


MEMORANDUM

TO: Council, SSC and AP Members

FROM: Clarence G. Pautzke
Executive Director 

DATE: April 8, 1997

SUBJECT: GOA Groundfish Management

ESTIMATED TIME 1 HOUR

ACTION REQUIRED

- (a) Review discussion paper for rockfish directed fishing standards.
- (b) Review discussion paper for rolling closures during NMFS sablefish longline survey.

BACKGROUND

(a) Rockfish Directed Fishing Standards

In September 1996, the Council took final action to approve revised directed fishing standards (bycatch rates) for two groundfish fisheries in the Gulf of Alaska. Allowing arrowtooth flounder as a basis species (5%) for P. cod and pollock and reducing the maximum retainable bycatch (MRBs) of sablefish from 15 to 7 percent against nine groundfish species became effective April 10, 1997. A third proposal originally considered in September, to prohibit the use of GOA northern rockfish as a basis for retaining shortraker/rougheye rockfish, was scheduled for reconsideration after the analysis was expanded to address all rockfish species using NMFS observer haul data. A discussion paper examining management alternatives for DFS rates for all GOA rockfish prepared by Dr. Jon Heifetz (NMFS Auk Bay Lab) and David Ackley (ADF&G) was sent to you last week.

In September, the Council also requested that future DFS adjustments be implemented through a framework procedure. NMFS responded with a groundfish proposal (#36, Agenda item D-1(a)) in August 1996 to implement GOA and BSAI FMP amendments to expand the existing NMFS in-season adjustment authority (§679.25) to provide clear authority to decrease MRBs as an in-season action. This action would allow for species or species groups to be better managed, control the harvest of bycatch species, and reduce the likelihood of prohibited species catch status for a given species, and reduce the associated regulatory discards. The Council may wish to consider whether the above, and future, DFS changes should be implemented through the proposed in-season process.

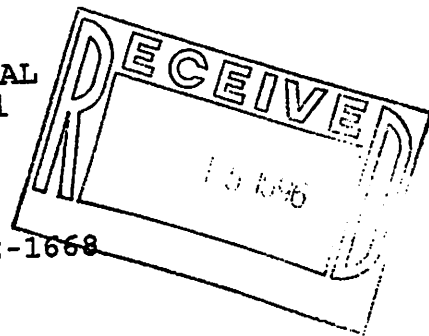
(b) Sablefish Rolling Closures

In December 1996, the Council initiated an analysis to consider gear closures during the NMFS sablefish longline surveys, upon recommendation by the IFQ Industry Implementation Team meeting. The Team has expressed its concern since the IFQ program was initiated that fishing effort during the sablefish longline survey under an extended IFQ season may significantly impact survey results. Efforts to minimize fishery interactions under a two year program of voluntary compliance to avoid survey stations has not been entirely successful. Since the effects of fishing during the survey cannot be scientifically quantified and recent stock assessments indicate a

continuing downward trend in stock abundance, the Team recommended that the Council initiate an analysis of rolling closures to longline and trawl vessels during the sablefish survey.

Trawl industry representatives met in Seattle on February 27, 1996 with Drs. Jeff Fujioka and Mike Sigler of the NMFS Auke Bay Lab to discuss possible management alternatives to minimize the impact of area closures on the trawl fleet. Their discussion paper was mailed to you last week.

GROUND FISH FISHERY MANAGEMENT PLAN PROPOSAL
North Pacific Fishery Management Council



Date: August 12, 1996
Name of Proposer: NMFS, Alaska Region
Address: P.O.Box 21668, Juneau, AK 99802-1668
Telephone: 907-586-7228
FMP: Groundfish Fishery of the BSAI;
 Groundfish of the Gulf of Alaska

Brief Statement of Proposal: Implement FMP amendments to expand the existing inseason adjustment authority (§ 679.25) to provide NMFS the authority to decrease maximum retainable bycatch (MRB) amounts as an inseason action. If NMFS determined that the MRB percentage published in regulations was excessive, and would lead to premature TAC attainment of a bycatch species, NMFS could take inseason action to reduce the retainable bycatch amount within any area for any gear type. NMFS also could specify basis species differently from the categories used for specifying maximum retainable bycatch amounts in regulation.

Objectives of Proposal: Greater flexibility to implement inseason reductions of maximum retainable bycatch amounts currently established for groundfish species or species groups at § 679.20(e) will provide NMFS a better management tool to control harvest rates of bycatch species and reduce the likelihood of PSC status and associated regulatory discards of these species.

Need and justification for Council Action: Maximum retainable bycatch percentages are management tools used by NMFS to slow harvest rates of a species closed to directed fishing. These percentages are established in regulations and were developed with the goal of limiting target operations for a bycatch species ("topping off") while minimizing the potential for mandatory discard of incidental catch. Some basis species are aggregated into groups, for example, all rockfish species. In some instances these MRB percentages may be excessive, allowing a fishing activity known as "topping off," where a vessel targets basis species for part of a trip, then changes fishing practices to target the bycatch species in order to bring the entire trip up to the maximum allowable amount. When a MRB percentage is excessive, and the TAC of a bycatch species is relatively low, the topping off behavior can lead to premature attainment of the bycatch species TAC, at which point further retention of the species is prohibited. Subsequent fisheries, which may catch the species as natural bycatch, must then discard the species, resulting in waste. Allowing NMFS flexibility to adjust MRB percentages can lead to more effective management of the target and bycatch species, and reduce discard waste.

Foreseeable Impacts of Proposal: Overall benefits should accrue because application of the requested authority would lead to

attainment of bycatch species TAC and reductions in discard. Fishers and processors that have benefited from "topping off" might see revenue reduced, but this would be offset by increased retention allowed by vessels catching the species as natural bycatch. TAC overages of bycatch species will be reduced, benefitting the resource and ultimately the industry, and the industry will benefit from the reduction in discards.

Are there alternative solutions? Inseason adjustment of MRB percentages to respond to unanticipated high catch rates of bycatch species is the only effective solution. Revision of MRB percentages through regulatory amendment is time consuming and non-responsive to unanticipated inseason operational problems.

Supportive Data & Other Information: Inseason catch data submitted by observers and groundfish processors can be used to assess the effectiveness of existing MRB percentages and whether or not an inseason adjustment is necessary to adequately provide for bycatch amounts. NMFS also has fishery catch and closure information which documents instances of premature TAC attainment for a species due to "topping off."

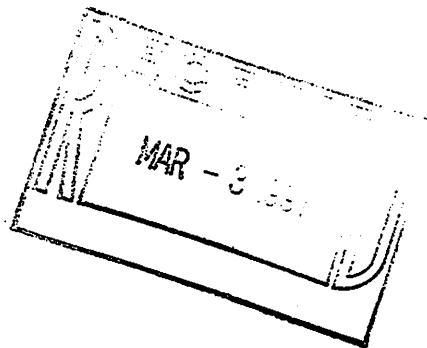
Signature: _____

cc: JDe ✓
Jan 1997

PENINSULA MARKETING ASSOCIATION

P.O. BOX 248
SAND POINT, ALASKA 99661
PH(907)383-3600 FAX(907)383-5618

February 24, 1997



Mr. Richard Lauber, Chairman
North Pacific Fishery Management Council
605 West 4th Avenue, Suite 306
Anchorage, AK 99501-2252

Dear Mr. Lauber:

I would like to take this opportunity to convey to you my disappointment in not being able to provide comments on the trip limits for the Western Gulf at the recent meeting in Anchorage. I'm enclosing an amended proposal for pollock and cod fishing for this area. A vessel list for 1997 was provided to your staff member at the last meeting, who is compiling a report on trip and vessel sizes for 1995 and 1996. I hope that it will be helpful.

We would like to amend our original proposal to include cod along with the pollock and to lower the trip limit size to 150,000 pounds that is delivered in the Western Gulf. Currently, according to our calculations, there are currently 52 vessels that are trawl fishing in this area. Of these vessels, 36 are considered to be local who live in either Sand Point or King Cove. Many of these vessels do not currently pollock fish but many have the capability and desire to do so. As I'm sure you know, to gear up for this fishery would require a substantial investment. Many are apprehensive to do so without imposition of trip limits.

As you can see from the vessel list, 45 of these vessels carry 155,000 pounds or less in their holds. Only seven carry more than that, two of which hold 500,000 pounds. If more of these larger vessels were to participate and deliver to this area, the economy could be severely hurt and management by NMFS would become even more difficult resulting in over fishing of the already diminishing quota. You had asked me at the December meeting that if there were trip limits, would the larger boats then fish the areas where the smaller boats fish. Fishermen have told me

**GROUND FISH FISHERY MANAGEMENT PLAN AMENDMENT PROPOSAL
NORTH PACIFIC FISHERY MANAGEMENT COUNCIL**

Name of Proposer: Peninsula Marketing Association
Address: P.O. Box 248
Sand Point, Alaska 99661

Telephone: (907) 383-3600

Fishery Management Plan: GULF OF ALASKA GROUND FISH FMP

Brief Statement of Proposal: Establish a trip limit of 150,000 pounds per 24 hours for all vessels fishing and delivering pollock and cod in the Western Gulf.

Objective of Proposal: The License Limitation qualification criteria and season date timing have resulted in an increase in the number of larger vessels participating in the Western Gulf. The large harvest capabilities of the larger vessels often plug the canneries and deplete the quota much too quickly. Establishing a trip limit of 150,000 pounds for all vessels would allow a steady flow of product to the processors and allow equal access to the resource. It would slow down the harvests of what have been, and are likely to remain, relatively small TAC's for pollock and cod. Thus, the National Marine Fisheries Service would be better able to account for harvests inseason and provide for season closures in a timely manner without dramatically exceeding or under-cutting the quota.

Need and Justification for Council Action: The Council has the authority to manage and regulate this fishery.

Foreseeable Impacts of Proposal: The National Marine Fisheries Service will be better able to manage this fishery, despite the increased effort that has been created by recent regulatory changes. Also to benefit are the fishermen and families of the coastal communities of the area that depend upon fishing as their sole source of income. The staff research done thus far indicates that these proposed trip limits will not disenfranchise very many vessels, but will benefit the majority of the fleet that has smaller capacity.

Are there Alternative Solutions: No.

Supportive Data & Other Information: The local community fishermen who participate in this fishery, and who have testified before this council, The staff research that has been done thus far and the vessel list that we compiled and submitted for your review.

Mr. Lauber
Page Two

that they already do so. With the close of the Bering Sea pollock fishery, it is expected that many larger vessels will be arriving in this area soon to participate in the cod fishery that is going on now. Already, the vessels here are on a rotation basis because the canneries are having a difficult time keeping up with their processing.

We feel that this is a very important issue that will benefit the majority of the entire fleet. Therefore, we will continue to pursue this. As you know, the Western Gulf is not the only area pushing for trip limits. Fishermen from the Central Gulf have also submitted a similar proposal for their area, although due to the size of their vessels their limit would be higher. The staff research that was done for 1995 and 1996 indicates that these proposed trip limits will not disenfranchise very many vessels, but will benefit the majority of the fleet that has smaller capacity. As you can see from the enclosed 1997 boat list, this still holds true. Please understand the importance of this proposal to the economy of our area. With the devastated condition of our salmon fishery, our fishermen are becoming reliant on bottomfish to support their overall fishing operations.

I hope that the information I've provided you with is helpful in convincing you to continue serious consideration of imposing a trip limit. I hope that the Council will discuss this issue seriously at the April meeting, rather than letting it slip off the end of the agenda buried in "staff tasking". If I can be of further assistance in providing you with any additional information, please let me know.

Sincerely,



Melanie Gundersen, President

enclosure

cc: Bob King
David Benton
Steve Pennoyer

The Western Gulf of Alaska Pollock Fishery

1 Western Gulf of Alaska Fishing Trips That Targeted Pollock

The North Pacific Fishery Management Council (Council) was asked to consider implementing a 200,000 pound trip limit for pollock in the Western Gulf of Alaska (W.G.) at their December 1996 meeting. This issue was brought before the Council by fishermen who utilize that resource. However, before proceeding with this issue the Council felt that additional information was needed. This document was developed to aid the Council in their decision making by providing some background information on this fishery.

This document looks at target pollock catch in the W.G. during 1995 and 1996. The pollock catch for each vessel has been divided by the "A" and "B" seasons, the harvesting vessel's length, and the vessel's smallest pollock trip. Only trips on which pollock was the target were considered in this analysis. Vessels were divided into two length classes using 58' LOA as the break point. Throughout this document, vessels less than 58' will be referred to as small vessels. Those in the 59' and bigger class will be referred to as the large vessels. These size classes were selected because the smaller category represents limit seiners, and the larger class of vessels are typically groundfish boats.

Vessels were also divided into groups based on the size of their smallest pollock trip in the year. Vessels that never reported more than 200,000 pounds in a trip were placed in the less than 200,000 pound class. Vessels that always reported more than 200,000 pounds on a trip were placed in the more than 200,000 pound class. Finally, vessels that reported some trips that were larger and some trips that were smaller than 200,000 pounds were placed in the "BOTH" category. On average, vessels in the "BOTH" category caught more than 200,000 pounds of pollock per trip. Often vessels were placed in this class because of one trip that was less than 200,000 pounds.

1.1 Catch

Pollock catch is reported for the 1995 and 1996 fishing seasons. These data were taken from Alaska Department of Fish and Game Fishtickets. Table 1 reports the W.G. pollock catch in 1995. Table 2 provides the same information for 1996. However, the 1996 information only contains about 35% of the W.G. pollock catch reported by the National Marine Fisheries Service in their Blend data. The difference between the two sources is that Fishtickets are still being entered into the data base at the regional offices, and as of January 21, 1997 this was the most complete information available. Blend data cannot be used in this analysis because it reports weekly catch at the processor level, and trip by trip information is needed to complete this study. Because 1995 is the most recent complete year of data, it will be the focus of the descriptive text. However, the 1996 data may be used to compare changes between the 1995 and 1996 "A" seasons.

The total W.G. pollock catch in 1995 was almost 65.2 million pounds. Over 81% of that pollock was caught by vessels in the larger class. Large vessels that had less than 200,000 pounds of catch on each trip caught 5.9% of the total. Those vessels that caught more than 200,000 pounds on each trip accounted for 52.5%, and those that made trips of both sizes caught 23.1%. Vessels in the "BOTH" category caught over 243,000 pounds per trip.

Small vessels harvested 18.4% of the total, and all the catch was made on trips that were less than 200,000 pounds.

1.1.1 "A" Season

A total of 9.3 million pounds of pollock was caught in 1995 by small vessels. All of that catch was taken on trips that were less than 200,000 pounds. Vessels in the large class caught just over 12.7 million pounds. Most of that catch was taken by vessels who had some trips over 200,000 pounds and some trips under. These vessels accounted for 39.4% of the "A" season total catch. Vessels that had catch over 200,000 pounds on each trip during the year caught almost 1.9 million pounds. Large vessels that caught less than 200,000 pounds on each trip reported just under 2.2 million pounds.

1.1.2 "B" Season

In 1995, over 93% (40.5 million pounds) of the pollock was caught in the "B" season by large vessels. And almost 75% (32.4 million pounds) of the total catch was taken by large vessels that only made trips of more than 200,000 pounds. Another 15% of the catch was reported by large vessels that made trips of both sizes. "B" season catch reported by vessels that always had trips less than 200,000 pounds accounted for about 10% of the total.

1.2 Trips

In this analysis a trip is defined as each time a Fishticket was filled out. A Fishticket is filled out every time a vessel makes a delivery to a processor.

Because the W.G. pollock fisheries occur in a relatively short time period, each vessel can only take a few trips. During 1995, the average small vessel took less than 9 pollock trips in the W.G.. Large vessels averaged less than three trips per vessel. Small vessels were typically fishing closer to their delivery port than large vessels and could make a trip in less time. This difference in "turn-around" time allows the smaller vessels to average more trips per vessel.

1.2.1 "A" Season

A total of 69 trips were taken by small vessels that reported less than 200,000 pounds of landings on each trip. On average, vessels in this group averaged 135,000 pounds of pollock per trip. Large vessels that always landed less than 200,000 pounds made 13 trips, and averaged over 167,000 pounds per trip. The large vessels that always caught more than 200,000 pounds on a trip took only five trips in the "A" season. These vessels averaged almost 372,000 pounds per trip. Large vessels in the "BOTH" class took 36 trips, and averaged almost 241,000 pounds per trip.

1.2.2 "B" Season

Small vessels reported making 27 trips in the "B" season. This is 42 trips less than this class of vessels made in the "A" season. These vessels averaged just over 100,000 pounds per trip. Large vessels that always had trips less than 200,000 pounds took 15 trips, and averaged almost 113,000 pounds per trip. A total of 63 trips were made by large vessels that always landed more than 200,000 pounds on a trip. These vessels averaged over 0.5 million pounds per trip.

1.3 Vessels

A total of eleven small vessels participated in the 1995 W.G. pollock fishery. Of these vessels, seven were home ported in King Cove or Sand Point, one in another Alaskan port, and the remaining three vessels were home ported outside of Alaska.

Only one vessel in the large class was home ported in Sand Point or King Cove. Other Alaskan communities were listed as the home port for 12 additional vessels. The remaining 47 vessels were reported in the Commercial Fisheries Entry Commission's vessel registration files as being home ported outside of Alaska.

1.3.1 "A" Season

Twenty-six vessels fished W.G. pollock during the 1995 "A" season. Ten were small vessels and 16 were large. Nine of the ten vessels fished in both the "A" and "B" seasons. Of the large vessels, five made only trips of less than 200,000 pounds, four made trips only greater than 200,000, and seven made trips of both sizes.

1.3.2 "B" Season

A total of 64 vessels fished during the "B" season. Fifty-four of the vessels were in the large class, and 33 of these vessels only had trips more than 200,000 pounds. Twenty vessels always had trips less than 200,000 pounds, ten in each size class.

Table 1. 1995 Target Pollock Catch in the Western Gulf of Alaska by the Vessel's Minimum Trip Size

Each Vessel's Catch by Size of Minimum Trip	Catch						Each Vessel's Catch by Size of Minimum Trip	Percent					
	Pollock "A" Season							Pollock "A" Season					
	0-58' LOA			59' and Greater LOA				0-58' LOA			59' and Greater LOA		
	Pounds	Vessels	Trips	Pounds	Vessels	Trips		Pounds	Vessels	Trips	Pounds	Vessels	Trips
All Trips Less Than 200,000	9,302,683	10	69	2,174,346	5	13	All Trips Less Than 200,000	42.3%	38.5%	56.1%	9.9%	19.2%	10.6%
All Trips More Than 200,000	-	-	-	1,858,873	4	5	All Trips More Than 200,000	0.0%	0.0%	0.0%	8.4%	15.4%	4.1%
Both Sizes	-	-	-	8,674,610	7	36	Both Sizes	0.0%	0.0%	0.0%	39.4%	26.9%	29.3%
Total	9,302,683	10	69	12,707,829	16	54	Total	42.3%	38.5%	56.1%	57.7%	61.5%	43.9%

Each Vessel's Catch by Size of Minimum Trip	Pollock "B" Season						Each Vessel's Catch by Size of Minimum Trip	Pollock "B" Season					
	0-58' LOA			59' and Greater LOA				0-58' LOA			59' and Greater LOA		
	Pounds	Vessels	Trips	Pounds	Vessels	Trips		Pounds	Vessels	Trips	Pounds	Vessels	Trips
All Trips Less Than 200,000	2,719,912	10	27	1,693,210	10	15	All Trips Less Than 200,000	6.3%	15.6%	20.6%	3.9%	15.6%	11.5%
All Trips More Than 200,000	-	-	-	32,352,439	33	63	All Trips More Than 200,000	0.0%	0.0%	0.0%	74.9%	51.6%	48.1%
Both Sizes	-	-	-	6,411,748	11	26	Both Sizes	0.0%	0.0%	0.0%	14.8%	17.2%	19.8%
Total	2,719,912	10	27	40,457,397	54	104	Total	6.3%	15.6%	20.6%	93.7%	84.4%	79.4%

Each Vessel's Catch by Size of Minimum Trip	Total for both "A" and "B" seasons						Each Vessel's Catch by Size of Minimum Trip	Total for both "A" and "B" seasons					
	0-58' LOA			59' and Greater LOA				0-58' LOA			59' and Greater LOA		
	Pounds	Vessels	Trips	Pounds	Vessels	Trips		Pounds	Vessels	Trips	Pounds	Vessels	Trips
All Trips Less Than 200,000	12,022,595	11	96	3,867,556	13	28	All Trips Less Than 200,000	18.4%	15.5%	37.8%	5.9%	18.3%	11.0%
All Trips More Than 200,000	-	-	-	34,211,312	35	68	All Trips More Than 200,000	0.0%	0.0%	0.0%	52.5%	49.3%	26.8%
Both Sizes	-	-	-	15,086,358	12	62	Both Sizes	0.0%	0.0%	0.0%	23.1%	16.9%	24.4%
Total	12,022,595	11	96	53,165,226	60	158	Total	18.4%	15.5%	37.8%	81.6%	84.5%	62.2%

Source: ADF&G fishticket data

Table 2. 1996 Target Pollock Catch in the Western Gulf of Alaska by the Vessel's Minimum Trip Size
 (NOTE: AVAILABLE FISHTICKET DATA ONLY ACCOUNTS FOR ABOUT 35% OF THE 1996 WG POLLOCK CATCH)

Catch							Percent						
Each Vessel's Catch by Size of Minimum Trip	Pollock "A" Season						Each Vessel's Catch by Size of Minimum Trip	Pollock "A" Season					
	0-58' LOA			59' and Greater LOA				0-58' LOA			59' and Greater LOA		
	Pounds	Vessels	Trips	Pounds	Vessels	Trips		Pounds	Vessels	Trips	Pounds	Vessels	Trips
All Trips Less Than 200,000	6,077,835	12	49	1,667,146	5	13	All Trips Less Than 200,000	35.8%	46.2%	52.1%	9.8%	19.2%	13.8%
All Trips More Than 200,000	-	-	-	4,896,782	6	13	All Trips More Than 200,000	0.0%	0.0%	0.0%	28.8%	23.1%	13.8%
Both Sizes	-	-	-	4,338,623	3	19	Both Sizes	0.0%	0.0%	0.0%	25.6%	11.5%	20.2%
Total	6,077,835	12	49	10,902,551	14	45	Total	35.8%	46.2%	52.1%	64.2%	53.8%	47.9%

Pollock "B" Season							Pollock "B" Season						
Each Vessel's Catch by Size of Minimum Trip	0-58' LOA			59' and Greater LOA			Each Vessel's Catch by Size of Minimum Trip	0-58' LOA			59' and Greater LOA		
	Pounds	Vessels	Trips	Pounds	Vessels	Trips		Pounds	Vessels	Trips	Pounds	Vessels	Trips
	All Trips Less Than 200,000	1,280,609	4	11	414,658	2		3	All Trips Less Than 200,000	62.5%	57.1%	68.8%	20.2%
All Trips More Than 200,000	-	-	-	-	-	-	All Trips More Than 200,000	0.0%	0.0%	0.0%	0.0%	0.0%	0.0%
Both Sizes	-	-	-	355,229	1	2	Both Sizes	0.0%	0.0%	0.0%	17.3%	14.3%	12.5%
Total	1,280,609	4	11	769,887	3	5	Total	62.5%	57.1%	68.8%	37.5%	42.9%	31.3%

Total for both "A" and "B" seasons							Total for both "A" and "B" seasons						
Each Vessel's Catch by Size of Minimum Trip	0-58' LOA			59' and Greater LOA			Each Vessel's Catch by Size of Minimum Trip	0-58' LOA			59' and Greater LOA		
	Pounds	Vessels	Trips	Pounds	Vessels	Trips		Pounds	Vessels	Trips	Pounds	Vessels	Trips
	All Trips Less Than 200,000	7,358,444	12	60	2,081,804	6		16	All Trips Less Than 200,000	38.7%	42.9%	54.5%	10.9%
All Trips More Than 200,000	-	-	-	4,896,782	6	13	All Trips More Than 200,000	0.0%	0.0%	0.0%	25.7%	21.4%	11.8%
Both Sizes	-	-	-	4,693,852	4	21	Both Sizes	0.0%	0.0%	0.0%	24.7%	14.3%	19.1%
Total	7,358,444	12	60	11,672,438	16	50	Total	38.7%	42.9%	54.5%	61.3%	57.1%	45.5%

Source: ADF&G fishticket data