

MEMORANDUM

TO: Council, SSC and AP Members

FROM: Clarence G. Pautzke
Executive Director

ESTIMATED TIME
1 Hour

DATE: April 10, 1995

SUBJECT: BSAI Pollock Fishery

ACTION REQUIRED

Consider whether to apportion pollock tonnage between midwater (pelagic) and bottom (non-pelagic) trawls.

BACKGROUND

In December 1994, Council member Wally Pereyra suggested that the Council should consider limiting pollock trawling to pelagic fishing only as a way to reduce bycatch and waste. Data from the 1992-1994 fisheries were examined to provide some insights on discarding (Tables 1 and 2). These data show that:

- For the 1994 directed pollock fishery, pollock catch was 93.2% pelagic and 6.8% bottom trawl. In 1992, the split was 67.2% pelagic and 32.8% bottom trawl; 1993 split was 85.3% pelagic and 14.7% bottom trawl.
- Overall discard rates have been lower in the pelagic trawl fishery (2% in 1994) than in the non-pelagic trawl fishery (11% in 1994).
- Discard of Pacific cod has been higher in the pelagic trawl fishery than the non-pelagic trawl fishery.
- Bycatch rates of crabs and halibut have been higher for the bottom trawl fishery.
- Bycatch rates for herring and other salmon have been higher for the pelagic trawl fishery.

There are two approaches the Council could take to pursue this proposal. The first approach could be taken if the Council wanted to reduce (or increase) the amount of pollock taken by bottom trawls, but not prohibit this gear type. In this case, an apportionment of pollock TAC between the pelagic and bottom trawl pollock fisheries can be accomplished during the annual specification process, without additional regulations. Amendment 16a provides for apportionment of pollock to pelagic trawl gear and bottom trawl gear to control the bycatch of crab

and halibut. In 1990, the Council adopted the 88%-12% split. For the 1991 through 1995 fisheries, the Council did not recommend a specific apportionment. Regulations (50 CFR 675.24) require that pollock allocations to non-pelagic trawls be based on the following types of information:

- A. The PSC limits and PSC bycatch allowances established under 50 CFR 675.21;
- B. The projected bycatch of prohibited species that would occur with and without a limit in the amount of pollock TAC that may be taken in the directed fishery for pollock using non-pelagic trawl gear;
- C. Costs of a limit in terms of amounts of pollock TAC that may be taken with non-pelagic trawl gear on the non-pelagic and pelagic trawl fisheries; and
- D. Other factors pertaining to consistency with the goals and objectives of the FMP.

The second approach would be taken if the intent were to reduce bycatch of species other than PSC, or if non-pelagic trawling for pollock were to be prohibited altogether to reduce discarding. In this case, a regulatory amendment would be required that prohibited the use of non-pelagic trawl gear for directed pollock fishing. The definition of non-pelagic and pelagic trawl gear is defined in regulations section 672.2. If the Council were to follow this path, then a regulatory amendment would need to be initiated.

Pelagic Trawl Definition (672.2 (7))

- (7) Pelagic trawl means a trawl that:
- (i) Has no discs, bobbins, or rollers;
 - (ii) Has no chafe protection gear attached to the foot rope or fishing line;
 - (iii) Except for the small mesh allowed under paragraph (7)(ix) of this definition:
 - (A) Has no mesh tied to the fishing line, head rope, and breast lines with less than 20 inches (50.8 cm) between knots, and has no stretched mesh size of less than 60 inches (152.4 cm) aft from all points on the fishing line, head rope, and breast lines and extending past the fishing circle for a distance equal to or greater than one half the vessel's length overall; or
 - (B) Has no parallel lines spaced closer than 64 inches (162.6 cm), from all points on the fishing line, head rope, and breast lines and extending aft to a section of mesh, with no stretched mesh size of less than 60 inches (152.4 cm), extending aft for a distance equal to or greater than one half the vessel's length overall;
 - (iv) Has no stretched mesh size less than 15 inches (38.1 cm) aft of the mesh described in paragraph (7)(iii) of this definition for a distance equal to or greater than one half the vessel's length overall;
 - (v) Contains no configuration intended to reduce the stretched mesh sizes described in paragraphs (7)(iii) and (iv) of this definition;
 - (vi) Has no flotation other than floats capable of providing up to 200 pounds (90.7 kg) of buoyancy to accommodate the use of a net-sounder device;
 - (vii) Has no more than one fishing line and one foot rope for a total of no more than two weighted lines on the bottom of the trawl between the wing tip and the fishing circle;
 - (viii) Has no metallic component except for connectors (e.g., hammerlocks or swivels) or net-sounder device aft of the fishing circle and forward of any mesh greater than 5.5 inches (14.0 cm) stretched measure;
 - (ix) May have small mesh within 32 feet (9.8 m) of the center of the head rope as needed for attaching instrumentation (e.g., net-sounder device); and
 - (x) May have weights on the wing tips.

TABLE 1**Catch and Discard in BSAI Directed Pollock Fisheries 1992**

	Pelagic Trawl			Bottom Trawl		
	Catch (mt)	Discard (mt)	Percent Discarded	Catch (mt)	Discard (mt)	Percent Discarded
pollock	1,295,707	80,653	6%	631,140	55,523	9%
Pacific cod	13,492	8,658	64%	19,646	8,404	43%
flatfish	12,132	11,127	92%	18,798	16,047	85%
rockfish	205	180	88%	510	104	20%
other	4,408	3,918	89%	4,863	4,315	89%
total	1,325,944	104,536	8%	674,957	84,393	13%

Catch and Discard in BSAI Directed Pollock Fisheries 1993

	Pelagic Trawl			Bottom Trawl		
	Catch (mt)	Discard (mt)	Percent Discarded	Catch (mt)	Discard (mt)	Percent Discarded
pollock	1,227,495	41,359	3%	210,744	21,895	10%
Pacific cod	8,648	7,052	82%	17,027	9,347	55%
flatfish	5,951	5,695	96%	13,984	11,878	85%
rockfish	234	227	97%	200	188	94%
other	2,382	1,286	54%	2,831	2,591	92%
total	1,244,710	56,619	5%	244,786	45,899	19%

Catch and Discard in BSAI Directed Pollock Fisheries 1994 (through October 29)

	Pelagic Trawl			Bottom Trawl		
	Catch (mt)	Discard (mt)	Percent Discarded	Catch (mt)	Discard (mt)	Percent Discarded
pollock	1,185,024	20,774	2%	85,784	5,837	7%
Pacific cod	8,230	4,906	60%	7,944	1,317	17%
flatfish	2,958	2,195	74%	4,434	3,553	80%
rockfish	91	61	67%	42	42	100%
other	775	662	85%	466	465	100%
total	1,197,078	28,558	2%	98,670	11,205	11%

TABLE 2
Bycatch of PSC in BSAI Directed Pollock Fisheries 1993

	Pelagic Trawl		Bottom Trawl	
	Bycatch	Bycatch rate	Bycatch	Bycatch rate
red king crab	9,550	0.01	49,370	0.45
other king crab	405	0.00	1,628	0.02
bairdi Tanner crab	392,461	0.32	1,279,104	11.57
other Tanners	217,946	0.18	534,152	4.83
halibut	638	0.51	702	6.36
herring	520	0.42	8	0.07
chinook	34,450	0.03	4,188	0.04
other salmon	239,654	0.19	2,609	0.02

Bycatch of PSC in BSAI Directed Pollock Fisheries 1994

	Pelagic Trawl		Bottom Trawl	
	Bycatch	Bycatch rate	Bycatch	Bycatch rate
red king crab	715	0.00	42,388	0.31
other king crab	141	0.00	616	0.00
bairdi Tanner crab	144,666	0.12	225,098	1.62
other Tanners	304,218	0.25	551,261	3.97
halibut	592	0.49	356	2.56
herring	1,576	1.29	79	0.57
chinook	32,071	0.03	1,833	0.01
other salmon	87,818	0.07	7,444	0.05

*Source:

Data from NMFS Alaska Region blend estimates.

**Note:

Bycatch units are tons for halibut and herring, and numbers for crab and salmon. Likewise, the bycatch rate could be kilograms/ton or numbers/ton.