

North Pacific Fishery Management Council

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MINUTES

NORTH PACIFIC FISHERY MANAGEMENT COUNCIL
Scientific and Statistical Committee
July 21-22, 1981
Homer, Alaska

The Scientific and Statistical Committee of the North Pacific Fishery Management Council met in Homer on July 21-22, 1981. Members present were:

- Richard Marasco, Vice-Chairman
- Ed Miles
- William Aron
- Bud Burgner
- John Clark
- Larry Hreha
- Steve Langdon
- Jerry McCrary (alternate for Jack Lechner)
- Don Calkins (alternate for John Burns)

E-1 Salmon FMP

Report of Limited Entry Working Group

The SSC reviewed the discussions of limited entry options prepared by the Salmon Limited Entry Working Group at the request of the Council at the May meeting. The SSC is of the opinion that a separate FCZ limited entry system does not appear to be feasible primarily because of implementation and enforcement costs, problems of enforcement, and possible disruptions of traditional fishing patterns.

The extreme measure of a complete closure of the FCZ was also discussed, but considered infeasible since fishermen who have traditionally fished the Fairweather grounds could be severely affected, resulting in unknown changes in distribution of Alaskan and non-Alaskan chinooks in the remaining troll fishery.

The SSC recommends development of working group option 4a, i.e., a single, state-administered limited entry system for the entire Southeast Alaska salmon troll fishery, addressing both state and federal waters, hand trollers and power trollers. Under this scheme all vessels could fish at any time in any area which was not closed for stock-specific management. Control of the balance of chinook or coho fishing between inshore and offshore waters would

take the form of closures. In the meantime, until such a limited entry system is established, control of effort in the FCZ probably could best be achieved by differential time closures during each fishing season. If socio-economic concerns are the driving force behind the Council's interest in limited entry, specific goals for the program must be defined.

The SSC agrees with the working group statement that any effective limited entry program would require a severe reduction in the number of licensed troll vessels.

Joint NPFMC and PFMC Meeting with WDF to Discuss Salmon Management Model

Members of the SSC's salmon subgroup will attend this meeting. Jim Richardson will keep the subgroup informed concerning the date of this meeting. All relevant information and documentation will be forwarded to the members of the subgroup. It is expected that subgroup members will examine this information and have a list of questions prepared for the meeting.

E-3 King Crab FMP

Draft FMP

The SSC reviewed Draft #10 of the Bering Sea/Aleutian Islands King Crab Fishery Management Plan. The SSC wishes to note that the draft was incomplete. We were informed that several sections were currently being drafted. It is the desire of the SSC to receive the final draft as soon as possible so that it can be reviewed and commented upon at an early date.

The SSC has had the opportunity to examine and comment on management objectives, the derivation of ABC and OY determination. We are in agreement with the approaches to these items contained in the draft plan. A source of concern to the committee was the Team's division of management measures into two categories: those that will be reviewed periodically and those that will remain unchanged through numerous fishing seasons. If at some future date there is a need to modify category 2 management measures, the formal amendment process will have to be used. Given the inefficiencies associated with this process, it is desirable to employ a different approach. The SSC recommends that, because of this problem, all management measures be handled in the fashion proposed for those that follow into category 1. This modification will require that criteria be specified that will trigger a modification of those measures included in category 2. It was also suggested that limited entry be added to the list. The SSC also had some suggested wording changes which will be passed on to the Team.

Fishing Vessel Financing

The SSC reviewed a July 20, 1981 memorandum prepared by Jim Richardson concerning the impact of NMFS fishing vessel financing programs on the king crab fishery. The SSC recognizes the importance of this issue and supports initiation of a study to determine the impact of the programs on all fisheries.

E-4 Tanner Crab FMP

Review of Tanner Crab FMP by PMT

The Tanner crab PMT met in July to discuss inconsistencies between the FMP and State regulations and suggest solutions. Four options were discussed. The PMT preferred modifying the FMP by changing it into a multi-year framework (Option 3). Given the inefficiencies of the current amendment process, the SSC supports the recommendations of the PMT.

Proposed Tanner Crab Workshop

The SSC discussed the proposed Tanner crab workshop and endorsed the idea. It was felt that information will be generated at the workshop which will be useful in developing a multi-year Tanner crab plan. Scheduling the meeting for November 1981 should be explored so that the Council and ABOF could use workshop results in their deliberations and in drafting the FMP.

E-5 Gulf of Alaska Groundfish FMP

The Gulf of Alaska Groundfish PMT identified three types of possible action with respect to the present FMP. These are:

1. an amendment of OY and certain minor adjustments to the present regime;
2. a prohibited species amendment; and
3. an amendment which introduces a flexible multi-year management regime.

The SSC concurs with the PMT in its recommendations that they proceed with the drafting of Amendment #11 and background documentation concerning OY (particularly for sablefish), current domestic reporting requirements, and lifting the prohibition on foreign trawling from February 16 to June 1 between 147°W and 157°W longitude.

The SSC also concurs with the recommendation to rewrite the FMP as a multi-year framework plan that would not require annual amendments.

The SSC was of the opinion that the PSC concept should be included in the development of the framework plan, rather than as a separate amendment to the FMP or the proposed framework plan.

E-6 Bering Sea/Aleutian Islands Groundfish FMP

Amendment #3

The SSC considered the June 30, 1981 version of Amendment #3 as developed by the PDT in response to instructions from the Council at the May meeting. The PDT identified seven separate issues arising out of the Council's instructions and the SSC discussed these seriatim.

A. Determination of PSC's for Each Prohibited Species

The SSC concurred with the inclusion of 1980 data in determining the base level for each prohibited species. The SSC noted, however, changes made in the target level and period of reduction for each prohibited species. Instead of the previously stipulated goal of 75% reduction in all prohibited species in a five year period, the PDT proposes a differentiated approach:

Pacific halibut - 75% reduction in five years

Salmon - 80% reduction in six years as agreed between Alaskan Natives and Japanese trawling associations

King and Tanner crabs - 25% reduction in five years

The SSC concurred with the reasons for the changes in the schedules for salmon and crabs. In the latter case the PDT had taken into account the insignificant biological impact of the incidental catch on the crab population and the lesser socioeconomic impact of the incidental catches on the domestic crab fishing industry.

In written and oral statements the representatives of the Japanese trawling associations criticized the target level for Pacific halibut as being completely unrealistic. The SSC finds that it is very difficult to determine whether this goal is realistic or unrealistic. Earlier reports have suggested that this target level is reasonable if proper gear (i.e., off-bottom trawls) is used. Without the actual experience, it is not possible to be definitive. For this reason, annual Council review of performance is necessary. Target levels can then be adjusted in either direction if experience shows such change is warranted.

With respect to the proposed reduction schedule, the SSC noted that some written responses of interested parties have found this schedule rigid and insufficiently responsive to annual variations in recruitment of prohibited species and in the abundance of target species. The SSC found that the PDT did consider this problem but found it most useful to provide for such annual variations by including several elements of flexibility:

1. the 10% level by which the PSC may exceed the limit in any year combined with the three year roll-over period;
2. flexibility in the field authority of the Regional Director;
3. the stipulated review of the schedule after two years; and
4. rewards for clean gear.

The SSC appreciates the difficulty of the problems and the way in which the PDT has sought to provide for flexibility. In addition, however, the SSC is impressed by the significant degree of uncertainty surrounding available data and stresses the need for caution in the face of this uncertainty. As a result, the SSC wishes to stress that there is a need for annual review of goals as well as reduction schedules to see whether they are reasonable in the light of stock conditions and the ability of the fleets to modify their gear and fishing strategies in relation to prohibited species.

The concept of the three year roll-over period generated considerable discussion within the SSC, especially in light of its preference for annual review of goals and reduction schedules. It is conceivable that drastic downward changes in stock conditions would call for different kinds of action from that contemplated in the roll-over concept. On the basis of detailed discussion in the SSC, it was agreed that the roll-over concept was appropriate for salmon to maintain consistency with the Alaska Natives and Japanese trawler associations' agreement.

B. Annual Review of Prohibited Species Catch

The SSC saw no need to review the base PSC levels for measurement annually. Only the target levels and the period of reduction and the percentage level of reduction from the previous year need to be reviewed annually.

In this connection, the question was raised whether a change in PSC levels as a consequence of annual review would necessitate a Plan Amendment. If so, flexibility would be lost. It appears, however, that if the criteria for field order authority were designed sufficiently broadly, a change in the PSC levels would not necessitate a formal Plan Amendment. The SSC has consulted with counsel on this point and it has been assured that it is legally possible to have the Regional Director implement PSC changes by field order.

C. Application of the PSC Concept to Foreign and Domestic Fishermen

The SSC noted that this was the most controversial item in the Amendment package and this was made clear in oral and written public testimony.

From the point of view of the PDT and the SSC, the purpose of the PSC concept is to control mortality. As such, all predators have to be considered. Furthermore, the PSC concept as currently utilized, has two components:

1. situations in which incidental catches have adverse biological impacts on the stocks in question; and
2. situations which do not involve adverse biological impacts, and where the purpose is to reserve a fishery for domestic fleets.

Since the Council instructed the PDT that Amendment #3 would not apply to the domestic fleet without specifying the levels of mortality of prohibited species that would be acceptable, the PDT had the disadvantage of not knowing what levels of mortality were acceptable or unacceptable. They therefore recommended a "point of concern" for the Council to reconsider the exempt status of domestic and joint-venture fisheries and suggested that this point be when:

1. the rate of incidental catch by domestic and joint-venture trawlers exceeds twice the average rate by foreign trawlers; and
2. when the total incidental catch of prohibited species by domestic and joint-venture fisheries exceeds half of the PSC.

The SSC noted that for various reasons both the domestic and foreign fleets argue strenuously that the proposed procedure is too onerous and will have seriously detrimental impacts on both fleets.

The SSC thinks that it is extremely difficult for the PDT to design and the SSC to evaluate alternative fishing strategies without clear specification of management objectives from the Council. These management objectives should include specification of acceptable PSC levels for both domestic and foreign fleets.

The SSC also notes that the formula employed by the PDT tying the performance of foreign and domestic fleets together raises a number of very serious questions. First, it is clear that such an arrangement presents the Council and the Secretary with potentially significant trade-offs. If, in fact, the procedure will lead to an early closure on participation by foreign fleets, there is a potentially significant loss in foreign fees as a result of unharvested TALFF attached to this result. Furthermore, the possibility of arranging for technology transfer between the foreign and domestic fleets will be foreclosed.

The point was also made that this issue raised serious legal questions as well, especially if the foreign fleets could be shut off in a year in which they had reduced their own PSC levels but the domestic fleets had increased theirs.

The SSC thinks that these issues suggest the need for separate regimes for the foreign and domestic fleets on the problem of PSC levels, but these separate regimes cannot be designed without clear instructions from the Council on the objectives for the management of fisheries in the Bering Sea and Aleutian Islands area.

D. Allocation of PSC's to Fishing Groups

The SSC agrees with the recommendation made by the PDT. In addition, the SSC recommends that the foreign longline fisheries be exempted for halibut as well. We note, however, that while the present impact is minor, the potential impact is much greater. The performance of foreign longline fleets should therefore be closely monitored and reviewed.

E. Retention of Prohibited Species

The SSC concurs with the PDT recommendations.

F. In-Season Implementation and the PDT Alternative in Item IV

The SSC thinks that the PDT's analysis is correct and prefers the Alternative stated in Item IV for the reasons specified by the PDT.

G. Estimation of Prohibited Species Catch

The SSC agrees with the PDT recommendation. However, the SSC notes that at the present time there is no observer coverage of the domestic trawl fishery.

H. Final Recommendations A & B (p. 11)

The SSC concurs in the two recommendations made by the PDT but suggests the following change in the last sentence of item B:

"any additional prohibited species catch would have to be counted against future PSC limits."

Contracts

RFP 81-2

One response was received to the "Determination of Stock Origins of Chinook Incidentally Caught in Foreign Trawls in the U.S. Eastern Bering Sea and Gulf of Alaska FCZ" RFP. This proposal was reviewed by the SSC. It is recommended that funding for the proposal be approved subject to one modification. It is suggested that a review be made prior to initiation of work scheduled to begin July 1982. This review will serve as the basis for determining if the project is to be continued.

F-3 FY82 Programmatic Funding Priorities

The following priority rank was established by the SSC given the project proposals brought before the committee:

High

Rapid response, Unforeseen Data and Analyses Needs	\$ 80,000
Analysis of Southeastern Alaska troll data	40,000
High seas tagging of salmon	60,000
Feasibility of using scale analysis methods to identify Bering Sea herring stocks	60,000
Tanner crab workshop	2,000
Socioeconomic study of Southeastern Alaska salmon fishing industry	10,000
Bering Sea and Gulf of Alaska groundfish studies	301,600
Economic studies of the King crab fisheries	50,000

Medium

Analysis of Southeastern salmon scale pattern and tagging data analysis	\$ 25,000
Evaluation of Incidental Catch of halibut mortality in commercial crab pots	100,000

Low

Marine Mammal studies	\$ 60,000
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