

M E M O R A N D U M

TO: Council, SSC, and AP members

FROM: Jim H. Branson
Executive Director

DATE: December 1, 1986

SUBJECT: Gulf of Alaska Groundfish Fishery Management Plan

ACTION REQUIRED

Review 1986 status of stocks and adjust 1987 ABCs where necessary. Set initial 1987 TQs for discussion purposes.

BACKGROUND

You received a report on the status of the Gulf groundfish resource at the September Council meeting. Since then the plan team has met on November 17-21, 1986 to review the earlier assessment following the receipt of INPFC documents and results of further analysis on pollock and other rockfish. A final Resource Assessment Document (RAD) for the Gulf of Alaska was prepared and mailed to you on November 26. The ABC for pollock has been reduced to 95,000 mt in the Western and Central areas as a result of a more appropriate method in determining ABC. The flounder ABC has been increased to 537,000 mt, the product of an exploitation rate biomass analysis. The other rockfish ABC has been increased to 3,350 mt to incorporate additional resource in the Southeast Outside District as determined by a habitat comparison study. The ABCs for these and other groundfish species were determined using the ABC definition approved by the Council in Amendment 15. A summary table of the team's findings is provided as item D-2(a)(1).

Following review of 1987 ABCs, the Council must set an initial target quota (TQ) for each managed groundfish species in the Gulf of Alaska. A computer spreadsheet and the enclosed worksheet [item D-2(a)(2)] are provided for your use. Initial TQs are necessary for purposes of determining resource apportionments.

On October 10, 1986 the Council released preliminary ABC and TQ estimates for a minimum 30-day public review. The review period ended on November 14. Copies of the public comments received were sent to you prior to this meeting. A summary of those public comments is included in your notebooks as item D-2(a)(3).

Table 1.-- Current status of Gulf of Alaska groundfish resources (mt).

Species	1986 OY	Projected 1986 catch	Stock condition	Current trend in abundance	ABC ^{1/}	TQ ^{2/}
Pollock	116,600	65,000	Depressed	Exploitable biomass increas- ing in 1987	112,000	<u>2/</u>
Pacific cod	75,000	21,000	Good	Stable; ABC=MSY	125,000	<u>2/</u>
Flounders	14,380	2,000	Good	Stable	537,000	<u>2/</u>
Pacific ocean perch	3,702	2,800	Depressed	Stable	10,500	<u>2/</u>
Sablefish	15,000	20,500	Good	Stable; ABC=MSY	25,000	<u>2/</u>
Atka mackerel	5,278	\$10	Depressed	Depressed; no apparent recruitment	0	Bycatch only
Other rockfish	5,000	2,700	Depressed	Unknown Gulf-wide, believed declining in SEC	3,350	<u>2/</u> , <u>3/</u>
Thornyhead rockfish	3,750	700	Unknown	Declining in Western & Central Areas	3,750	<u>2/</u>
Squid	5,000	10	Appears good	Assumed stable; ABC=MSY	5,000	<u>2/</u>
Other species	12,186	700	Probably good	Assumed stable	Not applicable	5% of sum of TQs for other species

1/ This mix of catches will not be attainable under a halibut PSC cap of 2,000 mt. See Part 2, Bycatch section.

2/ Total mortality should not exceed ABC.

3/ Total ABC is distributed between slope species (2,100 mt Gulfwide and demersal shelf species (1,250 mt) in Southeast Outside District.

DECEMBER 1986

BIOLOGICAL QUOTA WORKSHEET

(metric tons)					
Species	1986 OY ^{1/}	1986 Catch	Plan Team Recommended ABC	Council ABC	Initial TQ
Pollock	116,600	65,000	112,000		
Pacific cod	75,000	21,000	125,000		
Flounder	14,380	2,000	537,000		
POP complex	3,702	2,800	10,500		
Sablefish	15,000	20,500	25,000		
Atka mackerel	5,278	10	0 ^{2/}		
Other rockfish	5,000	2,700	3,350		
Thornyhead	3,750	700	3,750		
Squid	5,000	10	5,000		
Other species	12,186	700	5% of TQs		

1/ These figures reflect quotas Gulfwide. They will be apportioned by areas as a function of exploitable biomass.

2/ For rebuilding purposes, the plan team recommends a zero harvest. The Council may wish to allow small harvests to be taken in an incidental fishery only.

GULF OF ALASKA PUBLIC COMMENT SUMMARY

Comments received on initial 1987 ABCs and proposed TQs

1. International Pacific Halibut Commission - supports Council intentions of adjusting groundfish TQs to prevent exceeding halibut mortality limits.
2. Alaska Factory Trawlers' Assn., Seattle - recommends a sablefish TQ of 25,000 mt Gulfwide, distributed among the regulatory areas based on biomass distribution between 200-1,000 m depth. They also strongly believe that the application of a 5% exploitation rate is far too low for sablefish and that an ABC well in excess of 5% of MSY biomass is legitimate. They recommend application of a target exploitation rate of 10% to be achieved in 1.25% increments by 1990 provided that the annual assessment of stocks (and the market impact) by the Council supports the increase. AFTA also proposed an increase in the POP TQ to 6,000 mt and maintenance of the rockfish TQ at 5,000 mt.
3. Fishing Company of Alaska, Seward - supports an increase in the sablefish TQ of the published 20,000 mt as a minimum with the belief that 25,000 mt is more appropriate following a review of both status of stock and market analyses. All indications suggest that the current stocks of sablefish will allow fishing at a level of 25,000 mt or greater without threatening the health of the species and FCA urges the Council to set the TQ at 25,000 mt or higher.

FCA also recommends that the Council not reduce the sablefish TQ below ABC for market concerns. Analysis of sablefish pricing indicates that in recent years the price has increased even though catches have increased. This indicates that demand for sablefish is strong and strengthening and that good prices can be expected even though supply increases.

FCA supports a 5,000 mt TQ for rockfish indicating that they plan to expand their harvesting capacity for this species category.

4. Fishing Vessel Owners' Assn., Seattle - recommends a sablefish TQ of no more than 20,000 mt in 1987. Limited increases in quotas will reduce the possibility of overharvesting the older, targeted portion of the resource. To increase the quota much more than the landed amount during 1986, could have an adverse market effect.

The FVOA opposes increasing the flounder TQ to 30,000 mt given that the 1986 quota was about 14,000 mt and the estimated DAH harvest will be only 5,000 mt. The flounder and Pacific cod quotas should be based on realistic projections of industry requirements.

5. Kodiak Longline Assn., Kodiak - recommends a pollock TQ of 77,000 in the Western and Central Gulf. A large number of sexually immature pollock are likely to be taken in 1987. With the likelihood of poor roe recoveries and fish too small for optimum fillet productions, there is little justification for joint venture fishing on the Shelikof stock.

With two surimi lines and several fillet lines planned for 1987, DAP needs will be greater and this TQ will accommodate this shoreside investment.

TQs for flounder and Pacific cod should be held down to keep the halibut mortality below 2,000 mt. The Pacific ocean perch TQ should remain at 3,700 mt to continue rebuilding. The sablefish TQ should be 20,000 mt apportioned between regulatory areas based on biomass distribution at depths 200-1,000 m. With the biological uncertainties associated with a greater sablefish harvest, the Council should not raise the quotas too rapidly.

6. Alaskan Joint Venture Fisheries, Inc., Anchorage - supports the pollock quotas approved in September. Regarding the timing of the Shelikof fishery, AJVF recommends that the fishery begin on March 1 to maximize roe content.
7. Alaska Longline Fishermen's Assn., Sitka - supports the Pacific cod, sablefish, Pacific ocean perch, and rockfish quotas released for public review in September. Pacific cod do appear abundant and there will be a marked increased in effort next year. POP still appear depressed and they support continued rebuilding of this resource. Sablefish continue to increase in abundance and they support the 20,000 mt quota. On other rockfish, the ALFA supports the plan team's findings but recommends that the quotas be apportioned to all regulatory areas to avoid excessive removal in one area.
8. North Pacific Longline Assn. of Japan - supports a 75,000 mt Pacific cod TQ.
9. Japan Deep Sea Trawlers' Assn. - recommends Council adoption of a pollock TQ of at least 97,000 mt in the Western/Central areas. They believe there is sufficient justification to warrant an increase in ABC and TQ to 120,000 mt. The Shelikof Strait joint venture fishery should be managed in 1987 in the same way as 1986 with regard to season timing and reserve releases.
10. Japan Fisheries Agency - supports the 1987 Gulfwide pollock, Pacific cod, and flounder TQs of 163,600 mt, 75,000 mt, 30,000 mt, respectively.
11. Kelliher Fish Company, Edmonds - supports a 20,000 mt sablefish TQ and realistic quotas for Pacific cod and flounder. The U.S. industry performance does not support a 30,000 mt flounder or 75,000 mt Pacific cod TQ in 1987.
12. Sitka Sound Seafoods, Sitka - recommends that the Gulfwide other rockfish quota be apportioned by regulatory area to reduce the risk of overharvest in any one area. The sablefish TQ should be apportioned based on CPUE data.

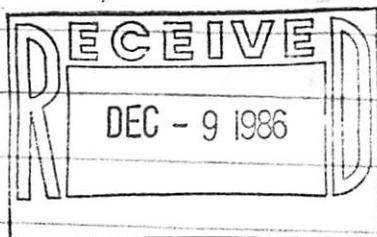
12/5/86 D-2

To whom it may concern,

As a Blackcod Longliner (Alaska Based)
I am concerned about the move by
factory trawlers to redistribute the
blackcod gouts in the central gulf.
I believe the long line fleet has
proven it can handle harvest any
available fish. Any added pressure
from factory trawlers would only
add new problems to what is
already an overpopulated fishery.

Also I don't believe the
maximum ^{mortality} for Halibut (for J/V and Domestic
trawlers) should be raised. I would like
to see a maximum mortality of:
2000 metric tons.

Thank you,
Richard



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