in the East Yakutat District.

As background, several weeks ago Dan Falvey (ALFA) and I were estimating the area inside the 100 fathom edge to use in a comparative analysis of the rockfish management approach used by Canada's DFO (which we presented at the March ALFA meeting). In doing so we discovered that in my earlier analysis of DSR biomass estimates, I had miscalculated the area estimate by transposing a number on the spreadsheet. Recalculation would result in a point estimate of ABC that is 75 mt higher than the 105 mt adopted by the Council.

The 1992 SAFE is the first time we have used the results of our submersible line transect work to estimate biomass. Given the time crunch we were under for the analysis, we did not use the 95% confidence intervals to bracket our TAC recommendations, something we will rectify next year. For your information I am providing the calculations for biomass per square kilometer and the resultant TAC using our current best estimate of yelloweye density - as you will note the 1992 TAC is within the confidence limit.

| Density/KM² | Biomass/EYAK | ABC F=M | Lower C.I. | Upper C.I. |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| 2217 | 9005 mt | 180 mt | 96 mt | 264 mt |

As we discussed at last night's ALFA meeting, the Fairweather Ground is presently closed to directed fishing for DSR but the remainder of the East Yakutat area remains open. After the June halibut opening we will assess what portion of the TAC is needed for the second halibut opening and decide at that point whether or not to reopen the Fairweather Ground. I would again like to point out that even with an increase in TAC for the East Yakutat area the Department would be hesitant to allow the removal of more than 105 metric tons of DSR from the Fairweather Ground. The five year historic harvest average for East Yakutat is 89 mt; prior to 1991 the highest annual harvest was 82 tons (1987). In 1991 the harvest in East Yakutat, taken primarily off Fairweather, was 209 mt. Given the vulnerability of this resource to over-

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harvest, the limited data available for stock assessment, and the innovative (and largely untested) approach taken to estimate biomass, a conservative management approach is warranted.

The next opportunity for me to make recommendations for changes in the TAC will be in the Status of Stock draft due to the Plan Team in August. The estimation of TAC's is based on best available information and is therefore open to annual increases and decreases. This approach to biomass estimatation is based on an estimation of available habitat; our knowledge of rocky area within the East Yakutat management area is, in part, based on logbook information and as such I anticipate the areal estimate to change with the increase in logbook information. It is also important to remember that the use of line transect data to estimate biomass is new, and, as such will be subject to modification as our analysis progresses.

Please feel free to call either myself or Barry Bracken if you would like additional information.

Sincerely,

Victoria M. O'Connell

cc B. Bracken
D. Carlile
E. Krieger