

# North Pacific Fishery Management Council

Clement V. Tillion, Chairman  
Jim H. Branson, Executive Director

Suite 32, 333 West 4th Avenue  
Post Office Mall Building



Mailing Address: P.O. Box 3136DT  
Anchorage, Alaska 99510

Telephone: (907) 274-4563  
FTS 271-4064

March, 1980

NEWSLETTER

#80-3

## EXTENDED COUNCIL MEETING YIELDS RESULTS

The Council convened on Wednesday, March 26, 1980 at 8:30 a.m. and adjourned Friday, March 28, at 4 p.m., ending a full week of meetings that started on Monday with the Scientific and Statistical Committee and ended on Saturday in a workshop with the Alaska Board of Fisheries. During that period the Council held a full day meeting on Wednesday, a half-day each on Thursday and Friday and joint meetings with the Alaska Board of Fisheries all day Thursday and in the morning on Friday. The Scientific and Statistical Committee (SSC) meeting actually spanned two days, including a late night session on Monday and a full day on Tuesday, while the Advisory Panel (AP) worked through the day on Tuesday.

All meetings, with the exception of the SSC, were held in the Anchorage Westward Hilton Hotel to a standing room only crowd of fishermen, processors, foreign representatives and others interested in or associated with various fisheries. Highlights of the week included the following:

### CANADIAN CONSUL VISITS ALASKA

Mr. Donald Martens, Canadian Consul, visited the Council meeting as a guest from his post in Seattle. Mr. Martens spoke briefly to the Council concerning the goodwill between the two countries in general and the opportunities for advancing fishery matters of mutual interest. His visit is the second in successive months of high ranking Canadian officials who have addressed the Council; Mr. Michael Hunter, Associate Director, International Fisheries Relations Branch, Ottawa, spoke to the Council during the February meeting concerning U.S./Canada relations on salmon and halibut issues.

### SOWL REPORT IS FOR THE BIRDS

Le Roy Sowl, Deputy Area Director, U.S. Fish & Wildlife Service, Alaska Region, introduced the Council to a new subject during the course of the meeting - seabirds and their utilization of capelin. Despite the title and occasional lapses into levity by Council members, the subject of sea birds and their utilization of prey species is one that is important in the ecosystem approach to fisheries. This was brought dramatically to the attention of the Council by the well-prepared report on bird/capelin relationships in the Kodiak area presented by one of his staff which indicates that five species, two shearwaters, puffins, murre, and kittiwakes comprise over 2,000,000 birds weighing 1,600 metric tons. They collectively consume an estimated 36,000 mt of prey species annually. Capelin accounts for 63% of that diet (22,000 mt), followed by sand lance (4%) and pollock (2.5%).

Sowl, a bird biologist, said the study of birds on the scale indicated by his report is relatively new and is the result of work started in 1976.

There are several international treaties which relate to seabirds, Sowl said. One infrequent visitor to the Alaska region, the short-tailed albatross, is on the endangered species list.

#### COAST GUARD PLAYS NO FAVORITES

A report by the U.S. Coast Guard on enforcement and surveillance work during the period between meetings shows a total of 13 infractions, four of which resulted in vessel seizures. Taiwan, Poland, USSR and Japan each had a vessel seized on underlogging charges.

#### ICICLE FISH VENTURE TEMPORARILY SUSPENDS

The fishing operation of Icicle Seafoods was suspended in the Akutan-Akun Island area of the Bering Sea during the last week in March. Icicle spokesmen termed the venture "successful" despite losing 7 to 8 cents/lb on the 1.4 million pounds of finished product for the season. Reasons cited for ending the operation at this time was the appearance of poor quality pre-spawning cod; the commitment of processing barges to the herring and salmon fisheries and market development needing completion. The company looks forward to an early fall start-up. Icicle's Gene Rutherford urged the Council to nudge the Department of Commerce in an effort to have processor preference provisions which the Council forwarded a month ago, put into effect.

#### AMENDMENT PACKAGE APPROVED FOR GROUND FISH FMP'S

Groundfish amendments for the Gulf of Alaska and Bering Sea/Aleutian areas have been approved for distribution prior to public hearings to be held in April. The amendments recommended for each plan were set out by the respective plan development teams during a series of hard working sessions which started in January and ended just last week. The final product, put together by Dr. Jim Balsiger (GOA team leader) and Dr. Loh-Lee-Low (BS/A team leader) was presented to the Council at this meeting and found smooth sailing.

Amendments to the Gulf of Alaska FMP include the setting of TAC (total allowable catch) amounts for prohibited species as follows: halibut - 1,500 mt; king crab - 130 mt; Tanner crab - 14 mt, and salmon, 70 mt. Prohibited species may not be retained by either foreign or U.S. fishermen. The limits stand as absolute quotas and if reached or exceeded shut down the Gulf to all boats of any nation which takes the share of TAC apportioned to it. In addition, a "mitigation fee" has been suggested to apply to foreign fishermen. The fee would equal the average ex-vessel price paid to U.S. fishermen for the species mentioned, multiplied by the mortality factor for each species. The provision is intended to force foreign fishermen to reduce incidental catches of prohibited species and compensate the U.S. for the loss of halibut, crab and salmon.

The amendment package also changes the plan year from November 1 through October 31 to January 1 - December 31, distributes the OY Gulf-wide for squid and "other species", divides the Eastern regulatory area of the Gulf of Alaska into four portions to facilitate the allocation of sablefish, broadens the authority of the NMFS Regional Director to issue field orders for time/area restrictions on foreign vessels to resolve gear conflicts, and apportions reserve amounts to TALFF or DAH in the amounts of 40-40-20% on the 4th, 6th and 8th month schedule. The transfer of initial DAH to TALFF, if required, comes in the 8th month.

#### BERING SEA/ALEUTIAN PLAN AMENDMENT PROPOSALS

Proposals for amendments to the BS/A plan reflect a different approach; a "multi-year/multi-species" concept originated by Bert Larkins of the Northwest and Alaska Fisheries Center, Seattle. Larkins guided the development of the two groundfish plans before his appointment to the SSC. While far too complicated to explain in the limited NEWSLETTER space, it can be summarized as a long-term, multiple species approach in which the maximum sustainable yields, optimum yields and reserves apply to the groundfish complex as a whole. Management is thus directed away from individual species to one species complex. The idea is being proposed for the Bering Sea in 1981 and will be considered for the Gulf of Alaska at a later date.

Under this approach, MSY has been set at 1.7 million mt for the entire groundfish complex. ABC is 90% of MSY, or 1.6 million mt and OY is equal to ABC. In its application, the system takes into account historical catch trends; ecosystem model results, impacts on marine mammals, the maintenance of species relationships and allows a biological cushion to buffer unforeseen developments.

The TAC amounts of incidental catch of prohibited species worked out for this management plan are 41,400 salmon, 600 mt of red king crab, 50 mt of blue king crab, 2,580 mt of C. opilio, 820 mt of C. bairdi, 600 mt of golden king crab, and 1,500 mt of halibut.

It is hoped that the establishment of the TAC amounts for both plans for prohibited species will simplify and tend to eliminate the need for so many specific time/area closures. Vessels working under absolute catch limits should tend to move if they start showing disproportionate amounts to any prohibited species in their catches.

#### FOREIGN EFFORT DROPS

The NMFS report of foreign fishing activity for the month of March shows 193 vessels at work, a drop of 20 from the same period in 1979. This can be attributed mostly to the absent Soviet ships as a result of the quota withdrawal in early January.

#### GROUND FISH RESERVES HELD

The NMFS has recommended, for the second reserve release period, that all reserves be held "in the bank". Releases had been scheduled for January-March-May and July in the GOA and February-April-June and August in the BS/A.

### TROLL SALMON

The NPFMC has responded to the Secretary of Commerce on the disposition of the troll salmon FMP by concluding it to be necessary that the chinook troll harvest off Alaska be managed in a very conservative manner during 1980, so as to assure, insofar as possible, that the OY range specified in the FMP is not exceeded. The Council has urged the NMFS Alaska Regional Director and the Alaska Department of Fish and Game to assure the attainment of this essential objective through the imposition of appropriate time and area closures or such other inseason management measures as may be necessary and appropriate. We expect these measures to reduce the troll catch of chinook salmon off Alaska by 40,000 to 70,000 fish from 1979 levels. The action comes after submission to the SOC of FMP amendments for 1980 and the subsequent concern of the Secretary that the amendments, as proposed by the Council, might not adequately protect depressed chinook stocks.

The long-range cooperative effort to develop a coastwide management plan is a step closer to reality with the formation of a liaison group of three NPFMC members to meet with a similar group from the Pacific Fisheries Management Council to coordinate conservation proposals for chinook salmon coastwide. The membership is composed of Commissioner Ron Skoog, Gordon Jensen and Dr. Donald Bevan.

### TANNER CRAB

A solution has yet to be found for the problem of pot storage in the Bering Sea. Proposals under consideration include the random storage of pots east of 165 degrees West longitude; storage in a "strip" along the coast inside 25 or 35 fathoms, continued use of the present pot storage area and other variations on the theme. The closing date for C. opilio has not been specified and will be through field announcement by the NMFS Regional Director in cooperation with the ADF&G Commissioner. The closure will be based on stock condition, the attainment of DAH and fishing pressure. Closure by field announcement does not require an amendment to the plan. The extended Tanner crab discussions considered the need for removing Tanner crab gear from the grounds prior to the opening of the king crab season (to facilitate an "equal start" for the king season), enforcement, size limits and the merits and demerits of a recruit fishery.

A big portion of the week-long session was devoted to the staff reports and public comments concerning king and Tanner crab. The subject was explored during the joint session on Thursday, again on Friday during the morning joint session and Council afternoon meeting and continued Saturday when the Council joined the Board for a Board-sponsored workshop on crab management strategies.

## AP NOMINATIONS

Selection of two nominees to fill vacancies on the Advisory Panel have been delayed until the April meeting. A list of 26 nominees will be considered by an AP Nominating Committee chaired by Chuck Meacham.

## MEETING NOTICES

GROUND FISH PUBLIC HEARING - A public hearing will be held Wednesday, April 23, starting at 10 a.m. in the Anchorage Westward Hilton Hotel, for both the Gulf of Alaska and the Bering Sea/Aleutian Groundfish Plans. The meeting has been arranged so Council members who will be attending the Council meeting in April can attend.

NPFMC MEETING - April 24-25, Anchorage Westward Hilton Hotel, Anchorage.

SSC MEETING - April 22-23, Council Conference Room, Post Office Mall, Anchorage.

AP MEETING - April 23, Kenai Room, Anchorage Westward Hilton Hotel, Anchorage.

MAY, 1980 NPFMC MEETING - KODIAK, ALASKA, May 22-23. The SSC and AP will meet on the 21st.

-NPFMC-

NORTH PACIFIC FISHERY MANAGEMENT COUNCIL  
P. O. BOX 3136 DT  
ANCHORAGE, AK 99510

**FIRST CLASS**