


MEMORANDUM

TO: Council, SSC and AP Members

FROM: Clarence G. Pautzke 
Executive Director

DATE: November 27, 1991

SUBJECT: International Fisheries

ACTION REQUIRED

- (a) Report on international fisheries activities.
- (b) Consider restrictions on U. S. operations related to fisheries in the Donut.
- (c) Review foreign permit applications and consider recommending conditions and restrictions.

BACKGROUND

International Fisheries Activities

Several international fisheries meetings have been held since the September Council meeting. The International North Pacific Fisheries Commission met in Tokyo in early November and the Third Conference on the Conservation and Management of the Living Marine Resources of the Central Bering Sea was held in Silver Springs, Maryland on November 19-21. Included in item C-6(a) are a joint press release from the pollock conference, and news articles on Donut Hole pollock stocks and Japan's announcement that it will curtail its driftnet fisheries. Various Council members were at these meetings and may wish to elaborate.

Restrictions on U.S. Operations Related to Fisheries in the Donut

In September the Council reviewed a letter from Senator Stevens suggesting that the Council take action to prohibit participation in U.S. fisheries of a company or vessel that was affiliated with foreign operations in the Donut Hole as a way of discouraging foreign fisheries outside 200 miles in the central Bering Sea. The Council then requested NMFS to develop regulations and permit conditions that would prohibit any vessel or processing facility from participation in any fishery under the Council's jurisdiction if any such vessel or processing facility is owned in whole or in part by any corporation, partnership or person that also directly or indirectly owns, leases, or charters in whole or in part a vessel that engages in harvesting, processing, or purchasing of fish taken from the international waters of the Bering Sea. The term "participating in any fishery" includes delivery of fish by a harvesting or tendering vessel to a floating or shorebased processing facility and receipt of fish by a floating or shorebased processing facility.

NMFS and NOAA GC are prepared to discuss this issue further with the Council and then the Council needs to determine which steps to take next.

Foreign Permit Applications

Normally at this meeting we review foreign permit applications and recommend conditions and restrictions to the Secretary for the next year. Poland and China have submitted applications for "other activities" in the Bering Sea and Aleutians. The Soviets evidently have applied for one bunkering permit.

Though I have not seen the applications yet, the Poles and Chinese usually request offloading privileges for pollock caught in the Donut Hole. For 1989-91, the Council recommended that foreign vessels only be permitted to support U.S. operations, and not tranship fish caught in the Donut. The Council urged the Secretary to require vessels to carry observers when operating in the Donut if permits were issued. The Council may want to make the same recommendations for 1992. I understand that the Secretary may be more amenable to these restrictions after considering the status of the pollock resource.

JOINT PRESS RELEASE

Delegations from the People's Republic of China, Japan, the Republic of Korea, Poland, the Soviet Union and the United States met at the "Third Conference on the Conservation and Management of the Living Marine Resources of the Central Bering Sea," held November 18-20, 1991, in Washington, D.C., to discuss issues pertaining to the living marine resources of the high seas area of the central Bering Sea (the area), especially the pollock resource. Two previous conferences were held earlier in the year, in Washington, D.C. (February 19-21) and in Tokyo (July 31-August 2).

The delegations reviewed the status of the pollock resource in the area and reported their third quarter catches for 1991 as well as annual catch data since 1985. The delegations noted substantial catch declines from the peak of 1.4 million metric tons in 1989. As of the end of the 3rd quarter of 1991, the reported catch was approximately 260,000 metric tons.

All delegations agreed that such decline necessitated strong and urgent measures to conserve the pollock resource.

The delegations established a working group of scientists to consider available information regarding the status of the pollock stock in the area. This working group produced a report which is attached to this press statement.

The United States indicated that it will take strict fishery conservation measures in its zone in 1992 because of the depressed status of the pollock stock. Such action would likely include a prohibition of a directed fishery for this stock in the Bogoslof Island area in the United States Exclusive Economic Zone. In light of this action, the U.S. delegation noted that it expected all countries fishing in the central Bering Sea to take commensurate actions and reiterated its strong support of a proposal made at the Second Conference by the delegation from the Soviet Union that all countries agree to a moratorium on pollock fishing in the central Bering Sea in 1992. The Soviet delegation noted that information reviewed at the Third Conference makes the need urgent for the moratorium in 1992. It also informed all the delegations that the continuation of the pollock fishery in the central Bering Sea would lead to a further disastrous decline of the resource. The Soviet delegation noted that the Soviet Union is substantially reducing its fishing effort in its Economic Zone for the purpose of conserving the pollock resource.

The delegations from China, Japan, Korea and Poland provided information on the conservation efforts that they have taken to date, and expressed their continued willingness to cooperate in conserving and managing the pollock resource and to introduce necessary interim measures for that purpose. However, they expressed continued opposition to the proposed moratorium.

In that a variety of views were discussed relating to the appropriate catch level in the central Bering Sea in 1992, including the views of the U.S. and Soviet delegations that there should be a moratorium, all agreed that in any event catch levels and fishing effort should be substantially reduced in 1992.

In addition, the delegations from China, Japan, Korea, and Poland each described voluntary measures they intended to take on an interim basis with respect to fishing activities in the area. These included, among other things, the deployment and exchange of scientific observers, the utilization of automatic vessel tracking devices (satellite transmitters) on all fishing vessels operating in the area in 1992 with provision to be made through bilateral arrangements for access to satellite information on a real-time basis for other countries, collection and submission of standardized data, and other enforcement and management activities.

The delegations from China, Japan, Korea and Poland agreed to notify all delegations by April 1, 1992, if not earlier, of the voluntary measures taken to reduce catch and fishing effort in the area.

Every delegation agreed to provide all concerned with 1992 quarterly catch and fishing effort data for the area within one month of the end of each quarter, and also agreed to develop necessary measures to immediately reduce catch and fishing effort if these increase in any given quarter of 1992.

All delegations agreed that in order to evaluate fully the state of the Aleutian Basin stock, statistical data and scientific information for the entire range of the stock is necessary.

The delegations considered the need for a long-term conservation and management regime for the area. In addition to the proposal submitted by the United States in Tokyo at the Second Conference, the Polish and Japanese delegations presented paper or views regarding such a regime. The delegations discussed major principles to be included in the long-term regime. The delegations agreed to convene a drafting group of experts to develop a composite negotiating text of an international convention for the conservation and management of the living marine resources of the central Bering Sea that would be made available for further consideration at a future time. The United States offered to host that drafting group meeting in Washington, D.C., during the week of January 27, 1992.

The delegations also noted that, as earlier agreed, a "Bering Sea Pollock Workshop" is to be hosted by the United States at the Alaska Fisheries Science Center (AFSC) in Seattle, Washington, in the last week of February 1992. In this regard, the delegations agreed to provide data necessary to facilitate that meeting by no later than January 1, 1992, and to exchange 4th quarter catch data

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for 1991 by February 1, 1992. The delegations also agreed to participate in another workshop at the AFSC at that time to develop an agreed standardized scientific observer training and data collection program.

Due to the urgent nature of the problem, the delegations agreed that they would meet again at a Fourth Conference, to be hosted by the United States tentatively during the week of April 13, 1992, to continue their discussions on both long-term and interim measures for the area.

A workgroup of scientists was established to discuss the questions raised by the Soviet delegation regarding the present and future status of the pollock in the Aleutian Basin. The workgroup consisted of the following individuals:

China: Dr. Qi Sheng Tang, Prof. Ying Qi Zhou

Japan: Dr. Takashi Sasaki

Korea: Dr. Yeong Gong

Poland: Dr. Jerzy Kleniewski

U.S.S.R.: Dr. O. Bulatov, Mr. V. Solodovnik

United States: Dr. William Aron, Dr. Donald Bevan, Dr. Douglas Eggers.

The workgroup noted the following:

1. Competent scientific opinions require the proper data and time for analysis. It is clear that additional data are required to fully address the questions posed by the Soviet delegation. We anticipate that these data will be available for consideration during the February workshop. At that time a more careful analysis will be possible.
2. In the absence of critical analysis the workgroup believed that the available information indicate that the pollock population in the Central Bering Sea is most likely to decline in the coming year.
3. The available data and our understanding of the environment do not permit us to predict in a definitive way, exactly when the population in the Aleutian Basin may increase. We cannot predict when a dominant yearclass may be produced. It is clear that there will be a significant lagtime of perhaps 4-7 years between the development of a strong yearclass and its availability in the Central Bering Sea. It was noted that a strong yearclass, which has not been detected by the recent stock assessment surveys, may have already occurred in the Bering Sea and may recruit to the Central Bering Sea fishery in the future.
4. There was a strong consensus that the uncertainties regarding the role of environment, the role of the fishery, and the biology of pollock make it urgent that all nations involved in the Bering Sea work together in scientific activities to assure that these gaps in understanding be closed. The workgroup noted that the Aleutian Basin encompasses the U. S. EEZ, the Soviet E.E.Z. and the Central Bering Sea and that all information from these areas be considered in assessing the status of the Aleutian Basin pollock.

Foreign fleets empty 'Doughnut Hole,' study says

The Associated Press

SEATTLE — A California researcher has developed solid evidence that foreign fishing fleets working the so-called "Doughnut Hole" in the Bering Sea are to blame for sharp reductions in Alaska's pollock stocks.

Stocks of a U.S.-raised fish popular in salads and fast-food lines are shrinking, and the evidence is the first to link the decline to a fleet of foreign vessels that skims an area in the North Pacific.

American fishermen have long worried that foreign fleets are depleting the harvest of U.S.-raised pollock by working the Doughnut Hole, an area of about 50,000 square miles in the Bering Sea.

Pollock forms the core of the Alaska bottom-fish industry and is the target

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POLLOCK: Study traces depleted 'Doughnut Hole' to foreign fleets

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of many of Seattle's 60 factory trawlers. The versatile fish can be found in products ranging from imitation crab meat to fish sticks and fast-food entrees.

U.S. regulators have been concerned recently about declining pollock stocks in Alaskan waters. The U.S. and Soviet governments brought the nations that fish in the Doughnut Hole together for negotiations twice this year, and a third round of talks is scheduled for next week in Washington.

Meanwhile, University of Washington researcher Tony Mulligan has produced the first firm evidence that U.S. pollock are being taken in the unregulated international waters.

An assistant professor of fisheries at Humboldt State University in California, Mulligan studied the DNA, or "genetic fingerprints" of Doughnut Hole pollock. By examining the DNA in fish ear bones, Mulligan was able to determine the chemical makeup of the water in which the fish originated.

Few juvenile pollock are found in the Doughnut Hole, and scientists have believed they migrated from elsewhere.

Mulligan concluded the fish came from around Bogoslof Island, in Alaska's Aleutian chain about 300 miles southeast of the Doughnut Hole. The findings will be published in a Canadian fisheries journal in February.

"It's the most compelling

evidence yet," said Bob Morgan, president of the American Factory Trawlers Association in Seattle and a member of an industry panel that has been advising U.S. officials on Doughnut Hole international negotiations.

"That fish is definitely of American origin," he said.

Pollock stocks around Bogoslof Island have declined by 75 percent in the past two years. U.S. regulators are considering a proposal to ban pollock harvest around the island next year and reduce the total harvest in the Bering Sea to between 900,000 and 1.3 million metric tons.

American fishermen reached the cap of 1.3 million metric tons in September this year.

The catch of foreign fleets

in the Doughnut Hole is also declining. Catches have fallen from about a million metric tons in recent years to less than 200,000 tons in the first half of this year.

As many as 200 boats from Japan, China, Poland and South Korea work the area. A few American boats fished in the Doughnut Hole in the fall of 1990.

Japan may sign ban on nets

Senators say it agrees to halt driftnet practice

By SCOTT SONNER
The Associated Press

WASHINGTON — Japan, faced with growing U.S. pressure to halt driftnet fishing, is on the verge of agreeing to ban the environmentally destructive practice, three senators said early today.

Republican Sens. Ted Stevens of Alaska, Bob Packwood of Oregon and Slade Gorton of Washington state said the U.S. State Department was to make a formal announcement as early as today on the agreement that would outlaw driftnet fishing by the end of next year.

"The U.S. has achieved its goal of hammering out an ironclad driftnet agreement," Stevens said in anticipation of the deal.

Acceptance of an unconditional ban would mark a sudden change in policy for Japan, the world's largest user of driftnets.

Packwood and Gorton said Japan's change of heart is due largely to legislation they helped push through the Senate this summer mandating trade sanctions against countries that continue use of driftnets.

Japan's fleet of about 450 driftnet vessels fish primarily for squid in the North Pacific Ocean. But critics say the mesh nets stretching as long as 30 miles act as a vacuum, indiscriminately killing all marine life in their path.

Greenpeace and other environmental groups have been working to outlaw the nets for several years. A United Nations resolution banning large-scale driftnets is set to go into effect next summer, but that prohibition includes loopholes that could allow continued use under some circumstances.

Aides to the Northwest senators said the pending agreement would take the form of

DRIFTNET: Practice to be banned

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cosponsorship of a new U.N. resolution phasing out use of driftnets, with no exceptions, between Jan. 1 and Dec. 31, 1992.

Secretary of State James Baker and Japanese officials have agreed on the text of the resolution and were waiting only on final ap-

proval of a plan to compensate driftnet fishermen for the loss of the use of their vessels, said the aides speaking on condition of anonymity.

Under the pending agreement, nations would have to cut their large-scale, driftnet fishing efforts in half by next June 30. A full moratorium would go into effect on Dec. 31, 1992, Stevens said.

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Driftnets' foes mark a victory

The Associated Press

WASHINGTON — Japan's agreement to stop fishing with driftnets paves the way for an international ban on the high-seas "curtains of death," environmentalists said Tuesday.

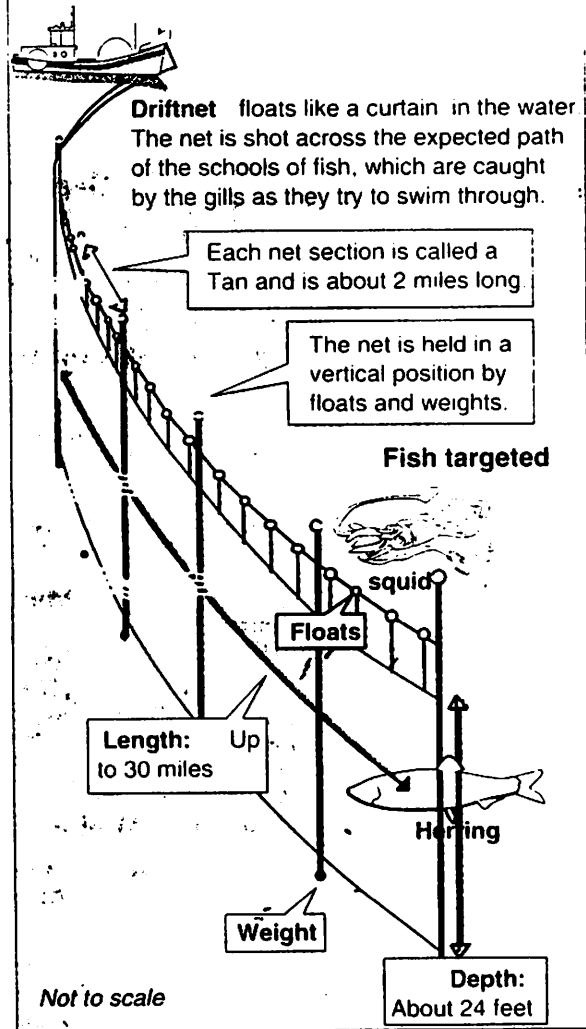
The world's biggest driftnetting country reluctantly agreed Monday night to support a United Nations resolution banning the nets without exception at the end of next year.

That could mean an end worldwide is nearing for the practice — fought by environmentalists for a decade — that critics say can indiscriminately sweep thousands of marine animals to their deaths in swaths as wide as 30 miles.

"This is a clear victory for living marine resources," White House press secretary Marlin Fitzwater said Tuesday. "By making this decision, Japan has demonstrated its commitment to the protection of the ocean envi-

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Commercial fishing's 'curtain of death'



The Associated Press

DRIFTNETS: Now that Japan has agreed to stop, other users likely to follow

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ronment."

William Fox Jr., assistant administrator of the Commerce Department's National Marine Fisheries Service, said the U.S. government has been concerned about driftnets' waste and destruction since the late 1970s.

"The impacts of high seas driftnet fishing on other fish species, marine mammals, sea birds and sea turtles have been found to be ecologically unacceptable," he said.

Members of Congress said a combination of international pressure and U.S. threats of trade sanctions caused Japan to reverse its position. Fox said the move could help persuade other

driftnetting nations to follow suit.

"The world has grown sick and tired of this fishery and I think Japan knows when to give up," said Sen. Bob Packwood, R-Ore., who sponsored a bill the Senate approved this summer mandating sanctions against drift-net violators.

Greenpeace spokeswoman Blair Palese said, "We still

have to clear the hurdle in the U.N., but in terms of a success story for driftnets, we've got the champagne on ice."

Japan's decision will carry a lot of weight with other U.N. members, Greenpeace said.

The Asian nation's fleet of about 450 driftnet vessels fish primarily for squid in the northern Pacific Ocean.

But critics say the nets trap and kill all marine life in their path.

In 1990, just 10 percent of Japan's fleet killed 1,758 whales and dolphins, 253,288 tuna, 81,956 blue sharks, 30,464 sea birds and more than 3 million other non-target fish, the U.S. National Marine Fisheries Service has said.

After Japan, South Korea

and Taiwan are the world's next largest drift-netting nations with about 150 vessels each. Taiwan, under direct threat of U.S. trade sanctions, already has promised to stop the practice.

Japanese fishermen angrily criticized their government Tuesday for agreeing to ban the nets, blaming the decision on politics and overzealous environmentalists.

Approved
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Proposed Regulations Pertaining to the Donut Hole

50 CFR Parts 672 & 675

In Sections 672.2 and 675.2, a definition of Donut Hole is added as follows:

Sections 672.2 and 675.2. Definitions.

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Donut Hole means that part of international waters in the Bering Sea between the EEZ of the United States and the EEZ of the Soviet Union.

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50 CFR Part 672

In Section 672.4, paragraph (j) is added to read as follows:

(j) Condition. A vessel owner or operator who applies for a Federal fishing permit under this section must agree on the permit application that the vessel will not be used to fish for groundfish in the Donut Hole during the fishing year.

In section 672.7, paragraph (g) is added to read as follows:

Section 672.7. General prohibitions.

* * * * *

(g) Fish for groundfish in the Donut Hole with a vessel that has been issued a Federal fishing permit under Section 672.4 of this part.

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50 CFR Part 675

In section 675.4, paragraph (j) is added to read as follows:

Section 675.4. Permits.

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(j) Condition. A vessel owner or operator who applies for a Federal fishing permit under this section must agree on the permit application that the vessel will not be used to fish for groundfish in the Donut Hole during the fishing year.

In section 675.7, paragraph (h) is added to read as follows:

Section 675.7. General prohibitions.

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(h) Fish for groundfish in the Donut Hole with a vessel that has been issued a Federal fishing permit under Section 675.4 of this part.

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