

North Pacific Fishery Management Council

Clement V. Tillion, Chairman
Jim H. Branson, Executive Director

605 West 4th Avenue
Anchorage, Alaska 99510



Mailing Address: P.O. Box 3136DT
Anchorage, Alaska 99510

Telephone: (907) 274-4563
FTS 271-4064

Certified by: _____

Date: _____

MINUTES
SCIENTIFIC AND STATISTICAL COMMITTEE
Sitka, Alaska
September 21-22, 1982

The Scientific and Statistical Committee of the North Pacific Fishery Management Council met in Sitka on September 21-22, 1982. The meeting was originally scheduled to start on September 20, but due to weather, members were unable to arrive in Sitka. Members present were:

Donald Rosenberg, Chairman	Richard Marasco, Vice-Chairman
Al Millikan	Larry Hreha
William Aron	Steve Langdon
John Clark	

C-6 Other Business

Alternates for Agency Representatives on SSC

The SSC discussed the request from the Washington Department of Fisheries regarding their alternate. The SSC finds that the request can be accomplished under the current Council policy on SSC membership.

D-1 Salmon FMP

A member of the Salmon PMT brought to the attention of the SSC that the team is currently compiling a report on the status of natural salmon stocks in the Northwest. This review will also contain recommendations on principles for management of these stocks. The SSC feels that this report is a necessary first step in the development of a Council policy on the management of natural stocks. The PMT report will be completed by October 6. The SSC has arranged a meeting with the team immediately after the completion of this report. At that time the SSC will draft a policy statement for Council review.

D-2 Herring FMP

The SSC reviewed the revisions to the Bering/Chukchi Sea Herring Plan. The changes appear to satisfy the instructions given the PDT by the Council. We regret that we received the document at this meeting and thus did not have time for a comprehensive review of the alterations to the original FMP. The revisions contain major changes in concepts and procedures which require detailed review by the SSC.

Our preliminary review focused on the following issues:

1. The new draft FMP will have very limited authority to conserve the herring resource. The priority herring fisheries are managed by the State of Alaska in state waters. The FMP does not control or influence harvest in state waters. Council conservation authority under the draft plan is limited to only offshore fisheries.
2. In the previous draft of the plan, surplus stocks not harvested in inshore fisheries were allocated directly to offshore fisheries. The revision limits the offshore harvest to 50 percent of the available surplus and sets a maximum level of 10,000 mt. We feel there is no scientific basis for this management procedure.
3. There is a 2,000 mt quota for the domestic summer fishery on Aleutian Islands/Alaska Peninsula stocks in the FCZ south of 55°47'N latitude. There is no limit on the harvest of these stocks in state waters. About 3,200 mt were taken in 1982. Although these stocks are tentatively identified as "Aleutian Islands stocks" the actual origin of these stocks is unknown. Large harvests in the Aleutians could conceivably impact stocks already harvested in other areas. Work should be undertaken to identify the stock components of the fishery and to develop procedures to set harvest levels.
4. The revision establishes the authority for a federal domestic logbook program. No other Council FMP has this authority. Joint venture fishermen are not required to keep logbooks. Thus, this requirement seems to be discriminatory.
5. Optimum yield has been redefined as that portion of ABC which is available in the FCZ. This is a significant departure from the definition in the last draft and conceptually different from the Council FMP. For example, the troll salmon plan OY includes all chinook salmon harvested in state and federal waters.

The SSC feels that the revisions constitute a major change in concepts and procedures from the previous draft. These changes should have further scientific and public review. The SSC recommends that the revised draft of the Bering/Chukchi Sea Herring Plan be sent out for public review prior to resubmission to the Secretary of Commerce.

D-4 Tanner Crab FMP

The SSC based its review of management measures proposed in Amendment #8 on goals and objectives contained in the Tanner crab FMP. The FMP was designed to meet the requirements of MFCMA and the National Standards by achieving the following objectives:

1. Promote conservation while providing for the optimal yield from the Tanner crab resource in terms of (1) providing the greatest overall benefit to the nation with particular reference to food production and recreational opportunities; (2) avoiding irreversible or long-term adverse effects on fishery resources and the marine environment; and (3) insuring availability of multiplicity of options with respect to the future uses of these resources.

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2. Promote, where possible, efficient utilization of the Tanner crab resource except that no conservation or management measures shall have economic allocation as their sole purpose.
3. Promote fair and equitable allocation of identified available resources in a manner such that no particular group acquires an excessive share of the privileges.
4. Base the plan on the best scientific information available. In accomplishing these broad objectives a number of secondary objectives are considered:
 - (a) Conservation and management measures should take into account the unpredictable characteristics of future resource availability and socio-economic factors influencing the viability of the industry.
 - (b) Where possible, individual stocks of fish should be managed as a unit throughout their range, but such management should be in due consideration of other potentially impacted resources.
 - (c) In such instances where stocks have declined to levels below that capable of producing MSY, management measures should promote rebuilding the stocks. In considering the rate of rebuilding, factors other than biological considerations should be taken into account.
 - (d) Management measures, while promoting efficiency where practicable, should seek to avoid disruption of existing social and economic structures where fisheries appear to be operated in reasonable conformance with the Act and have evolved over a period of years as reflected in community characteristics, processing capability, fleet size and distribution. These systems and the resource upon which they are based are not static, but change in the existing regulatory regime should be the result of considered action based on data and public input.
 - (e) Management measures should contain a margin of safety in recommending allowable biological catches when the quality of information concerning the resource and the ecosystem is highly limited. The management plan should provide for assessing biological and socio-economic data in such instances where the information base is inadequate to effectively establish the biological parameters of the resource or to reasonably establish optimum yield. The plan should identify information and research required for further plan refinement.
 - (f) Fishing strategy should be designed in such a manner as to have minimal impact on other fisheries and the environment in which they operate.

The SSC's review of each of the proposed management measures is as follows:

2. From the above, it is clear that the primary objective of the present study is to determine the effect of the various factors on the yield of the crop. The results of the study will be used to develop a management plan for the crop.

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Pot Limits

It is generally recognized that pot limits cannot be enforced. Therefore, the SSC believes that they are not a viable management tool. It is recommended that the Council eliminate all existing federal pot limits.

Gear Placement

The 72-hour provision for on-the-ground pot storage prior to the season opening was originally designed to provide fishermen the opportunity to transfer their gear to the grounds in areas where considerable time was necessary to get to the grounds, and/or where they lacked sufficient pot unloading/loading facilities. With the use of sea-pot-storage areas, the construction of new port facilities and problems associated with enforcement of this regulation, the SSC recommends that it be eliminated.

Size Limits

As indicated in the Amendment, the rationale for the 3.1 inch (78 mm) minimum size limit for the opilio fishery is the same as the one used for the bairdi fishery. In the bairdi case, the size limit was established at the size when 50 percent of the male crab population is sexually mature, plus one year's growth. The SSC was not provided with the scientific data upon which this proposed management measure was based. In light of the rapid expansion of this fishery, the SSC recommends that an analysis of this issue be initiated and the results reported to the Council during the next year. The SSC recommends, in the interim, acceptance of the proposed size limit.

Gear Restrictions

This proposal would prohibit the use of side-loading Tanner crab pots in Yakutat district within the Southeastern Management Area. The SSC was provided with a report prepared by the Alaska Department of Fish and Game which summarized the results of an onboard observer program conducted during January-March 1981 in the Yakutat Tanner crab fishery. While differences in the incidental catch in the various types of gear were indicated, the SSC was not provided with the costs and benefits that would be generated by this measure. It is understood that Council staff is developing an issue paper on gear restrictions in the Yakutat crab fishery. The SSC recommends that this report include a cost-benefit analysis of the various options. Further, it is recommended that an analysis be undertaken by ADF&G and NMFS to determine the overlap of crab fisheries and halibut concentration in the Gulf and the eastern Bering Sea. It is recommended that the Council delay action on gear restrictions until this analysis has been completed.

OYs/ABCs

After examining material on ABC and OY presented in the Amendment, the SSC recommends that the process used to arrive at ABC in the plan be spelled out in detail. Further, it is recommended that OY be set equal to DAH and that OY be constrained to be less than or equal to the upper limit of ABC. It is felt that by following this course of action, plan amendment will be facilitated. The SSC recommends that the Council adopt this framework approach as opposed to the numerical one proposed in the amendment.

Background

It is generally recognized that the health of the community is dependent upon the quality of the environment. The health of the community is dependent upon the quality of the environment. The health of the community is dependent upon the quality of the environment.

Policy Statement

The 1970s provision for the environment is a landmark in the history of environmental protection. It is a landmark in the history of environmental protection. It is a landmark in the history of environmental protection.

State of the Environment

As indicated in the statement, the following are the major areas of concern. The following are the major areas of concern. The following are the major areas of concern.

General Findings

This proposal would provide the means for the implementation of the following program. This proposal would provide the means for the implementation of the following program. This proposal would provide the means for the implementation of the following program.

Conclusion

After examining the proposal, it is recommended that the following action be taken. After examining the proposal, it is recommended that the following action be taken. After examining the proposal, it is recommended that the following action be taken.

Fishing Seasons

The FMP specifies that fishing seasons are set to protect crab during molting, peak breeding of old-shell females and egg hatching periods. Opening dates should be set after molting and after adequate growth to take advantage of weight gain, thereby increasing the amount of meat recovered from each animal. The current dates in the federal regulations meet the above criteria. The proposed amendment recommends modification of the seasons for the Chignik and South Peninsula management areas to meet the above criteria. The proposed amendment moves up the opening date of the western Aleutian fishery by about two months. The rationale for this action, as well as the impact of the measure on the resource, were not provided to the SSC. Before the Council takes final action on modification of fishing seasons for the western Aleutian management area, it is recommended that the Council request the biological, social, economic and weather factors used to make the adjustments be spelled out in detail.

D-6 Bering Sea/Aleutian Islands Groundfish FMP

The SSC reviewed Amendment #6 to the Bering Sea/Aleutian Islands Groundfish FMP. In undertaking this review, the committee reviewed the amendment package dated August 9, 1982, the comments by the Plan Maintenance Team dated July 15, 1982, the analysis undertaken by Drs. Low and Narita dated April 1982, the trip report by Council staff Mr. Povolny, and the written comments provided us at this meeting. The SSC also reviewed input from the public at our meeting.

In our review, the SSC separated the discussion of the amendment package into two individual parts:

Part 1. Establishment of a U.S. Fishery Development Zone

The SSC considers that this amendment is not a conservation issue and that it is clearly an allocation to encourage the development of the domestic fishery. The SSC evaluated the proposal in this light and is unable to provide the Council with a specific recommendation. The SSC would like the Council to note the following:

1. It is impossible to evaluate whether the establishment of the development zone would result in an increase in CPUE in the area. We note that increases in CPUE would have a favorable impact on profitability of the domestic fleet and, therefore, might stimulate development. But, if stock migration in and out occurs in the area and the foreign fleets harvest the migratory stocks, then increases in CPUE in the area may not occur.
2. The establishment of the zone will eliminate gear conflicts between foreign and domestic fleets. The SSC notes that the establishment of an exclusive development zone is not the only way to reduce or eliminate gear conflicts.
3. Displacement of foreign fleets to other areas could result in failure to achieve the established OYs in light of the prohibited species amendment and the projected increase in catch rate of incidental salmon in the other areas.

The SSC would also like to point out that the proposed amendment closes the FDZ to all foreign fisheries. It should be noted that the team indicates that the foreign longliners will be impacted greater by this amendment because it will be more difficult for them to increase their catches in other areas.

Part 2. To Allow Foreign Longline Fisheries in the Winter Halibut Savings Area

The SSC finds that the description of this proposed amendment is not well stated. We feel that the following description better states the proposed amendment:

"This amendment proposes modifying the present regulation prohibiting foreign longlining shallower than 500 meters in the Winter Halibut Savings Area from December 1 through May 31 so that the depth restriction in any given year is imposed only when the by-catch of Pacific Halibut in that year in the entire Bering Sea/Aleutian Islands Management Area by all foreign longliners exceeds 105 mt."

In developing this description, the SSC notes that the 105 mt limit on halibut is based on 75 percent of the four-year average (1978-81) halibut by-catch by foreign longliners in the Bering Sea/Aleutian Islands Management Area (140 mt).

The SSC finds that the original intent of the Winter Halibut Savings Area was to protect winter concentrations of young halibut. Current data indicates that the present regulation does not provide additional protection for young halibut and that the incidental catch of halibut by the foreign longliners has been low. The proposed amendment will provide an incentive for the foreign longliners to minimize their catch of halibut.

If the intent of the current regulation is to protect young halibut, then the SSC supports the amendment. We feel that this proposed modification might provide additional protection for halibut.

E-1 Status of Contracts and RFPs

Contracts

Contract 81-5

The SSC reviewed the annual progress report on contract 81-5 "Determination of Stock Origins of Chinook Salmon Incidentally Caught in Foreign Trawls in the Alaska FCZ." We find that the contractor was able to develop techniques adequate for stock separation analysis. We, therefore, recommend that the second year of this project be funded.

SOCIOCULTURAL STUDY OF HALIBUT LIMITED ENTRY

Draft Report

The SSC reviewed the report entitled "Phase I: Fishermen's Perception of Halibut Limited Entry." We would recommend that this report be marked draft at this time and not be made a Council document until comments from the Council, Council staff, the SSC and the AP have been considered by the authors and appropriate modifications made.

In this regard, the SSC would like to point out that the data base on which this report is based is very limited, being only the views on limited entry that are expressed in written comments to the Council, oral testimony to the Council and those comments expressed through the news media. The SSC makes the following recommendations to the authors:

1. That the title of the report be modified to reflect that the report is based on a limited data base. The current title is felt to be very misleading.
2. That the "Recommendations" section of the report be dropped. Because of the limited data base, the SSC feels that some of the recommendations may be misleading. Additionally, some recommendations are not based on data provided in the report. We believe that the recommendations can best be included in the report after the Phase II study.
3. That most of the material in the Appendix be deleted leaving only the summary of the news service received and the objectives provided by the Council.

In general, the SSC recommends that an internal review of all draft Council documents be made before they are provided Council consideration so they can be properly marked. The SSC feels that all such documents should be clearly marked draft until approved by the Council.

Proposal - Phase II

The SSC believes that the proposed study is important to the Council for action on Halibut Limited Entry. We recommend that the proposal be modified as follows:

1. That the contractor interact with the Council's Halibut Limited Entry Steering Committee in the carrying out of this study. The contractor indicated that the cost of implementing this recommendation would be an additional \$500.
2. That the time frame for the study be modified. In the current proposal the draft report is due December 31, 1982 and the final report will be submitted January 31, 1983. Within that time frame, the SSC will not be able to provide any review of the draft report. The only SSC meeting within that time will be in very early January. The SSC recommends that the due date be modified so the SSC will be able to provide a review and report to the Council at our March 1983 meeting.

The SSC is concerned with the time frame proposed for the whole study. We believe that the study could be better improved with additional time. But the SSC does understand the need for completion of this study in conjunction with other Council studies. We, therefore, do not recommend a change in the time for submission of the draft report to the Council.

Taking the above comments into consideration, the SSC recommends that the Council proceed with the study.

In this regard, the SAC would like to point out that the data base on which the report is based is very limited, being only the view of limited entry data as presented in written comments to the Council, and testimony to the Council and those comments are based through the news articles. The SAC makes the following recommendations to the Council:

1. That the title of the report be modified to reflect that the report is based on a limited data base. The current title is felt to be very misleading.

2. That the "Recommendations" section of the report be dropped. Because of the limited data base, the SAC feels that some of the recommendations are misleading. Additionally, some recommendations are not based on data provided in the report. We believe that the recommendations can best be included in the report when the limited study.

3. That most of the material in the Appendix be deleted leaving only the summary of the news coverage and the objectives provided by the Council.

In general, the SAC recommends that a further review of all Council documents be made before they are provided Council consideration so that they are properly worded. For SAC feels that all such documents should be clearly worded and approved by the Council.

Proposed Changes II

The SAC believes that the proposed study be reported to the Council for action on limited entry. We recommend that the proposal be modified as follows:

1. That the comparison between with the Council's limited fishing waters grouping committee in the context of this study. The comparison indicated that the cost of implementing this recommendation would be an additional \$500.

2. That the time frame for the study be modified. In the current proposal the study report is due December 31, 1983 and the final report will be submitted January 31, 1983. Within this time frame, the SAC will not be able to provide any review of the draft report. The only SAC review will be in very early January. The SAC recommends that the due date be modified so the SAC will be able to provide a review and report to the Council at our first 1983 meeting.

The SAC is concerned with the time frame proposed for the study. We believe that the study could be better reviewed with additional time. But the SAC does understand the need for completion of this study in conjunction with other Council matters. We, therefore, do not recommend a change in the time for submission of the final report to the Council.

That the above comments into consideration, the SAC recommends that the Council proceed with the study.

MARINE MAMMAL WORKSHOP

The SSC reviewed a brief report on the status of the workshop on the biological interaction among marine mammals and commercial fisheries in the Bering Sea. It appears that there is difficulty in holding the meeting by late winter. The SSC has, therefore, recommended to the University of Alaska (the workshop host) that it be rescheduled for Fall 1983. This schedule will allow full participation by the U.S. scientists and for identified foreign scientists to be invited.

SABLEFISH WORKSHOP

The SSC discussed with the University of Alaska the status of the Sablefish Workshop. The SSC provided the University with comments on additional contacts. As now scheduled, the workshop will be held at the end of March 1983.

LOGBOOK PROGRAM

The SSC discussed the concept of a coastwide logbook program for groundfish. We wish to reaffirm our support for such a program.