North Pacific Fishery Management Council

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North Pacific Fishery Management Council Met December 8-13

During their six-day December meeting, the Council set the final 1993 groundfish harvest levels, apportionments, bycatch limits, and Vessel Incentive Program rates for the first half of the year. They approved a delay of the opening for the Bering Sea/Aleutian Islands 'B' season pollock fishery until August 15 and exclusive registration provisions for trawl vessels participating in a directed pollock fishery. Details of these items and other Council actions and news are provided in this newsletter.

The Council will meet next the week of January 17, with the Advisory Panel, Scientific and Statistical Committee, and the Comprehensive Planning Committee beginning at 8:00 a.m. that morning. The Council will begin meeting on Monday, January 18. All meetings will be held at the Anchorage Hilton Hotel. A draft agenda for the meeting should be available by January 4.

1993 Advisory Committee Appointments Announced

Advisory Panel. Two new members have been appointed to the Council's Advisory Panel for 1993:

Philip (Steve) Drage	Commercial Fisherman
Tom Elias	Sport Fishing Representative

The following nineteen Advisory Panel members were reappointed for the coming year:

John Bruce	Deep Sea Fishermen's Union
Al Burch	Alaska Draggers Assn.
Phil Chitwood	Arctic Alaska Fisheries
Dan Falvey	Alaska Longline Fishermen's Assn.
Dave Fraser	American High Seas Fisheries Assn.
Kevin Kaldestad	Kaldestad Fisheries
David Little	Clipper Seafoods
Pete Maloney	UniSea
Dean Paddock	Bristol Bay Driftnetters Assn.
Penny Pagels	Greenpeace
Byron Pfundt	Petersburg Vessel Owners Assn.
Perfenia Pletnikoff	Central Bering Sea Fishermen's Assn.
John Roos	Pacific Seafood Processors Assn.

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John Sevier	Alaska Pacific Seafood
Harold Sparck	Bethel
Mick Stevens	Native Seas, Inc.
Beth Stewart	Aleutians East Borough
John Woodruff	Alaska Fresh Seafood, Inc.
Robert Wurm	Kodiak Longline Vessel Owners Assn.

Scientific and Statistical Committee. Three new members have been appointed to the Scientific and Statistical Committee for 1993:

Keith Criddle	Univ. of Alaska Fairbanks, Dept. of Economics
Francis (Bud) Fay	Univ. of Alaska Fairbanks, Institute of Marine Science
Phil Rigby	Alaska Department of Fish and Game

The following nine Scientific and Statistical Committee members were reappointed for the coming year:

William Aron	Alaska Fisheries Science Center, NMFS
William Clark	International Pacific Halibut Commission
Douglas Eggers	Alaska Department of Fish and Game
Larry Hreha	Oregon Department of Fish and Wildlife
Daniel Huppert	Univ. of Washington, Institute of Marine Studies
Richard Marasco	Alaska Fisheries Science Center, NMFS
Marc Miller	Univ. of Washington, School of Marine Affairs
Terrance Quinn II	Univ. of Alaska, Juneau Center for Ocean Sciences
Jack Tagart	Washington Department of Fisheries

Observer Program

The Council approved a regulatory amendment to the domestic groundfish Observer Program. It was developed in consultation with the Council's Observer Oversight Committee, a group of fishing industry representatives, and includes:

1. Basing observer coverage requirements on fishing days, as opposed to fishing trip days, and defining a fishing day as any day in which groundfish are retained.

2. Changing the way in which 30% coverage vessels must meet their quarterly coverage requirements; these vessels will be required to carry an observer during 30% of their days during fishing trips in each calendar quarter in which they fish more than three days in the groundfish fishery. Additionally, each vessel must carry an observer during at least one fishing trip for each target fishery in which the vessel participates. Some of the groundfish target fishery categories will be aggregated to ease the logistical burdens of this requirement.

3. Longline vessels in the 30% coverage category which fish in the Eastern Gulf of Alaska must carry an observer during at least one fishing trip in the Eastern Gulf.

4. Modified observer coverage requirements for vessels using pot gear so that 30% coverage requirements apply to all vessels 60 feet and greater (vessels 125 feet and greater now have 30% coverage requirement as well).

5. Revision of conflict of interest standards for observers and observer contractors. Generally, these standards have been clarified so that observers and contractors may not have a personal or financial interest in the vessel or processing facility to which they are assigned. Financial or personal interest means any source of income to, or capital investment or other interest held by an individual, partnership, or corporation or an individual's spouse, immediate family member, parent, or significant other living within the same household.

These changes are scheduled for implementation by mid-year 1993. The Council also considered proposals which would have reduced the length limits for both 100% and 30% coverage requirements and would require multiple observers on some processing plants. The Council decided not to move forward with these changes now, noting that these issues would be addressed under the North Pacific Fisheries Research Plan. The Research Plan, when it becomes effective, will provide the flexibility to adjust coverage requirements annually.

The Research Plan is being prepared for review by the Secretary of Commerce, and will likely be submitted in January of 1993. If approved, it could be effective by mid 1993, which will initiate the one year start-up phase of that program. For the first twelve months of the program, fishing operations will continue to carry and pay for observers as currently required; those not carrying and paying for observers will pay a percentage fee of their exvessel fish value. The Council reaffirmed its earlier action that the fee will not exceed 2% of the exvessel value of the fisheries. The Council will likely be setting that fee percentage at their April 1993 meeting.

Gulf of Alaska Groundfish Specifications for 1993

The Council established Gulf of Alaska groundfish specifications for the 1993 fisheries, including Acceptable Biological Catches (ABCs), Total Allowable Catches (TACs), and Prohibited Species Catch (PSC) limits. Twenty-five percent of the preliminary TACs (set in September) will go forward as interim harvest limits for the first of the fishing year until superseded by the final specifications published in late January. The Council recommendations for ABC, TAC, and apportionments are listed in Table 1. They are based on the most current stock assessment information contained in the Stock Assessment and Fishery Evaluation (SAFE) document that was released for public review in November, as well as recommendations from the Plan Team, Scientific and Statistical Committee, and Advisory Panel.

Specifications for pollock received considerable attention because the Plan Team's final ABC recommendation of 206,400 mt was much higher than the preliminary recommendation, despite no change in stock status. It was based on new analysis that indicated a higher optimal exploitation rate. The Council's final ABC recommendation of 160,400 mt reflected uncertainty with the stock assessment model. The final TAC recommendation of 111,000 mt for the Western and Central regulatory areas was primarily based on ecosystem concerns, particularly with Steller sea lions, which feed extensively on juvenile pollock and have continued their population decline.

The TACs for shallow water flatfish and arrowtooth flounder were slightly higher than the preliminary recommendation, with an increased catch allowed in the Central area. Slightly higher TACs were also recommended for sablefish (20,900 mt) and demersal shelf rockfish (800 mt). Recommended TACs for flathead sole and deep water flatfish remained the same. The lower 1993 TAC for Pacific cod (56,700 mt) reflects a decline in exploitable biomass.

The Council set rockfish TACs in consideration of the depleted status of many of the target species. Significant reductions in TACs for Pacific ocean perch (POP) and other slope rockfish were made for the 1993 season, with TACs set at 2,560 and 5,383 mt respectively. Northern rockfish were broken out from the other slope rockfish group and received a separate TAC of 5,760 mt. Black rockfish were again

included with the pelagic shelf complex, as it was determined that there was not enough biological and fishery information available to manage this species separately. For thornyhead rockfish, the Council recommended a TAC of 1,062 mt.

The 'other species' category of groundfish will be apportioned by management area, not Gulfwide, for 1993. This TAC is set as 5% of the subtotal of all other target groundfish species and apportioned by the distribution of the aggregate TACs in each management area. This will prevent a directed fishery for Atka mackerel in the Western Gulf from exceeding the TAC (as occurred in 1992), until a plan amendment separating Atka mackerel from the 'other species' category can be completed. The 1993 total TAC for all Gulf of Alaska groundfish is 306,651 mt, which is allocated entirely to Domestic Annual Processing (DAP).

The PSC limits for halibut in the Gulf of Alaska are set by gear type and may be apportioned seasonally over the fishing year (Amendment 21). For 1993, the Council recommends the following halibut PSC apportionments for the Gulf of Alaska groundfish fisheries:

Trawl gear		**Hook and Line gear**	
1st quarter	600 mt (30%)	1st trimester	200 mt (26.7%)
2nd quarter	400 mt (20%)	2nd trimester	500 mt (66.7%)
3rd quarter	600 mt (30%)	3rd trimester	50 mt (6.7%)
4th quarter	400 mt (20%)		
TOTAL	2000 mt		750 mt

The 1993 total halibut PSC limits for all fisheries and gear types were the same as 1992 (2,750 mt), but the seasonal apportionments differ slightly for both trawl and hook and line fisheries.

For hook and line gear, the second trimester would be released coincidentally with the opening of the sablefish season on May 15, and would end on August 31. The third trimester apportionment will be released on September 1. As in 1992, pot gear would be exempt from the halibut PSC limits. The Council is again recommending a separate PSC allowance of 10 mt for the demersal shelf rockfish fisheries in the Southeast Outside District.

Based on a study of release condition factors, prepared by the International Pacific Halibut Commission and National Marine Fisheries Service, the Council recommends that 1993 fisheries in the Gulf of Alaska be managed using fishery-specific discard mortality rates as follows:

GOA Trawl fisheries

Midwater Pollock - 75%
Rockfish, shallow water flatfish, and 'other species' - 60%
Pacific cod, bottom trawl pollock, and deepwater flatfish - 55%

GOA Hook and Line fisheries

Pacific cod and rockfish - 16%
Sablefish - 20.5%

GOA Hook and Line fisheries

All Targets - 5%

Bering Sea/Aleutian Islands Groundfish Specifications for 1993

The Council adopted final groundfish specifications for the 1993 Bering Sea and Aleutian Islands (BSAI) fisheries, including Acceptable Biological Catches (ABCs), Total Allowable Catches (TACs), Prohibited Species Catch (PSC) limits, and apportionments. The Council recommendations for ABCs, TACs, and apportionments are listed in Table 2, based on the most current stock assessment information, as well as recommendations from the Plan Team, Scientific and Statistical Committee, and Advisory Panel.

Generally, abundance of species managed in the BSAI remain stable. For 1993 the Council recommended a BSAI pollock TAC of 1,300,000 mt for the Eastern Bering Sea, 51,600 mt for the Aleutian Islands area, and 1,000 mt for the Bogoslof District (518), reaffirming the Council's intent of conservative management of the Aleutian Basin/Bogoslof pollock stock. These are the same TACs set for pollock in 1992, and represent nearly 70% of the total groundfish tonnage available in the BSAI. The Council allocated 45% of the pollock TAC to the roe ('A') season and 55% of the pollock TAC to the non-roe ('B') season . Of the total pollock quota, 7.5% (or half of the reserves) will be set aside for Community Development Quota (CDQ) fisheries. This amounts to 97,500 mt in the Eastern Bering Sea and 3,870 mt in the Aleutians area. Seasonal apportionments of Bering Sea CDQ pollock fishery were the same as for the 1993 Bering Sea pollock fishery (45/55 split).

In order to protect Atka mackerel stocks in the eastern region from overharvesting, the Council set the TAC for BSAI Atka mackerel at 32,100 mt, well below the ABC of 117,100 mt. The Council felt that the lower TAC was necessary until area-specific TACs for this species could be adopted. The Council is developing a plan amendment that would subdivide the Aleutian Islands management area. (See Subdivision of the Aleutian Islands District). Once the subdivision is made, more Atka mackerel could be made available for harvest.

Bering Sea/Aleutian Islands PSC Bycatch Apportionments

Table 3 presents the 1993 apportionments of prohibited species catch limits among the designated trawl fisheries. In the BSAI, PSC allowances for Pacific halibut, red king crab and Tanner crab may be apportioned to six different trawl fisheries. Herring PSC may be apportioned into seven trawl fisheries, and is 1% of the estimated biomass of the EBS herring stocks. For halibut PSC bycatch in the 1993 fisheries, the cap will be enforced in terms of halibut discard mortality, rather than total halibut handled. This past year the Council adopted a 3,775 mt halibut mortality limit for BSAI trawl fisheries, and the halibut PSC caps presented in Table 3 are in terms of discard mortality. Attainments of an apportionment or seasonal allowance of a PSC will close the particular fishery.

For 1993, the Council recommends that fisheries be managed using fishery-specific halibut discard mortality rates rather than a single rate for the trawl fisheries and a single rate for the hook and line fisheries as was done in previous years. The trawl rates are shown in Table 3. The hook and line rates for all target species will be 18% and for pots, 5%.

The 1993 BSAI fishery will have a halibut PSC limit for the hook and line fisheries, also based on total mortality. Earlier this year the Council established a 900 mt halibut mortality cap on the hook and line fisheries. At this meeting, the Council recommended that 825 mt of the cap be placed in the Pacific Cod hook and line fishery, and that the remaining 75 mt go to other hook and line fisheries including sablefish and rockfish longline and jig. The Council chose not to seasonally apportion the halibut PSC cap for the hook and line fisheries, and also recommended exempting groundfish pot gear from halibut PSC closures. The Council also set bycatch rate standards for the vessel incentive program (VIP) for the first half of the 1993 season, as presented in Table 4.

TABLE 1. GULF OF ALASKA GROUNDFISH
1993 Council Recommendations for ABC, TAC, and Apportionments
(All Values in Metric Tons)

Species	Area	Council ABC	Council TAC	Council DAP
Pollock	W (61) }	34,068	24,087	24,087
	C (62) }	36,737	25,974	25,974
	C (63) }	86195	60,939	60,939
	E	3,400	3,400	3,400
	Total	160,400	114,400	114,400
Pacific Cod	W	18,700	18,700	18,700
	C	35,200	35,200	35,200
	E	2,800	2,800	2,800
	Total	56,700	56,700	56,700
Flatfish, Deep	W	2,020	1,740	1,740
	C	35,580	15,000	15,000
	E	7,930	3,000	3,000
	Total	45,530	19,740	19,740
Flathead sole	W	12,580	2000	2000
	C	31,830	5,000	5,000
	E	5,040	3,000	3,000
	Total	49,450	10,000	10,000
Flatfish, Shallow	W	27,480	4,500	4,500
	C	21,260	10,000	10,000
	E	1,740	1,740	1,740
	Total	50,480	16,240	16,240
Arrowtooth	W	38,880	5,000	5,000
	C	253,330	20,000	20,000
	E	29,080	5,000	5,000
	Total	321,290	30,000	30,000
Sablefish	W	2,030	2,030	2,030
	C	9,610	9,610	9,610
	W. Yakutat	3,830	3,830	3,830
	E. Yak./SEO	5,430	5,430	5,430
	Total	20,900	20,900	20,900
Pacific Ocean	W	1,240	571	571
Perch	C	1,560	718	718
	E	2,760	1,271	1,271
	Total	5,560	2,560	2,560
Shortraker /	W	100	90	90
Rougheye	C	1,290	1,161	1,161
	E	570	513	513
	Total	1,960	1,764	1,764
Rockfish	W	330	214	214
(Other Slope)	C	1,640	1,064	1,064
	E	6,330	4,105	4,105
	Total	8,300	5,383	5,383
Northern Rockfish	W	1,000	1,000	1,000
	C	4,720	4,720	4,720
	E	40	40	40
	Total	5,760	5,760	5,760
Rockfish	W	1,010	1,010	1,010
(Pelagic Shelf)	C	4,450	4,450	4,450
	E	1,280	1,280	1,280
	Total	6,740	6,740	6,740
Rockfish (Demersal Shelf)	S.E. Out.	800	800	800
Thornyhead	Gulfwide	1,180	1,062	1,062
Other Species	W		3,065	3,065
	C		9,709	9,709
	E		1,828	1,828
	Total		14,602	14,602
GULF OF ALASKA TOTAL		735,050	306,651	306,651

Table 2. Bering Sea/Aleutian Islands Groundfish
Council Recommended Groundfish Specifications for 1993 (in metric tons)

Species	Area	Seasons\1	ABC	TAC	ITAC\2	Seasonal Allowances	DAP	CDQ\3
Pollock	EBS		1,340,000	1,300,000	1,105,000		1,105,000	97,500
		Roe			497,250	45%	497,250	43,875
		Non-Roe			607,750	55%	607,750	53,625
	AI	\4	58,700	51,600	43,860		43,860	3,870
	518		42,000	1,000	850		850	75
					0		0	
Pacific cod	BS/AI		164,500	164,500	139,825		139,825	
					0		0	
Yellowfin sole	BS/AI		238,000	220,000	187,000		187,000	
					0		0	
Greenland turbot	BS/AI		7,000	7,000	5,950		5,950	
					0		0	
Arrowtooth flounder	BS/AI		72,000	10,000	8,500		8,500	
					0		0	
Rock sole	BS/AI		185,000	75,000	63,750		63,750	
					0		0	
Other flatfish	BS/AI		191,000	79,000	67,150		67,150	
					0		0	
Sablefish	EBS		1,500	1,500	1,275		1,275	
	AI		2,600	2,600	2,210		2,210	
					0		0	
POP complex					0		0	
ue POP	EBS		3,330	3,330	2,831		2,831	
Other POP complex	EBS		1,400	1,200	1,020		1,020	
True POP	AI		13,900	13,900	11,815		11,815	
Sharp/Northern	AI		5,670	5,100	4,335		4,335	
Short/Rougheye	AI		1,220	1,100	935		935	
					0		0	
Other rockfish	EBS		400	360	306		306	
	AI		925	830	706		706	
					0		0	
Atka mackerel	BS/AI		117,100	32,000	27,200		27,200	
					0		0	
Squid	BS/AI		3,400	2,000	1,700		1,700	
					0		0	
Other species	BS/AI		26,600	26,600	22,610		22,610	
					0		0	
BS/AI TOTAL			2,476,245	1,998,620	1,698,827		1,698,827	101,445

\1 Roe season for BSAI Pollock: January 20 to April 15.
Non-Roe Season, pending approval of a regulatory amendment: August 15 to December 31, otherwise will start June 1.

2\ Recommended TAC less the 15% Reserve

3\ CDQs equal half of the reserve for Pollock, or 7.5% of the BSAI pollock TAC.

4\ The Council did not divide the Aleutian Islands pollock TAC into roe and non-roe allowances.

Table 3. Council Recommended 1993 BSAI Trawl Fisheries PSC Apportionments & Seasonal Allowances

Fishery Group	Assumed Mortality\1	Halibut,Secondary Mortality Cap (mt)	Halibut, Primary\2 Mortality Cap (mt)	Herring (mt)	Red King Crab Zone1	C. bairdi Zone1	C. bairdi Zone 2
Yellowfin sole	70%	592	518	359	40,000	175,000	1,225,000
May 1 - Aug. 2		230	201				
Aug. 3 - Dec. 31		362	317				
Rocksole/other flatfish	70%	588	514		80,000	475,000	200,000
Jan. 1 - Mar. 29		427	373				
Mar. 30 - June 28		80	70				
June 29 - Dec. 31		80	70				
Turbot/arrowtooth/sablefish	40%	137	120				
June 29 - Dec. 31		137	120				
Rockfish	60%	201	176	9			25,000
Mar. 30 - June 28		81	70				
June 29 - Dec. 31		120	105				
Pacific cod	60%	1,000	874	27	40,000	175,000	400,000
Pollock/mackerel/"o. species"	60%	1,257	1,099	193	40,000	175,000	1,150,000
'A' Season (1/20 - 4/15)		314	274				
'B' Season (8/15-12/31)		943	824				
7 MW Pollock (Herring)				1,534			
TOTAL		3,775	3,300	2,122	200,000	1,000,000	3,000,000

\1 Recommended Mortality rates based on IPHC and NMFS analysis of 1991 observer data.

\2 Primary halibut cap closes Zones 1 and 2H (Areas 511, 512, 516 and 517).

Table 4. Council Recommendations for 1993 VIP Rate Standards

	Incentive Program Rate Standards	
	Halibut	Zone 1Red King Crab
Fishery and quarter	(kg halibut/mt groundfish)	(# of crab/mt groundfish)
BSAI Midwater Pollock		
First Quarter	1.0	n/a
Second Quarter	1.0	
BSAI Bottom Pollock		
First Quarter	7.5	
Second Quarter	5.0	
BSAI Yellowfin Sole		
First Quarter	5.0	2.5/mt
Second Quarter	5.0	2.5/mt
BSAI Other Trawl Fisheries		
First Quarter	30.0	2.5/mt
Second Quarter	30.0	2.5/mt
GOA Midwater Pollock		
First Quarter	1.0	n/a
Second Quarter	1.0	
GOA Other Trawl Fisheries		
First Quarter	50.0	n/a
Second Quarter	50.0	

Subdivision of the Aleutian Islands District

In September the Council requested its staff to prepare a plan amendment to subdivide the Aleutian Islands management area into two or more smaller management areas. The primary purpose of this amendment is to provide for more appropriate management of Atka mackerel, rockfish, and sablefish based on their biomass distributions. For example, the TAC for Atka mackerel is constrained to 32,100 mt, the amount that can safely be taken from the eastern portion of the Aleutians. However, an additional quota of Atka mackerel could become available from the reserves, to be fished in the western portion of the Aleutians, if the area is subdivided in 1993. The analysis for this proposed amendment may be available for Council review and action in January 1993. Final action would be required in January for this split to be in place by June of 1993, and the Council wishes to notice the industry and public that they intend to take final action, if at all possible, on this proposal in January.

If the analyses are not completed by January, the Council will take final action at their April 1993 meeting and request NMFS to implement the split by an emergency rulemaking to have it in effect by June. Because of the potentially high monetary value associated with the additional Atka mackerel quota, the Council's intent is to have the subdivision in place by mid-1993. The alternatives being considered are (1) divide the Aleutian District into two areas at 178°E. longitude and (2) divide the Aleutian District into three areas at 178°W. longitude and 178°E. longitude.

Pollock 'B' Season

The Council took final action on a regulatory amendment that delays the June 1 opening of the BSAI 'B' season pollock fishery until August 15. In setting the date for the 'B' season opening, the Council considered the tradeoffs between an increase in the value of pollock harvested, processing and harvesting opportunities, and the potential for poor weather and bycatch problems. A delay in the pollock 'B' season to August 15 would increase the size and value of the pollock harvested resulting in fewer small pollock being harvested and discarded. This opening may also allow catcher processors the opportunity to participate in salmon processing during the summer months. Trawl vessels would have the opportunity to participate in other fisheries during the summer months. The Council also considered drawbacks to delaying the opening. Analysis indicated that herring bycatch is higher in the late summer and fall. Also, the likelihood of fishermen encountering poor weather conditions during the pollock season would increase if the opening was too late in the season. The Council considered and rejected opening dates beyond August 15. This season delay is scheduled to be in effect beginning in 1993.

Exclusive Area Registration

At the December meeting, the Council made its final recommendation regarding exclusive area registration. The analysis was reviewed by the SSC and the AP, and substantial public testimony was received. The analysis showed that vessels that have fished in both the BSAI and GOA would generally choose to fish exclusively in the BSAI. Costs to affected vessels would be higher than benefits to those not affected, and would increase with the number of fish species included. The majority of public testimony indicated that exclusive registration should be an interim measure until a comprehensive rationalization plan is implemented, and that exclusive registration should be required of trawl vessels only. Given these considerations, the Council recommended an exclusive area registration amendment that would require all trawl vessels participating in a directed pollock fishery to register to fish in either the Western/Central GOA (areas 61-63) or the BSAI, but not both. It was also recommended that this amendment expire December 31, 1995.

Pribilof Island Trawl Closure Proposal

The Council was presented with a proposed amendment (21a) to close an area around the Pribilof Islands to trawling to protect important habitat for blue King crab, Korean hair crab, marine mammals and seabirds. Three separate areas were considered for closure: IPHC Area 4C, IPHC Area 4C west of 169°W, and waters within 25 nautical miles of the islands. Testimony from the public, SSC, and AP suggested that other areas should be considered to achieve the objective of protecting crab habitat while allowing important adjacent waters to remain open for trawling. The Council recommended that ADF&G consider the information received at the meeting and provide a revised analysis for review in the spring of 1993.

Salmon Bycatch

Originally part of the BSAI Amendment 21, the analysis of a proposed amendment to manage salmon bycatch in the BSAI trawl fisheries was scheduled for initial review by the Council at the December 1992 meeting. However, the analysis was not completed in time for Council consideration. Therefore, the Council decided to review the analysis for this proposal at the January 1993 meeting. It will be provided to the Council, AP and SSC before the Christmas holiday. The analysis for salmon bycatch measures contains options for setting a rate-based PSC cap for chinook salmon time/area closures to reduce chinook salmon bycatch in BSAI trawl fisheries. These measures, if approved, would not be implemented until 1994.

Comprehensive Rockfish Management

At the December meeting, the Council received several reports on the status of rockfish in the Gulf of Alaska, in addition to the stock assessments contained in the SAFE document. Concerned about the status of rockfish stocks, the Council recommended that the Plan Team develop a scoping document on rebuilding depleted rockfish stocks, particularly Pacific ocean perch (POP). Alternatives to be considered include attaining various target levels of biomass of all rockfish species within a specified time frame. The Council recommended that biological, sociological, and economic consequences of various alternatives should be considered. This preliminary analysis will be reviewed by the Council in April, with development of a plan amendment occurring in 1993.

The Council recommended that a regulatory amendment to reduce directed fishing standards for rockfish be explored. Preliminary data analysis by NMFS staff indicated that current directed fishing standards for POP and other rockfish may be too high, resulting in fishermen 'topping off' when directed fishing for rockfish is prohibited. It was suggested that a lower rate, one more comparable with a neutral bycatch situation, would allow more fishing for other species before rockfish TACs are reached. Possible implementation of such a regulation by emergency rule would allow new directed fishing standards to be in place early in 1993.

Comprehensive Rationalization Program

The Comprehensive Planning Committee (CPC) for the North Pacific Fishery Management Council met on November 12-13, 1992, in Seattle, Washington. The committee heard presentations on IFQ management systems, took public testimony, and developed a draft Problem Statement:

Draft Problem Statement

Expansion of the domestic fleet harvesting fish within the EEZ off Alaska, in excess of that needed to harvest the optimum yield efficiently, has made compliance with the Magnuson Act's National Standards and achievement of the Council's comprehensive goals, adopted December 7, 1984, more difficult under current management regimes. In striving to achieve its comprehensive goals, the Council is committed to: (1) assure the long-term health and productivity of fish stocks and other living marine resources of the North Pacific and Bering Sea ecosystem, (2) support the stability, economic well-being, and diversity of the seafood industry, and provide for the economic and social needs of the communities dependent upon that industry, (3) efficiently manage the resources within its jurisdiction to reduce bycatch, minimize waste, and improve utilization of fish resources in order to provide the maximum benefit to present and future generations of fishermen, associated fishing industry sectors, communities, consumers, and the nation as a whole.

The Council's overriding concern is to maintain the health of the marine ecosystem to ensure the long-term conservation and abundance of the groundfish and crab resources. In addition, the Council must address the competing and oftentimes conflicting needs of the domestic fisheries that have developed rapidly under open access, fisheries which have become overcapitalized and mismatched to the finite fisheries resources available. Symptomatic of the intense pressures within the overcapitalized groundfish and crab fisheries under Council jurisdiction off Alaska are the following problems:

- Harvesting capacity in excess of that required to harvest the available resource;
- Allocation and preemption conflicts between and within industry sectors, such as with inshore and offshore components;
- Preemption conflicts between gear types;
- Gear conflicts within fisheries where there is overcrowding of fishing gear due to excessive participation and surplus fishing effort on limited grounds;
- Dead-loss such as with ghost fishing by lost or discarded gear;
- Bycatch loss of groundfish, crab, herring, salmon, and other non-target species, including bycatch which is not landed for regulatory reasons;
- Economic loss and waste associated with discard mortality of target species harvested but not retained for economic reasons;
- Concerns regarding vessel and crew safety which are often compromised in the race for fish;
- Economic instability within various sectors of the fishing industry, and in fishing communities caused by short and unpredictable fishing seasons, or preemption which denies access to fisheries resources;
- Inability to provide for a long-term, stable fisheries-based economy in small economically disadvantaged adjacent coastal communities;
- Reduction in ability to provide a quality product to consumers at a competitive price, and thus maintain the competitiveness of seafood products from the EEZ off Alaska on the world market.
- Possible impacts on marine mammals and seabirds, and marine habitat.
- Inability to achieve long-term sustainable economic benefits to the nation.
- A complex enforcement regimen for fishermen and management alike which inhibits the achievement of the Council's comprehensive goals.

At the January 17 meeting and then during that week, the Committee and Council will take public testimony on the draft problem statement and on alternative management systems that should be developed to address the problems identified. Seven main alternative solutions were identified in the inshore-offshore amendment:

1. Individual Transferable Quotas
2. License limitation
3. Auctions
4. Traditional management tools

5. Continuation of inshore-offshore options
6. Community development quotas
7. No action

These alternatives were considered in detail in a discussion paper entitled 'North Pacific Groundfish and Crab: A Review of Management Options for Comprehensive Rationalization', which was circulated to industry on October 20, 1992, to stimulate industry suggestions for a comprehensive management program for the future of the groundfish and crab fisheries under the Council's jurisdiction.

Though each of the above alternatives may be viable options, the Council will need to narrow the range of alternatives if the analysis is to be completed by early 1994. This narrowing will take place at the January 17 Committee meeting and later that week in Council session. It is the Council's intent to select a few alternatives that can be studied extensively in the twelve months available for analysis. The Council solicits industry comment and suggestions on the draft problem statement and which alternatives to consider to resolve the problems and issues identified in the draft problem statement. Written comments received at our office by January 14 will be copied and made available in the Council meeting notebooks. Those wishing to bring written comments to the January 17 meeting should provide at least 30 copies for distribution.

CDQ Allocations for 1992-1993

On November 25, 1992 the Council, in a teleconference, reviewed and approved the Governor's recommendations for community development quotas (CDQ) for pollock for 1992 and 1993. These were forwarded to the Secretary of Commerce who approved the CDQ allocations on December 3, 1992. Fishing on the CDQs began immediately and will continue until the 1992 quotas are filled. CDQ allocations for 1994 and 1995 will again undergo the application and review procedure. Six community groups applied for and received allocations. These were:

1. Aleutian Pribilof Island Community Development Association (APICDA)
2. Bristol Bay Economic Development Corporation (BBEDA):
3. Central Bering Sea Fishermen's Association (CBSFA)
4. Coastal Villages Fishing Cooperative (CVFC):
5. Norton Sound Fisheries Development Association (NSFDA):
6. Yukon Delta Fisheries Development Association (YDFDA):

The following table shows the 1992 and 1993 CDQ allocations (mt) for each community group.

Community Group	APICDA	BBEDA	CBSFA	CVFC	NSFDA	YDFDA	All CDQs
Allocation %	18%	20%	10%	27%	20%	5%	7.5% of TAC
1992 CDQ	18,260	20,289	10,145	27,390	20,289	5,072	101,445
1993 CDQ	18,260	20,289	10,145	27,390	20,289	5,072	101,445

CDQ pollock fisheries will have to be conducted under the same rules and regulations as non-CDQ fisheries, with the exception that all CDQ fisheries are required to have 100% observer coverage. During the roe season (January 20-April 15), 45% of the CDQ reserve in the Eastern

Bering Sea (43,875 mt) may be harvested by CDQ fisheries, as well as 3,870 mt in the Aleutian District. The remainder of the CDQ reserve may be harvested after April 15.

At the December meeting, the Council took final action on Amendment 25 which would allocate bycatch to CDQ fisheries. This amendment is not expected to be in place until late 1993, and therefore prohibited species bycatch for 1992 and 1993 CDQ fisheries will fall under the same constraints as the non-CDQ fisheries. This means that all PSC, whether CDQ or non-CDQ, will count toward the same caps. Once a cap is reached both fisheries will be affected. Amendment 25, as passed, would allocate 7.5% of the pollock PSC caps to the CDQ fisheries. The CDQ bycatch allowances would be deducted from the caps set for the BSAI trawl fisheries, and would be apportioned among CDQ participants as individual bycatch accounts in proportion to the CDQ allocation going to each group. These specific CDQ bycatch apportionments will likely not be in effect until 1994. The Council also recommended eliminating the primary halibut PSC cap that closes Zones 1 and 2H in favor of using just the overall cap to close the BSAI. This change will be implemented in 1994.

Pelagic Trawl Definition

The Council previously approved a new definition of a pelagic trawl based on the physical configuration of the net. That definition has been withheld from implementation pending the addition of a performance-based definition which would kick in when on-bottom trawling is prohibited due to PSC closures. Simply stated, that definition will be based on whether a trawl picks up 20 or more crabs in a given haul. The Council recommended that the amendment be frameworked so that they can evaluate, annually, the number of crabs which will constitute a violation. It is anticipated that the new physical definition, shown below, will alleviate much of the problem associated with the previous definition.

Pelagic trawl means a trawl which:

(a) Does not have discs, bobbins, rollers, or other chafe protection gear attached to the foot rope, but which may have weights on the wing tips, and

(b) Has stretched mesh sizes of at least 60 inches, as measured between knots, (1) starting at all points on the fishing line, head rope, and breast lines and extending aft from the fishing circle and going around the circumference of the trawl as measured from the aft most point or center point on the fishing line, around the circumference of the trawl for a distance equal to or greater than one-half the vessel's length overall, and (2) tied to the fishing line with no less than 20 inches between knots around the circumference of the net, and

(c) Has stretched mesh sizes of at least 15 inches, as measured between knots for distance equal to or greater than one-half the vessel's length overall aft of the mesh required under (b).

(d) Contains no configuration intended to reduce the mesh size of the forward section as described under (b) and (c) of this definition, and

(e) May have parallel lines spaced no closer than 64 inches in the section ahead of the minimum mesh size required under (b) and (c) of this definition but such parallel lines shall not substitute for the required length of large mesh, and

(f) May have small mesh within 32 feet of the center of the head rope for the purpose of attaching of instrumentation, e.g. net-sounders, and

(g) Has no floatation other than a float capable of providing up to 200 pounds of buoyancy to accommodate the use of a net-sounder, and

(h) Has no more than one fishing line and foot rope for a total of no more than two weighted lines on the bottom of the trawl between the wing tip and the fishing circle, and

(i) Has no metallic components except for connectors, e.g., hammerlocks or swivels, aft of the fishing circle and forward of any mesh greater than 5.5 inches stretched measure.

The Council has requested that the Secretary implement these new definitions by an emergency rulemaking so that they can be in place by February of 1993.

Trawl Mesh Proposal

The Council reviewed a proposal submitted by the Highliner's Association recommending regulations to require large, single layer mesh in portions of net cod-ends. The purpose of such a regulation would be to reduce the incidental take of undersized fish, particularly pollock. The Council supports this concept and has requested its staff to begin preparation of a regulatory amendment in 1993. If adopted, such a regulation could be in place for the 1994 fisheries.

Gangion-Cutting/Careful Release

The Council unanimously approved a regulatory amendment that will require groundfish longliners to release halibut outboard of the roller by cutting of the gangion or careful removal of the hook with a gaff in a manner that does not add injury to the halibut (such as "hook straightening"). All non-retainable halibut taken in the BSAI or GOA groundfish longline fisheries, including those undersized fish taken in the directed halibut fishery, must be released in the required manner. This regulation should reduce the mortality rate of discarded halibut. In making its decision, the Council considered the costs to individual longline vessels, including replacement costs of hooks and gangions, and the cost of time lost due to replacement and/or slower retrieval. However, the Council believes the costs of careful release to individual vessels are more than offset by the benefits to the group of longline vessels as a whole due to lower discard mortality of halibut. Applying lower discard mortality rates of halibut to longline vessels managed under a halibut PSC bycatch cap allows them to harvest more Pacific cod and other groundfish. Because this regulation would not be in place until mid-season 1993, the Council recommended it be implemented by emergency rule. This will allow the benefits of this regulation to accrue during the entire 1993 fishery. It is the Council's intent that this regulation apply to all longline vessels, not just vessels with observers on board. In addition, it is the Council's intent to have NMFS use a preseason, assumed mortality rate of 18% temporarily, which is somewhat less than the rates (16-25%) estimated for 1993 from 1991 observer data. This rate would be updated with in-season data sometime during 1993 as appropriate.

Experimental Fishing Permits

Last September the Council reviewed a draft request for an experimental fishing permit submitted by Terra Marine Research and Education, a non-profit corporation established to conduct research in the field of marine science. The permit, if granted by the NMFS Regional Director, would allow for limited retention of bycaught salmon and halibut to be distributed to needy persons through a network established by Terra Marine. The Council discussed the permit request once again at the December meeting, noting their concerns with the proposal, but generally supporting the concept of reducing waste and providing food to needy persons. However, the permit request is still under review by the Regional Director, and the Council will again address this request in January 1993 for an official recommendation. Even if approved by the Council, the experiment would require the International Pacific Halibut Commission (IPHC) to make a change in their regulations to allow for the retention of trawl-caught halibut for this experimental program.

The Council also reviewed an experimental fishing permit request submitted by the Alaska Fisheries Development Foundation (AFDF) which would allow for the taking of 750,000 pounds of arrowtooth flounder between January 1 and January 20, prior to the opening of the general fishing season. The project is intended to demonstrate the feasibility of producing market grade arrowtooth surimi under commercial conditions. Designed in conjunction with All Alaskan Seafoods and the Alaska Draggers Association, the project will employ observer coverage for the duration of the experiment. This proposal has been reviewed by the Regional Director and the Council unanimously recommended that the permit be granted to AFDF.

Floating Seafood Processor Tracking Volunteer Pilot Program

The Alaska Department of Environmental Conservation (DEC) is initiating a Volunteer Floating Seafood Processor Tracking Project to develop the feasibility and demonstrate the technological capabilities to remotely track the position of floating seafood processors within Alaskan coastal waters. The ARGOS satellite system will be employed to demonstrate tracking capabilities. The volunteer pilot program is soliciting a total of five (5) floating seafood processor vessels representative of industry activity throughout Alaskan coastal waters.

The pilot program will evaluate vessel tracking technical requirements, as well as the feasibility of implementing a full-scale vessel tracking program. Issues such as transmitter reliability, software utility, communications, data access and interpretation, software utility and operator training will be evaluated. The cost of the program are paid for by DEC.

The requirements of a seafood processor vessel willing to participate in this volunteer program are minimal, and include: committing to a three (3) month test duration beginning as early as February, 1993; installing a lightweight, compact, integrated antenna and transmitter on the exterior of the vessel in an unobstructed location, using shipboard DC power supply; operating largely within Alaskan coastal waters during the three-month trial period; and reporting any difficulties with the installation or operation of the system.

If you are interested in participating in this program or have additional questions, please write DEC at 10107 Bentwood Place, Juneau, Alaska 99801-8552, Attention: Jeff Hock, or contact him at (907) 790-2169, or FAX (907) 790-2451.