

North Pacific Fishery Management Council

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NEWSLETTER

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NORTH PACIFIC COUNCIL ELEVENTH PLENARY SESSION

The NPFMC, the SSC and AP met concurrently on Dec. 1-2, 1977 at the State Court Building, Anchorage, Alaska. A public hearing session was conducted during the meeting on Dec. 1.

Major items under discussion during the meeting were the FMP's for Gulf of Alaska Groundfish, Tanner Crab and Troll Salmon.

TROLL SALMON

The Council amended and approved the Salmon Troll Plan, adopting a 28-inch legal length limit for chinook (in effect in State waters during 1977 and enforced in the offshore fishery through the ADF&G landing laws); required fin-clipped salmon (indicating tagged fish) to be landed with the head on; endorsed an observer program and approved limited entry in the power troll fishery based on the present state model.

Consideration was given to a form of limited entry which might become necessary in given areas of the power troll fishery in addition to the entire fishery. Because of that, the date of Dec. 1, 1977, was set as the date beyond which no fisherman can accrue points toward permit eligibility for entering the fishery on the Fairweather Grounds.

In addition, the Council recommended re-defining statistical areas in the troll fishery to more closely identify fishing areas where fish are caught, and continued a closure in offshore waters west of Cape Suckling where a closure has been in effect since 1973.

The Alaska Trollers Association was commended for its voluntary logbook program for the value it will have in adding to the data base of the troll fishery in future management regimes.

TANNER CRAB

Abby Gorham, an assistant professor at the University of Alaska, Fairbanks, reported to the Council on the results of a crab market study conducted in Japan under the auspices of the Alaska Sea Grant Program. Gorham said it was determined there are separate markets for C. bairdi and C. opilio and that U.S. quota actions on Tanner crab have a neutral effect on distributors. Distributors purchase through trading companies and do not concern themselves with the origin of the product.

A discussion of crab pot storage highlighted an existing problem posed by storage during the off-season where a concentration of pots impacts shipping in waters where they are required by law to be stored. The Council asked that the State and NMFS explore the possibility of pot storage on the fishing grounds. Such storage would require pot doors to be open and bait boxes removed.

The dividing line between the foreign and domestic crab fisheries in the Bering Sea was re-affirmed at 58 degrees North latitude. The line effectively separates the two fleets and reserves catches of C. bairdi to the U.S. An OY of 10,000 mt was established for C. opilio south of that line. The foreign allocation to the north was left at 15,000 mt.

Dr. Lee Alverson, SSC Chairman, reported that biological indicators predict a decline in recruitment patterns which should be evident in the fishery in 1980-81, for C. bairdi.

GROUND FISH

Permits were issued to 18 Korean longliners with the provision that only half the ships can participate in the fishery at any given time. If more than half are observed fishing, the fleet commander will be issued a warning and a review of permits will be conducted on future applications. The permits are for sablefish.

A report from the AP confirms the downward trend in the sablefish population. This is reflected in reduced catches per boat day, catch per unit of effort, etc. The total 1976 catch was 28,000 mt, exceeding the MSY of 22,000 mt.

The Council retained the 10,000 mt quota for sablefish and directed that a fishery for Pacific cod within the 500 m isobath be conducted as a longline fishery with no effort allowed during the halibut season. The fishery will be conducted westward of 157 degrees West longitude.

The New England Fish Company has acquired a British bottomfish processor with a capability of 150,000 lbs per day. It is to be docked at NEFCO's Sand Point facility.

CLAM TEST FISHERY

A clam test fishery shows commercial possibilities, with an estimated 236,000 mt of whole clams available in the Ugashik Bay-Port Moller test area. Best results were obtained from test drags in 13-18 fathoms which yielded 40-60 bushels of surf clams per hour. With a ratio of 36% meat to total weight, the fishery could produce from 19-26 million pounds of clam meats per year. Surf clams tested for the presence of paralytic shellfish poison revealed no toxin present. Other species tested indicated that the toxin had been present at one time.

WARNING ISSUED

The Council has issued a warning to foreign governments whose ships apply for fishery permits in the FCZ. Design features which allow for returning prohibited species with a minimum of handling and greater chances for survival will be a factor in the issuance of future permits. An AP report indicates that mortality rates for fish being returned are unacceptably high.

SURVEILLANCE

A report by the U.S. Coast Guard indicates they are close to achieving their goal of 90% probability of detecting an individual ship on the fishing grounds in any two-week period, and that the data retrieval system is being refined to provide full utilization of patrol resources.

MEETING DATES

Meeting dates for 1978 have been set as the 4th Thursday and Friday of each month. The next meeting date will be Jan. 26-27 at the Hill Building, 623 W. 6th Avenue, Anchorage, Alaska. Meetings start at 8:30 a.m.