

M E M O R A N D U M

TO: Council, SSC and AP Members  
FROM: Jim H. Branson  
Executive Director  
DATE: November 30, 1982  
SUBJECT: Bering Sea/Aleutian Islands Groundfish

*ACTION REQUIRED*

*No action required. Information only.*

BACKGROUND

I. DAH Estimates for 1983

The National Marine Fisheries Service estimates that the U.S. fishing industry will need DAH increases for the following species:

		(Amendment #4) <u>Current DAH</u>	<u>NMFS Projected 1983 DAH</u>	<u>Increase</u>
Pollock BS	JVP	64,000	120,000	56,000
Pollock AI	JVP	-0-	9,000	9,000
Other flatfish	JVP	10,000	14,000	4,000
Pacific Cod	JVP	17,065	26,000	8,935
	DAP	26,200	40,000	22,200
Pacific Ocean Perch AI	JVP	830	1,500	670
Atka Mackerel	JVP	14,500	20,000	5,500

In order to accommodate the domestic fishery, NMFS will withhold from the current TALFFs the amount necessary to meet the projected 1983 DAH. It is also still national policy to hold back a portion of the designated TALFF when initial foreign allocations are made in 1983. These two actions will ensure that enough groundfish are available for the domestic fishery in 1983.

Amendment #1, which will be in effect by 1984, will allow an annual determination of DAH to be made based on the most current information. Thus, a formal amendment to change the DAH figures in the FMP is not necessary.

Table 1, agenda item D-6a, shows the projected 1983 OY, DAH, Reserves, and available TALFF for all species and species groups in the Bering Sea/Aleutian Islands area.

## II. Status of FMP Amendments

There are six amendments under Secretarial Review or being prepared for Secretarial Review.

Amendment #1: Establishes a framework procedure for determining annual harvest levels and DAH. It was sent in to the Secretary on December 3, 1982.

Amendment #3: The prohibited species amendment. The Regional NMFS office has finished its review of the amendment and the supporting documents and the Council staff is preparing it for Secretarial Review. It will be submitted after the December Council meeting.

Amendment #4: Submitted for Secretarial Review on February 18, 1981, raises the DAH for pollock, yellowfin sole, other flatfish, atka mackerel and "other species", and increases the OY of Pacific cod from 78,700 mt to 120,000 mt. This amendment proposed to give the Regional Director of NMFS field order authority to adjust time-area closures for conservation reasons, however, the reviewers have recommended disapproval of this part because the amendment language and rationale did not fulfill NMFS guidelines for such authority. Council staff will rewrite the appropriate sections to conform to the review guidelines and resubmit this part for Secretarial approval. The rest of Amendment #4 has not yet been approved.

Amendment #5: Submitted for Secretarial Review on May 26, 1982, lowers the prohibited species catch of chinook salmon from 55,250 fish to 45,500 fish for the foreign trawl fisheries for 1983. This amendment to be effective should be implemented by January 1, 1983, but has not yet received Secretarial approval.

Amendment #6: The Council approved this amendment at the September meeting. It will create a fishery development zone north of Unimak Pass for exclusive use by U.S. fishermen. Council staff and the NMFS Regional office are preparing the amendment and supporting documentation for Secretarial Review.

Amendment #7: The Council approved this amendment at the September 1982 meeting. It will modify the requirement that foreign longliners fish deeper than 500 m from December 1 to May 31 in the Winter Halibut Savings Area. The restriction will be imposed only if the total foreign longline halibut by catch exceeds 105 mt. Council staff and the NMFS Regional office are preparing the amendment and supporting documentation for Secretarial Review.

## III. Status of Stocks

### A. Resource Assessment Documents (RAD)

The PMT is currently drafting a resource assessment document (RAD), which will provide the biological information on the target species and species groups in the Bering Sea. The RAD will provide the biological basis for setting total allowable catch levels (TACs) each year. The PMT will submit the RAD to the Council at the July 1983 meeting to begin the process for setting 1984 figures.

B. Status of Stocks

NMFS scientists have evaluated the status of the Bering Sea/Aleutian Islands groundfish stocks. Generally, the scientists report that groundfish stocks are considered to be in good or very good condition, except for Pacific ocean perch and sablefish, which are in poor condition.

TABLE 1  
1983 OY, DAH, Reserve, TALFF

	<u>OY</u>	<u>JVP</u>	<u>DAP</u>	<u>Reserve</u>	<u>TALFF</u>
Pollock BS	1,000,000	120,000	10,500	50,000	819,500
Pollock AI	100,000	9,000	-0-	-0-	91,000
Yellowfin sole	117,000	30,000	1,200	5,850	79,950
Turbots	90,000	75	1,000	4,500	84,425
Other flatfish	61,000	14,000	1,200	3,050	42,750
Pacific cod	120,000	26,000	40,000	6,000	48,000
Pacific ocean perch BS (see Table 2)	3,250	240	10	500	
Pacific ocean perch AI (see Table 2)	7,500	1,500	550	500	
Other rockfish	7,727	450	1,100	500	5,677
Sablefish BS	3,500	200	500	350	2,450
Sablefish AI	1,500	200	500	150	650
Atka mackerel	24,800	20,000	-0-	1,240	3,560
Squid	10,000	50	-0-	500	9,450
Other species	<u>77,314</u>	<u>6,000</u>	<u>1,800</u>	<u>3,866</u>	<u>65,648</u>
TOTAL	1,623,591	227,715	58,360	77,006	

TABLE 2  
Current Condition of Pacific Ocean Perch

	<u>FMP EY</u>	<u>1983 EY<sup>1/</sup></u>	<u>Possible 1983 OY<sup>2/</sup></u>
Bering Sea	6,500	1,700	850
Aleutian Islands	15,000	10,100	5,050

<sup>1/</sup> Bakkala, R. and L. Low (eds.). Condition of groundfish resources of the eastern Bering Sea and Aleutian Islands region in 1982. Unpubl. rep. NWAFC, NMFS, NOAA, 2725 Montlake Blvd. E., Seattle, WA 98112, p. 148

<sup>2/</sup> The FMP sets the OY equal to 50% of the EY.

(K)

1982 Japanese Allocation for POP in  
the BS Initial Allocation Breakdown

Vessel Class	No. of Vessel	Total Allocation	Allocation/Vessel
Mothership	6 (60)*	14.0	0.23
Large Trawler	26	123.9	4.77
Small Trawler	100	162.1	1.62
Longliner	22	7.0	0.32
Total	208	307.0	Av. 1.48

\* ( ) - Number of Catcher Boat

COMMENTS IN OPPOSITION TO PROPOSAL #241

NO. 241 PROPOSES TO "POSTPONE THE OPENING OF THE SABLEFISH FISHERY IN THE OUTSIDE DISTRICTS UNTIL MARCH 15, 1983."

The longline vessel ZENITH fishes year around for sablefish and rockfish in the Gulf of Alaska. From this position, the ZENITH owner-operators are opposed to #241 because:

1. It is based on erroneous information; and
2. It is not in the overall best interest of the still developing sablefish fishery.

The assumption that sablefish harvested in the early months of the year are "of lower quality/value" is not substantiated by actual prices offered in the marketplace. Sablefish caught by the ZENITH are exported to Japanese processors who are considered among the most "quality/value" conscious fish buyers in the world. The price indices below are shown to compare prices paid over the past year for ZENITH sablefish caught in Southeast Alaska. They reflect prices for all sablefish four pounds dressed weight and over, and are based on yen paid by the processors, therefore are not affected by exchange rate fluctuations.

Time Fish Caught:	<u>Sep-Nov</u>	<u>Jan-Mar</u>	<u>Apr-May</u>	<u>Jun-Jul</u>	<u>Jul-Aug</u>
Price Index:	71	83	84	82	84

In no way do the above figures indicate a difference in "quality/value" for fish caught during January through March.

It is true that some sablefish have a more "soft" or "jellied" texture than what is considered normal, but in Southeast Alaska fish not fit for sale are very few in number. On the ZENITH usually only one or two fish each day are discarded because they are too "soft" or "jellied". Also, this phenomena cannot only be attributed to or explained by the January and February spawning season. "Jellied" fish are caught throughout the year and various theories on the cause of this still remain. Depth at which the fish live and catching method are but two other theories.

The "jellied" fish problem has been exaggerated and is often used as an excuse for various situations. For example, one very reliable top producing Southeast Alaska boat made a sablefish trip this past July and delivered it to Seattle. When he arrived, the buyer refused the trip because it was "soft" or "jellied". However, the fisherman is sure the quality was fine and remains convinced the real reason the buyer reneged on his original offer was due to a weak market.

To fully develop the U. S. Sablefish fishery, more effort will be required to fully utilize the resource. If more effort cannot be justified because it is not considered economically viable, emphasis should be placed on improving financial return by increasing productivity. This would not require major capital outlays but may be accomplished by adjusting fishing technique and

learning new fishing grounds. Turning Southeast Alaska into a fair weather fishery would not be consistent with this approach and may reduce the incentive for fishermen to improve operating efficiency and productivity. If fishing the early months helps fill the quota by August, some good weather will be left with which to find new grounds. The harsh winter months have more limited fishable days so prospecting new fishing grounds can be accomplished more efficiently during the fair weather summer months.

#### SUMMARY

Proposal #241 is based on misleading information and offers a solution to a marketing problem which does not exist. Proposal #241 says not allowing fishing effort in Southeast Alaska during the early months "will improve the economic viability of the fishery", but it ignores the fact that Gulf-wide the sablefish resource is still underutilized by the U. S. fleet and requires more fishing effort not less. In actuality, the proposal will only serve to limit competition within a framework that will favor particular fishermen, while not providing any tangible benefits to the resource, consumer, or overall fishing industry.

Submitted by:

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