

North Pacific Fishery Management Council

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Certified Phil Mundy
Phil Mundy, Chairman

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MINUTES
Scientific and Statistical Committee
May 18-19, 1987
Anchorage, Alaska

The Scientific and Statistical Committee met May 18-19, 1987 at the Hilton Hotel, Anchorage Alaska. Members present were:

Phil Mundy, Chairman
John Burns
Don Rosenberg
Bill Clark
Bill Aron

Rich Marasco, Vice Chairman
Terry Quinn
Don Bevan (5/19)
Doug Eggers
Robert Burgner

D-3 Gulf of Alaska Groundfish FMP

(c) Final approval of Amendment 16 and implementing regulations.

- (1) Establish DAP priority within 100 miles of Unalaska Island.
(See BS/AI notes)
- (2) Revise the definition of "prohibited species".
(See BS/AI notes)
- (3) Improve catch recording requirements.
(See BS/AI notes)
- (4) Establish a framework procedure for setting seasons.

The SSC recognizes the need for regulatory flexibility, however the SSC supports Alternative 1, Status Quo because Alternative 2 is too broadly stated. The specific mechanisms whereby seasons are actually going to be set were not clearly developed. Rational planning by industry is facilitated by a stable management/regulatory environment. Instability could affect economic performance of the fleet and the ability of fishermen to gain access to capital. The SSC concluded that setting seasons is largely an allocative function. As such the setting of seasons should be done with a great deal of deliberateness. Sufficient time must be allowed for analysis of alternatives and public comment.

- (5) Expand the existing halibut PSC framework to include halibut, salmon, king and Tanner crab.

The SSC believes that the proposed amendment is premature in the absence of a domestic observer program and in light of work being conducted by a Council bycatch committee. The SSC suggests tabling Alternative 2 and continuing the status quo until the Committee's work is completed and an observer program is implemented. The SSC is particularly concerned that accurate reporting and analysis of bycatch is dependent upon independent onboard sampling.

- (6) Update the plan's descriptive sections, reorganize chapters, and incorporate Council policy as directed.

The SSC endorses the update of the descriptive material, much of which is outdated.

These are important sections of the plan and should have full public review and comment before submission to the Secretary. Therefore, we recommend the update not be included in the present amendment cycle, but be delayed to offer sufficient opportunity for review. We offer the following comments on sections "a" through "e".

- (a) The SSC endorses management of rockfish by species assemblage in Southeast Alaska, rather than as individual species or as a single group. It makes sense because the species are unavoidably caught together and therefore cannot be managed separately. Even if they could, there are so many species that it would be difficult to perform good assessment of the individual species.

Table 7.1 and 7.2 should be revised to make clear that the rockfish assemblages are defined only for Southeast Alaska.

- (b) The SSC recommends replacing the term target quota (TQ) with total allowable catch (TAC).
- (c) We recommend the change in the definition of Acceptable Biological Catch (TAC).
- (d) It is our understanding that research can be funded with the proceeds from the sale of catches made during research fishing. We believe that experimental fishing can better be controlled and more effectively managed if conducted as a research program.
- (e) We suggest that reserves be retained in the plan for pollock, cod, and flounder in order to accommodate operational problems which may arise due to our imperfect data gathering systems.

D-4 Bering Sea/Aleutian Islands Groundfish FMP

(b) Final approval of Amendment 11 and implementing regulations.

The SSC had difficulty determining the specific problems that some of the proposals were attempting to address, as well as their associated objectives. These deficiencies made it difficult to develop comments on the DAP priority and roe-stripping parts of the amendment. The SSC urges that future proposals be screened to determine if problems and objectives are clearly identified. Proposals found to be deficient should be returned to their originators. The analysis of vague proposals is an ineffective use of the Council, SSC, AP, Plan Teams, and the public.

(1) Establish DAP priority within 100 miles of Unalaska Island.

The SSC had difficulty in determining the problem being addressed by this proposal. If the proposal is aimed at providing shoreside delivery of fish to processing facilities in the communities of Unalaska/Dutch Harbor and Akutan, and providing priority to DAP harvesters on the grounds through area/time closures, the SSC has the following comments to offer:

With regard to shoreside delivery:

1. None of the Alternatives insure that shoreside delivery of fish will take place. Adopting any of the Alternatives over the status quo will probably have a significant negative impact on JV fishermen, without the generation of offsetting benefits. It is not apparent that Alternatives 2 through 6 promote efficiency in the utilization of the fishery resource.
2. The plants involved are making, or have made, arrangements to secure product (page 2-32) and therefore Council action is not required.

With regard providing priority to DAP harvesters:

1. No evidence is provided that indicates that DAP fishermen are currently adversely affected by JV operation within the proposed zone.
2. If DAP fishermen are benefited by the closure, any benefits would be short term in nature. Improved economic performance of the fishery would attract additional effort (unless there is some form of effort limitation), resulting in a dissipation of benefits in the long term.

The SSC also discussed the change in the pollock harvest pattern in the Bering Sea. As of May 2, 73% of the pollock TAC had been taken. This is a substantial shift from past patterns. For example, during the period 1968-73 an average of 24% of the total harvest was taken in the January through April period (Table 1). During 1984 and 1985 an average of 14% of the total harvest was taken in this period (Table 1).

The SSC notes that concern over the rapid harvest of TAC has lead some segments of the industry to suggest management measures that spread out the harvest over the course of the year. Examples of alternative percentage semi-annual splits that have surfaced are 50/50 and 30/70. With respect to

TABLE 1

BERING SEA-ALEUTIANS REGION

POLLOCK CATCH PATTERNS (Average Percent Of Total Catch, All Fisheries) JV & Foreign

	<u>1968-73</u>		<u>1974-80</u>		<u>1984-85</u>	
	MON	CUM	MON	CUM	MON	CUM
Jan	2.5	2.5	3.6	3.6	1.2	1.2
Feb	2.4	4.9	4.8	8.4	3.9	5.1
Mar	9.0	13.9	4.3	12.7	4.2	9.3
Apr	10.2	24.1	5.6	18.3	4.6	13.9
May	10.5	34.6	7.0	25.3	1.6	15.5
Jun	10.9	45.5	10.4	35.7	7.3	22.8
Jul	16.8	62.3	14.7	50.4	19.5	42.3
Aug	16.8	79.1	15.1	65.5	17.4	59.7
Sep	12.6	91.7	14.7	80.2	13.8	73.5
Oct	3.3	95.0	9.7	89.9	12.8	86.3
Nov	2.3	97.3	6.1	96.0	8.2	94.5
Dec	2.7	100.0	4.0	100.0	5.5	100.0
TOTAL	100.0		100.0		100.0	
Jan-Jun	46		36		23	
Jul-Dec	54		64		77	
Jan-Apr	24		18		14	
May-Dec	76		82		86	

Footnotes: 1968-73 period---before substantive time-area regulations were implemented
 1974-80 period---after winter halibut savings area was implemented
 1984-85 period---recent period prior to rapid development of JVP fisheries
 MON = monthly
 CUM = cumulative

the 50/50 split, it corresponds closely with the historical catch distribution (1968-73 before fishery regulations were imposed, Table 1). This harvest pattern does not appear to have negatively affected the population. Data currently are not available that allow assessment of the biological implication of the 30/70 split, or for that matter any other split.

The SSC also has the following comments on the EA/RIR/IRFA:

1. Section 2.4.2 Fishery Cost and Benefits.
 - a. Page 2-35 - the selection of the 1984-85 period for defining the "worst case" is considered inappropriate given the nature of the 1987 fishery.
 - b. Page 2-39 and 40 - the text should be modified to indicate that benefits likely to be realized by communities having shorebased processing will accrue only if the proposed management measure results in fish being delivered to the shorebased plants. Further, the discussion is deficient in that it fails to identify quantities of fuel, vessel servicing and supplies purchased from shoreside suppliers by JV operation, and how adoption of any of the alternatives might impact these purchases. Some useful information on this subject is provided in an April 15, 1987 letter sent to the SSC from Dr. James A. Crutchfield.
- (2) Revise the definition of "prohibited species".

The SSC agrees that the revision of the definition of prohibited species be accepted as proposed. Concern was expressed over the omission of consideration in the definition for the traditional winter bait fishery for herring in the Aleutians, however this fishery is conducted in State waters.

- (3) Improve catch recording requirements.

The SSC points out that NMFS proposed to replace the presently required weekly catch report with a weekly production report, although this intention was not stated within the language of any of the alternatives.

The SSC agrees that catch reports must be accurate and verifiable, whenever the catches are landed or shipped, but wishes to reiterate that there are other critical needs for data on DAP fisheries that would not be met by any proposal before the Council. In particular, age composition samples are needed for determining ABC, and incidental catch rates for managing bycatch. These data needs can only be filled by onboard observers on at least a sample of vessels. Logbook data giving details on the time and place of fishing operations may be needed for managing bycatch and investigating the impacts of various proposed regulations such as the DAP priority proposal before the Council at this meeting.

The SSC questioned the need for some elements of the proposed production and transfer logs for DAP motherships and catcher/processors, specifically the 20 pound tolerance and the requirement for a daily production log in addition to the weekly reports of production and transfers. The Committee primarily regards these as enforcement issues and believes they can be best resolved by NMFS and industry. There does not seem to be any urgent need to tighten up the enforcement system, since the DAP component of the industry is not yet

restricted by catch quotas and therefore has no incentive to under-report catches.

(4) Revise the definition of acceptable biological catch (ABC).

The SSC supports Alternative 2, revise the definition for acceptable biological catch to bring it into conformity with the definition adopted by the Pacific Fishery Management Council.

(5) Increase the upper limit of the optimum yield (OY) range.

The SSC approached the question of optimum yield levels or limits as a procedural management issue and from the standpoint of Council operations. The major consideration was that of the Council's flexibility in establishing OY limits, meaning the ability to choose from an array of acceptable values in the determination of OY.

As pointed out in the EA/RIR/IRFA, an increase in the upper limit of the OY range would provide the Council and the Secretary of Commerce broader latitude to fully utilize groundfish resources when conditions are favorable. The SSC is not suggesting that catch levels be increased at this time. In fact, the SSC is quite cognizant of the rapid temporal, spatial, and technological changes occurring in the fishery and the potential problems of making management decisions in the absence of an adequate or timely database.

From the perspective of management flexibility, Alternative 4 is the most restrictive, in that it restricts the upper limit of OY to the minimum of 2 million mt or the sum of ABCs. Alternative 1 (the status quo of 2.0 million mt) and Alternative 3 (setting the upper limit of OY to the sum of ABCs) are viewed as intermediate in flexibility, with Alternative 3 being more restrictive when the sum of ABCs is less than 2.0 million mt and more flexible when the sum of ABCs is greater than 2.0 million mt. Under the EA/RIR the highest permitted level for OY under Alternative 3 would be 2.6 million mt, without further analysis being necessary. Alternative 2, which has an upper limit of 2.4 million mt, was viewed as the least restrictive under forecasted levels of future ABCs.

Either Alternative 3 or Alternative 2 would be acceptable to the SSC. Alternative 2 is simple and straightforward in fixing the upper limit to a constant value of 2.4 million mt, which is higher than the sum of ABCs in recent years. Alternative 3 was favored by many SSC members who believe that catch limits should not go above the sum of the ABCs. It was pointed out that adoption of Alternative 3 may be problematic in its annual determination of the upper end of OY, because of requirements of NEPA, ESA, MMPA, etc.

(6) Prohibit pollock roe-stripping.

There are two issues which are to be addressed in consideration of this proposal. The first is a purported wastage of product from the roe-stripping operation. The second is the problem of greatly intensified fishing effort in the early part of the year in the JVP pollock fishery. This second issue is dealt with in a separate report as it bears no relation to the intent behind this amendment proposal. Thus the SSC concentrated only on the issue of economic wastage in consideration of this proposal.

The issue of how the fish carcasses are utilized once they are harvested is not in itself of biological concern, other than it affects in a relatively small way the amount of waste product discarded to re-enter the ocean food chain. Depending on the nature of local water circulation patterns, decomposition of carcasses could be injurious to plant and animal life, particular on the benthos.

The SSC notes roe-stripping is currently a minor component of utilization of pollock catches. In 1986, the EA/RIR reports that as much as 27,000 mt of pollock may have been processed by taking the roe and discarding the carcasses by Korean JVP partners and 40,000 mt by Japanese JVP partners out of a total JVP catch of 840,000 mt, which is less than 10% of the total. In 1987, some increase is expected, although it is not possible to quantify how much.

Furthermore, it is important to recognize that wastage occurs in all fishing operations. From the EA/RIR, roe-stripping recovers about 4% of the whole fish, while other accepted processes recover about 20%. After review of the the EA/RIR, the SSC concluded that there is no evidence of economic losses from the roe-stripping operation under current circumstances. It was pointed out by representatives of the fishing industry that there is no variation in price per ton paid to JV fishermen by various buyers. For these reasons and lack of scientific information indicating that the dumping of carcasses has caused any large scale biological problems, the SSC supports Alternative 1, the status quo.

Definition of overfishing: a clarification.

In further discussion we believe we borrowed a term from the guidelines for fishery management definition, maximum biological yield, which has not been defined. We now recommend a change to substitute maximum sustained yield (MSY) for maximum biological yield.

SSC Staffing: A consideration of some options.

The SSC considered the matter of membership by reviewing the resumes of several individuals. The matter of selecting new members has been deferred for an indeterminate period. The chairman will research the topics which may be the subject of a closed meeting.

Report from John Harville on Policy and Planning Committee

The SSC received a report form John Harville regarding a proposal to establish a new committee structure to more intensively screen proposals for FMP amendments.

Proclamation Honoring John Harville

This statement was signed by the members of the SSC and given to Mr. Harville.

May 19, 1987

Be it Proclaimed:

In light of his strong support of Council operations in general and fisheries science in particular that the members of the Scientific and Statistical Committee thank John Harville and wish him smooth seas and a full hold of happiness and joy in his future activities. With affection and appreciation.

Shelikof Pollock Survey

The SSC notes that the Shelikof pollock survey is consistent with the currently established ABC.

Fisheries Management Foundation (FMF) Study

The SSC looks forward to the opportunity to assist Dan Huppert who will review Bering Sea and Gulf of Alaska groundfish fisheries management on behalf of the Foundation. The FMF was established by microwire tag inventor and manufacturer, Keith Jefferts, as a means to further information gathering and research in Pacific fisheries.

Rosenberg comments on Fisheries Management

Exhilaration is that feeling you get just after a great idea on how to solve a fisheries management problem and just before you realize what's wrong with it.