


MEMORANDUM

TO: Council, SSC and AP Members

FROM: Clarence G. Pautzke
Executive Director 

DATE: January 29, 1998

SUBJECT: Groundfish Amendments: Initial Review

ESTIMATED TIME 4 HOURS (all D-1 items)
--

ACTION REQUIRED

(d) Initial review of Plan Amendments 48/48 to revise the annual specification process in the BSAI and GOA.

~~(e)~~ Initial review of a plan amendment to separate the Eastern Gulf regulatory area. *Not necessary to address at this time.*

BACKGROUND

(d) Revise the annual specification process

In December 1996, the Council approved development of a plan amendment proposed by NMFS. The objective of this amendment is to streamline the Council's current groundfish quota specification process. Allowable Biological Catches (ABCs) and Total Allowable Catches (TACs) would remain unchanged from year to year until revised in a final rule. The proposed change would eliminate several steps, thereby increasing overall efficiency and clarity, without sacrificing public access to information and the opportunity for public comment. First, publication of proposed and interim specifications in the *Federal Register* would be eliminated. Second, obsolete references to foreign and joint venture fishery management measures would be omitted from the FMPs. Neither foreign nor JV fishing vessels have operated in Alaska waters since 1991, and any discussion of foreign and JV allocations is unnecessary. As a result, the annual specifications would become more succinct and easier to understand. The analysis was mailed to you on January 28, 1998. The management alternatives are:

Alternative 1. Status quo.

Alternative 2. Publication of preliminary and interim specifications for Bering Sea/Aleutian Islands and Gulf of Alaska groundfish fisheries would be eliminated. Final specifications are effective unless modified, superseded, or rescinded. References to foreign and joint venture fisheries would be deleted from the FMP.

(e) Separate the Eastern Gulf regulatory area

The issue of separating the Eastern GOA into West Yakutat (Area 640) and East Yakutat/Southeast Outside (Area 650) regulatory areas in the FMP arose as a direct result of the trawl prohibition east of 140° W. longitude (Area 650) in Amendment 41 (License Limitation Program). In December, the Council adjusted the Eastern area sablefish ABCs and shifted the East Yakutat/Southeast Outside trawl apportionment to the West Yakutat area because of the pending trawl closure. This adjustment has caused some initial confusion with the public in calculating their IFQs, but seems to have diminished the need for a change in the Eastern area boundary as was contemplated in the development of the LLP. So, instead of proceeding with further development of this boundary change now, staff is recommending that the GOA Plan Team review this issue at its next meeting and report back to the Council.

Alaska Groundfish Data Bank

P.O. Box 2298 • Kodiak, Alaska 99615

TO: RICK LAUBER, CHAIRMAN
NORTH PACIFIC FISHERY MANAGEMENT COUNCIL

RE: D-1(d) STREAMLINE GROUND FISH TAC PROCESS

DATE: JANUARY 27, 1998

SENT BY FAX: 1 PP

RECEIVED

JAN 28 1998

N.P.F.M.C.

COMMENTS ON AGENDA ITEM D-1(d) STREAMLINE GROUND FISH TAC SPECIFICATIONS

The members of Alaska Groundfish Data Bank (AGDB) support moving ahead with streamlining the groundfish TAC specifications process by not requiring that preliminary assessments be done for the September North Pacific Fishery Management Council meeting. In most cases using 25% of the current year's TAC's as preliminary TAC's for the coming year will work well.

However, there are two issues we would like to see addressed should the NPFMC decide to proceed with this proposal.

1. If it appears that there may be a significant increase or decrease in a TAC, the NPFMC and industry be informed of the expected change at the September meeting. In September 1997 Grant Thompson informed industry that preliminary data indicated that there would be a substantial drop in the BSAI Pacific cod ABC. He did not yet have the data to define the exact extent of the drop. This is the kind of "heads up" industry would appreciate.
2. The trimester allocation for the first trimester of the Gulf of Alaska pollock is 25% and is often take before the final specifications are approved. This means if the pollock ABC decreases substantially from one year to the next the preliminary specification would be too large; conversely, if there was a substantial decrease, the fishery may be closed prematurely and then reopened later to the disadvantage of the fleet, processors and processing employees.

For Gulf pollock, and any other fishery in the same predicament, we ask that NMFS be given the latitude to manage for the ABC contained in the final specifications even if the final specifications have not yet been approved.

I regularly attend the Plan Team meetings and am well aware of the time and work involved in producing full assessments for the September meeting and of the fact that there is little new data available for those assessments. The Plan Teams' and assessment authors' time could certainly be better used.

I raised the two issues enumerated above at the Plan Team meeting last year and the team appeared to feel the requests were reasonable and doable.

Thank you for your consideration of our comments.


Chris Blackburn, Director
Alaska Groundfish Data Bank