

# North Pacific Fishery Management Council

John G. Peterson, Chairman  
Clarence G. Pautzke, Executive Director

605 West 4th Avenue  
Anchorage, Alaska 99501

#4-88



NEWSLETTER

Mailing Address: P.O. Box 103136  
Anchorage, Alaska 99510

Telephone: (907) 271-2809  
FAX (907) 271-2817

10/7/88

## Bering Sea Bycatch Plan Dominates September Meeting

The Council met September 28 through October 1 in Anchorage to review two plan amendment packages, one dealing with sablefish season opening dates in the Gulf of Alaska, and the other a proposed bycatch plan for the Bering Sea and Aleutian Islands. During the 4-day meeting the Council also received reports on the status of groundfish stocks in the Gulf of Alaska and Bering Sea and Aleutian Islands and approved for public review the preliminary 1989 groundfish harvest quotas. Other items discussed include the draft Bering Sea/Aleutian Islands Crab Fishery Management Plan and sablefish bycatch in the Bering Sea. The Council deferred action on proposed sablefish management alternatives until their December meeting in order to allow more time for discussion and public testimony. Details of these and other Council actions are found in this newsletter.

At their December 5-9 meeting, the Council will review comments received on the proposed groundfish quotas and will receive an update on the status of stocks before setting final 1989 harvest quotas. They will also review requests for joint venture allocations and consider approval of two halibut allocative measures.

## Council Elects New Chairman and Vice Chairman

Council members elected John Peterson and John Winther as Chairman and Vice Chairman, respectively, for the next twelve months. Mr. Peterson hails from Washington State and is a retired executive from the seafood processing industry. He was first appointed to the Council in 1984 and serves on the Council's Permit Review, Bycatch and Finance Committees. John Winther, a member of the Council since 1983, is a long-time Alaska fisherman and a director of Icicle Seafoods. He is the current chairman of the Council's Finance Committee and serves on the Permit Review, Crab Management, and Domestic Observer Committees.

## Council Appointments

Oscar Dyson of Kodiak, Alaska, has been appointed to his second three-year term on the Council. Mr. Dyson, owner of All Alaska Seafood Company, has been involved in the fishing business over 40 years and in Alaska fisheries policy-making almost as long. Bob Alverson of Seattle and Tony Knowles of Anchorage have been appointed to their first three-year Council term. Mr. Alverson has been a member of the Council's Advisory Panel since its inception in 1976, serving as its Chairman for five years and Vice Chairman for the past two years. He is the Director of the Fishing Vessel Owners' Association in Seattle. Mr. Knowles, a businessman involved in government and civic affairs in Anchorage since he arrived in 1962, served as Anchorage's mayor for six years.

Council Issues Call for AP and SSC Nominations

The Council is now calling for nominations to its Advisory Panel and Scientific and Statistical Committee. The current one-year AP terms and two-year SSC terms expire in December. Incumbents will be asked to indicate whether they wish to serve another term and may be reappointed. Resumes for persons wishing to be considered for AP and SSC membership should be received at the Council office by 5:00 p.m., November 7. Please send them to the attention of Judy Willoughby, North Pacific Fishery Management Council, P.O. Box 103136, Anchorage, Alaska 99510. The Council will make appointments to both panels in December, effective January 1989.

Bycatch Plan Adopted for Bering Sea and Aleutians

Over the past year the Council has been struggling with a bycatch control plan for incidental harvest of C. bairdi Tanner crab, red king crab, and Pacific halibut in groundfish fisheries of the Bering Sea/Aleutian Islands. A bycatch amendment to the BS/AI groundfish management plan was approved at the September meeting, accommodating a wide variety of concerns of both the groundfish fleet and crab and halibut fishermen.

If approved by the Secretary of Commerce, bycatch limits for 1989 in the groundfish fishery will be:

<u>C. bairdi</u> :	846,500 crabs in Zone 1
	1,988,500 crabs in Zone 2
Red king crab:	135,000 crabs in Zone 1
Halibut:	3,300 mt of catch for the entire BS/AI

The bycatch limits will be apportioned to four fisheries: joint venture (JVP) flatfish fisheries (including yellowfin sole, rock sole, and other flatfish), other JVP fisheries, U.S. processed (DAP) flatfish fisheries, and other DAP fisheries. When a fishery reaches its crab bycatch apportionment, bottom trawling in that fishery will be closed in the appropriate zone. When a fishery reaches its halibut bycatch apportionment, bottom trawling in that fishery will be closed in Areas 511, 513, and 515 (Zones 1 and 2H). The bottom trawl closure pertains to just pollock and Pacific cod if the fishery attaining its crab or halibut bycatch limit is other than for flatfish. Figure 1 illustrates the zones that will be closed. The crab and halibut protection zone (160° to 162°W, south of 58°N) will remain closed, except for the Port Moller 25 fathom exemption for totally-U.S. (DAP) Pacific cod trawling.

During this next year, NMFS will review a more comprehensive bycatch proposal forwarded by an ad hoc group of the Council's Bycatch Committee. NMFS is expected to report back to the Council by June or September 1989 with a bycatch management proposal to account for and control the bycatch of specific groundfish target fisheries. If approved by the Council, such a comprehensive plan could be in effect by the 1990 fishing year.

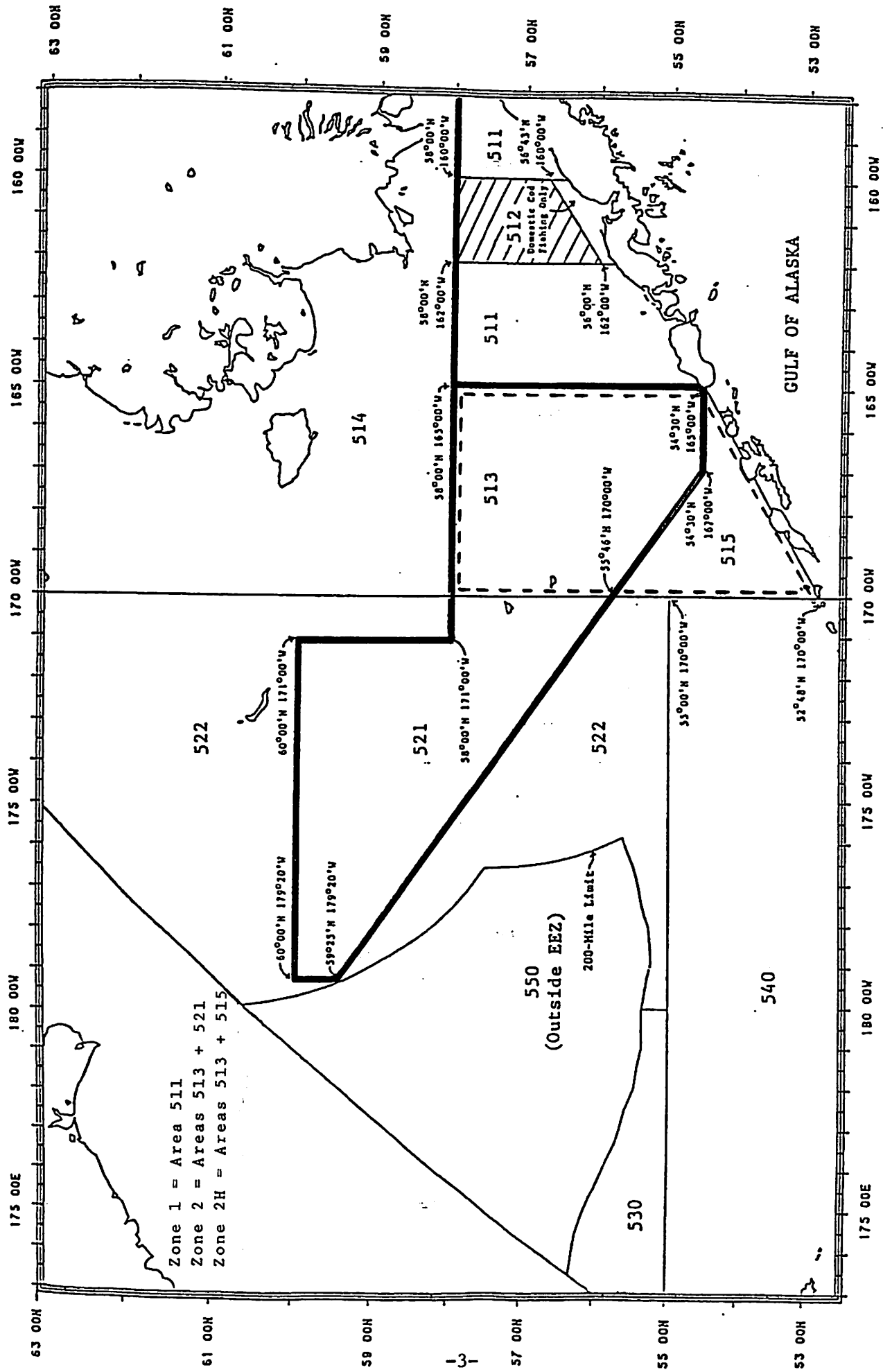


Figure 1: Zones in BS/AI for control of crab and halibut bycatch (Amendment 12a).

National Marine Fisheries Service Reports on  
Crab Resources in the Bering Sea

The 1988 Bering Sea crab survey consisted of 396 successful bottom trawl tows covering an area of approximately 141,000 square nautical miles. The survey results, which covered virtually all commercial crab fishing grounds with the exception of golden king crab, are summarized below:

Red king crab, Bristol Bay and Pribilof Districts. There are an estimated 6.4 million legal males, down 19% from last year. Pre-recruit crab declined significantly to 53% of the previous level and are now at an historical low. The estimated abundance of large female crabs in Bristol Bay showed no significant change from 1987 to 1988 and now stands at 15.7 million animals. The estimated abundance of small females decreased to 17% of last year's estimate, but as with legal male, the decrease was not significant due to high variance of the estimates.

Blue king crab, Pribilof Islands. There are an estimated 196,000 legal males, a decrease of 73% from 1987 to 1988. No pre-recruits were caught. The adult portion of this stock appears to have essentially disappeared; the range of legal males appears to have contracted, as they were captured at only three stations in this district as opposed to 11 last year. Juvenile recruitment may be occurring but is questionable. This population is now at an historical low level and the fishery will not be opened in 1988.

Blue king crab, St. Matthew Islands, Northern District. There are an estimated 833,000 legal crabs and no significant change from 1987. The population of pre-recruits also remained stable. Overall, the population is characterized as stable but poor.

Tanner crab, *C. bairdi*. Estimated abundance of legal *C. bairdi* in the Southeast and Pribilof districts is 14.4 million crabs, a 240% increase over 1987 levels; although this increase was not statistically significant, associated increases in other size and sex groups indicate that it is a biologically important change. Both pre-recruits and large females showed increases of 290% and 220%, respectively.

Tanner crab, *C. opilio*. Estimated abundance of large males is 171 million crabs, a 13%, but statistically insignificant, increase from 1987. Overall, total males showed no significant change, but small females decreased by 58%. Size frequency data indicate that recruitment to the fishery may continue to improve in the near term.

Hair crab. There are an estimated 550,000 large males, a decrease of 55% from 1987. In contrast, the estimated abundance of small males shows an increase of 100% from 1987. The female population showed no significant change from the previous year.

The detailed written report concerning crab resources submitted to the Council was prepared by B. G. Stevens, R. A. MacIntosh, and K. L. Stahl-Johnson at the Kodiak Island Laboratory, NMFS/NOAA, P.O. Box 1638, Kodiak, AK 99615.

### Bering Sea/Aleutian Islands Crab Plan Delayed Until January

At the request of the Crab Management Committee, the Council delayed taking final action on the Bering Sea/Aleutian Islands King and Tanner Crab Fishery Management Plan (FMP) until January to allow staff time to incorporate several changes to the FMP and its supporting analyses. The Committee met September 26-27 to review agency and public comments on the FMP package. The State of Alaska had several concerns with the proposed plan, many of which were addressed by the Committee in its recommendations to the Council. However, the treatment in the plan of several management measures, specifically pot limits, registration areas, and closed waters, still remains an issue. Further public comment will be taken between now and the January Council meeting. A revised FMP package should be available for public review in late November.

### Council to Consider Halibut Management Proposals

The Council reviewed 21 proposals with allocative implications for the halibut fishery off Alaska and took action as follows:

Limited access -- In response to sixteen proposals for license limitation or share quota systems, the Council decided to begin a gradual exploration of possible limited access alternatives for the halibut fishery, an approach similar to that currently being taken for sablefish. It will include questionnaires to fishermen and processors on appropriate limited access systems and possibly workshops to assess industry interest.

Gear limitation -- Proposals for skate limits were referred to the International Pacific Halibut Commission for their determination of whether such management controls are necessary for conservation reasons.

Landing restrictions -- One proposal requested that landing restrictions be established to assure that the quality of halibut landed is safeguarded. The Council expressed concern over the quality of halibut landings, but voted to encourage the appropriate agencies within the State of Alaska to take legislative or regulatory action to improve the quality of landed halibut.

Area 4B -- A proposal from Atka fishermen requested a series of short openings in Area 4B (Aleutian Islands) within a catch limit of 500,000 pounds, prior to a regularly scheduled opening of the area by the IPHC. The Council directed the Halibut Management Team to analyze the effects of this proposal, particularly as they related to allocative impacts on local and non-local vessels. A draft analysis will be available by November; the Council will take final action on the proposal at its meeting in December.

Area 4C -- Last year the Council approved a trip limit system near the Pribilof Islands whereby vessels could only land 10,000 pounds each trip until 50% of the area catch limit was taken and 20,000 pounds per trip thereafter. This year Pribilof Island fishermen have requested that the system be amended to limit trips to 10,000 pounds until 80% of the area catch limit is taken. The Council has directed the Halibut Management Team to analyze this proposal, with a final decision scheduled for December.

The Council's intent in further processing the Area 4B and 4C proposals is to only consider those management proposals that are primarily allocative between groups of fishermen. Other management considerations for halibut fisheries will continue to be taken up by the International Pacific Halibut Commission, whose annual meeting will be held January 24 - 27, 1989 in Vancouver, British Columbia.

Council Wants Public Comment on Groundfish  
Harvest Levels and Industry Needs

The Council heard plan team reports on the status of groundfish stocks off Alaska. The information is preliminary and will be updated by December. The big surprise in the Gulf of Alaska this year is pollock. Preliminary results from the 1988 Shelikof hydroacoustic survey produced an estimate of 330,000 mt which indicates a continued decline in pollock biomass and is substantially below the most pessimistic projection from 1987. The team noted that the biomass estimate from the 1987 bottom trawl survey in the Gulf of Alaska (593,000 mt) provides a different view of current stock conditions, but could not determine which is more accurate. Regardless of what biomass estimate is believed correct, only optimistic recruitment scenarios lead to an increasing biomass projection above the 700,000 mt threshold. As a result, both the plan team and the SSC have recommended an initial acceptable biological catch (ABC) of zero but recognize that it is important to consider a small fishery in 1989 for purposes of collecting population dynamics data. To allow a limited fishery, it may be necessary for the Council to establish a Shelikof Strait district for purposes of managing pollock in the Central Area. The Council adopted an initial ABC of 0-50,000 mt based on the team analysis that indicated a harvest within this range will have little effect on future recruitment (Table 1). The plan team intends to continue its analysis of pollock and will present its findings to the Council in December.

For the remaining groundfish species in the Gulf, there is little change from 1987 (Table 1). Pacific cod, flounders, sablefish, and most rockfish continue to remain healthy and either stable or increasing in abundance. The exception is shelf demersal rockfish in the eastern Gulf where it appears that the 1989 ABC should be set lower than the approximate 1988 catch of 600 mt. There is little scientific information available to allow an independent determination of ABC for this species category.

Table 1 compares initial ABCs with preliminary total allowable catches (TAC) and their apportionment to domestic processors (DAP), joint venture processors (JVP), and foreign fisheries (TALFF) for 1989. The initial TACs are identical to those approved for 1988, except for pollock where the ABC is lower this year. The Council also has initially apportioned the Gulf groundfish TACs to DAP for 1989 due to lack of information pertaining to joint venture needs.

For the Bering Sea/Aleutian Islands, the Council approved an initial set of ABCs for 1989 that total over 2.6 million metric tons. Within the optimum yield limit of 2.0 million metric tons for the Bering Sea and Aleutians the Council approved an initial set of total allowable catches (TACs), which act as catch limits for each species group, and apportionments to DAP and JVP as shown in Table 2.

The sablefish ABC in the Bering Sea is substantially reduced from 3,400 mt this year to 1,500 mt in 1989. The lower ABC is derived from reduced estimates of biomass found in the 1987 longline survey. Because there is also concern about apparently low recruitment of young fish to the fishable population, the ABC reflects a conservative exploitation rate.

The TACs are basically the same as those set for 1988 (Table 2), due to the general good health of the stocks, except where new estimates of ABC happen to be lower than the TAC for last year. Also, for next year, separate limits are to be set for rock sole, which as been isolated from the more general "other flatfish" group.

Comments are requested on estimates of ABC, TAC, and initial apportionments in preparation for the December meeting. Comments are also requested on estimates of PSC limits for fully-utilized groundfish which are presented in the RADs. The period for written comments will last until November 25. Further comments on the 1989 figures will be accepted at the December Council meeting.

#### Council Finds Pacific Cod Surplus to U.S. Needs

Last week the Council reviewed the projected domestic utilization of groundfish off Alaska and determined that 12,000 mt of Pacific cod was surplus to U.S. needs and available for directed foreign fisheries (TALFF) in the Western Gulf of Alaska. The Council reviewed the projects in Western Alaska that are supported by the Japanese North Pacific Longline Association and the cooperative research by the Japanese in longline surveys for Pacific cod and sablefish off Alaska. There was public testimony for and against the release of Pacific cod to TALFF. Testimony for the allocations stressed the benefits of the Japanese longline projects to the economies of outlying Western Alaska communities such as in Norton Sound, Nelson Island, and Atka. The testimony against a release to TALFF centered on the potential disruption of markets for U.S. products. The Council was aware of the whaling certification and also discussed the alleged violations of Japanese trawlers. Taking all these factors into account, the Council voted 6 to 5 to recommend that the National Marine Fisheries Service transfer 12,000 mt Pacific cod to TALFF.

#### Council Maintains Single Sablefish Season in Gulf

The Council unanimously rejected the proposed split season for the Gulf of Alaska sablefish longline fishery. Fishermen in attendance commented that they believed a September opening might prevent full attainment of the sablefish total allowable catch (TAC) because of deteriorating weather conditions. Vessel safety concerns and the likelihood that increased longline effort on Pacific cod in the spring would result in higher halibut bycatch were also cited by the public. A fall opening might have produced sablefish of higher quality but insufficient data were available to the Council to make this determination. The Council has requested that NMFS examine its longline survey data base to determine whether fish quality information might be available.

TABLE 1

**GULF OF ALASKA GROUND FISH: PRELIMINARY RECOMMENDATIONS FOR 1989 GROUND FISH  
ABC, TAC, DAP, JVP, TALFF, AND PSC ADJUSTED TO REFLECT RESERVES (IN METRIC TONS).**

Species	Area	ABC 1/	TAC	RESERVES 2/ 20% TAC	DAP	JVP	TALFF
Pollock	W/C	0-50,000 3/	0-50,000	0-10,000	0-50,000	0	0
	E	3,375	3,375	0	3,375	0	0
	Total	0-53,375	0-53,375	0-10,000	0-53,375	0	0
Pacific Cod	W	19,000	19,000	3,800	15,200	0	0
	C	73,000	60,800	12,160	48,640	0	0
	E	7,000	200	0	200	0	0
	Total	99,000	80,000	15,960	64,040	0	0
Flounders	W	69,000-142,650	1,600	320	1,280	0	0
	C	239,000-538,280	21,300	4,260	17,040	0	0
	E	37,000-86,770	100	0	100	0	0
	Total	345,000-767,700	23,000	4,580	18,420	0	0
Sablefish	W	5,075	4,060	-	4,060	0	0
	C	15,680	12,540	-	12,540	0	0
	W. Yakutat	6,125	4,900	-	4,900	0	0
	E. Yak/S.E. Out.	8,120	6,500	-	6,500	0	0
	Total	35,000	28,000	-	28,000	0	0
Rockfish (Slope)	W	3,400-6,800	4,850	-	4,850	0	0
	C	6,100-12,200	7,100	-	7,100	0	0
	E	4,550-9,200	4,850	-	4,850	0	0
	Total	14,050-28,200	16,800	-	16,800	0	0
Rockfish (Pelagic Shelf)	W	550-1,100	550	-	550	0	0
	C	2,350-4,700	2,350	-	2,350	0	0
	E	400-800	400	-	400	0	0
	Total	3,300-6,600	3,300	-	3,300	0	0
Rockfish (Demersal Shelf)	S.E. Out.	n/a	660	-	660	0	0
Thornyhead	GW	3,750	3,750	-	3,750	0	0
Other Species	GW	n/a	7,776-10,444	1,555-2,089	6,221-8,355	0	0
<b>GULF OF ALASKA TOTAL</b>		<b>500,100-993,625</b>	<b>163,286-219,329</b>	<b>22,095-32,629</b>	<b>141,191-196,700</b>	<b>0</b>	<b>0</b>

Initial Halibut Mortality Goal for 1989 = 2,000 mt.

1/ Initial ABC as recommended by the SSC and Plan Team. Ranges are presented where recommendations differ.

2/ Reserves are only used in managing the pollock, Pacific cod, flounder, and other species categories in the Western and Central Regulatory Areas. Releases from reserves can be made as DAP or JVP needs arise.

3/ Pollock ABC is presented as a range due to uncertainty over biomass estimates inside and outside of Shelikof Strait.



TABLE 2

BERING SEA/ALEUTIAN ISLANDS GROUND FISH: Preliminary Recommendations for  
(all in metric tons)

DAP, JVP, and Reserves

Retyped -  
orig. accidentally  
destroyed  
BSAI Sr. Rec HLA/MTG

Species	Area	1988		Council Recommendations for 1989				
		ABC	TAC	ABC	TAC	15% Reserve <sup>1</sup>	DAP	JVP
Pollock	BS	1,500,000	1,300,000	1,340,000	1,300,000	195,000	900,000	205,000
	AI	160,000	45,000	160,000	45,000	6,750	4,160	34,090
Pacific cod		385,300	200,000	370,600	200,000	30,000	87,416	82,584
Yellowfin sole		254,000	254,000	241,000	241,000	36,150	60,000	144,850
Greenland turbot		14,100	11,200	12,600	11,200	1,680	9,520	0
Arrowtooth flounder		99,500	5,531	83,000	5,531	830	3,808	893
Rock sole	(Previously in other flatfish)			143,400	70,000	10,500	50,000	9,500
Other flatfish		331,900	131,369	184,300	76,269	11,440	50,000	14,829
Sablefish	BS	3,400	3,400	1,538	1,500	225	1,275	0
	AI	5,800	5,000	5,800	5,000	750	4,250	0
Pacific ocean perch	BS	6,000	5,000	6,000	5,000	750	4,250	0
	AI	16,600	6,000	16,600	6,000	900	5,100	0
Other rockfish	BS	400	400	400	400	60	340	0
	AI	1,100	1,100	1,100	1,100	165	935	0
Atka mackerel		21,000	21,000	21,000	21,000	3,150	3,000	14,850
Squid		10,000	1,000	10,000	1,000	150	850	0
Other species		<u>54,000</u>	<u>10,000</u>	<u>59,000</u>	<u>10,000</u>	<u>1,500</u>	<u>2,000</u>	<u>6,500</u>
BS/AI TOTAL		2,863,100	2,000,000	2,656,338	2,000,000	300,000	1,186,904	513,096

<sup>1</sup>Each species TAC is reduced by 15% to provide for 300,000 tons of nonspecific reserves.

(October 1, 1988)

Pollock and Sablefish Emergencies Identified in Bering Sea

In 1988 the joint venture pollock apportionment in the Bering Sea and Aleutians was released in two seasons. In the Bering Sea, Part One (274,000 mt) was available during the first season (January 15 - April 15) but the fishery was so successful that the first season closed on February 9. For 1989 the joint ventures anticipate that even less pollock will be available because of increased U.S. processor capacity. They, therefore, have asked the Council to remove the split season.

The Council's preliminary total allowable catches (TACs) and apportionments (Table 2), indicate that DAP for pollock in the Bering Sea may be 900,000 mt for 1989 which, when the split-season formula is applied, would leave only 160,000 mt pollock (minus bycatch needs in other joint venture fisheries) for joint ventures during the first season. This small amount could be taken by the joint venture fleet in less than three weeks and such a short season, combined with the costs of mobilizing and suspending operations, could result in unnecessary disruption and expense.

Therefore, the Council has declared an economic emergency and requested the Secretary of Commerce to take emergency action to combine the joint venture directed fishery for pollock into one season beginning January 15.

This year NMFS closed directed fishing for sablefish in the Bering Sea on June 11 when approximately 50% of the TAC had been taken because the remainder was required for bycatch in other, predominantly trawl, fisheries for other groundfish. The Kodiak Longline Vessel Owners Association submitted a request for emergency action to reduce, by the 1989 season, the allowable amount of sablefish that can be retained after directed fisheries are closed. Currently the directed fishing definition allows retention of 20% of sablefish outside the directed fishing season until the sablefish TAC is reached; the proposal requested that the retention level be reduced to 4%.

In light of a probable decline in sablefish acceptable biological catch (ABC) next year (from 3,400 mt in 1988 to 1,500 mt in 1989), a conservation concern was added to allocative arguments of the proposal. Although the Council did not believe there was yet sufficient information to determine an exact percentage for a new definition of directed fishing for sablefish, they voted to declare an emergency so that plan and regulatory amendment proceedings could begin and be effective at the beginning of 1989. For the moment the Council's intent is to limit retention to 4%, but the figure will be revisited at the December meeting when better analyses should be available.

Council Calls for Cessation of Fishing in Donut Hole

The Council has recommended that the State Department call for an immediate cessation of all fishing in the Donut Hole, to be implemented as expeditiously as possible by bilateral or unilateral action. This cessation must be followed by effective management and enforcement to further protect U.S. interests. The Council cited concerns over Donut Hole fishery impacts on U.S. pollock resources and U.S. market opportunities for groundfish as the basis for their recommendation.

In addition to a cessation on fishing, the Council strongly encouraged the State Department to investigate how enforcement can be improved in Bering Sea fisheries. This could include cooperative enforcement arrangements with the Japanese as well as pressure on their government to strictly punish violators, seize illegal product and prosecute harvesters and distributors of the illegal product.

### House Moves Ahead on U.S.-U.S.S.R. GIFA

The comprehensive fisheries agreement signed in Moscow on May 31, 1988 is to be implemented as a Governing International Fishery Agreement (GIFA). A bill to approve the GIFA was passed by the House on September 26, amended to require foreign fishing vessels within the U.S. Exclusive Economic Zone to stow fishing gear below decks or render it unusable for fishing unless authorized to harvest fish. It is anticipated that the Senate will take affirmative action on the GIFA later this session.

### Sablefish Management Decision Delayed Until December

The Council postponed a decision on sablefish management until their December 5-9, 1988 meeting when it will be among the first items on the agenda. The following alternatives are being considered by the Council:

- (1) Status quo; continued open access management;
- (2) Multispecies longline fishery;
- (3) Individual Fishing Quotas;
- (4) Licence limitation; and,
- (5) Combination systems.

This delay will allow for additional public review of the draft document in addition to increased public testimony during the meeting. The draft regulatory analysis was released on August 10, 1988. Comments on that analysis may be submitted to the Council office until November 30, 1988.

### Future of Groundfish Management

The Council deferred further action on this topic until the January 16-20, 1989 Council meeting. Prior to January, the Council will appoint a revised Future of Groundfish Committee to work with the staff in developing the groundfish management alternatives identified in the Future of Groundfish Committee report of last June. Also, the Council staff will work up a plan for a series of seminars with the industry and interested groups that will provide an opportunity for discussion of the work of the Future of Groundfish Committee and the various management alternatives in the Committee report.

### Electronic Bulletin Board Now Available for Fishermen

The National Marine Fisheries Service now has an electronic bulletin board which contains the most current information on seasons, closures, quotas and other subjects of interest to fishermen. The bulletin board can be reached by computers with modems at (907) 586-7259. An informational pamphlet explaining the system can be obtained by contacting NMFS at (907) 586-7229.

Legislative UpdateMagnuson Act Reauthorization

Current authorization for the Magnuson Fishery Conservation and Management Act expires September 30, 1989. Congress is expected to hold initial hearings on reauthorization during the first quarter of next year. The Council will be forming a committee to propose amendments and monitor legislation as it passes through Congress.

Vessel Safety

On September 9, 1988 the President signed into law H.R. 1841, the Commercial Fishing Industry Vessel Safety Act of 1988. The bill requires a variety of personal and vessel safety devices to be onboard all fishing vessels, and creates a 17-member Commercial Fishing Industry Vessel Advisory Committee to advise the Secretary of Transportation on marine insurance, vessel safety, and personnel qualification and training matters. Also, the National Academy of Engineers, in consultation with the Secretary of Transportation, the National Transportation Safety Board and the Commercial Fishing Industry Vessel Advisory Committee, must prepare a study of safety problems on fishing vessels and recommend whether to implement a vessel inspection program.

Territorial Sea and Contiguous Zone Extension Act of 1988

H.R. 5069 was introduced on July 14, 1988 by Washington state Representative Mike Lowry. If passed, the bill would establish a 12-mile territorial sea and 24-mile contiguous zone around the U.S. for purposes of protecting national security, enforcing U.S. laws on vessels operating off the coasts of the U.S. and conforming U.S. laws with prevailing international law. The bill would also establish a National Oceans Policy Commission to assist in implementing the territorial sea and contiguous zone legislation and to propose to Congress and the President a comprehensive oceans policy. The bill was recently amended to ensure that current state fishery management authority would not be altered by passage of the new legislation.

The President was to have issued a proclamation in early September extending the territorial sea and contiguous zone; however, consultations within the Administration have taken longer than anticipated, and a proclamation now is expected by late October.

Seafood Inspection

No action is expected prior to adjournment on any of the bills currently before Congress regarding seafood research and inspection. The GAO report on this topic, Seafood Safety - Seriousness of Problems and Efforts to Protect Consumers, released in August concluded that there is no compelling case for implementing a comprehensive, mandatory federal seafood inspection program similar to that used for meat and poultry. Copies of the report may be obtained from the GAO by calling (202) 275-6041.

Marine Mammal Protection Act Reauthorization

On September 26, 1988 the House passed H.R. 4189, a bill reauthorizing and amending the Marine Mammal Protection Act. The Senate is expected to act on companion legislation, S. 2810, in early October. The amended law would provide a 5-year exemption to commercial fisheries from the MMPA's general taking prohibitions. The exemptions apply to U.S. fishermen, other than tuna fishermen, and to foreign vessels fishing under permits issued to the Secretary of Commerce pursuant to Section 204(b) of the MFCMA.

The Secretary of Commerce must also classify fisheries based on whether there is frequent, occasional, or remote likelihood of incidental taking of marine mammals. The House Merchant Marine and Fisheries Committee Report stated that at a minimum, the Bering Sea/Aleutian Islands and Gulf of Alaska Groundfish trawl fisheries, the Prince William Sound/Copper River salmon set and driftnet gillnet fisheries, and the Unimak and False Pass salmon drift gillnet fisheries should be included in the category of frequent taking.

Fisheries with frequent taking of marine mammals will be required to take natural resource observers if so requested by the Secretary of Commerce. Vessels in fisheries with remote likelihood of taking marine mammals may receive an exemption if they report to the Secretary any lethal incidental takings during their fishing operations.

Fishermen will be provided a 240-day grace period after enactment of the legislation to allow the Secretary of Commerce time to establish categories of fisheries and implement registration and reporting systems.

Chemical, Drug and Alcohol Testing of Personnel on Commercial Vessels

On July 8, 1988 the Coast Guard published a notice in the Federal Register proposing to implement a drug abatement program which would include periodic drug tests as part of required physical exams, pre-employment testing, and random sampling programs for marine employees. The public comment period on the proposed rules closed on September 6, 1988. The Coast Guard originally intended to publish final rules in October or November but final action may be delayed until the end of the year.

On September 22, 1988 the House Merchant Marine Subcommittee held a hearing on the proposed testing program. Subcommittee members and industry witnesses were concerned that the Administration appeared to be in a rush to implement drug testing and, also, that no data existed to justify the program. There may be an attempt to legislatively forestall the testing program.

Joint Venture Harvests

The total joint venture catch off Alaska through September 17 as reported by the National Marine Fisheries Service was 1,176,181 metric tons from the Bering Sea/Aleutian Islands and 3,718 metric tons from the Gulf of Alaska. The catch included 739,036 mt pollock, 191,795 mt yellowfin sole, 105,577 mt Pacific cod, 109,128 mt flatfish, and 34,363 mt of other species. The monthly number of U.S. harvesting boats delivering to joint venture processors peaked at 124, surpassing last year's high of 110 boats.

Council Approves Habitat Policy

Recent amendments to the Magnuson Act provided two ways for the Council to be involved in habitat protection, one mandatory and the other discretionary. Mandatory requirements include discussion and analysis of habitat concerns in all fishery management plans and amendments. The North Pacific Council has addressed this in recent changes to its fishery plans. Discretionary opportunities include development of habitat policies and procedures to comment or intercede in federal or state actions that may affect the habitat of species for which the Councils have management authority or concern.

At the September meeting the Council approved a policy that provides for habitat committee(s), as the need arises, to evaluate activities which may threaten important habitats and to recommend appropriate Council response. The Magnuson Act amendments require that any comments made by the Council must receive a substantial response from federal agencies within 45 days. Although the Council's new policy does not contemplate any large-scale involvement in habitat protection, especially as it duplicates existing roles of other state and federal agencies, it does establish a procedure for the Council to respond to those threats to habitats that the Council deems important.

Coast Guard Report

Between June 1 and September 15, seven cutters spent 161 days on Alaska patrol and four patrol boats and 5 buoy tenders spent 92 days conducting fisheries enforcement operations off Alaska. A total of 683 hours were spent on fisheries enforcement patrols by Coast Guard aircraft and helicopters during the same period. There were 425 foreign fishing/support vessel sightings and 3,296 domestic fishing vessel sightings; 11 foreign fishing vessels and 169 domestic fishing vessels were boarded and inspected for compliance with Magnuson Act, International Pacific Halibut Commission, and International North Pacific Fishery Commission regulations. Three warnings were issued for logbook and reporting infractions, five notices of violation were issued for prohibited species infractions, one for possession of marine mammals, and two for unsafe boarding ladders. All of the incidents involved domestic vessels. The Coast Guard also seized 6,500 pounds of sablefish harvested illegally by the U.S. longliner NANCY K, and issued four reports of violation to the U.S. catcher/processor ALASKA I for an unsafe boarding ladder, possession of prohibited species, improperly reporting catch, and impeding inspection of the catch.

Value of Alaska's Fisheries Exceed One Billion Dollars

The Alaska Dept. of Fish and Game reports that the exvessel value of Alaska's commercial fisheries in 1987 was \$1.1 billion, the first time it has exceeded the 1 billion dollar mark. This escalation of value is attributed to continued healthy finfish stocks, increased prices paid to fishermen, and continued development of the domestic groundfish fishery.

The 1988 commercial salmon catch, valued at \$705 million, is estimated to have produced a harvest of 94.6 million fish weighing a total of over 500 million pounds. The exvessel value surpasses last year's record of \$473 million.

For the crab fisheries in southeast Alaska, ADF&G reports that 643,073 pounds of brown king crab were harvested at an estimated value of \$2.3 million. They anticipate an additional harvest of about 200,000 pounds by the end of the season. The Tanner crab fishery opened January 15 and closed February 18, the second shortest season on record. Approximately 1.306 million pounds were taken, valued at \$3 million. Approximately 3.3 million pounds of dungeness crab were landed during the two-segment 1987/88 season with an estimated value of about \$3.68 million.

Following are the seasons, 1988-89 projected harvests, and the 1987/88 harvests for the various crab species and areas in the Westward Region and Western Alaska:

<u>AREA</u>	<u>SPECIES</u>	<u>SEASON</u>	<u>1988-89 PROJECTION</u> (millions of pounds)	<u>1987-88 HARVEST</u>
Kodiak	Red	Closed	0	0
	Brown	Permit	0.07	-
AK Peninsula	Red	Closed	0	0
Dutch Harbor	Red	Closed	0	0
	Brown	Sept. 1	1.0	1.4
Adak	Red	Nov. 1-Feb. 15	1.0	1.2
	Brown	Nov. 1-Aug. 15	-	7.2
Bristol Bay	Red	Sept. 25	7.5	12.3
Bering Sea				
Pribilof	Blue	Closed	0	0.7
St. Matthew	Blue	Sept. 1	1.1	1.1
St. Matthew	Brown	Permit	-	1.1
Norton Sound	Red	Aug. 1	0.2	0.33

#### Domestic Groundfish Processing

By September 17, the U.S. industry had harvested and processed 505,151 mt of groundfish off Alaska. The catch in the Gulf of Alaska was 101,806 mt including 20,968 mt pollock, 25,872 mt Pacific cod, 28,046 mt sablefish, 15,152 mt rockfish, and lesser amounts of other species. The catch in the Bering Sea and Aleutians was 403,345 mt including 301,394 mt pollock, 4,984 mt yellowfin sole, 31,586 mt other flatfishes, 54,220 mt Pacific cod, 6,272 mt sablefish, and lesser amounts of other species. These figures do not include joint venture harvests by U.S. trawlers delivering to foreign processing vessels in over-the-side sales off Alaska.

Upcoming Meetings

Bycatch Committee	October 17-21 1:30 p.m.	Sitka, Alaska
INPFC	November 1-5	Tokyo, Japan
Gulf of Alaska Groundfish Plan Team	November 7-10	Northwest & Alaska Fisheries Center, Sand Point Seattle, Washington
Bycatch Committee	November 7-10	Northwest & Alaska Fisheries Center, Sand Point Seattle, Washington
Int'l Symposium on the Biology & Management of Walleye Pollock	November 14-16	Holiday Inn Anchorage, Alaska
BS/AI Groundfish Plan Team	Week of Nov. 14 (tentative)	Anchorage, Alaska
Pacific Marine Expo	November 17-19	Seattle Convention Center
Council, AP, & SSC Meetings	Week of Dec. 4	Sheraton Hotel Anchorage, Alaska

**NORTH PACIFIC FISHERY  
MANAGEMENT COUNCIL  
P.O. Box 103136  
Anchorage, AK 99510**

**FIRST CLASS**