

# North Pacific Fishery Management Council

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NEWSLETTER

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## Groundfish And Tanner Crab Highlight Meeting

The Council met in Anchorage March 17-19 and approved the proposed Amendment 10 to the Bering Sea and Aleutian Islands Groundfish Plan to go to public review. The Council also reviewed a new draft fishery management plan for the Gulf of Alaska groundfish fishery. They'll review it once more in June before sending the plan to public review during the summer. Concerning Tanner crab, the Council reworked the crab bycatch limits recommended in January for trawl fisheries in the Eastern Bering Sea. The Council went on to recommend suspending the federal regulations that manage the directed pot fishery for Tanner crab. These and other items are discussed in this newsletter.

## Council Will Meet In Kodiak In June

The next Council meeting is scheduled for the week of June 23 at the Elk's Lodge in Kodiak. The Council probably will convene on Wednesday, June 25. The Advisory Panel and Scientific and Statistical Committee will start in the late afternoon on Sunday, June 22, and continue through Tuesday.

At the meeting the Council will give final consideration to the proposed Amendment 10 to the Bering Sea Groundfish FMP and approve the Gulf of Alaska Groundfish FMP rewrite to go out for public review. The Council will also review progress on the sablefish fishery in the Bering Sea to determine when the directed fishery should be closed. A new joint venture policy will be sent out for public review. A more definitive schedule and draft agenda for the meeting should be available by June 6.

## Council Sets Tentative Meeting Dates For 1987

The Council approved the following tentative meeting dates for 1987, all to be held in Anchorage to conserve funds:

Week of January 19, 1987  
Week of March 16, 1987  
Week of May 18, 1987  
Week of September 21, 1987  
Week of December 7, 1987

The remaining three meetings for 1986 are scheduled as follows:

Week of June 23, 1986 (Kodiak)  
Week of September 22, 1986 (Anchorage)  
Week of December 8, 1986 (Anchorage)

### Workgroup To Focus On Americanization Of The Fisheries

The Council reviewed a proposal from the Pacific Seafood Processors Association that would amend the Magnuson Fishery Conservation and Management Act (MFCMA) to include the following:

1. a legislatively mandated end to foreign fishing off Alaska by 1988;
2. a legislatively mandated ceiling on joint venture allocations off Alaska; and
3. a reaffirmation of the existing processor preference section.

The Council directed its MFCMA Reauthorization Committee to review the proposal at a public hearing on the evening of March 19. After considering public comment, the Committee agreed that the Council should appoint an industry workgroup to study the Americanization of the North Pacific groundfish fisheries. The Council adopted this recommendation and appointed a workgroup composed of industry representatives and directed it to report recommendations on the Americanization of the groundfish fisheries to the Council at its June 23-27, 1986 meeting in Kodiak. The workgroup has been charged to give special consideration to Council-established phase out dates for foreign fishing and foreign processing established on a fishery-by-fishery, or species, basis. The workgroup will consult with members of the various sectors of the fishing industry and focus on specific phase out mechanisms.

### Domestic Observer Program

The Council reviewed state and federal efforts to establish a program for placing observers on domestic fishing vessels off Alaska. There has been no final word on the NMFS Alaska Region's request for \$250,000 to fund a pilot domestic observer program. The State of Alaska legislature is considering CSHB 355 that would authorize the Commissioner of Fish and Game to implement an observer program for vessels registered to the State of Alaska. That bill is currently before committees in the State House of Representatives.

### Sablefish Management

The Council Sablefish Management Committee reported the results of its March 19, 1986 meeting. The Committee decided that it should focus on alternate management systems for all Gulf of Alaska and Bering Sea domestic groundfish fisheries rather than just the Gulf of Alaska sablefish fishery (its original charge from the Council). The Committee recommended, as a first step, that Council staff be directed to prepare a questionnaire to solicit ideas from the industry on the direction of groundfish management. Information from the questionnaire will be the basis for public meetings the Committee intends to conduct throughout the state. The Committee cautioned those presently in the domestic groundfish fisheries that implementation of any management scheme other than the status quo could take several years. The Council adopted the Committee's recommendations and directed its staff to prepare a questionnaire to be submitted for Council approval before dissemination to the fishing industry.

### Council Holds Teleconference With Board Of Fisheries On Crab

For purposes of joint management of Alaska's Tanner crab and Bering Sea/Aleutian Islands king crab fisheries, the Council held a teleconference with the Alaska Board of Fisheries to discuss the future of the Tanner crab FMP, 1986-87 shellfish regulatory proposals, and emergency groundfish trawl closures to protect king crab in the westward region. The Board recommended that the Council withdraw the Tanner crab FMP given its history of regulatory inconsistencies and the inability of federal managers to respond rapidly to changes in the fishery. They suggested that a joint statement of principles between the Council and Board be prepared for management of this fishery whereby the state would manage the fishery with federal oversight.

A review of Board action on king and Tanner crab proposals produced only a few regulatory changes that require modification to the federal Tanner crab regulations. However, with the future of the Tanner crab FMP still undecided, development of a plan amendment incorporating the changes in regulations will be delayed pending further action on the plan itself.

The Council also reviewed with the Board the Council action taken in January for an emergency groundfish trawl closure in the Gulf of Alaska. The closure prohibits the use of hard-on-bottom trawl gear in the Chirikof Island, Alitak Flats, Towers, Barnabus, and Marmot Flats areas around Kodiak Island to protect king crab during their reproductive period. The closure was implemented after the January meeting and will expire on June 15, 1986. The Board believes that poor status of the king crab stocks in these areas warrant more conservative action. The Board therefore adopted year-round closures of state waters to hard-on-bottom trawling within these same five sensitive areas as well as other state waters in specified areas along the west side of the island, the southern side of the Alaska Peninsula and the eastern Aleutians. The Council requested that an industry workgroup be organized that can develop long-term solutions to the Kodiak bottom trawl/crab bycatch problem with their report available by the June meeting.

### Seattle King Crab Hearing Will Be Retained

The Bering Sea/Aleutian Islands King Crab Fishery Management Plan requires that a joint Council/Board of Fisheries public hearing be held in Seattle each year to provide opportunity for non-Alaskans to testify on important crab issues. These hearings have been poorly attended in the past and many of the same people have testified again at Board and Council meetings in Alaska. The Council considered amending the FMP to make the hearing discretionary rather than mandatory, but Seattle area residents feel strongly about retaining the hearing. The Council agreed to retain the mandatory meeting, but has stated that to reduce costs the hearing may be conducted via teleconference. Other cost saving options also may be explored.

The Council also discussed the status of the king crab FMP and the proposed delegation of management authority to the state. The Governor has not yet accepted this delegation and there is no definite indication of when or if he will. Two of the main issues bearing on the decision include the State's financial status and limitations on the State's flexibility in managing the fishery.

### Council Recommends Suspending Federal Tanner Crab Regulations

Following a review of the Tanner Crab Fishery Management Plan and the inflexibility of the federal regulatory system to respond quickly to changes in the fishery, the Council voted to suspend federal regulations. With Tanner crab seasons becoming increasingly short because of declining stock abundance and high effort, the Council believes this action is necessary to eliminate inconsistencies between state and federal regulations which have led to overharvests in some areas. As a result of this action, State of Alaska Tanner crab regulations will govern the fishery.

During their deliberations the Council approved a work schedule calling for preparation of a draft joint statement of principles between the Council and the Alaska Board of Fisheries and a discussion paper (due by the June meeting) which will explore possible long-term alternatives with regard to the future of the Tanner Crab FMP. These alternatives will include an FMP that delegates management responsibility to the state, a framework FMP that eliminates the procedural problems of the existing plan, and possibly a joint statement of principles without a FMP. Depending on which alternative is selected, an amendment to the Tanner Crab FMP and its regulations could be prepared for the Council's 1987 crab amendment cycle.

### Action On Salmon FMP Delayed

Since the Salmon FMP was last amended in 1981, several major changes have occurred that need to be reflected in the FMP. The most important of these are related to ratification of the U.S./Canada Pacific Salmon Treaty, which in some ways has diminished the need for an FMP. The Council is in the process of determining what role they should take in management of the Alaska salmon fisheries and has directed the Plan Team to draft a set of alternative approaches and their implications. These options will be sent out for public comment, after which the Council will make their decision. NMFS will make the initial cut at drafting alternatives which will then be fully evaluated by the Salmon Plan Team and the SSC prior to initiation of the comment period.

The main alternatives are as follows:

1. A major plan overhaul to update biological and socioeconomic sections and to framework management sections.
2. Update the biological and socioeconomic sections but make minimal changes to the management sections to bring them into conformance with the Treaty and MFCMA.
3. Delegate management authority to the State.
4. Withdraw the FMP.

Council Gives Further Direction On Revising  
The Gulf Of Alaska Groundfish FMP

The Gulf of Alaska Groundfish Plan Team reviewed progress on revising the Gulf of Alaska Groundfish FMP and described how the optimum yield framework would operate. The new plan will provide improved guidance to managers and the fishing industry, be easier to read, and incorporate efficient rule-making procedures to allow rapid Council and NMFS reaction to changes in the fishery. The Council also reviewed a new set of draft goals and objectives for the plan. Following discussion, the Council accepted the draft objectives for purposes of continued plan development. The draft plan and its goals will be available for public review after the June Council meeting. In September the Council will take final action on the plan; Secretarial implementation is scheduled for 1987.

Bering Sea Sablefish Fishery To Remain Open

By March 15 U.S. fishermen targeting sablefish in the Bering Sea had harvested 960 mt, over half the annual quota for the area. If fishing effort remains high, the current apportionment of 1,826 mt to the directed fisheries could be reached by early June. The Council recommended that the Regional Director increase the directed apportionment as necessary to keep the fishery open until the Council's June meeting. At that time the Council will review the status of the fishery and decide when directed fishing should be stopped so that enough fish will remain for bycatch fisheries.

Bering Sea Amendment 10 Approved For Public Review

The Council approved Amendment 10 to the Bering Sea Groundfish Fishery Management Plan for public review. It addresses four main issues:

1. Reallocations of groundfish within DAH.
2. Field order authority to manage conservation emergencies by adjusting harvest levels and seasons.
3. Limiting bycatches of prohibited and fully U.S.-utilized species.
4. Priority access to important stocks for U.S. fish processors through the use of time and area closures.

The plan team will edit the environmental and regulatory impact analyses associated with Amendment 10 and incorporate Council and SSC suggestions before sending the package out to public review. One significant change from the earlier draft is an added provision for modifying foreign prohibited species catch ceilings.

A notice of availability will be circulated shortly after mid-April to commence a 30-day public review period. The Council will take final action in June and forward the amendment for Secretarial review. Changes will be in effect for 1987.

Please contact Jim Glock at the Council office if you would like more information on this amendment package.

Bering Sea Trawl Closure Revised

At the January meeting the Council approved a closure to protect depressed Tanner and king crab stocks in the Eastern Bering Sea and established limits on the number of crabs that could be taken by the joint venture yellowfin sole/flounder fishery. The bycatch limit of C. bairdi was based on erroneous data presented at that meeting and the Council found it necessary to reconsider the limit. They approved an Advisory Panel Committee report that recommended the following objectives and bycatch limits for three separate zones, as follows:

To manage fishery activity in the Bering Sea, specifically bottom flatfish (yellowfin sole and other flounders) trawling and crab pot fishing, in a manner which emphasizes conservation and rebuilding of the crab resource while, to the extent possible, allowing both bottom flatfish trawling and crab pot fishery activity.

In accordance with this objective (shown in the attached chartlet) the three areas will be established to control the bycatch of C. bairdi. The boundaries of each area along with measures applicable to that area are:

Zone 1 is that area of 165°W long. and south of 58°N lat. exclusive of that area between 160° and 162°W long. In this area there is a bycatch cap of 80,000 C. bairdi in the joint venture flounder/yellowfin sole fishery based on a bycatch rate of two C. bairdi per metric ton of flounders. All joint venture flounder/yellowfin sole fishing must stop in Zone 1 once that cap or the cap of 135,000 red king crab from the January Council decision is reached, whichever comes first. Joint venture trawling is still prohibited in that area between 160° and 162° south of 58°.

Zone 2 is that area bounded to the east by 165°W long. from the shoreline north to 58°N lat. The northern boundary is 58°N from 165°W long. west to 171°W long. then extending northward along 171°W long. to 60°N lat. then west to 179°E long. The southern and eastern boundary is a straight diagonal line extending from the intersection of 179°E long., 60°N lat. to the intersection of 167°W long., 54°30'N lat. then following

54°30'N lat. to shore. In Zone 2, there is a joint venture bycatch cap of 326,000 C. bairdi Tanner crab based on a bycatch rate of 2.25 crab per metric ton of flounder. Once this cap is reached, all joint venture and directed foreign flounder and yellowfin sole fishing must stop in Zone 2. Zones 1 and 2 encompass approximately 98% of the known C. bairdi population according to 1984 and 1985 NMFS trawl survey estimates.

Zone 3 - This zone is the remainder of the FCZ in the Eastern Bering Sea. There is no bycatch limit of crab in this zone.

A bycatch ceiling of 64,000 C. bairdi Tanner crab for the foreign fishery in the Eastern Bering Sea will also be established.

An increased DAP fishery for flounder is expected to harvest about 11,000 mt in 1986, but the bycatch of crab is expected to be negligible. Although observers will not be required on board domestic vessels, the Council expects DAP operations to voluntarily modify their operations if their bycatch of C. bairdi exceeds the limits imposed on the joint venture trawlers. The joint venture trawlers will be directly monitored and will be required to leave the zone in which they are fishing if their bycatch exceeds the specified limits, on average, for three consecutive weeks.

The Council will recommend that a 1986 directed C. bairdi pot fishery be allowed if the results of the NMFS trawl survey confirm a population at least as great as the anticipated 72 million crabs.

The Emergency Rule being prepared by NMFS is expected to differ from the Council's January and March recommendations in the following ways:

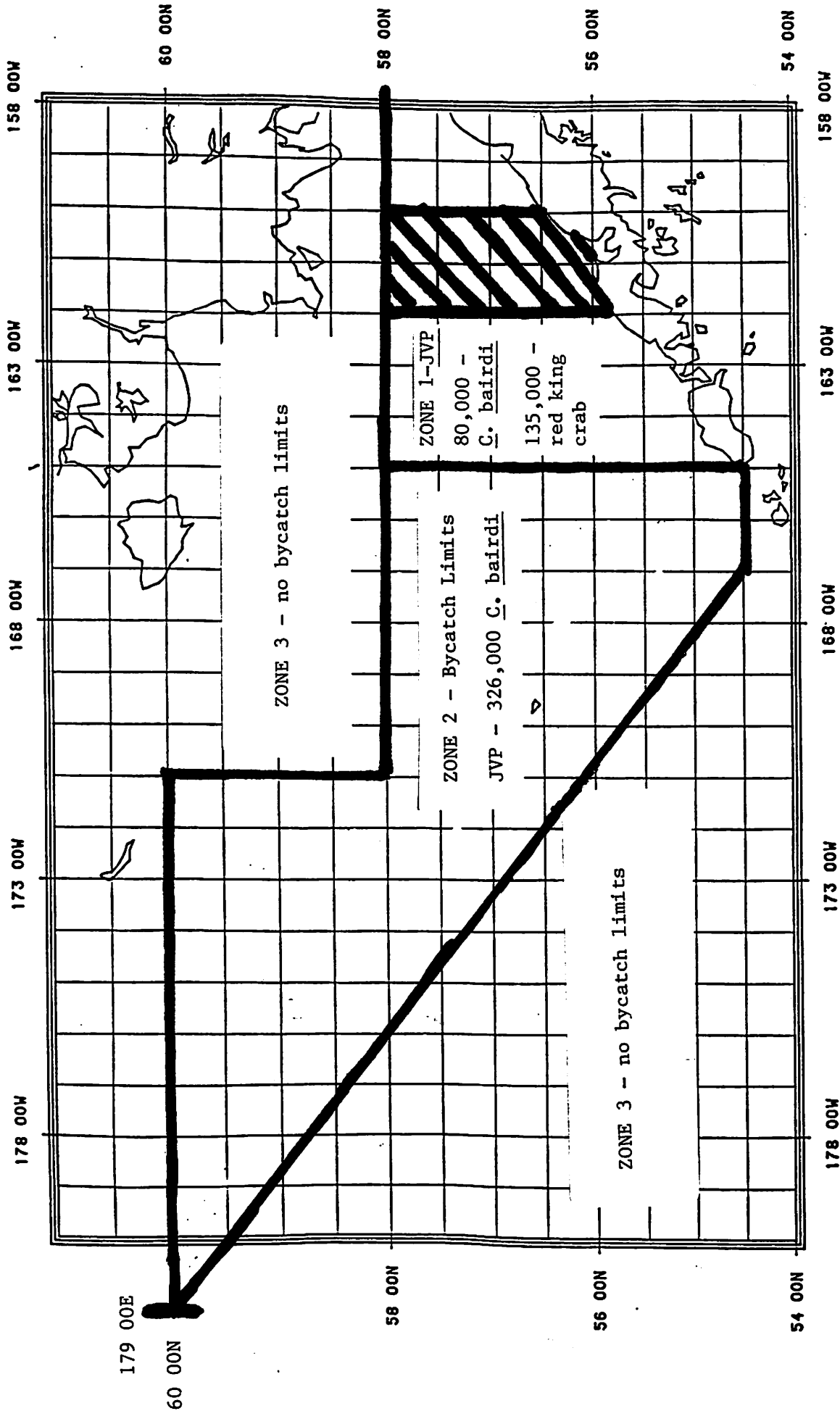
1. No halibut limits are established.
2. Only trawl fisheries are excluded from the closed areas.
3. The closed area extends south to the Alaska Peninsula and includes the area shallower than 25 fathoms.
4. No king crab limit is established for the area north of 58°N and west of 165°W.
5. No observers are required on DAP vessels east of 160°W.

#### Joint Venture Update

The total joint venture catch off Alaska through March 1 was 111,000 mt. This included 52,000 mt pollock from the Gulf of Alaska, and 50,000 mt pollock and 7,300 mt Pacific cod from the Bering Sea and Aleutians. Of the eighteen joint venture operations that have commenced fishing this year, ten operated in Shelikof Strait from the opening on February 15 through early March. The Shelikof fishery generally was scattered and for the most part lackluster. However, fishing in the Unimak area was excellent. Because of this, several companies that had planned to fish Shelikof bypassed it in favor of the Bering Sea.

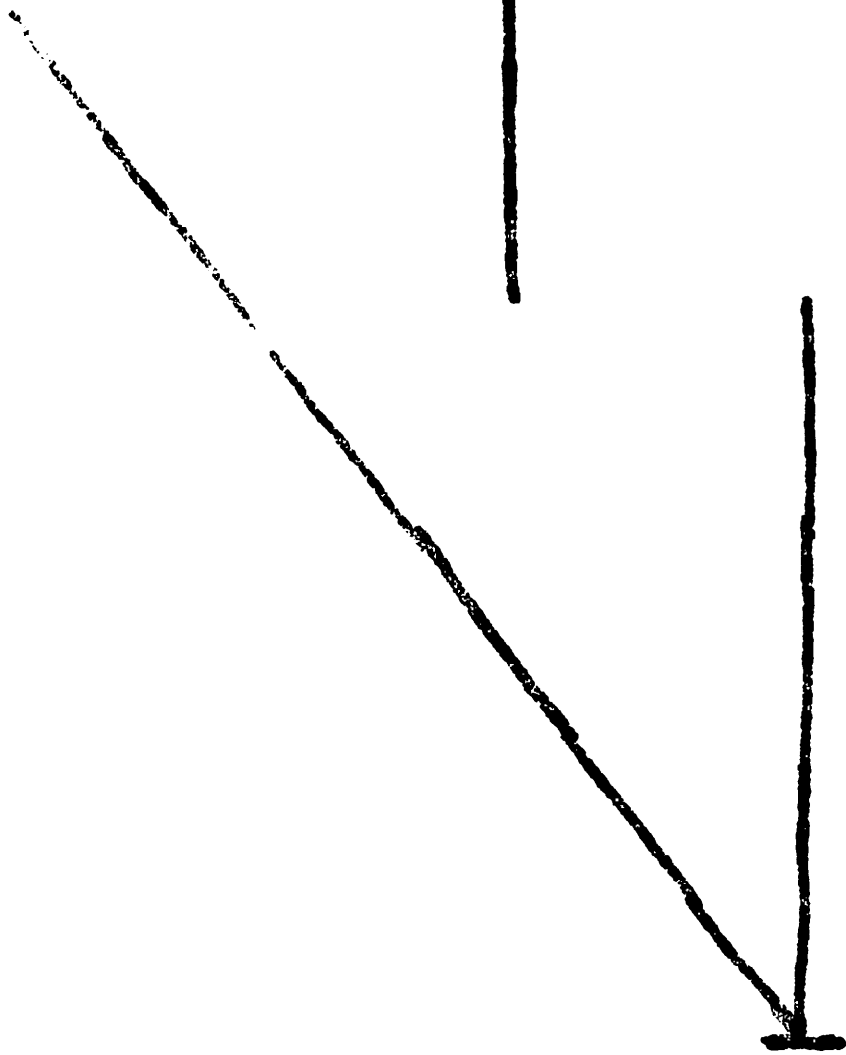
NMFS reported to the Council on their efforts to develop joint venture bycatch guidelines for fully U.S.-utilized species such as rockfish, Pacific ocean perch and sablefish, and prohibited species such as crab, halibut, and salmon. The Council had earlier requested that guidelines be established for each joint venture operation. NMFS has developed guideline procedures for the Bering Sea and shortly will be working on the Gulf of Alaska. In the meantime the Council will be appointing a workgroup to overhaul the Council's Policy on Joint Ventures to possibly include company-by-company allocations of target and bycatch species. A draft revised policy will be available for Council review in June and go to public review over the summer. The Council will take final action in September and regulations will be in effect for the 1987 fishing year.

ZONES RECOMMENDED BY COUNCIL TO LIMIT LARGER CRAB BYCATCH IN THE EASTERN BERING SEA.



Foreign bycatch limit in the Eastern Bering Sea is 64,000 C. bairdi.





Domestic Fisheries Activities

The winter troll chinook fishery opened October 1, 1985 and will continue through April 14, 1986. The harvest through February was about 20,000 salmon. The 1985-86 troll harvest is projected to reach 30,000 fish, some 7,000 fish above the 23,000 winter harvest last year.

Tanner crab harvests through March 9 total 44,840,000 pounds as follows:

<u>Area</u>	<u>Harvest</u> (thousand lbs.)
Southeast	1,000
Yakutat	---
P.W.S.	500
Cook Inlet	2,600
Kodiak	8,862
Chignik	43
S. Peninsula	3,777
E. Aleutians	81
W. Aleutians	126
Bering Sea	
C. bairdi	---
C. opilio	<u>28,000</u>
TOTAL	44,989

The total groundfish catch by U.S. fishermen delivering to U.S. processors was 12,914 mt by March 10. This includes 2,437 mt pollock, 1,542 mt sablefish, 7,961 mt Pacific cod, 661 mt flounders, 54 mt Pacific ocean perch, and 210 mt other rockfish. The pot and longline sablefish fishery in the Gulf of Alaska begins April 1 and considerable effort is expected.

Foreign Fisheries Update

By March 20 foreign fleets off Alaska harvested 28,154 mt of groundfish. In the Bering Sea and Aleutian Islands harvests included 9,800 mt pollock and 5,800 mt Pacific cod. In the Gulf of Alaska a directed foreign fishery (by Japanese longliners) is allowed only on Pacific cod. The harvest was 11,453 mt.

Foreign allocations now total 200,540 mt of which 153,669 mt (77%) went to Japan; 39,462 mt (20%) to South Korea; 2,917 mt (1%) each to Poland and China; and 1,575 mt (0.8%) to Taiwan. Pollock, cod, yellowfin sole and flounders make up the bulk of these allocations. As of mid-March there were 88 foreign vessels in the waters off Alaska, 47 from Japan, 24 from Korea, 9 from the USSR, 7 from Poland, and 1 from China.

Coast Guard Reports On Enforcement Activities

The U.S. Coast Guard reported that enforcement efforts through March 10 totalled 57 cutter days and 232 aircraft patrol hours covering 2.3 million square miles of ocean. Enforcement efforts resulted in the issuance of ten reports of violation and five written warnings. Most of the infractions were for violation of new regulations, both for foreign and domestic fishing vessels.

Specific violations included written warnings to two Polish stern trawlers for failure to submit the required activity message 24 hours prior to beginning or ceasing to fish in the FCZ; a written warning to a Japanese longliner for failure to accurately maintain its daily catch log; and a written warning to two South Korean stern trawlers for failure to have on board an accurate set of vessel plans.

Reports of violation were issued to a South Korean processor for failure to log product recovery rates on a daily basis and failure to accurately maintain the daily joint venture log. A Japanese longliner was issued a report of violation for failure to have on board an accurate set of vessel plans; and three U.S. processors were issued reports of violation for failure to submit vessel activity and weekly catch reports as required. One of the U.S. processors was also written up for failure to provide a safe boarding ladder. A Japanese longliner was issued a report of violation for discharging oily water over the side, and two reports of violation were issued for failure to accurately maintain the daily joint venture log and report the amount of fishery product on board upon commencement of fishing operations within the U.S. FCZ; the country and vessels were not identified in the report.

The Coast Guard reported that the level of enforcement activity in Alaska thus far in 1986 is equal to about half of the effort provided during the first three months of last year. The Coast Guard enforcement efforts for the remainder of the year are expected to remain at a lower level because of budget constraints.

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Specific violations included written warnings to two Polish state travelers for failure to submit the required activity messages. A large portion of the violation activity was reported to a Japanese traveler for failure to accurately maintain his daily activity log; and a written warning to two South Korean state travelers for failure to have an accurate set of vessel logs.

Reports of violations were issued to a South Korean processor for failure to log products, activity rates on a daily basis and failure to accurately maintain the daily activity log. A Japanese longliner was issued a report of violation for failure to have an accurate set of vessel logs; and three U.S. processors were issued reports of violation for failure to submit vessel activity and weekly catch reports as required. One of the U.S. processors was also warned up for failure to provide a safe boarding ladder. Japanese longliner was issued a report of violation for failure to submit a report of the day's catch and two reports of violation were issued for failure to accurately maintain the daily activity log and report the amount of fish caught. The board was commended of fishing operations within the U.S. EEZ; the company and vessels were not identified in the report.

The Coast Guard reported that the level of enforcement activity in Alaska this year in 1992 is equal to that of the effort provided during the first three months of last year. The Coast Guard enforcement effort for the remainder of the year are expected to remain at a lower level because of budget constraints.

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