

# North Pacific Fishery Management Council

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#4-87

NEWSLETTER

August 7, 1987

## Policy and Planning Set for September 1-2

The Council's Policy and Planning Committee will meet on September 1-2, 1987 in Anchorage, Alaska in the Kuskokwim East Room at the Sheraton Hotel. The meeting will commence at 10:00 a.m. on Tuesday, September 1, and the Committee will consider the following agenda items:

1. Groundfish Apportionments
2. Joint Venture Policy
3. Halibut Allocation Policy
4. Future Groundfish Management Options
5. Domestic Observer Program
6. Crab Management

The first item, Groundfish Apportionments, will be the subject of a teleconference with listening stations for the public set up at the following locations:

Juneau	Room 453, Federal Building
Kodiak	Borough Conference Room Kodiak Island Borough Building 710 Mill Bay Road
Seattle	Room 2143, Building 4 NMFS Northwest & Alaska Fisheries Center 7600 Sand Point Way N.E.
Anchorage	Kuskokwim East Room Sheraton Hotel

The teleconference will begin at 1:00 p.m., Alaska Daylight Savings Time, on Tuesday, September 1, and will end upon completion of business on groundfish apportionments. The Committee meeting will continue, remaining open to the public at the Sheraton Hotel.

Following adjournment of the Policy and Planning meeting on September 2, the Council's Bycatch Committee will convene to continue its discussion of bycatch management strategies. That meeting will also be held in the Sheraton and is open to the public.

Agenda topics for the Policy and Planning meeting are described further in this newsletter.

Groundfish Apportionments

In May the Council said they would review the needs of U.S. processors in early September for Pacific cod and pollock for the remainder of the year. The Council will determine if any surplus exists in the DAP (Domestic Annual Processed) or reserve categories for reapportionment to joint ventures. The current status of cod, pollock, turbot, and flounders is as follows:

	(all in metric tons)				<u>Reserves</u>
	<u>DAP</u>		<u>JVP</u>		
	(early July)		(late July)		
	Quota	Catch	Quota	Catch	
<b>Pollock</b>					
Bering Sea	189,987	72,951	1,005,013	973,026	0
Aleutians	57,210	126	30,790	22,490	0
W/C Gulf of Alaska	67,200	7,796	300	0	16,800
<b>Pacific cod</b>					
Bering Sea/Aleutians	111,767	26,454	94,938	50,997	20,000
Western Gulf	15,000	699	0	0	0
Central Gulf	32,775	8,263	225	0	0
<b>Greenland Turbot</b>					
Bering Sea/Aleutians	15,213	2,620	37	51	3,000
<b>Flounders</b>					
Bering Sea/Aleutians	23,103	12,588	88,472	31,735	22,245
Western Gulf	3,000	69	0	0	0
Central Gulf	4,000	719	1,500	0	0

NMFS has been asked to survey U.S. processors as close to the September 1 meeting as possible for current production figures and their projections of their requirements for the rest of 1987. Greenland turbot is shown in the list above because of strong foreign interest in obtaining allocations. Flounders will be considered because of joint venture interest in a fall fishery, particularly in the Central Gulf.

Most joint venture fisheries are now closed. The joint venture fishery for pollock closed June 6 in the Bering Sea, and for yellowfin sole on June 29. The JV Atka mackerel fishery is still going as is a fishery for other flatfish, mostly Alaska plaice. The JV flatfish fishery is closed in the area east of 170°W longitude and south of 61°N latitude. The Eastern Area in the Gulf of Alaska has closed to trawling and all sablefish target quotas (TQ) in the Gulf have been taken except for a small amount reserved for pots in the Western Area. The entire rockfish TQ in the Gulf has also been taken and they will be treated as prohibited species for the rest of the year. DAP catches in general continue to run behind estimates although the catches of cod and pollock, as shown above, are strong.

Joint Venture Policy

In May the Council directed the Policy and Planning Committee to review the joint venture policy. The Committee met in June but recommended no changes to the policy other than possibly adding language expressing the Council's great

concern over unaccounted pollock fisheries in the international waters ("Donut hole") of the Bering Sea. On September 1 the Committee expects a report from NMFS on those fisheries and will again consider revising the Council joint venture policy.

#### Halibut Allocation Policy

The Council has been tasked by NMFS with review of allocational issues in the halibut fishery, while the International Pacific Halibut Commission will continue to manage the biological aspects of the fishery including seasons, quotas, etc. The Council's annual halibut regulatory cycle begins August 15 with a call for allocative-type proposals. These will be reviewed by the Council in September, then sent out for public comment with final review and decision by the Council scheduled for December.

The Committee will review draft goals and objectives for halibut allocation at the September 1-2 meeting. These will be used as a basis for judging industry proposals during this fall's halibut management cycle.

#### Future Groundfish Management Options

The Council now has the results of several surveys of the groundfish industry seeking their perceptions and advice on managing the fisheries. The Policy and Planning Committee will review these surveys and begin developing a statement of commitment to guide the Council in its examination of alternatives to managing groundfish off Alaska.

#### Domestic Observer Program

The Council begins a pilot domestic observer program in September. Details of the program are being finalized and a letter will soon be out to the groundfish industry asking their help in carrying observers and getting the program off to a good start. The University of Alaska Sea Grant staff will administer the program in coordination with the Council, NMFS, and Alaska Department of Fish and Game. The Policy and Planning Committee expects a status report on the pilot program and will also review a federal observer policy drafted by NMFS.

#### Crab Management

The Council's Crab Management Committee has been working diligently since last November on a new Fishery Management Plan (FMP) for Tanner and king crab in the Bering Sea and Aleutians. They will report on progress at the September 1-2 meeting. The draft plan should be available for full Council review at its 78th plenary session the week of September 21.

The Policy and Planning Committee will also consider establishing an interim advisory group to work with the State of Alaska on crab management issues until the FMP is in place. Such a group is already envisioned in the draft FMP, but the plan is not expected to be in place until October or November of 1988. Establishing an interim group would be in line with recommendations from Senators Packwood and Hatfield of Oregon.

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August 12, 1987

## NEWSLETTER ADDENDUM

### Reopening of Sablefish Fishery Added to September 1 Teleconference; Petersburg and Sitka will be On-Line

The Council Newsletter of August 7, 1987 announced a Council teleconference and a Policy and Planning Committee meeting set for September 1-2 in Anchorage at the Sheraton Hotel. Another agenda item has been added to the Council teleconference: the National Marine Fisheries Service has requested Council advice on reopening the directed longline sablefish fishery in the Southeast Outside/East Yakutat and West Yakutat districts where, as discussed below, some sablefish quota still remains.

The longline fishery for sablefish began on April 1 in the Gulf with an estimated 370 vessels participating. It closed on April 9 in the Southeast/East Yakutat District, on April 15 in the West Yakutat District, on May 29 in the Central Area, and on June 9 in the Western Area. As in the past, the fleet began operations in the east and progressed westward as area quotas were reached.

The directed trawl fishery for sablefish opened on January 1 and closed in the Western area on March 21 and in the Central area on May 5. The bycatch amounts of sablefish allocated to trawls in the Eastern Area were exhausted by June 20.

The pot fishery for sablefish in the Western Area opened on April 1 and remains open. As of August 11, 1987, pots took 667 mt, leaving 83 mt more which NMFS estimates will be harvested by late August.

Recently compiled fish tickets indicate the following sablefish harvests:

<u>AREA</u>	<u>ABC*</u>	(all in metric tons)	
		<u>TARGET QUOTA</u>	<u>ACTUAL CATCH</u>
Southeast Outside/E. Yakutat	5,250	4,200	3,400
West Yakutat	5,500	4,000	3,000
Central	11,000	8,880	10,500
Western	3,750	3,000	3,400+
	<u>25,000</u>	<u>20,000</u>	<u>20,300</u>

(\* Acceptable Biological Catch)

The total catch in the Gulf exceeds the sablefish target quota of 20,000 mt, with shortfalls in the eastern areas just balanced by the overages in the Central and Western areas. All catches remain below the ABC. The pot fishery still has about 83 mt remaining in the Western Area and there will also be some nonretainable bycatches of sablefish in other fisheries.

The Council will review the sablefish situation during the teleconference and decide whether or not to recommend reopening the directed fisheries to longliners in the Southeast Outside/East Yakutat and West Yakutat districts.

The second item on the teleconference, groundfish apportionments, needs further clarification from the August newsletter. The Council will review U.S. processor utilization of pollock and cod during 1987 specifically to determine (1) if the 16,800 mt pollock reserve in the Western/Central Gulf of Alaska can be released to joint ventures, and (2) whether surpluses in the DAP of pollock and cod exist in the Bering Sea and Aleutians that could be reapportioned to joint ventures.

The Council has a request to increase the flounder quota by 5,000 mt in the Western and Central areas of the Gulf giving any amount not needed for U.S. processors to joint ventures. The flounder quotas are now 3,000 mt and 5,500 mt in the Western and Central areas, well below their respective ABC's of 101,000 mt and 346,000 mt, to minimize the incidental catch of halibut.

Petersburg and Sitka will be tied into the teleconference using the State's Legislative Information Offices at 101 Gjoa Street in Petersburg and 210 Lake Street in Sitka. Anchorage, Juneau, Kodiak, and Seattle locations have already been announced as locations where the public may participate in the teleconference, which begins at 1:00 p.m., Alaska Daylight Savings Time, September 1.