

North Pacific Fishery Management Council

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NEWSLETTER

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COUNCIL MEETS IN ANCHORAGE

The North Pacific Fishery Management Council met on July 24th and 25th at the Anchorage Westward Hilton Hotel. The Council heard reports on various fisheries, reviewed and took action on several fishery management plans, and approved the Council's budget for FY 1981. Highlights of the meeting follow.

NO MEETING IN AUGUST - COUNCIL WILL MEET FOR THREE DAYS IN SEPTEMBER

The August Council meeting was cancelled. The next meeting will be held in Sitka on September 24-26. The September meeting will have a heavy agenda including major actions on four fishery plans: king crab, troll salmon, herring, and Tanner crab.

NEW COUNCIL STAFF INTRODUCED

The Council staff has undergone considerable change in the past two months. New personnel include Clarence Pautzke as Deputy Director, Jim Richardson as Fisheries Economist, Peggy McCalment as Executive Secretary, Elise Zuspan as Bookkeeper/Secretary, and Vickie Hennion as Secretary/Typist. In addition, Jock Mills, a graduate student from California, is working for the Council this summer developing a regulatory analysis for the Bering Sea Groundfish FMP and its 1981 amendments.

DOMESTIC FISHERIES

Alaska Fish and Game reported that the domestic groundfish fisheries off southeast Alaska have taken 961,000 pounds dressed weight of black cod through May. Effort on black cod is increasing from previous months, but the price of about 45¢/pound dressed weight continues to be low. There was little groundfish activity in either southeast Alaska or the western Gulf of Alaska.

The Tanner crab fishery for C. bairdi is now closed. Preliminary harvest estimates for the 1979-80 bairdi fishery off Alaska are about 82 million pounds. The Bering Sea opilio fishery is still open and the

catch through July 13th is 38.5 million pounds, expected to top at around 40 million pounds.

The troll chinook season in outside waters opened on April 15th and the estimated troll catch as of July 15th is 163,000 fish. The coho season opened June 15th and estimated catch through July 15th is 53,000. The actual catch is probably slightly higher as more fish tickets remain to be compiled.

FOREIGN FISHERIES

NMFS reported 11 Soviet stern trawlers in the GOA. South Korea has 4 stern trawlers concentrating on Pacific cod in the GOA and 10 stern trawlers fishing pollock in the Bering Sea. Poland's fishing effort has declined, only 3 ships are now fishing off Alaska. No Mexican vessels have fished even though they have allocations. Taiwan has one ship off Alaska while Japan, this year with their salmon fleets now at sea, has 393.

JOINT-VENTURE FISHERIES

The Marine Resources Company joint-venture Bering Sea winter-spring fishery on pollock and cod produced 7373 mt of food grade fish and 3997 mt of fishmeal grade fish. Even though the operations were directed at cod, pollock dominated the catch. The Marine Resources experimental yellowfin sole fishery began June 3rd and is currently using five American trawlers and three Soviet processors. The catch through July 12th was 4533 mt, primarily yellowfin sole. Dr. Pereyra projects a catch of about 12,000 mt by late September.

Ken Puckett, U.S. manager for the KMIDC joint-ventures, reported that KMIDC operations in the GOA have ended but 5 U.S. boats continue to fish for a Korean processor in the Bering Sea. Catch to date, both Gulf and Bering, is 5370 mt. of which over 3000 mt is pollock. Two more permits are being submitted for Korean processors and they are looking for additional U.S. trawlers.

ENFORCEMENT AND VIOLATIONS

Since the last Council meeting, the Coast Guard issued 6 reports of violations and 7 citations. One vessel, the Soviet stern trawler MYS PROKOFYEVA, was seized for underlogging its catch of Atka Mackerel and escorted to Kodiak. The Coast Guard patrolled about 26,000 miles through 20 July, identified 299 vessels, and made 39 boardings.

WALRUS AND CLAMS

Dr. Francis (Bud) Faye, University of Alaska, reported to the Council on his ongoing study of walrus distribution and feeding habits. Aerial surveys, flown during the project's first three months, showed that the major walrus population in Bristol Bay was in the surf

clam fishery area in April. Walrus sightings declined in May as boat traffic increased. In June, the walrus were in northern Bristol Bay. He has not collected any animals as yet.

AN EXPERIMENTAL JV FISHERY FOR HERRING?

The Council reviewed a Marine Resources proposal to conduct a production/research/experimental fishery for herring in the Eastern Bering Sea from Unimak Pass to southwest of St. Matthew Island this fall. Estimated total production would be about 13,000 mt (including 3500 mt herring, 7500 mt pollock, 1500 mt Pacific cod). Marine Resources would provide the SULAK and/or up to 4 BMRT/RTM-type processors working with 4-5 American trawlers as sampling platforms for biological research in the age class structure and relative abundance of eastern Bering Sea herring stocks. The Council moved not to endorse the proposal since it appears the herring resource was fully harvested during the spring roe fishery.

IPHC EXPERIMENTAL HALIBUT FISHERY

The International Pacific Halibut Commission had approved an experimental halibut fishery in the western portion of Area 3 wherein, by lottery, four vessels would be chosen to fish between Kodiak and the Shumagin Islands and four vessels between the Shumagin Islands and Unimak Pass from September 1 to 17, 1980. This fishery was designed to provide stock assessment data, such as catch per effort and age composition, needed because there had been no offshore commercial fishery in that area during the regular openings.

The Council discussed the proposed fishery and passed a resolution requesting the IPHC to (1) reconsider its proposed experimental fishery, (2) cancel the drawing scheduled for early August to determine the eligible vessels, and (3) replace the proposed experimental fishery with a fishing season that does not discriminate between large and small boats. The resolution passed with one opposing vote. We have since learned that IPHC has decided to charter 2 boats to gather the necessary information, canceling the special fishery.

SURF CLAMS SHELVED

With little industry interest in the Bering Sea surf clam resource and unresolved problems with testing for paralytic shellfish poisoning, the Council moved unanimously to shelve the Surf Clam FMP indefinitely after adding the results of ongoing research.

GULF OF ALASKA FMP

The Council discussed several amendments to the GOA FMP which had been deferred from the Kodiak meeting in May. To prevent gear conflicts and grounds preemption with the U.S. crab fishery, the Council unanimously approved an enlarged closed area to foreign trawling bounded by the "Lechner Line" recommended by the PDT.

A proposed amendment setting a "Total Allowable Catch" (TAC) on prohibited species, with or without economic disincentive needs further study by the PDT so no Council action was taken. A working group composed of Council and AP members was instructed to establish criteria for the regional director to enable him to close certain areas around domestic shore-based processors to foreign fishing.

BERING SEA FMP

The Council unanimously agreed to send the final amendment package prepared by the PDT to public hearings along with a proposed amendment on a winter salmon/herring savings area submitted by Nunam Kitlutsisti. This proposal is intended to reduce high incidental catches of juvenile chinook salmon and overwintering eastern Bering Sea herring by foreign trawlers. The Council directed the TAC concept (See Gulf of Alaska FMP section) be included as an option for public consideration.

FOREIGN PERMITS APPROVED

The Council recommended approval for permit applications for the West German trawler, FRIEDRICH BUSSE, and Republic of Korea factory ships KYUNG YANG HO and HEUNG YANG HO and the cargo/transport vessel GAE CHEOG HO #2 to support KMIDC joint-venture operations.

FOREIGN FISHING FEES

The Council endorsed the use of poundage fee, the present system, to recover U.S. costs of foreign fishing.

SCIENTIFIC & STATISTICAL COMMITTEE MEETING

The SSC will meet September 2nd through the 4th at the Northwest and Alaska Fisheries Center in Seattle, starting with a programmatic research subcommittee meeting at 1:00 p.m., September 2nd; an 8:30 a.m. start the morning of September 3rd to discuss SSC policy, and a regular session beginning at 1:00 p.m., September 3rd. Their agenda will include a final review of the King Crab FMP before it goes out for public comment, a report on the Troll Salmon FMP, review of crab resource surveys in the Bering Sea, contracts, and a discussion of Domestic Annual Harvest (DAH) forecast methodology.

ADVISORY PANEL NOMINATIONS SOLICITED

The Council has an Advisory Panel of 25 members from the public whose two-year terms will expire this December. All nominations to the Advisory Panel must be received in the Council office by October 15th. Appointments will be announced prior to the December Council meeting. For further information, please contact Mrs. Judy Willoughby at (907) 274-4563.

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HARD OF HERRING?

A total of 24,061 mt of herring was harvested commercially during the 1980 season in Togiak, Security Cove, Goodnews Bay, Cape Romanzof, and Norton Sound. The first commercial herring delivery was made from Togiak on April 26th and all fishing was closed down by June 7th. Wastage was a major problem in the Togiak fishery.

Estimates of biomass derived from the 1980 fishery show a substantial decline from 1979, though similar estimation techniques were used. In the Togiak district, the low end of the biomass estimates has decreased 68% from 115,000 mt in 1979 to 69,300 mt in 1980. Similar major declines were reported for Security Cove and Goodnews Bay. Biomass estimates increased for Norton Sound. ADF&G will report to the Council in September on the status of the herring stocks.

KING CRAB PLAN GOES TO PUBLIC HEARINGS

Amid such discussion of the pros and cons of proceeding with further development of the King Crab Fishery Management Plan, the Council voted to send the plan to public hearing with some revisions suggested by the SSC. A significant new option in the plan is to have no FMP and let ADF&G manage the fishery. Furthermore, the Council wanted to make clear to the public that sending the FMP to public hearing did not necessarily mean the Council would implement the plan. Public hearings will be held in Kodiak, Seattle, and Anchorage in late November or early December, and probably in Nome sometime in October.