

MEMORANDUM

TO: Council, SSC and AP Members

FROM: Clarence G. Pautzke  
Executive Director



DATE: January 30, 1998

SUBJECT: International Fisheries

ESTIMATED TIME 1 HOUR
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**ACTION REQUIRED**

- (a) Update on transboundary pollock issues.
- (b) Update on Pacific pelagics.

**BACKGROUND**

Transboundary Pollock

The Bering Sea Fisheries Advisory Body will meet this week with Tucker Scully of the U.S. Department of State to discuss upcoming activities on negotiations with the Russians on transboundary pollock stocks and the maritime boundary dispute. Mr. Scully will then present a report to the Council on those issues and others on the international front.

Pacific Pelagics

In early December we received a letter from the Pacific Fishery Management Council proposing an inter-council policy committee that would have representatives from the Pacific, North Pacific, and Western Pacific councils. At our December meeting, we approved participating in the committee. I have not heard anything from the Western Pacific Council, but I understand that NMFS will be making a decision soon on proceeding with the development of an FMP during 1998, and the three councils will have varying roles in development and administration of the plan. I thought we would have a letter from NMFS with the details of the schedule by now, but will just have to keep you posted when it finally arrives.

Fishing in the Russian EEZ

(Revised version for February 1998 Council meeting)

In September, 1997, a report was prepared at the request of the Council, summarizing the entry and exit patterns of American fishing vessels moving between the U.S. EEZ off Alaska and the Russian zone. At that time, the question posed to the NMFS Enforcement Office, Juneau, which monitors these passages, was, "... how many U.S. vessels fished in the BSAI or GOA pollock fisheries *and* operated in the Russian zone... *in the same year?*" In other words, how many vessels fished *both* in the Russian zone and in the BSAI or GOA pollock fishery in 1992; how many in *both* in 1993; etc.

The results suggested that almost no vessels had exhibited this pattern of operation over the period 1992 through 1996. When these data were presented to the Council, however, they expressed the opinion that the question had been too narrowly phrased. They asked that the data be re-examined to determine, "... how many American vessels had fished in a BSAI or GOA pollock fishery, *any time during this period*, and *also* "checked-in" to, or "checked-out" of, the Russian zone?" That is, for example, had a U.S. fishing vessel which fished in a pollock target fishery in the BSAI in, say, 1994, *ever* notified NMFS of its intention to exit the U.S. zone to participate in fishing activities in the Russian zone, either before or after its pollock activity in 1994?

By re-phrasing the question in this way, it should be possible to identify vessels moving between the two zones across multiple-years, rather than within a single year, as posed in the original question. The results, however, may appear somewhat illogical, since, in any given year, the total number of entries and exits may exceed the number of unique vessels reporting in to NMFS. This can be the case, because some vessels may exit and enter the U.S. zone within a single year (perhaps more than once); some re-enter the U.S. zone having exited before the check-in/check-out requirement was in place; some check-out but do not return to the U.S. zone for several years; and some check-out but do not check-in over the period of analysis.<sup>1</sup>

Some limited opportunity apparently existed, over the period of interest, for U.S. groundfish operations to participate in fisheries in the Russian western Bering Sea and North Pacific EEZ. Federal regulations require that domestic fishing vessels 'check-in' and 'check-out' when moving between fisheries in the U.S. and Russian zones. The NMFS Enforcement Office, Juneau, maintains records of such activity. They report that these data were not collected for 1991 (the first year of this profile), but were compiled beginning in 1992.

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<sup>1</sup> There is, of course, the possibility that one or more vessels may have failed to report their entry or exit to NMFS, as required, in any given year. If, for example, a boat reported it was "checking-out", but failed to report when it returned (or vis versa) the count would be off.

The original draft of this discussion contained information on the total number of vessels which either checked in or out, and provided information regarding the subset of vessels which have also been involved in the BSAI or GOA pollock fisheries over the same time period. The relevant information was that, in 1992 there were 22 vessels which checked in/out, and which also had some involvement in the pollock fishery between 1991 and 1996. In 1993 only one such vessel was identified; in 1994 only one vessel; in 1995 there were three vessels; and, in 1996 there were five. All the vessels involved were *C/Ps*, within the definition of this analysis, having operated as such in the U.S. EEZ. Despite this fact, some reportedly operated as motherships or catcher boats while fishing in the Russian zone.

No operations defined within the I/O3 analysis as *'true' motherships* exhibited these U.S. to Russian zone switching patterns, over the period. And no operations, identified as *catcher boats* within the I/O3 analytical definitions, fished in both the Russian EEZ and in the BSAI *pollock target* fishery, over this period, according to NMFS Enforcement records.

Ideally, we would provide information to the Council which identifies the entry/exit patterns of the unique vessels over time, as well as perhaps their EEZ pollock activity; however, we have been informed that this is confidential data and cannot be disclosed.