

North Pacific Fishery Management Council

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DRAFT MINUTES
 SCIENTIFIC & STATISTICAL COMMITTEE MEETING
 February 21-22, 1979

The SSC meeting was called to order at 9:00 a.m., Wednesday, February 21 in the Council offices with the following members present:

Steve Pennoyer, Chairman
 Jack Robinson
 Don Bevan
 Alan Millikan
 Jack Lechner
 Ed Miles (Present during part of the meeting)

SUBCOMMITTEES

- (1) Socioeconomic data needs: At the January meeting the Council approved the SSC recommendation of a group consisting of Messrs. Ed Miles, George Rogers, Jim Crutchfield of the SSC, Messrs. Hart, Marasco, Martin and Stokes as economists involved in the preparation of FMP's, the chairmen of the plan development teams and two members of the Advisory Panel to evaluate the FMP's prepared to date in terms of socioeconomic data needs.

The SSC recommended Ed Miles serve as Chairman. The SSC also suggested that someone from the Pacific Fishery Management Council be asked to participate on this subcommittee.

It is expected this group will meet and report back to the SSC by June 1, 1979.

- (2) DAH: At the same time the Council also approved the SSC's recommendation to form a working group to develop a standardized method of arriving at a reasonably accurate DAH. This group will consist of Rogers and Crutchfield from the SSC, someone from the NMFS Regional Office, (Phil Chitwood) and some AP members.

The SSC suggested George Rogers as Chairman of this group. The Chairman is to contact members and mutually agree upon a time and report to the SSC in late spring or early summer.

SSC PROCEDURES

The SSC discussed review procedures on management plans and lengthy reports. Concern was expressed about not having sufficient time to review plans. A suggestion was made to appoint a subcommittee to review each plan and present a written report to the SSC. The King Crab plan is due to be mailed to the SSC the first week in March. The Committee appointed a subcommittee of Frank Fukuhara as Chairman, Jack Lechner, Don Bevan and George Rogers. This subcommittee is to meet with the team prior to the March meeting and report to the SSC. The SSC will then combine their comments with those of the subcommittee.

Another subject on SSC policy was surfaced by Lee Alverson, past Chairman of the SSC. The SSC unanimously recommended that the Council approve designated alternates for the SSC members who are from State or Federal agencies who can serve on the SSC in their absence. It is felt that since the agencies have certain responsibilities and commitments requiring absence at some meetings this would be beneficial. It was pointed out that this is done in the Pacific Fishery Management Council and works out well.

DISCUSSION OF MANAGEMENT OF EASTERN BERING SEA KING AND TANNER CRABS:

Dr. D. L. Alverson made a presentation entitled A Discussion of Abundance Trends and Management of Eastern Bering Sea King and Tanner Crabs. This was a slide presentation. Dr. Alverson explained it was done to clarify for the Council certain data collection and analysis procedures.

KING CRAB MANAGEMENT STRATEGY - Report by J. Reeves and R. Marasco

The SSC considered the report by Jerry Reeves and R. Marasco entitled An Evaluation of Alternate Management Strategies for Alaskan Red King Crab, which was given us at our January 1979 meeting. Jerry Reeves was present to summarize the report's main conclusions and answer questions. The report summarizes results of a computer simulation model testing two management strategies - pulse fishery and multiple-age class fishery for a 30-year period. The results of these simulations showed there was little difference in long-term total yield either biological or economic over the 30-year period. More important, there was only a modest difference in yield and abundance trends over the period. The overriding factor appeared to be variable recruitment over time in both models.

The SSC thought the report was well-done. It felt that new, better, estimates of actual natural mortality were needed. Dr. Reeves felt the biggest imponderable factor in the parameters used was the real effect of pulse fishing on reproductive capacity of the crab population. The SSC recommended the plan drafting team carefully consider data needs and needed research. NMFS did indicate that they were going to continue the modeling work and the SSC suggested certain new areas of investigation including using different constant rates of fishing mortality.

GULF OF ALASKA GROUND FISH AMENDMENTS

The SSC reviewed the Plan Development Team comments on several Gulf of Alaska Groundfish FMP Amendments.

1. Open Davidson Bank to Longlining.

The SSC reconfirmed its conclusion that this is not a scientific problem. The only purpose of the Davidson Bank sanctuary is to preserve groundfish stocks for eventual use of the domestic fishery. The domestic use thus far has been limited to a small amount of trawling for crab bait and there is little likelihood of major expansion at this time. Halibut savings is not an issue since halibut are no more abundant in Davidson Bank than in the remainder of the Shumagin area.

2. Foreign Longlining leeward of 400/500 meters between 157° W and 140° W.

There appears to be no scientific rationale for prohibiting longlining for cod landward of 500/400 meters from 157° W to 140° W in the Gulf of Alaska. In fact, there is the possibility that some savings of halibut will occur if the longline catch of cod replaces a cod trawl catch.

The SSC was presented data from the Shumagin and Chirikof areas where trawl and longline catches in shallow waters could be compared. The data clearly demonstrated that the trawl fishery causes a significant greater loss of halibut than a directed longline fishery for cod. The Plan Development Team also estimated that halibut mortality would be reduced if the cod reserve was allocated to longliners rather than the trawl fishery although savings would be small since the cod reserve is small relative to the total groundfish allocation. The total catch of groundfish would not be increased if the longliners are allowed inside 500 meters - the longline catch would simply replace some of the trawl catch. It was understood that allocations already made would probably not allow taking any effect action on this prior to 1980.

3. - OY for Atka mackerel

There is presently no OY or TALFF for Atka mackerel in the SE region. The Japanese currently harvest mackerel incidentally to other species and requested a small TALFF to accommodate legitimate by-catches. The SSC supports the PDT recommendation that the Gulf-wide OY be increased by 2,000 mt (to 26,800 mt) all of which should be apportioned to the new Yakutat-Southeast area. The additional amount should not be made on the basis for initiating a target fishery. The OY is still well below the conservative EY estimate of 33,000.

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BERING SEA/ALEUTIAN GROUND FISH PLAN COMMENTS

The SSC reviewed the PDT recommendations and responses to public comments on the plan received during the public review process.

1. Winter halibut savings area -- no foreign longlining landward of 500 m during the winter.

Longlines experience high catch rates of halibut during the winter (24.17 halibut per ton of catch and low rates (0.13) during summer months. The Committee supports the PDT recommendation that no foreign longlining be allowed in the winter halibut savings area. Currently there is no trawl fishery allowed in this time/area so the longlining is an additional mortality on halibut.

3. Foreign closures in the 3-12 mile zone.

The PDT presented a comprehensive proposal for foreign fishery closures in the 3-12 mile zone of the Aleutian area. The proposal is an attempt to overcome the hodge-podge of existing closures which have accumulated over the years and for which the justification is questionable, unclear or unknown.

The SSC compliments the PDT on its approach and believes that this proposal is better than previous suggestions. However, we reserve final judgement until data from other sources are received and carefully reviewed.

4. Exempting concept of foreign longliners from national closures when certain allocations are reached.

The Committee and the PDT have differing views on this proposal. The PDT is against an exemption and suggests that foreign nations are responsible to divide allocations of all species including those individually taken between gears and fleets and that enforcement of the sub-allocations is the responsibility of foreign nations which receive allocations.

The SSC recommends that the foreign longline fishery not be closed unless the catch of the following longline target species exceed the total national allocation. The longline fishery should be closed if the total nation's catch of sablefish, Pacific cod and turbot exceed the nation's allocation for those species.

The concept of exemptions is a complex issue. The SSC may reconsider its proposal in the future after SSC and PDT members work together to develop a solution or better approach to this complicated problem.

5. Salmon savings closure

The SSC recognizes the potential impact of incidental salmon trawl catches on the western Alaska salmon fisheries. Very little data will be available until late March when detailed incidence data by $\frac{1}{2}^{\circ} \times 1^{\circ}$ blocks is due. The SSC, PDT and Alaska Department of Fish and Game personnel will work together to provide recommendations after analyses of these data are complete.

6. Domestic catch reporting

Need to establish time and place for meeting between AP, SSC and PDT at March Council meeting. ADF&G will circulate options with charts for various data collection and reporting systems.

7. Limited entry to the domestic groundfish fisheries

The SSC appointed Drs. Miles and Crutchfield to help the PDT revise and expand this section of the plan. The new section will be submitted to the SSC and Council as soon as it is completed.

8. Response to the Marine Mammal Commission comments on the Bering Sea/Aleutian Groundfish FMP.

The Committee recommends the Council request from the Marine Mammal Commission estimates of Optimum Sustainable Population size of the marine mammals which may be impacted by the FMP and the rationale for how these are derived. The SSC has little information on the current status of stocks or population trends of mammals in the Bering Sea.

The Committee generally supports the team contention that a direct adverse impact on marine mammals as a result of the plan is unlikely since the proposed total allowable catch of groundfish for 1980 is 25 percent below the 1969-76 average catch.

9. It was recommended that a mechanism be stated in the plan similar to that proposed for the Gulf, allowing discretionary release of unused DAH to the reserve by the Council.

ADF&G DATA SYSTEM CONTRACT

The SSC reviewed a contract monitoring committee report from Jim Branson dated February 13, 1979. We concur with the recommendations that:

1. The contractor should concentrate on completion of Phase I and Phase II should be restricted to planning only and that the contract be amended to reflect the new schedule.

2. That an outside consultant review and comment on the appropriateness of the tasks, the adequacy of the suggested funding to complete them and the time frame allowed.

MARCH MEETING & AGENDA

The SSC will meet beginning at 9:00 a.m. on Tuesday, March 20 and will meet again on the 21st in Juneau.. Agenda items were discussed.

1. First Review of King Crab FMP
2. Final Review of Bering Sea/Aleutian FMP
3. Stat areas, data collection and reporting for groundfish
4. Other

List of Documents Reviewed by the SSC at the February 21-22, 1979 SSC Meeting:

1. Gulf of Alaska Groundfish FMP -- PDT Comments, dated February 17, 1979.
2. PDT Recommendations Re Bering Sea/Aleutian Groundfish FMP dated February 27, 1979.
3. Preliminary Response of the BS/A Groundfish PDT to the Marine Mammal Commission Comments dated February 21, 1979.
4. Illustrations for "A Discussion of Abundance Trends and Management of Eastern Bering Sea King and Tanner Crabs" This document went with the slide presentation from Dr. D. L. Alverson.
5. Table Presented by Bert Larkins regarding halibut kill rate (February 21, 1979)
6. Document dated January 1979 entitled "An Evaluation of Alternate Management Strategies for Alaskan Red King Crab"
7. Memorandum dated February 13, 1979 to Council, SSC and AP from Jim H. Branson entitled "Report from the Contract Monitoring Committee to Contract 78-4, The Development and Enhancement of a Computerized Fisheries Information System."