

# North Pacific Fishery Management Council

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## NEWSLETTER

### Groundfish Management Highlights December Meeting

The North Pacific Fishery Management Council, meeting on December 7-9 in Anchorage, took up a wide range of issues on groundfish management for 1984. These included setting total allowable catches and optimum yield for various species in the Bering Sea/Aleutians and Gulf of Alaska and recommending apportionments to U.S. fishermen delivering to U.S. processors and foreign processors, and to foreign fishermen harvesting groundfish resources off Alaska. In particular, foreign fishing for sablefish, Pacific cod, and Pacific ocean perch in the Gulf of Alaska and for Pacific cod, Atka mackerel, Pacific ocean perch, and other rockfish in the Bering Sea/Aleutians was reduced significantly. The Council also approved exempting the winter/spring U.S. trawl fishery for pollock in Shelikof Strait from halibut by-catch restrictions in the Gulf of Alaska. This fishery uses off-bottom gear and takes very few halibut incidentally.

A second main topic was halibut management. The Council voted to discontinue efforts to impose a moratorium on new entry into the fishery. The Council will consider other management alternatives to achieve goals agreed upon for the fishery.

A third main topic was consideration of foreign vessel permit applications to participate in joint ventures and directed fishing off Alaska in 1984. Permits were submitted by Japan, South Korea, Taiwan, West Germany, Spain, and the USSR.

Council actions on the above topics as well as others are described below in this newsletter.

### Council Will Discuss Salmon Management With Board of Fisheries in February

The North Pacific Fishery Management Council will meet with the Board of Fisheries February 1-2, 1984 at the Baranof Hotel in Juneau. The main topic of discussion will be salmon management for 1984. The two bodies will jointly hear public testimony, staff reports and a status report on U.S.-Canada salmon treaty negotiations. They will then consider regulatory proposals submitted to the Board of Fisheries and Council and determine what management actions should be taken for 1984.

The Council will meet alone on February 3 to review several groundfish management items including restrictions on joint venture trawling for sablefish and ways to reduce prohibited species catches by trawlers in various areas of the

Bering Sea and Gulf of Alaska. The Council will also consider halibut management in the Bering Sea and review management decisions made by the International Pacific Halibut Commission at their annual meeting the previous week.

An agenda for the Council meeting should be available about January 16. The Council's Scientific and Statistical Committee and Advisory Panel will meet at the Baranof on January 30-31.

#### Governor Sheffield Addresses Council

In an impromptu speech before the Council, Bill Sheffield, Governor of Alaska, congratulated members on their efforts on behalf of the Alaska fishing industry. "The fishing industry in Alaska is very important," he said. "It employs more people and puts more food on the table than any other industry in Alaska." The Governor thanked the Council for approving an Alaska/Korea joint venture and underscored the importance of bottomfish to the Alaskan fishing industry. Diversification is important, he said, as well as finding new and innovative methods of fishing.

The Governor also told Council members that he is very much in favor of a U.S.-Canada salmon interception treaty, but he is not prepared to endorse one which is not equitable for Alaskans. "We in Alaska practice good conservation measures," he said, "but I'm not sure that everyone else does."

#### Directed Foreign Fishing for Sablefish Reduced in the Gulf of Alaska

Reacting to overwhelming U.S. industry intent to utilize the entire Gulf of Alaska sablefish resource, the Council endorsed an agreement between U.S. industry representatives and the Japanese North Pacific Longline Gillnet Association (NPLGA), which reduces directed foreign sablefish fishing.

The NPLGA promised to abstain from any directed sablefish longlining in the Gulf of Alaska between 140°W longitude and 159°W longitude, the area most U.S. fishermen intend to fish, until October 7. If the U.S. fishery has caught or is projected to catch the entire sablefish quota, there will be no directed foreign sablefish longlining in this area for the remainder of 1984. The NPLGA vessels will be allowed to longline for Pacific cod only in waters less than 350 meters.

The Council, responding to the domestic industry's agreement, asked the Regional Director to assess the progress of the domestic industry sablefish harvest on September 1 to determine their likely catch; to release 3,000 mt of Pacific cod reserves to TALFF in the Central Gulf of Alaska on January 1 for the foreign longline fishery; and to set the domestic annual processed catch (DAP) of sablefish in the Gulf west of 159°W longitude at 300 mt, providing an extra 300 mt of sablefish to the foreign longline fleet in this area. The Council also requested the Regional Director to provide a 5% sablefish by-catch in the foreign longline Pacific cod fishery.

Emergency Regulation to Raise Pollock Optimum Yield in Gulf

By a unanimous vote the Council has requested the Secretary of Commerce to issue an emergency regulation to raise the pollock OY for the combined Central and Western areas of the Gulf of Alaska to 400,000 mt.

This action was taken to provide enough pollock for U.S. joint venture fisheries which have been catching increasing amounts of pollock in Shelikof Strait each year (70,000 mt in 1982, 133,000 mt in 1983). The Shelikof Strait fishery, due to start at the end of January, may catch as much as 210,000 mt of pollock in 1984.

As part of the same action the Council requested that only 100,000 mt of pollock be caught by foreign bottom trawls which will permit foreign fisheries to maintain historical pollock catch levels while preventing an increase in the foreign incidental catch of halibut. This action should encourage off-bottom trawling for the remainder of the pollock quota.

The emergency action request was also approved as a formal amendment to the Gulf of Alaska groundfish fishery management plan. While the amendment could be implemented by mid-1984, this would not have been soon enough to benefit the U.S. pollock fishery in Shelikof Strait.

In other Gulf of Alaska groundfish business, the Council approved for public review an amendment to lower the Pacific ocean perch optimum yields in the Western and Central areas in order to protect this depressed resource for future rebuilding, and to change the Pacific cod OY to meet current fishery needs. The amendment package will be sent to the public before the next Council meeting.

Council Sets 1984 U.S. and Foreign Groundfish  
Apportionments in the Gulf of Alaska

The Council has made 1984 apportionments of ten groundfish species and species groups to U.S. joint ventures with foreign fishing companies (JVP) and U.S. processors (DAP). The apportionments are based on a survey of U.S. fishing industry plans for 1984 conducted by the National Marine Fisheries Service. The DAP and JVP amounts for each species in each regulatory area of the Gulf are shown in Table 1. Figure 1 shows the location of the regulatory areas in the Gulf of Alaska. The DAP and JVP added together make up the total amount of groundfish expected to be harvested by U.S. fishermen (DAH).

Table 1 also lists the amount of groundfish available for foreign fishing (TALFF). The TALFF is the remainder, if any, of the groundfish quota (OY) after it has been apportioned to DAP and JVP. In order to assure that there will be enough groundfish for the U.S. fishery, a reserve equal to 20% of the OY is set aside as a buffer between TALFF and DAH. The reserve can be apportioned to the U.S. fishery as needed.

TABLE 1

1984 GULF OF ALASKA GROUND FISH (MT)

<u>SPECIES</u>	<u>AREA</u>	<u>OY</u>	<u>RESERVE</u>	<u>DAP</u>	<u>JVP</u>	<u>DAH</u>	<u>TALFF</u>
POLLOCK	W/C	400,000	80,000	24,360	210,300	234,660	85,340
	E	16,600	3,320	300	0	300	12,980
TOTAL		416,600	83,320	24,660	210,300	234,960	98,320
PACIFIC COD	W	16,560	3,312	500	250	750	12,498
	C	33,540	6,708	11,691	14,621	26,312	520
	E	9,900	1,980	120	0	120	7,800
TOTAL		60,000	12,000	12,311	14,871	27,182	20,818
FLOUNDERS	W	10,400	2,080	0	10	10	8,310
	C	14,700	2,940	102	8,615	8,717	3,043
	E	8,400	1,680	300	0	300	6,420
TOTAL		33,500	6,700	402	8,625	9,027	17,773
PACIFIC OCEAN PERCH	W	2,700	540	0	1,770	1,770	390
	C	7,900	1,580	622	2,000	2,622	3,698
	E	875	175	460	0	460	240
TOTAL		11,475	2,295	1,082	3,770	4,852	4,328
SABLEFISH	W	1,670	334	300	50	350	986
	C	3,060	612	1,541	110	1,651	797
	W. Yak	1,680	336	1,344	0	1,344	0
	E. Yak	1,135	0	1,135	0	1,135	0
	S.E.	1,435	0	1,435	0	1,435	0
TOTAL		8,980	1,282	5,755	160	5,915	1,783
ATKA MACKEREL	W	4,678	936	0	400	400	3,342
	C	20,836	4,167	0	1,500	1,500	15,169
	E	3,186	637	0	0	0	2,549
TOTAL		28,700	5,740	0	1,900	1,900	21,060
OTHER ROCKFISH	GW	7,600	1,520	395	500	895	5,185
THORNYHEADS	GW	3,750	750	150	50	200	2,800
SQUID	GW	5,000	1,000	100	10	110	3,890
OTHER SPECIES	GW	28,780	5,756	100	400	500	22,524
GRAND TOTAL		604,385	113,087	44,855	240,586	285,441	205,857

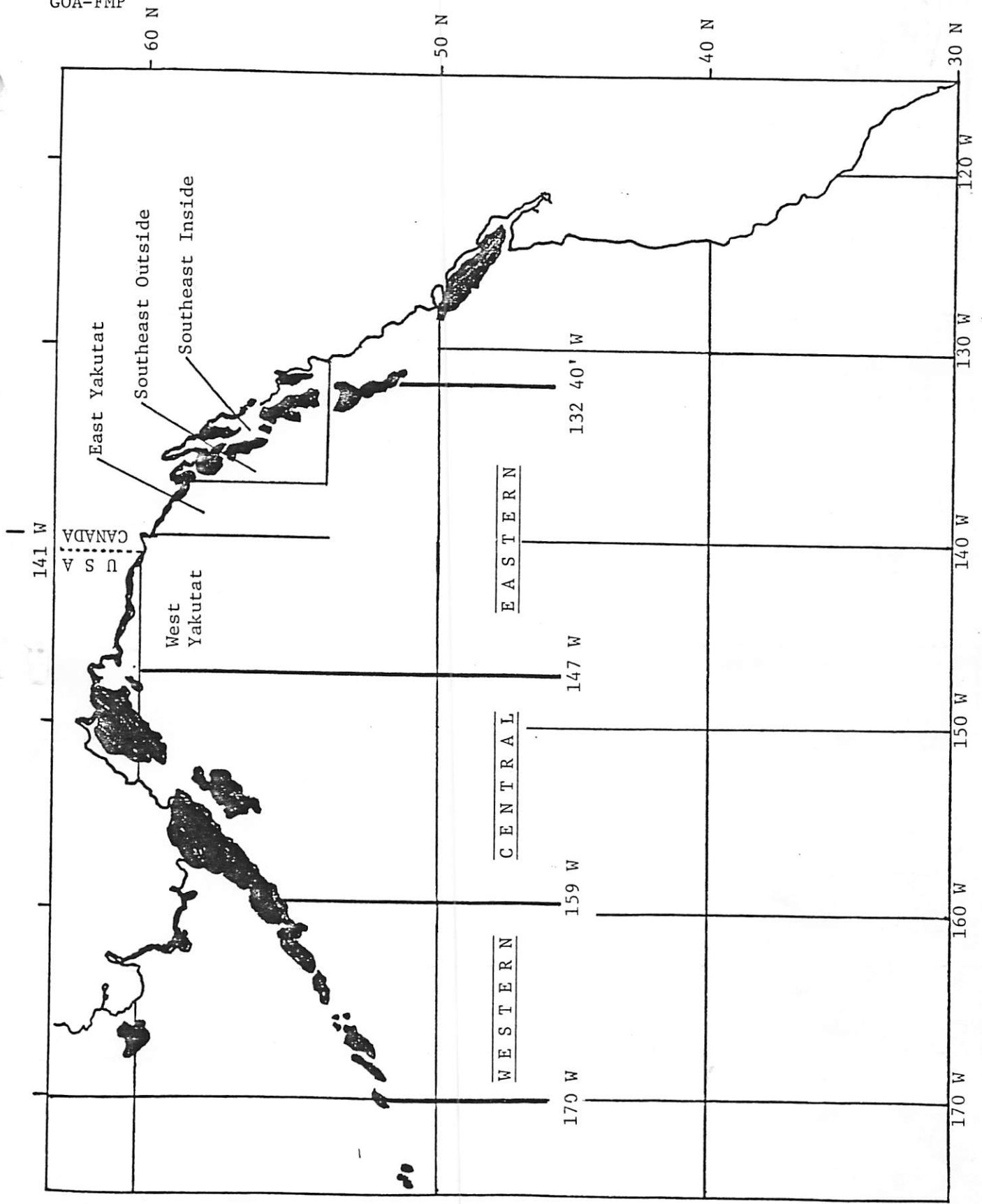


Figure 1 -- Regulatory Areas of the Gulf of Alaska (FMP)

### Council Changes Domestic Halibut By-catch Regulations

By emergency action the Council has changed the existing halibut by-catch regulations for U.S. groundfish fisheries in the Gulf of Alaska due to the possibility that joint ventures now fishing for flounders and Pacific cod could have shut off all U.S. trawling in the Central Gulf of Alaska in late December or early January because of regulations to protect the halibut resource.

Current federal regulations limit the U.S. trawl halibut by-catch to 29 mt in the Western Gulf and 52 mt in the Central Gulf from December 1 through May 31. When the halibut by-catch quotas are caught, all U.S. trawling must shut down for the remainder of the period. The regulation could have shut off the U.S. joint venture fishery for pollock in Shelikof Strait, due to start at the end of January. This is an off-bottom (pelagic) fishery which has virtually no halibut by-catch (2 mt halibut by-catch out of a directed harvest of 133,000 mt of pollock in 1983).

So that the Shelikof Strait fishery could start on schedule, the Council unanimously approved an emergency regulation to exempt U.S. pelagic fishing from the existing halibut by-catch rule.

In a related action the Council unanimously approved an emergency rule to raise the domestic halibut by-catch limits to 270 mt in the Western Gulf and 768 mt in the Central Gulf. The old limits of 29 and 52 mt had been calculated as 1% of the 1978 estimated domestic trawl harvest of primarily Pacific cod, at a time when halibut stocks were relatively low. The new limits are 1% of the estimated 1984 domestic trawl harvest of all groundfish species expected to be taken with "on-bottom" gear.

In addition to the two emergency actions, the Council directed the staff and the Prohibited Species Working Group to prepare for public review an amendment to limit the halibut (and crab) by-catch in the Gulf of Alaska. The Council directed that the objective of the amendment will be to hold the total crab and halibut by-catch in all Gulf of Alaska trawl fisheries at approximately current levels, but with as few restrictions as possible on the developing U.S. groundfish fisheries.

### Council Sets 1984 Quotas and Domestic Apportionments for Bering Sea/Aleutian Islands Groundfish

The Council has set the 1984 total allowable catches (TAC) of groundfish species in the Bering Sea/Aleutian Islands region and apportioned up to 85% of each TAC to domestic processors (DAP), to joint ventures between U.S. fishermen and foreign processing companies (JVP), and to foreign fisheries. The Council's decisions were based on the November 1983 status of stocks update from the Plan Maintenance Team and surveys of U.S. industry needs by the National Marine Fisheries Service.

Table 2 shows the TACs, DAPs and JVPs. Four species have separate amounts for the Bering Sea and Aleutian Islands area, pollock, Pacific ocean perch, other rockfish, and sablefish. The rest of the species are managed as unit stocks

for both areas. Table 2 also shows the amount of fish available for foreign harvest (TALFF). TALFF is the remainder, if any, of 85% of the TAC after it has been apportioned to DAP and JVP.

The Council has set aside 300,000 mt of groundfish reserves, shown in Table 2, for a) unexpected expansion of the domestic fishery, b) to correct operational problems in the domestic and foreign fishing fleets, c) for inseason adjustments in TACs and d) for apportionments to JVP, DAP, and TALFF. The reserve is not designated by species, although it is equal to 15% of the sum total of the TACs. It can be apportioned any time during the fishing year by the Regional Director of NMFS.

As shown in Table 2, there are zero TALFFs indicated for Pacific ocean perch in the Aleutian Islands and Atka mackerel, which could cause operational problems for the foreign fisheries. In order to prevent problems, the Council asked the Regional Director to reapportion from reserves only enough of those species to TALFF as needed for minimal foreign by-catch in the foreign target fisheries.

The Council also requested the Regional Director to release only enough Pacific cod TALFF as necessary for a minimal by-catch in the foreign pollock fisheries, but to allocate 3,000 mt of Pacific cod TALFF to the foreign longline fishery.

#### No Moratorium for Alaska Halibut Fishery

The Council voted 8 to 2 to discontinue efforts to impose a moratorium on new entry into the Alaska halibut fishery. The Council will, however, pursue consideration of other management alternatives for the fishery and attempt to develop a management regime in cooperation with the International Pacific Halibut Commission.

The following objectives for halibut management, developed by the Council's Halibut Workgroup and amended through public comments, were adopted by the Council:

1. Insure survival of the North Pacific halibut resource.
2. Distribute the halibut fishery in time and place to insure the harvest of the available surplus of all components of the halibut population over all areas of the North Pacific Ocean including the Bering Sea.
3. Continue to limit the harvesting of halibut to hook and line as the best means of utilizing and maintaining the resource at its highest sustained level of abundance.
4. Retain the International Pacific Halibut Commission as the primary management authority over the coast-wide range of the halibut population.
5. Provide high quality fresh, frozen or preserved halibut to the consumer throughout the year.
6. Strive to reduce incidental halibut mortality by gear that is not legal for a directed halibut fishery.

1984 BERING SEA/ALEUTIAN ISLANDS GROUND FISH (MT)

<u>SPECIES</u>	<u>AREA</u>	<u>TAC</u>	<u>DAP</u>	<u>JVP</u>	<u>DAH</u>	<u>TALFF</u>	<u>RESERVE</u>
POLLOCK	BS	1,200,000	18,163	253,000	271,163	748,837	
	AI	100,000	500	3,000	3,500	81,500	
PACIFIC OCEAN PERCH	BS	1,780	550	150	700	813	
	AI	2,700	550	1,745	2,295	0	
ROCKFISH	BS	1,550	50	20	70	1,247.5	
	AI	5,500	50	4,000	4,050	625	
SABLEFISH	BS	3,740	2,540	100	2,640	539	
	AI	1,600	50	100	150	1,210	
PACIFIC COD		210,000	104,442	27,180	131,622	46,878	
YELLOWFIN SOLE		230,000	1,361	36,500	37,861	157,639	
TURBOTS		59,610	20	100	120	50,548.5	
FLATFISH		111,490	1,361	22,000	23,361	71,405.5	
ATKA MACKEREL		23,130	227	19,433.5	19,660.5	0	
SQUID		8,900	20	20	40	7,525	
OTHER SPECIES		40,000	3,000	2,000	5,000	29,000	
TOTAL		2,000,000	132,884	369,348.5	502,232.5	1,197,767.5	300,000



### Halibut Quotas May Be Increased in 1984

Dr. Donald McCaughran, Executive Director of the International Pacific Halibut Commission, told the Council that the Commission is considering increasing quotas for the 1984 season because of the apparent healthy condition of the stocks; however, the Commission will still have to consider methods of spreading the catch over a longer period of time to more closely monitor the catch of the large fleet to avoid overfishing.

The Commission is scheduled to meet in Anchorage at the Sheraton Anchorage Hotel January 24-26, 1984 to decide on management measures for 1984.

### Council Delays Consideration of Pribilof Proposal

At the request of the proposing organizations, the Council has postponed until the February meeting discussion of a request to establish an exclusive registration area for the halibut fishery in Area 4C. The proposal, submitted by the Central Bering Sea Fishermen's Association, halibut fishermen of St. George, and the Nelson Island Fishermen's Association, also requested a quota of 800,000 pounds of halibut for 1984 and asked that the fishery be restricted to vessels of 5 net tons or less. The objective of the proposal is to allow local fishermen to develop a viable halibut fishery.

### Halibut Limited Entry Study Available

The report by Northwest Resources Analysis titled, Limited Entry in the Pacific Halibut Fishery: The Individual Quota Option is available to the public. The Council released a staff synopsis of this report on June 20, 1983 as Council Document 20a. The full report, 168 pages, is available on request (Council Document 20).

### Council to Increase Their Participation at Spring Shellfish Meeting With the State

As a result of continued regulatory inconsistencies between federal and state Tanner crab fishery regulations, the Council plans on increasing their involvement at the annual Board of Fisheries shellfish meeting in March. It was apparent from the Council discussion that many of these differences in regulations could be avoided if both the Board and Council played a more active role in developing a cohesive Tanner crab management program. A workgroup was created to meet with the Council and Board staff and prepare an improved review and regulatory procedure. A report will be available at the next meeting.

### Herring Research Workgroup Report

The Council received a report by the herring research workgroup which identified data gaps and discussed data needs. This workgroup is attempting to determine (1) the types of research programs that the Council might initiate; (2) the cost of conducting the various programs; and (3) the tonnage of herring that might be required to offset the cost of using commercial rather than government research vessels. A Request for Proposals is being drafted which may be available for Council review at the February meeting.

Joint Ventures Approved for 1984

The Council reviewed and approved vessel permit applications from Japan, South Korea, the U.S.S.R., Taiwan, Spain and West Germany to participate in joint ventures with U.S. fishermen in 1984. The total amount of groundfish requested so far, 298,635 mt, includes 86,000 mt for Japan, 78,700 mt for South Korea, 96,935 mt for the U.S.S.R., 19,000 mt for Taiwan, 12,000 mt for Spain, and 6,000 mt for West Germany. Japan has committed to buy an additional 244,000 to 274,000 mt in joint ventures in 1984 and Poland, Portugal, and Norway will also be requesting joint venture permits. Thus, the tonnage harvested by U.S. fishermen in 1984 may exceed 600,000 mt, well over the 390,000 mt harvested in 1983.

The prospective joint venture arrangements reviewed by the Council include 18 different partnerships between U.S. and foreign firms and could put over 100 U.S. trawlers to work off Alaska. The species requested include 166,060 mt pollock, 40,950 mt Pacific cod, 18,400 mt Atka mackerel, 54,800 mt flatfish, 9,400 mt Pacific ocean perch/rockfish, and 9,025 mt of other species.

The Council also approved directed fishing permits for vessels of Japan, South Korea, Taiwan and West Germany. These countries have had groundfish allocations in the past off Alaska. The Council recommended that Taiwan not be permitted to fish until its joint ventures were at least 80% complete. And, for West Germany, the Council recommended withholding 50% of its direct allocation until after June 30 and then releasing it contingent upon satisfactory joint venture performance in the first six months of 1984. These stipulations were placed on Taiwan because of its poor violations record and on West Germany because of its failure to live up to joint venture agreements made with U.S. trawlermen in the past.

ADF&G Reports on Domestic Commercial Fisheries

The statewide domestic catch of Pacific cod through October 1, 1983 was 52,168 mt. By area, 47,788 mt came from the Bering Sea, 4,002 mt came from the Central Gulf of Alaska, and 379 mt came from other areas. The U.S. catch of Pacific cod was 40,804 mt in 1982 and 19,097 mt in 1981.

The statewide domestic catch of pollock totaled 279,968 mt, including 148,515 mt from the Bering Sea, 131,095 mt from the Central Gulf, and 358 mt from the Western Gulf. The U.S. catch was 131,246 mt in 1982 and 59,557 mt in 1981.

Nearly 2,800 mt of sablefish have been caught by U.S. fishermen off Alaska. This includes 2,334 mt from the Eastern Gulf, 238 mt from the Central Gulf, 113 mt from the Western Gulf, and 112 mt from the Bering Sea. The U.S. catch of sablefish off Alaska was 2,187 mt in 1982 and 1,333 mt in 1981.

### Joint Venture Update

The total joint venture catch off Alaska through November 19, 1983 was 349,027 mt. In the Gulf of Alaska, 139,078 mt of pollock and other species were harvested using 24 foreign and 45 U.S. vessels. In the Bering Sea/Aleutians, 18 foreign vessels and 45 U.S. vessels harvested 209,949 mt including 149,013 mt pollock, 34,228 mt flatfish, 14,351 mt Pacific cod, and 10,512 mt Atka mackerel. Four processors and eight U.S. trawlers are currently operating in joint ventures in the Gulf of Alaska.

### Foreign Fisheries Update

By November 19 foreign fleets in the Gulf of Alaska harvested 128,461 mt of groundfish or about 52% of the current foreign allocation for that area. The catch included 72,424 mt pollock, 24,586 mt Pacific cod, 10,371 mt Atka mackerel, 5,328 mt Pacific Ocean perch, 8,305 mt flounders, and 3,356 mt sablefish.

In the Bering Sea and Aleutians they harvested 1,039,738 mt, about 82% of the current foreign allocation. The catch included 849,448 mt pollock, 31,689 mt Pacific cod, 2,375 mt sablefish, 905 mt Pacific Ocean perch, and 136,975 mt flatfish. There were 143 foreign vessels off Alaska on November 30, 112 from Japan, 25 from South Korea, two from Taiwan, three from the U.S.S.R., and one from West Germany.

### U.S. Coast Guard Enforcement Report

The Coast Guard reported 23 infractions by foreign vessels since late September. The Japanese longliner KIYO MARU 55 was seized near Kodiak for underlogging its catch of sablefish by 11.1 mt. In mid-November the Japanese transport NIKKO MARU was seized in the central Bering Sea for gross logging violations. The Coast Guard boarding party found product transfer receipts and cargo stowage plans from 1982 and 1983 which showed the amount of product transferred exceeded the amount listed in transfer logs by more than 2,200 mt over the two-year period. Subsequently, individual reports of violations were issued to seven Japanese stern trawlers for underlogging the amount they had transferred to the NIKKO MARU.

Thus far in 1983, the U.S. Coast Guard enforcement effort has totaled 724 cutter patrol days and 2,872 aircraft patrol hours for a combined trackline coverage of over 380,011 miles. These enforcement efforts have resulted in forty-three reports of violations, thirty-seven citations and seven seizures.

### Scientists Seek Fishermen Input on Ocean Conditions

Ocean waters along the North Pacific Coast were exceptionally warm this year. These conditions in the eastern North Pacific Ocean are thought to be linked to the 1982-1983 'El Nino' event in waters off Peru. Fisheries scientists and oceanographers from federal, state and university groups in the U.S. and Canada are attempting to find out as much about this event as possible. An informal Task Force has been established to coordinate the separate efforts to monitor the progress of the warm water event over the course of the fishing

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season. Scientists are collecting and interpreting this information concerning fish-ocean interactions during previous warm water events. In addition, a project is under way to obtain information concerning the 1983 event from fishermen, port samplers, Sea Grant agents and others.

Scientists need information from fishermen on changes in fish distribution, timing and migration for marine mammals and seabirds, that is, anything that is unusual. Of special importance would be the occurrence of fish that normally occur in warmer waters - pompano, ocean sunfish, white sea bass, tropical tunas, and the like.

The following information is needed: What species have you caught that you do not normally catch? When? Where? Water Temperature? Any special conditions or observations? What changes in fish distribution (depth, concentration, location) did you notice this year as compared with previous years? Have you observed different conditions on the fishing grounds this year? Water temperature? Color of water? Direction of movement?

Also, please report any other observations that were unusual and may have been related to 'El Nino'. Your written comments may be mailed to:

Task Force on El Nino  
c/o The Institute for Marine Studies HF-05  
University of Washington  
Seattle, Washington 98195

For information on the Task Force contact Dave Fluharty at (206)543-7004 or Dr. Murray Hayes at (206)442-7719.

From the Council staff to all of you, HAPPY HOLIDAYS!

