

DRAFT SUMMARY

North Pacific Fishery Management Teleconference November 14, 1994

On November 14, 1994, the North Pacific Fishery Management Council met by teleconference to receive reports on bycatch of king crab in groundfish fisheries in the Bristol Bay area and to determine whether emergency action was necessary to protect crab stocks. The Council was also scheduled to consider an increase in the VIP bycatch rate standards for the Bering Sea/Aleutian Islands other trawl category.

Council members participating in the teleconference:

Rick Lauber, Chair
Capt. Bill Anderson for RADM Rufe
Linda Behnken
David Fluharty
Ron Hegge
Bob Mace

Al Millikan for Robt. Turner
Steve Pennoyer
Wally Pereyra
Carl Rosier
Robin Samuelsen
Clem Tillion

The following persons participated in the call at several listening sites:

Lisa Lindeman, NOAA-GC
Chris Oliver, NPFMC
Dave Ackley, ADF&G
Dave Witherell, NPFMC
Sue Salvesson, NMFS-AKR
Jay Ginter, NMFS
Galen Tromble, NMFS
Joe Terry, NMFS-AFSC
Thorn Smith, NPLA
Chris Blackburn, AGDB
Lance Farr, ACC
Jim McManus, Trident
Gordon Blue, F/V Zolotoi
Fran Bennis, AMCC
Kaja Brix, NMFS-AKR
Ellen Varosi, NMFS-AKR
Arni Thomson, ACC
Tom Casey, AFCG
John Henderschedt, Golden Age Fisheries
Mike Petersen, NPF
Clyde Sterling, Peter Pan
Jerry Reeves, NMFS-AFSC
Brent Paine, UCB
Dave Fraser, F/V Muir Milach
Dave Benton, ADF&G
Earl Krygier, ADF&G
John Winther
Bill Coffey

Larry Cotter, Pacific Associates
Peggy Murphy, ADF&G
Ken Griffin, ADF&G
Jie Zheng
Brad Stevens, NMFS-RACE
Tom Pearson, NMFS
Dan Urban, ADF&G
Leslie J. Watson, ADF&G
Ludger Dochtermann, KLVOA
Richard Thummel, KLVOA
Linda Kozak, KLVOA
Al Burch, ADA
Mark Kandianis, Kodiak Fish Co.
Teresa Kandianis, Kodiak Fish Co.
John Pfeifer, Alaska Fisheries Report
Bruce Gnad, Diamond Head, Inc.
David Hillstrand, F/V Time Bandit
Paul Seaton, Homer
Max Mitchell, Homer
Mark Mikols, Homer
Mike Tolva, Homer
Debra Rehder, Homer
Jeff Stephan, UFMA
Bill English
Scott Highleyman, AMCC
Mako Haggerty, NPF
Bill Noll, Cold Sea Int'l

Crab Bycatch

In September, the Council received a status report on crab stocks from the Crab Plan Team. Results from the 1994 Eastern Bering Sea crab survey indicated that female red king crab abundance in Bristol Bay was below threshold. As a result, the State did not open the directed pot fishery for Bristol Bay red king crab, and prohibited fishing for Tanner crab east of 163°W longitude. In their report to the Council, the Crab Plan Team recommended that the red king crab PSC cap east of 163°W longitude be set at zero (which effectively eliminates trawling). The Council did not take action in September, but requested that additional data on crab bycatch in the groundfish fisheries in this area be provided for the teleconference, at which time the Council would make a recommendation on possible emergency action to close areas to groundfish trawling to protect red king crab.

The draft discussion paper, "An analysis of red king crab bycatch in the Bering Sea with alternatives for trawl closures," was prepared by ADF&G staff and mailed to Council members and listening sites before the conference. Dave Ackley briefly reviewed the discussion paper for Council members during the call and answered questions regarding the analysis.

Public comments were submitted in writing by the following people and organizations:

Golden Age Fisheries
John Hillstrand
Nancy Hillstrand
Olof Vedoy
Bruce Gnad
Debbie Rehder
Mike Tolva
David Hillstrand
Alaska Fisheries Conservation Group
Kodiak Fish Company
Johnathan Hillstrand

Alaska Crab Coalition
Pacific Northwest Crab Industry
Advisory Committee
Petition signed by 12 Sitka residents and
1 Anchorage resident to decrease all crab
bycatch in the Bering Sea
City of Unalaska
Dave Fraser
Gordon Blue
John Gauvin

The following people gave oral testimony on this subject:

Arni Thomson, ACC
Dave Fraser, F/V Muir Milach
Mark Kandianis, Kodiak Fish Co.
John Winther
Jeff Stephan, UFMA
John Henderschedt, Golden Age Fisheries
David Hillstrand
Bill Noll, Cold Sea Int'l
Gordon Blue, F/V Zolotov

Council Discussion/Action

During public comment, Arni Thomson, representing the Alaska Crab Coalition, told Council members that their organization supports an industry-negotiated closure for the area bounded by 56°10' to 57°N latitude and from 162° to 164°W longitude. This area would encompass a major area of king crab bycatch. Mr. Thomson said the analysis shows that areas to the southeast may involve more bycatch of *bairdi* and could increase halibut bycatch, but the industry compromise as a whole is acceptable for an emergency rule and the industry wants it in place for the 1995 season.

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Bob Mace moved to request an emergency rule based on the industry compromise as stated by Arni Thomson:

Close the areas bounded by 56° 10' to 57°N latitude and from 162° to 164°W longitude.

The motion was seconded by Wally Pereyra.

It was pointed out that other aspects of the industry compromise included:

- 100% observer coverage;**
- Daily catch reporting.**

Mr. Mace indicated these requirements would be included in the motion.

The Council discussed whether the motion should apply to all trawling or bottom trawling only. Capt. Anderson said that for enforcement purposes, a closure to all trawling in a specific area would be preferable—even with the 100% observer coverage.

Mr. Rosier pointed out that the issue is not just protection of red king crab, but that Tanner crab are also involved and that he feels the current motion does not do enough to promote conservation.

Carl Rosier moved to amend the motion to change the southern boundary to: 55° 45'N latitude. The motion was seconded by Linda Behnken.

Mr. Rosier cited the necessity of providing a "buffer" area in terms of redistribution of the fleet from the closed areas.

Dr. Pereyra said that the Council needs to begin to address the entire issue of crab, including predation, habitat, disease and handling mortality. He also suggested that the Council consider some kind of sliding cap which would move up and down along with abundance estimates.

Mr. Pennoyer said he agreed that the Council needs to take action to protect the king crab in the area, but extending the closure to 55°45'N would encompass a major portion of the area where the rocksole fleet operates and he is concerned about where that effort may shift to.

Linda Behnken moved to amend the motion to apply the closures to all trawling, based on comments made by Capt. Anderson regarding enforcement. The motion was seconded by Ron Hegge and carried 7 to 4, with Fluharty, Mace, Millikan and Pereyra voting no.

The Chair ruled that this amendment was to the entire motion, not just the previous amendment.

Mr. Rosier's motion to amend to 55° 45' carried, 6 to 5, with Fluharty, Mace, Millikan, Pennoyer and Pereyra voting no.

There was a question about the timing of the closure. It was clarified that it would be an emergency rule - effective for 90 days, renewable for another 90 days. Steve Pennoyer suggested that during the first 90 days the Council could review available information on possible impacts of the closures on other fisheries, for example, flatfish.

Mr. Pennoyer also requested clarification of the requirement of 100% observer coverage, pointing out that the majority of the rock sole fleet already is required to have 100% coverage.

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Linda Behnken said that her understanding is that the 100% observer coverage requirement would apply to all flatfish fisheries in areas 516 and 511, between 165° and 162°.

Linda Behnken moved that 100% observer coverage would apply to all flatfish fisheries between 162° and 165°W longitude, and south of 58°N latitude to protect crab in areas where there is a cap and other fisheries taking place. The motion was seconded by Ron Hegge.

Steve Pennoyer said he would prefer to split out the observer coverage provision and discuss it during the course of a regular Council meeting.

The amendment carried, 6 to 5, with Mace, Millikan, Pennoyer, Pereyra and Lauber voting no.

The main motion, as amended, carried, 7 to 4, with Fluharty, Millikan, Pereyra and Lauber voting no.

Summarized, the approved emergency rule has the following provisions:

1. Prohibit all trawling in the area from 162° to 164°W longitude, 55°45' to 57°N latitude.
2. Require 100% observer coverage with daily catch reporting on all trawlers fishing in Areas 511 and 516.

Other Trawl VIP Standards

At the September Council meeting, representatives from the trawl industry proposed a program to increase codend mesh sizes used in the rock sole fishery. The program would be voluntary, as mesh size regulations (and the related changes to the VIP other trawl category) recently adopted by the Council would not be in effect until about mid-1995. One reason fishermen have not voluntarily increased their mesh size in the past was the resulting possibility of exceeding VIP rate standards. As such, fishermen have requested the Council to consider increasing the bycatch rate standards for the BSAI other trawl category for the first half of 1995.

Sue Salvesson, NMFS-Alaska Region, briefly reviewed current VIP standards for the Other Trawl category. Dave Fraser, David Hillstrand, and Mark Kandianis testified on this subject.

Council Discussion/Action

Council members felt that they did not have enough information to take action at this time. Steve Pennoyer said he did not know what the effects would be of not taking action in view of the larger mesh sizes industry will use next year. Status quo will leave all fisheries in the "other trawl" category at the 30% rate.

Carl Rosier moved to table the issue for discussion at a regularly-scheduled Council meeting. The motion was seconded by Bob Mace and carried without objection. (Dr. Pereyra had left the teleconference before this vote was taken.)

The teleconference was concluded at approximately 12:29 p.m.