

North Pacific Fishery Management Council

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NEWSLETTER

5/29/87

Council Recesses for Summer

The Council met May 20-22 in Anchorage to review proposed amendments to the Gulf of Alaska and Bering Sea/Aleutian Islands Groundfish Fishery Management Plans. They also reviewed pollock harvests and apportionments for both the Gulf and Bering Sea, approved new procedures for processing groundfish and halibut management proposals, agreed to solicit long-term management options for sablefish from industry, and approved plans for a pilot domestic observer program. Details of these and other Council actions are found in this newsletter.

The Council's next meeting will be the week of September 21, when they will review preliminary groundfish harvest quotas and status of stocks for both the Gulf and Bering Sea/Aleutians to go forward for public review. The Council will also consider final approval of revised sections of the Gulf of Alaska Groundfish Fishery Management Plan to go forward to Secretary of Commerce for review. Attached to the end of this newsletter is a Notice of Availability for the revisions contemplated to the Gulf Plan.

Council Sets 1988 Meeting Schedule

The Council approved the following meeting schedule for 1988: the weeks of January 18, April 11, June 20, September 19, and December 4. Normally the Council's Advisory Panel and Scientific and Statistical Committee will meet on Monday and Tuesday followed by the Council on Wednesday through Friday. In December, the AP and SSC probably will start on Sunday. All meetings will be held at the Sheraton Hotel in Anchorage.

Miscellaneous Meetings Scheduled

<u>Date</u>	<u>Meeting</u>	<u>Location</u>
June 3-4	Marine Fisheries Advisory Committee (MAFAC)	Baltimore, MD
June 9-10	Pacific Salmon Commission	Juneau, AK
June 9-10	Bering Sea/Aleutian Islands Groundfish Plan Team (work on Resource Assessment Document)	NWAFAC Seattle, WA
June 9-11	Technical Subcommittee of Canada/U.S. Groundfish Committee	Seattle, WA
June 10-11	Bering Sea/Aleutians Crab Team (work on new plan)	ADF&G Office Anchorage, AK

<u>Date</u>	<u>Meeting</u>	<u>Location</u>
June 16-17	Council Policy & Planning Committee	Sheraton Hotel (Room 305) Anchorage, AK
June 19	Council/Industry Workgroup on Reporting Requirements for Catcher/Processors	NWAFB Seattle, WA
September 1	Council Teleconference on Pollock DAP/JVP in Gulf and Bering Sea	Teleconference
September 21-25	Council, Scientific & Statistical Committee & Advisory Panel meetings	Anchorage, AK

NOAA/NMFS Penalty Schedules Available for Comment

The National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration, Office of General Counsel, Alaska Region and the National Marine Fisheries Service have proposed amendments to the penalty schedule that covers federal groundfish fishery violations. The changes were briefly considered by the Council and are available for public review by contacting Jon Pollard, Office of General Counsel, P.O. Box 1668, Juneau, Alaska 99802, telephone (907) 586-7414.

Pilot Domestic Observer Program

The Council reviewed plans for a Pilot Domestic Observer Program which will get underway by September 1. The major purpose of this voluntary program is to collect biological information, all of which will be held confidential. The program will be cooperatively run by Alaska Sea Grant and NMFS in consultation with the North Pacific Fishery Management Council and Alaska Department of Fish and Game. Industry and their association representatives will be asked to identify and solicit suitable vessels to voluntarily take observers this year. The industry will also be asked to provide feedback on ways to improve the program toward providing better information in future years.

A meeting with industry will be scheduled for June or July to explain the program and formulate an appropriate observer coverage scheme for the various sectors of the fleet over the next 12 to 18 months. The Council may also request vessels to take observers on short notice to certain areas where more information is needed quickly. Though the program is scheduled to begin September 1, it will be further reviewed by the Council at their late September Council meeting.

The Council also will be reviewing its domestic observer policy to determine if changes are needed and will request an extension of the June 15, 1987 deadline for the submission of comments on the NMFS draft Domestic Observer Policy. The Council has asked its Domestic Observer Committee to review the NMFS policy during the summer and make their recommendations to the Council in September.

Sablefish Management

The Council unanimously adopted an Advisory Panel proposal requesting the Council to call for long-term sablefish management options from the public through July 30. The plan teams will develop the options for review by the Council at the September meeting. In September, the Council will decide whether to release the developed options for public review.

Nonprofit Fishery Foundation

The second public meeting on the creation of a private nonprofit research foundation was held on Sunday, May 17, 1987 at the Anchorage Hilton. Reports were presented on problems in funding state and federal fishery research, the status of steering committee work, and H.R. 1887, the Fishery Research Promotion Act of 1987 introduced by Representative Don Young. The fishery foundation steering committee and industry representatives present concluded that a draft foundation charter, program description, and resolution should be prepared for consideration by the industry during the summer. A meeting will be held during the September Council meeting to provide industry representatives the opportunity to finally decide on the desirability of forming a fishery foundation.

Legislation Updates

Since the last Council meeting, Congress has introduced several bills and held hearings on matters of interest to the Council.

A. New Legislation

Vessel safety. On March 26, 1987 legislation was introduced in both the House and Senate that establishes crew licensing requirements, sets inspection and safety standards for commercial fishing vessels, provides compensation for injured seamen on fishing vessels, and establishes a fishing vessel safety advisory committee to advise the Secretary of Transportation. The House bills are H.R. 1836, by Representative Lowry, and H.R. 1841, by Representatives Studds, Don Young and others. Senate legislation, S. 849, is co-sponsored by Senators Chafee and Kerry. A hearing on H.R. 1836 and H.R. 1841 will be held on June 11 by the Fisheries and Wildlife, Coast Guard, and Merchant Marine Subcommittees of the House Merchant Marine and Fisheries Committee.

Sea Grant. H.R. 1717, by Representative Walter Jones, and H.R. 1727, by Representative Mike Lowry, seek to reauthorize and strengthen the National Sea Grant Program. The Senate Commerce Committee considered Sea Grant reauthorization at a hearing on May 13. Senators Hollings and Stevens propose to increase the base authorization levels for Sea Grant from \$46 million in FY 1988 to \$54 million in FY 1992. Additional appropriations would be provided for strategic marine research and international programs.

NOAA as an independent agency. Bills have been introduced in both the House and Senate to establish NOAA as an independent agency. The Senate legislation is S. 330 by Senators Roth and Cohen, and S. 821 by Senator Weicker. The House legislation, H.R. 2135, was introduced by Representative Watkins.

Marine/Ocean Policy Commission. S. 562, by Senator Weicker, proposes to establish a National Marine Policy Commission. Companion legislation, H.R. 1171, was introduced in the House by Representative Walter Jones that calls for the establishment of a National Ocean Policy Commission. Both bills require the Commission to make recommendations to Congress and the President on developing a comprehensive marine/ocean policy for the U.S. A hearing was held on H.R. 1171 by the House Merchant Marine and Fisheries Committee on May 21. No substantive changes to the bill resulted from the hearing; however, a mark-up session will be held in the near future.

B. Congressional Hearings.

Reflagging of foreign vessels. The Senate Commerce Committee held a hearing on Senators Stevens' and Murkowski's reflagging bill, S. 377, on April 28. On April 29 a joint hearing was held by the Fisheries and Wildlife Conservation, Merchant Marine, and Coast Guard Subcommittees of the House Merchant Marine and Fisheries Committee to consider reflagging legislation introduced by Representative Don Young (H.R. 438) and Representative Mike Lowry (H.R. 1956). The current word is that a compromise may be reached soon by the interested members of Congress that would allow the opportunity for reflagging of foreign fish processing vessels during a limited period or for a limited number of vessels. The Council family will be notified when final word on this compromise is received. A mark-up session on the House legislation is tentatively scheduled by the Merchant Marine and Fisheries Committee on June 9.

High-Seas driftnets. A hearing was held by the Senate Commerce Committee on April 30 to consider S. 62, Senator Stevens' bill on high-seas driftnets. A mark-up session on that bill will be held in the near future.

The Fisheries and Conservation Subcommittee of the House Merchant Marine and Fisheries Committee will hold a hearing on June 17 to consider H.R. 940, a bill introduced by Representatives Studds, Don Young, and others to regulate the use of driftnets in the U.S. EEZ and the at-sea disposal of all plastics and other garbage.

Fish product inspection. A hearing may be held early this summer by the House Agriculture Committee on H.R. 1483, by Representative Dorgan, that proposes to establish a mandatory inspection program for all commercially processed fish products used for human consumption. The Senate Agriculture Committee may also hold a hearing on fish inspection within the next few weeks.

Council Approves New Procedures for Processing Proposed Groundfish Amendments

The Council first adopted formal procedures for processing proposed amendments to fishery management plans in 1984. Since then the Council has gone through several annual cycles for groundfish and determined that some procedures needed improvement. One problem was the lack of time for adequate review and analysis of proposed amendments. Another was the burden placed on the plan teams to initially screen and assign priorities to proposals from industry. A third area of concern was lack of a definitive format for proposals.

Marine Mammal Policy Commission, S. 568, by Senator Weicker, progress to establish a National Marine Policy Commission. Companion legislation, H.R. 1171, was introduced in the House by Representative Walter Jones that calls for the establishment of a National Ocean Policy Commission. Both bills require the Commission to make recommendations to Congress and the President on developing a comprehensive marine/ocean policy for the U.S. A hearing was held on H.R. 1171 by the House Merchant Marine and Fisheries Committee on May 21. No substantive changes to the bill resulted from the hearing; however, a mark-up session will be held in the near future.

8. Congressional Hearings

Relaxing of Foreign Vessels. The Senate Commerce Committee held a hearing on Senator Stevens' and Norwood's relaxing bill, S. 377, on April 28. On April 19 a joint hearing was held by the Fisheries and Wildlife Conservation and Commerce Subcommittees of the House Merchant Marine and Fisheries Committee to consider relaxing legislation introduced by Representative Don Young (H.R. 438) and Representative Mike Bony (H.R. 1956). The current bill is that a compromise way be reached soon by the interested members of Congress that would allow the opportunity for relaxing of foreign fish processing vessels during a limited period or for a limited number of vessels. The Council family will be notified when final word on this compromise is received. A mark-up session on the House legislation is tentatively scheduled by the Merchant Marine and Fisheries Committee on June 9.

High-Seas Fisheries. A hearing was held by the Senate Commerce Committee on April 30 to consider S. 67, Senator Stevens' bill on high-seas fisheries. A mark-up session on that bill will be held in the near future.

The Fisheries and Conservation Subcommittee of the House Merchant Marine and Fisheries Committee will hold a hearing on June 17 to consider H.R. 940, a bill introduced by Representative Studds, Don Young, and others to require the use of driftnets in the U.S. EEZ and the on-ice disposal of all plastic and other garbage.

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Last week the Council addressed these problems, focusing on the groundfish plans, and made the following changes. First, the Council changed its normal March and May meetings to April and June to allow more time for analysis of groundfish amendments before they go out to public review. In addition the deadline for groundfish proposals was moved up from the end of the December meeting to October 1 to allow more time for review before initial Council consideration in January.

The Council also established special committees, Plan Amendment Advisory Groups (PAAG), for each plan to review proposals and team recommendations before they go to the Council. The Council staff will continue to initially review proposals to help ensure they are structurally complete and respond to the criteria in the Council's newly adopted proposal format.

After the October 1 deadline the plan teams will identify proposals which are unnecessary because the requested action is already allowed by the fishery plan or can be accomplished without formal plan amendment. For the remaining proposals, the team will specify alternatives if possible, estimate workloads, identify priorities, and determine if the proposal can be processed in one year or will take longer. The team will also attempt to assess the technical merits of the proposal against the Council's goals and objectives and obtain a preliminary legal review if desirable.

In December the PAAGs for groundfish will review proposals and team recommendations. They will identify those proposals of high priority and add alternatives if possible. For proposals that are placed in the extended cycle the PAAG will recommend a time schedule and milestones for their processing. The PAAGs recommendations will be forwarded through the SSC and AP to the Council for their consideration

The Council will initially review proposals for groundfish in January and determine which should be further developed and analyzed by the plan teams. The Council will again review the proposals and team analyses in April to determine which, if any, should go forward for public review. In June the Council will consider final approval to groundfish amendments and submit them in early July to the Secretary of Commerce. Those approved by the Secretary should be in place by the next fishing year starting January 1.

Copies of the new policy and proposed format are available from the Council offices. These new procedures will be used for the first time starting this fall.

Halibut Management Procedures Approved

The Council has been requested by NMFS to serve as the major forum for consideration of halibut regulatory issues that are socioeconomic or allocative in nature. This responsibility issues under the authority of the Northern Pacific Halibut Act in 1982, which places the legal responsibility for nonbiological measures on the Council, rather than the International Pacific Halibut Commission (IPHC). The Commission will continue to set biological regulations such as seasons, quotas, and legal gears.

The Council approved new procedures for considering socioeconomic and allocative halibut proposals. They include establishing a halibut management team to provide background material, analyze proposals, and support Council

Last week the Council addressed these problems focusing on the groundfish plan. The Council changed the format of the plan and will allow more time for analysis of groundfish amendments before they go out to public review. In addition the Council has moved up from the end of the December meeting to October 1 to allow more time for review before final Council consideration in January.

The Council also established special committees. The Assessment Advisory Group (AAG) has been set up to review proposals and their recommendations before they go to the Council. The Council will continue to initially review proposals to help ensure they are technically sound and relevant to the Council's policy objectives and objectives.

After the October 1 deadline the plan team will identify proposals which are unnecessary because the requested action is already allowed by the existing plan or can be accomplished within the existing plan. For the remaining proposals, the team will identify alternatives to groundfish management objectives, identify priorities, and determine if the proposal can be processed in one year or will take longer. The team will also attempt to assess the technical merits of the proposal against the Council's policy objectives and objectives. Preliminary legal review is desirable.

In December the AAG will identify proposals for review proposals and team recommendations. They will identify those proposals of high priority and the alternatives if possible. For proposals that are placed in the extended cycle the AAG will recommend a time schedule and alternative methods of processing. The AAG recommendations will be forwarded through the SSC and AA to the Council for their consideration.

The Council will initially review proposals for groundfish in January and determine which should be further developed and analyzed by the plan team. The Council will then review the proposals and team analysis in April to determine which, if any, should be forwarded for public review. In June the Council will consider final approval to groundfish amendments and submit them in early July to the Secretary of Commerce. Those approved by the Secretary should be in place by the next "fishery year" starting January 1.

Drafts of the new policy and proposed format are available from the Council office. These new procedures will be used for the first time starting this fall.

Initial Management Procedures Approved

The Council has been requested by NMFS to serve as the major forum for consideration of certain regulatory issues that are socioeconomic or otherwise in nature. This request identifies issues under the auspices of the Fisheries Policy Board (FPB) in 1987, which places the legal responsibility for nonbiological measures on the Council, rather than the International Pacific Fisheries Commission (IPFC). The Commission will continue to set biological regulations such as seasons, quotas, and legal limits.

The Council approved new procedures for considering socioeconomic and other nonbiological proposals. They include establishing a Fisheries and Economic Council to provide background material, analysis, proposals, and recommendations.

deliberations, which will be comprised of representatives of the staffs of IPHC, NMFS Regional Office, Northwest and Alaska Fisheries Center, Alaska Department of Fish and Game, and the Council. In addition, a halibut regulatory amendment advisory group (RAAG) will be established to advise the Council. It will be composed of two Council members (one of them being the NMFS Regional Director, who also serves as an IPHC Commissioner), two SSC members, two AP members, and the chairman of the halibut management team.

The Council will call for proposals on halibut regulations in mid-August with the deadline set for September 15. Then the halibut management team will initially categorize proposals as either incomplete, requiring Council action, or requiring IPHC action. At that point the halibut RAAG will review the team's recommendations and identify priorities, workloads, and additional alternatives. Those proposals of a strictly biological nature will be forwarded to IPHC. At the September meeting, the Council will review the recommendations of the RAAG and the management team to determine which proposals to process further. Those approved for further processing will be sent out to public review in mid-October for 30-45 days. In December the Council will review the management team's analyses and comments from IPHC and the public and take final action. Approved proposals will be forwarded to the Secretary of Commerce for action.

The Secretary of Commerce may approve, disapprove, or amend proposals and then will publish a Notice of Proposed Rulemaking to allow for a 30-day public comment period starting around January 20. The IPHC will have their normal annual meeting during that time and can comment to the Secretary on the Council's actions. The Secretary will publish a final rule-making package on March 10 and approved regulations will take effect on April 10, in time for the first halibut openings normally set for early May.

NMFS Presents Preliminary Results of Shelikof Pollock Survey

NMFS scientists from the Northwest and Alaska Fisheries Center presented preliminary results from their hydroacoustic survey of spawning pollock in Shelikof Strait during March 11-31, 1987. The Council and fishing industry earlier had expressed concern that the poor domestic catches of pollock may have resulted from an unanticipated decline in the spawning stock. Preliminary survey results confirmed that mature pollock were indeed less abundant than last year, a decline likely attributable to removals from the mature population by the 1986 fishery, natural mortality, and weak recruitment into the fishery. In contrast, juvenile pollock were more abundant in the Strait than in 1986. The 1984 year class is very strong and the 1985 year class is at least average. The Gulf of Alaska Groundfish Plan Team considers that this information supports their earlier conclusions on the status of pollock stocks.

Pollock Apportionments to be Reviewed September 1st

Last December the Council set the harvest quota for pollock in the Western/Central Gulf of Alaska at 84,000 mt and apportioned 83,700 mt to U.S. processors (DAP) and 300 mt as bycatch to foreign joint venture processors (JVP). There has been increasing interest by joint ventures in obtaining a pollock quota in the Gulf this year. In March the Council asked NMFS to resurvey DAP processors to determine if there were any surpluses to their needs for 1987.

The Council will call for proposals on habitat regulations in mid-August with the deadline set for September 1. Then the habitat management team will identify corporate proposals or other proposals, including those from the regulatory advisory group (RAAG) which will be established to advise the Council. It will be composed of two Council members (one of whom will be the KPS Regional Director, who also serves as an IPRC Commissioner), two IPRC members, two AF members, and the chairman of the habitat management team.

The Council will call for proposals on habitat regulations in mid-August with the deadline set for September 1. Then the habitat management team will identify corporate proposals or other proposals, including those from the regulatory advisory group (RAAG) which will be established to advise the Council. It will be composed of two Council members (one of whom will be the KPS Regional Director, who also serves as an IPRC Commissioner), two IPRC members, two AF members, and the chairman of the habitat management team.

The Secretary of Commerce may approve, disapprove, or amend proposals if they will publish a notice of proposed rulemaking to allow for a 30-day public comment period starting around January 30. The IPRC will be in their normal annual meeting during that time and can comment to the Secretary on the Council's actions. The Secretary will publish a final rule-making package on March 10 and approved regulations will take effect on April 10. In time for the first habitat opening usually set for early May.

KPS Issues Preliminary Results of Habitat Pollock Survey

KPS scientists from the Northwest and Alaska Fisheries Center presented preliminary results from their hydroacoustic survey of commercial pollock in the Gulf of Alaska during March 11-21, 1987. The Council and Habitat Advisory Group has expressed concern that the near domestic catches of pollock may have resulted from an unanticipated decline in the spawning stock. Preliminary survey results confirmed that mature pollock were indeed less abundant than last year, a decline likely attributable to removals from the mature population for the 1986 fishery, in part voluntary, and some recruitment into the fishery. In contrast, juvenile pollock were more abundant in the Gulf than in 1986. The 1984 year class is very strong and the 1987 year class is at least average. The Gulf of Alaska Groundfish Team concludes that this information supports their earlier conclusions on the status of pollock stocks.

Pollock Opportunities to be Reviewed September

Last December the Council set the harvest quota for pollock in the Western Gulf of Alaska at 84,000 mt and apportioned 83,700 mt to U.S. processors (UAF) and 300 mt as license to foreign joint venture processors (JVP). There has been increasing interest by joint ventures in obtaining a pollock quota in the Gulf this year. In March the Council asked UAF and JVP processors to determine if there was any surplus to their needs for 1987.

After considering the survey results and preliminary status of stock information from the NMFS acoustic survey of Shelikof Strait, the Council decided to leave the harvest or target quota (TQ) at 84,000 mt but reestablish a 20% reserve of 16,800 mt, leaving 66,900 mt for U.S. processors. NMFS was requested to firm up their estimates of DAP needs and provide them to the Council in time for a teleconference tentatively planned for September 1, when the Council will decide how much, if any, pollock should be transferred to joint ventures.

For the Bering Sea management area the Council recommended the immediate release to joint ventures of the remaining 75,000 mt pollock in reserves noting that some of that release will be needed as bycatch in joint ventures targeting other species. Come September, the Council will review NMFS' latest estimates of DAP and decide if there is pollock excess to U.S. processor needs. The apportionments of Pacific cod will also be reviewed at that time.

Council Takes Action on Gulf Groundfish Amendment 16

The Council considered the various measures proposed as Amendment 16 to the Gulf of Alaska Groundfish Fishery Management Plan and, after public comments and recommendations from its Scientific and Statistical Committee and Advisory Panel, took the following actions:

1. Establish a DAP priority access zone within 100 miles of Unalaska Island: The Council adopted the status quo and deleted this proposal.
2. Revise the definition of prohibited species: The Council adopted Alternative 2 to clearly identify crabs, halibut, herring, and salmon as prohibited species which must be returned to the sea as quickly as possible.
3. Improve catch recording requirements: The Council decided not to make any changes for the time being, but instead, requested NMFS to meet with industry to determine how best to gather needed management data, and then report back to the Council next September.
4. Establish a framework procedure for setting fishing seasons: The Council decided not to framework seasons now, but directed the plan team to continue their development of acceptable procedures.
5. Add salmon and crab to existing prohibited species management framework for halibut: The Council deferred this issue to their Bycatch Workgroup for further development. A regulatory amendment addressing problems in assigning halibut bycatch limits by gear type will be developed over the summer and presented to the Council in September.
6. Update fishery management plan's descriptive sections, reorganize chapters, and incorporate Council policy as directed: The Council decided to go ahead with this update but postponed final approval until September to allow for additional Council and public review.

After considering the survey results and preliminary status of stock information from the 1977 acoustic survey of Shelikof Sound, the Council decided to leave the survey on target quota (TP) at \$4,000 per year until a 20% reserve of 16,000 mt. leaving 10,000 mt. for U.S. processors. The Council requested to firm up their estimates of WVP needs and provide them to the Council in time for a referendum tentatively planned for September, when the Council will decide how much, if any, quota should be transferred to joint venture.

For the 1978-79 management year the Council recommended the immediate release to joint venture of the remaining 75,000 mt. quota. In reserves and some of that release will be needed as a buffer to joint venture pending other species. Come September, the Council will review WVP, Japan's estimate of WVP and 5 side if there is a policy excess in U.S. processor needs. The appointment of Pacific cod will also be reviewed at that time.

Council Takes Action on Gulf of Alaska Amendment 1A

The Council considered the various measures proposed in Amendment 1A to the Gulf of Alaska Groundfish Fishery Management Plan and, after public comment and recommendations from the Scientific and Statistical Committee and Advisory Panel, took the following actions:

1. Repeal a 20% WVP quota reserve for 100 miles of Shelikof Sound.
The Council adopted the status quo and deleted this proposal.
2. Review the decision of prohibited species. The Council adopted Amendment 1A to clearly identify crabs, halibut, herring, and salmon as prohibited species which must be returned to the sea as quickly as possible.
3. Improve catch reporting requirements. The Council decided not to make any changes for the time being, but instead, requested WVP to meet with industry to determine how best to gather needed management data, and the report back to the Council next September.
4. Repeal a 20% WVP quota reserve for fishing halibut. The Council decided not to increase reserve now, but directed the plan team to continue their development of acceptable programs.
5. Add salmon and crab to existing prohibited species management program for halibut. The Council believed this change to their groundfish program for further development. A regulatory amendment addressing problems in existing halibut research limits in gear type will be developed over the summer and presented to the Council in September.
6. Update fishery management plan's descriptive sections, including objectives, and fisheries Council policy as directed. The Council decided to go ahead with this report but postponed final approval until September in order for additional Council and public review.

Except for items 2 and 6, the status quo was maintained. Items 2 and 6 are housekeeping amendments having little regulatory impact on the fishery. These items will be available for public review beginning June 1 and written comments should be received no later than August 3. (Please see the Notice of Availability included with this newsletter.)

Three Changes to Bering Sea/Aleutian Islands Groundfish
Plan Approved with Amendment 11

The Council approved Amendment 11 to the Bering Sea/Aleutian Islands Groundfish Plan to go forward to the Secretary of Commerce for review, approval, and implementation. A summary of issues and Council actions is listed below. Only the last three items were approved for Secretarial review; the other items were deleted by the Council at the May meeting.

1. DAP priority within the 100 miles of Unalaska: The Council adopted the status quo, in consideration of an industry compromise for split season apportionment of pollock joint venture quota (JVP) (see below).
2. Improve catch recording requirements: The Council adopted the status quo, but requested NMFS to confer with industry to develop a comprehensive and acceptable catch recording and transfer log system.
3. Increase the upper value of the optimum yield range: The Council adopted the status quo, maintaining an upper limit of 2.0 million metric tons.
4. Prohibit pollock roe-stripping: The Council adopted the status quo, in consideration of an industry compromise for split season apportionment of pollock JVP (see below).
5. Revise the definition of prohibited species: The Council adopted Alternative 2, specifically naming the species to be prohibited in the catches of foreign and domestic fishermen. The Council voted to add steelhead, in addition to Pacific salmon, to the prohibited species list for domestic fishermen; all salmonids are prohibited for foreign fishermen.
6. Revise the definition of acceptable biological catch: The Council adopted Alternative 2, bringing the definition into conformity with that used by the Pacific Council and included definitions for "threshold" and "overfishing".
7. Seasonal apportionment (split season) of pollock JVP: The Council voted to approve an industry compromise forwarded by the Advisory Panel, which created a 40/60% split in Bering Sea/Aleutians pollock JVP for the periods January 15 - April 15 and April 16 - December 31. The first period tonnage allocation will be calculated based on combined initial JVP and 15% of the pollock total allowance catch (the amount normally assigned to reserves). This amendment will be effective for only 1988 and 1989, during which the Council has been requested by industry to formulate a comprehensive management strategy for pollock.

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Three Changes to Status Quo/American Fishery Council
Plan Approved with Amendment II

The Council approved Amendment II to the Status Quo/American Fishery Council... Only the last three items were approved for Secretary's view; the other items were rejected by the Council at the May meeting.

1. BAP priority within the 100 miles of Unalaska: The Council adopted the status quo, in consideration of an industry compromise for split season appointment of pollock (see below).

2. Improve catch recording requirements: The Council rejected the status quo, but requested WMS to confer with industry to develop a comprehensive and acceptable catch recording and transfer system.

3. Increase the upper value of the optimum yield range: The Council adopted the status quo, maintaining an upper limit of 2.5 million metric tons.

4. Prohibit pollock re-estriping: The Council adopted the status quo, in consideration of an industry compromise for split season appointment of pollock (see below).

5. Review the definition of prohibited species: The Council adopted Alternative 2, specifically naming the species to be prohibited in the catch of foreign and domestic fisheries. The Council voted to add, in addition to Pacific salmon, to the prohibited species list for domestic fisheries; all salmonids are prohibited for foreign fisheries.

6. Revise the definition of acceptable biological catch: The Council adopted Alternative 3, bringing the definition into conformity with that used by the Pacific Council and included definitions for "uncollected" and "overfishing".

7. Second appointment (split season) of pollock (BAP): The Council voted to approve an industry compromise forwarded by the industry label, which created a 50/50 split in Status Quo/American pollock BAP for the periods January 15 - April 15 and April 15 - December 31. The first period harvest will be calculated based on a certain initial period harvest allocation will be calculated based on a certain initial BAP and 12% of the pollock total allowable catch (the amount currently assigned to research). This amount will be effective for only 1987 and 1988, during which the Council has been requested by industry to formulate a comprehensive management strategy for pollock.

Industry Volunteers to Make Up Crab Bycatch Overage

As part of Bering Sea and Aleutians groundfish Amendment 10, implemented April 16, 1987, Zone 1 was established north of the Alaska Peninsula with a bycatch limit of 80,000 C. Bairdi Tanner crabs in the U.S. yellowfin sole and "other flatfish" fisheries. This year, that zone was closed on April 27 and the Tanner crab bycatch exceeded the 80,000 crab limit by about 15,000 crabs. Though Zone 1 will remain closed to sole and flounder operations for the rest of the year, these fisheries may proceed in other areas such as Zone 2 which also has a Tanner crab bycatch limitation. At the Council meeting, representatives of the trawl industry volunteered to reduce their allowable bycatch in Zone 2 by 15,000 crabs (from 326,000 to 311,000 crabs) to compensate for the overage in Zone 1. As with all other prohibited species, the crabs must be returned to the sea immediately.

Development of New King and Tanner Crab FMP Continuing on Schedule

The Council received a status report from its crab management committee on the development of a new king and Tanner crab fishery management plan for the Bering Sea and Aleutian Islands area. A working draft of the plan had been developed by the plan team and reviewed by the committee. Several parts will require more work, including the sections on objectives, permit requirements, and on alternative management approaches. The crab plan team will meet June 10, 1987 at the Alaska Department of Fish and Game offices in Anchorage to work on these and other issues. The plan will be further developed this summer, with a new draft available for initial Council review by September. Meanwhile, NMFS published a final rule on May 11, 1987 repealing the Tanner Crab Fishery Management Plan, effective April 29, 1987. The State of Alaska will have full management authority for the crab fisheries inside and outside three miles while the new plan is being developed.

Polish Permit Given Close Scrutiny

The Council reviewed a Polish trawler/processor permit application for the GOPLO to operate in joint ventures off Alaska. Poland has no directed fishing allocation in the Bering Sea or Aleutian area but has been operating in joint ventures within the 200-mile zone and in directed fisheries in the international waters of the Bering Sea (the "donut hole"). Their catch from the "donut hole" is estimated to be between 80,000 to 100,000 mt pollock, which is of great concern to the Council. The Council approved the vessel permit but again emphasized that it wants accurate, timely reports of Poland's catches of pollock from the "donut hole". Other nations reported fishing in those waters include Japan, South Korea, and China.

Domestic Fisheries Report

The Alaska Department of Fish and Game reported that an estimated 30,000 chinook salmon were caught during the 1986/87 winter troll season, up from 23,000 chinook last year. The summer troll season will open June 20 with an estimated 191,000 chinook salmon (not including Alaskan hatchery contributions) available for harvest.

Preliminary catches for the 1987 Alaska sac roe herring fishery totalled 35,746 short tons as follows: Southeast Region--5,670 st; Central Region--27,870 st; AYK Region--647 st; Westward Region--1,559 st, with some areas still open to fishing. A detailed report will be available in September.

The National Marine Fisheries Service reported that domestic groundfish fishermen processing on board or delivering to U.S. processors (DAP) harvested 31,000 mt in the Gulf of Alaska and 79,515 mt in the Bering Sea and Aleutians through early May. The Gulf DAP harvest included about 6,300 mt pollock, 14,000 mt sablefish, and 8,222 mt cod. The Bering Sea and Aleutian U.S.-processed catch included 45,000 mt pollock, 19,000 mt Pacific cod, 10,500 mt rock sole, 1117 mt sablefish and smaller amounts of other species.

The Central Regulatory Area of the Gulf was closed to directed trawling on sablefish on April 11, reserving the remaining quota for bycatch. That was taken quickly and the Central Area was closed to all retention of sablefish with trawl gear on May 5. The sablefish longline fishery in the West Yakutat area of the Gulf opened April 1 and closed on April 15 when NMFS projected that the 3,900 mt quota was taken. A total of 216 vessels participated in the fishery.

The sablefish longline fishery in the Southeast/East Yakutat area lasted from April 1 to April 9 when NMFS projected that the 3,880 mt quota was taken, with 353 longline vessels participating. The sablefish longline fishery in the Central and Western Areas of the Gulf opened April 1. The catch through May 21 was about 4,600 mt in the Central Area and 600 mt in the Western Area. A total of 378 vessels registered to fish in the Central Area and 86 registered for the Western Area.

Coast Guard Reports on Enforcement Activities

Through April 30, the Coast Guard has expended 198 cutter days and 523 aircraft patrol hours, covering more than three million square miles of ocean. Forty-four reports of violation and written warnings have been issued to foreign fishing vessels operating off Alaska.

Since March, the Coast Guard has investigated several cases involving foreign nationals working aboard U.S. fishing vessels, the most significant involving two U.S. trawlers with foreign nationals in command. Two other vessels, a large processor and a longline vessel, were found with illegal aliens aboard. The Immigration and Naturalization Service is investigating and beginning deportation proceedings.

On May 1 the Coast Guard received word that a U.S. vessel was fishing for halibut off Kodiak before the season opening. The F/V MINNOW was found to have 84,000 pounds of frozen halibut aboard, as well as five illegal aliens. The aliens, all Mexican nationals, are being processed for deportation by the U.S. Immigration and Naturalization Service.

From June through September the Coast Guard will conduct cutter and aircraft patrols in the North Pacific Ocean, primarily enforcing the provisions of the International Convention for the High Seas Fisheries of the North Pacific Ocean while monitoring the activities of the squid gillnet fleets from Japan, South Korea, and Taiwan.

The Coast Guard also notes that numerous U.S. fishing vessels boarded during the past two months have been found to have inaccurate or expired vessel documentation. Coast Guard regulations require that documented U.S. vessels, while operating, maintain current and original documentation on board.

Foreign Fisheries Report

Foreign directed fishing is much reduced this year, with foreign allocations totalling slightly less than 65,000 mt, all confined to the Bering Sea. It is distributed 49,551 mt to Japan, 14,157 mt to South Korea, and 644 mt to the Republic of China, a split that reflects the Council's recommendation last December that 77% of any available TALFF go to Japan, 22% to South Korea, and 1% to China. The foreign catch through early May totalled 20,108 mt, almost all by Japan. Ninety-six percent of the catch was Pacific cod taken by Japan longliners. It is unclear at this time whether any additional foreign allocations will be available this year. The needs of U.S. processors and their joint ventures have to be satisfied first. Foreign catches totalled about 487,000 mt off Alaska last year.

NORTH PACIFIC FISHERY MANAGEMENT COUNCIL
FISHERY MANAGEMENT PLAN FOR GROUND FISH
OF THE GULF OF ALASKA

AMENDMENT 16

Notice of Availability

The domestic and foreign groundfish fisheries in the 3- to 200-mile Exclusive Economic Zone of the Gulf of Alaska are managed under the North Pacific Fishery Management Council's Gulf of Alaska Groundfish Fishery Management Plan (FMP). This plan was developed by the Council and implemented by the Secretary of Commerce in 1978 and has been amended fourteen times. One additional amendment was withdrawn.

In January 1987 the Council reviewed groundfish amendments proposed by the public and management agencies and selected seven proposal topics for analysis and inclusion in proposed Amendment 16. In March the Council withdrew one proposal on sablefish size limits because its analysis showed little biological or socioeconomic benefit. In May, following public review of the six remaining proposals and the accompanying environmental and regulatory analyses, the Council chose to maintain the status quo for four of the management proposals, thereby deleting them from Amendment 16. The remaining two proposals are: (1) revise and clarify the definition of "prohibited species", and (2) update the FMP's descriptive sections, reorganize chapters, and incorporate Council policy as directed. These two proposals are available under this Notice of Availability and constitute the revised Amendment 16. While this amendment significantly changes the FMP text, it has little effect on fishery regulations. The Council requests public comments on the proposed changes to the FMP and implementing regulations.

The public review period commences June 1 and all written comments must reach the Council by 5:00 p.m., Monday, August 3. The changes to the FMP document, draft implementing regulations, the environmental and socioeconomic analyses, and old copies of the FMP are available and may be requested by calling the Council staff at (907) 274-4563. The Council will give final consideration to Amendment 16 at their September 23-24, 1987 meeting in Anchorage. Primary contact: Steve Davis.