

Bering Sea/Aleutian Islands Groundfish
Interim Action Committee
Teleconference Summary: May 14, 1985

The Bering Sea/Aleutian Islands Groundfish Interim Action Committee held a teleconference at noon, May 14, 1985 to consider a request from the Alaska Factory Trawlers Association for an emergency order to reduce the Pacific cod TAC from 220,000 mt to 132,000 mt.

Present on the call were Jim Campbell, Bob McVey, Bob Alverson, Rich Marasco, Vidar Weststad, Fred Gaffney, Clarence Pautzke, Jim Glock, Konrad Uri, Terry Baker and Steve Hughes.

The Committee reviewed the request (Attachment A) and an analysis by Vidar Weststad (Attachment B). Current estimates of industry needs for cod are compared with catches through May 3 in Attachment C. There was considerable discussion of the trends in CPUE. Factory Trawler data show catch/day decreased 18% between 1984 and 1985 and catch/tow decreased 34%. Though the latter index declined most, catch/day was the only measure available for comparison of the factory trawlers, Japanese longliners and joint ventures. Japanese longline catch per day nearly doubled between 1984 and 1985 east of 170°W but was unchanged to the northwest of the Pribilofs. Joint Ventures catch/day also remained unchanged east of 170°W. Weststad concluded that without additional data there was no biological evidence indicating a decrease in yield estimates from the predictions last December.

Steve Hughes provided additional information indicating that post-spawning (June-December) cod CPUEs have declined every year since 1982 and that it will be very difficult to catch cod later this year. Konrad Uri noted that while there may not be evidence of a biological emergency, this certainly constituted a socioeconomic emergency for the factory trawler fleet unless the catchability can be increased.

The Committee noted that there was little evidence that removing the foreign fleets would improve the factory trawler CPUE or that price would be pushed up by dropping the TAC.

Committee Recommendations

1. The Committee concluded that there was no biological emergency in Bering Sea and Aleutians Pacific cod. A socioeconomic emergency may exist but the FMP does not have any mechanism for solving these types of emergencies inseason.

2. If it could be shown that withholding fish would improve the factory trawler catch, then possibly the Council would want to recommend withholding reserves and unallocated TALFF, which combined amount to about 30,000 mt. However, the Committee recommends a thorough airing of the pros and cons of withholding cod before taking any such action.
3. The Committee recommends that a long-term solution be sought in the 1986 annual management cycle. The industry is strongly encouraged to work closely with the plan team and provide catch and performance data to come up with a solution to the low catch rates, possibly a 0-TALFF option for 1986.
4. The Committee recommends that the Factory Trawler Association review their data with the Center scientists and bring any further conclusions to the May Council meeting.

ARCTIC
ICE

Arctic Alaska Seafoods, Inc.

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May 10, 1985

Mr. Jim H. Branson
Executive Director
North Pacific Fishery Management Council
411 West 4th Avenue
Anchorage, AK 99510

Dear Jim,

As requested, we are submitting the enclosed information to justify the Alaska Factory Trawlers Association's request for an Emergency Order in regard to Pacific Cod.

The statistical data enclosed represents approximately 50% of the Alaska Factory Trawler fleet. Mr. Steve Hughes, who assembled most of the data, is presently on a vessel in the Bering Sea and is not available for the conference call for the Interim Committee.

Our justification in seeking this Emergency Order is as follows:

1. The overall CPUE of the vessels included in the survey indicates a dramatic decrease of 34.4%. In 1984 the Metric Ton/Hr Cod was 3.78 as compared with 1985's Metric Ton/Hr Cod of 2.48. These vessels operated in the Cape Sarichef area during the same time in 1984 and 1985.
2. The distribution of the fish size has also changed drastically in 1985 as compared to 1984. Our concern is the fact that the younger year classes are not coming into the resource. This is an indication of what the NMFS staff has been predicting for 1986 and 1987 could be earlier than originally thought. Based on 10,000 MT of round weight Cod, the breakdown of the size is as follows:

<u>Fish Size</u>	<u>1-2 lb</u>	<u>2-5 lb</u>	<u>5-10 lb</u>	<u>10 lb +</u>
1984	6%	42%	44%	8%
1985	1%	30%	55%	13%

Mr. Jim Branson
May 10, 1985
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Based on the 34.4% decrease in CPUE and average fish size increasing in the 5 lb & up fish by 12%, we feel it would be most prudent to immediately adjust the OY in the Bering Sea/Aleutian Island area to reflect a 40% decrease. This would effectively reduce the OY from 220,000 MT to 132,000 MT. Depending on the year to date catch of Pacific Cod, this adjustment should allow for a 10-15% incidental catch of Pacific Cod for the Joint Venture fleets that work on Sole and Mackerel.

In our opinion, the enclosed data represents a more solid management information tool than the scientific staff has previously had access to and indicates a trend that must be reacted to.

Your cooperation in receiving this material will be appreciated and should you have any questions, please do not hesitate to contact me.

Sincerely,



Terry J. Baker
Secretary
Alaska Factory Trawlers Association

TJB:bw

Enclosures

cc: Trans Pacific Seafoods, Inc.
Glacier Fish Co.
America No. I
Ted Evans
Jim Bolziger
Steve Hughes

Alaska Factory Trawlers Association CPUE 1985 vs 1984

		Days Fished	No. of Tows	Hrs Fished	Cod Total MT	MT/ Hr Cod	MT/ Dy Cod	MT/ Tow Cod	Time	Area
1984	Northern Glacier	89	521	1185	4,319.0	3.64	48.5	8.29	1/8-4/6	Sarichef Area
	Arctic Trawler	95	597	1385	4,806.0	3.47	50.6	8.05	1/3-4/9	" "
	America No. I	31	144	200	1,631.0	8.10	52.6	11.32	2/1-4/1	" "
	Northwest Enterprise	70	432	702	2,387.0	3.40	34.1	5.52	1/5-3/31	" "
	Total	285	1694	3472	13,143.0	3.78				
1985	Northern Glacier	87	521	1592	4,340.0	2.73 ⁽²⁾	49.9	7.65	1/7-4/3	Sarichef Area
	Arctic Trawler	65	393	1055	2,238.0	2.12	34.4	5.69	1/5-3/31	" "
	America No. I	33	132	345	928.0	2.68	28.1	7.03	2/1-4/1	" "
	Northwest Enterprise	74	437	1030	2,494.0	2.42	33.7	5.70	1/3-3/31	" "
	Total	259	1483	4022	10,000.0	2.48				

Average Size of Catch (10,000 MT Sample)

	Round Weight			
	1-2 lb	2-3 lb	5-10 lb	10 lb +
1984	6%	42%	44%	8%
1985	1%	30%	55%	13%
	<5%>	<12%>	+11%	+5%



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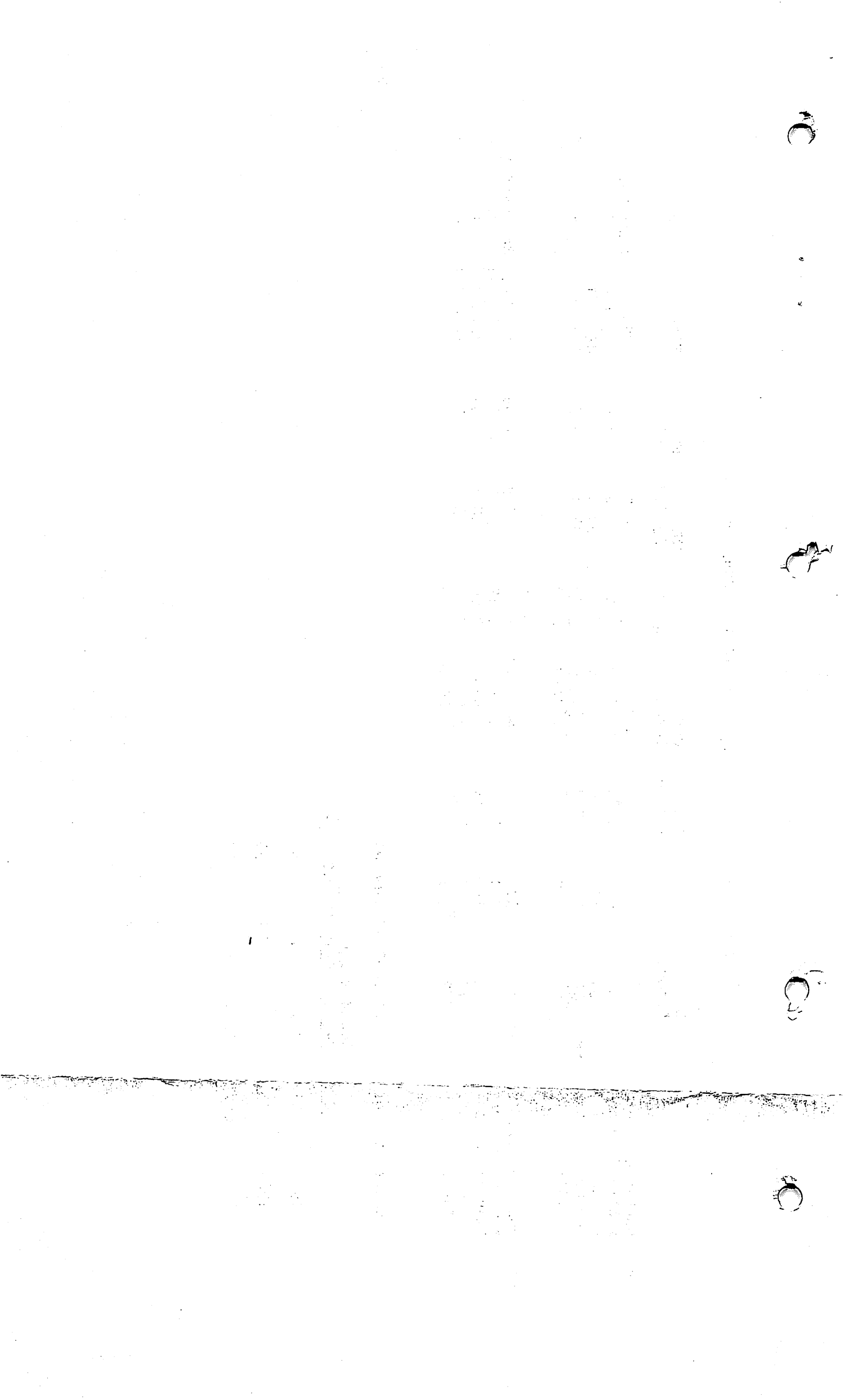


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EVALUATION OF THE CURRENT STATUS OF PACIFIC COD
IN THE EASTERN BERING SEA

The most recent evaluation of the status of Pacific cod in the eastern Bering Sea is that of Bakkala and Weststad (1984) in which they conclude that although cod abundance is declining catches of 300 thousand tons can be harvested in 1985 in the eastern Bering Sea. They estimate that with average recruitment the harvestable cod population will decline from 751,200 t in 1985 to 675,600 t in 1986 and by 1987 the population should be similar to what existed prior to the strong 1977 yearclass.

U.S. factory trawlers report that catch rates in tons/hour towed have declined 34.4 % between 1984 and 1985 and the average size of Pacific cod in the catch is increasing. They feel that these changes suggest a more rapid decline than forecast by Bakkala and Weststad.

This paper presents the data submitted by the Alaska Factory Trawlers Association (AFTA) in support of their request for an Emergency Order reducing the cod OY along with observer data collected from Joint Venture and the Japanese longline fisheries directed toward cod. These data are presented in Table 1. All three data sets include only data from January through April in both 1984 and 1985. AFTA supplied CPUE data in terms of hours towed, vessel days and hauls, however, only catch/day is utilized in this examination since it is the only measure available for the other fisheries.

Comparison of the catch rates (catch/day) from the three data sets show different trends. The AFTA data shows a decline with catch/day going from 46.1 to 38.6 t. a decrease of 16%. CPUE in catch/hour declined 34%; the difference between catch/day and catch/hour is due to an increase in hours towed/day between 1984 and 1985.

The J/V catch rates also declined between 1984 and 1985. The difference between years depends on the data used. If catch and effort is used for the entire 1984 cod fishing period the average catch/day decreases by 28% and by 37% if the same periods in 1984 and 1985 are compared (Table 1.). The decline observed in the J/V fishery comparing the entire data set available for 1984-85 is not significant due to the variability in the data, however, if the same time periods are compared the decline of 37 % is significant.

The Japanese longline data is available for the southeastern Bering Sea (East of 170) and from northwest of the Pribilof Islands (West of 170). Catch rates from the area east of 170 W show a doubling between 1984 and 1985 in the southeastern Bering Sea going from 17.9 t/day to 30.6 t/day, however this was not a statistically significant increase and also this area accounted for only a portion of the catch and effort during the period examined. Most of the Japanese longline catch and effort during the January - April period was in the area northwest of the Pribilof Islands. In that area catch rates were essentially unchanged between years similar to that observed in the J/V fishery.

The request by AFTA for an Emergency Order notes an increase in the average size of harvested cod. This is as expected with the bulk of the catch composed of one yearclass. If the average size had decreased between

1984 and 1985 or remained the same it would have indicated stronger than expected recruitment. Population projections indicate that after 1985 the average size of the catch should decrease as the 1977 yearclass becomes less dominant in the population.

In general there does not appear to be any striking data to support an argument that the cod population is returning to pre- 1977 yearclass levels more rapidly than forecast. Of interest is that the reported CPUE decline of 34.4% is close to the expected rate of population decline of 36.2% reported by Bakkala and Wespestad (1984). Several factors could have contributed to the decline in CPUE such as weather, difficulty in processing the larger cod and modified distribution patterns.

The predicted population decline between 1984 and 1985 is based on several assumptions which can not be verified without additional data. These can not be fully evaluated until the completion of the 1985 Bering Sea summer survey. Until results are available from the survey there does not appear any biological reason to decrease yield estimates.

REFERENCES Bakkala, R G. and V. G. Wespestad. 1984. Pacific cod. In: R.G. Bakkala and L.L. Low (ed), Condition of groundfish resources of the eastern Bering Sea and Aleutian Islands region in 1984. Unpubl. rep., 202p. Northwest and Alaska Fish. Ctr. NMFS, NOAA.

Table 1. Reported and observed vessel days, catch and catch per unit effort for Pacific cod by factory trawlers (AFTA), joint venture fisheries (J/V) and Japanese longline vessels in the the eastern Bering Sea east of 170 W and west of 170.

	VESSEL DAYS	CATCH M/T	CATCH/DAY		
			AVERAGE	STD. DEV.	
AFTA					
1984	285	13,143	46.1		
1985	259	10,000	38.6		
J/V					
1984	2/11-3/31	431	11,000	24.7	8.5
	2/25-3/31	325	9,447	28.4	6.8
1985	2/25-3/31	586	10,452	17.8	3.0
JAPAN LONGLINE					
east of 170					
1984	67	1,263	17.9	6.2	
1985	56	1,987	30.6	12.5	
west of 170					
1984	155	3,573	23.1	5.9	
1985	284	8,483	25.4	7.9	

BSA Pacific Cod: Needs vs Catch

	<u>Estimated Needs</u>				Catch thru <u>May 3</u>
	<u>Initial</u>	<u>May NMFS Survey Results</u>			
	<u>Jan 85</u>	<u>Jan-June</u>	<u>Jul-Dec</u>	<u>Total</u>	
TAC	220,000				37,626
DAP	100,000	61,436	43,418	104,854	11,886
JVP	63,190			55,690 ^{1/}	14,473
DAH	163,190			160,380	26,359
Reserve	17,210				
TALFF	39,600				11,267
JA	25,511				10,465
ROK	731				
Portugal	440				
Poland	138				
USSR	395				
Unallocated	12,385				

^{1/} NMFS JVP survey not completed yet; this number is 63,190 mt minus Iceland JV request for 7,500 mt.