

North Pacific Fishery Management Council

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Summary

North Pacific Fishery Management Council
Fifth Plenary Session
March 21 and 22, 1977, Anchorage, Alaska

The North Pacific Fishery Management Council met in Anchorage, Alaska, March 21-22, 1977 concurrently with the Scientific and Statistical Committee and the Advisory Panel.

In the Executive Director's Report Mr. Branson presented: (1) the second half FY77 budget estimate for Council operating costs at \$427,000 (\$39,000 less than previously estimated); (2) management plan development budgets estimated at \$175,000 but subject to downward revision; (3) the Council financial report and a request for Council action to authorize an annual audit; and (4) general statements about staff benefits, signature authorization and the Executive Directors' meeting in Charleston, S.C. on March 28-30.

The Executive Director introduced the following communiques: (1) the Kennedy-Stevens Commercial Fishing Industry Revitalization Act of 1977 (S.B. #187); (2) the Alaska Fisheries Council statement of policy on the priorities for foreign fishing interactions with the U.S.; (3) the Association of Pacific Fisheries letter advocating relief on EPA fish processing waste requirements; (4) letter from Ambassador Ridgway acknowledging Council action appointing delegates for all future negotiations of international agreements; (5) the U.S.-Canadian short-term agreement; (6) and a letter from Governor Hammond to Secretary Vance re-emphasizing the need for careful study of effects of re-negotiation, unilateral control and background to make decisions and recommendations regarding the International Pacific Halibut Convention (IPHC).

Harry Rietze (Director of the Alaska Region of National Marine Fisheries Service), presented an update on extended jurisdiction activities including: (1) a summary of foreign fishing permits (1977) for Japan, U.S.S.R., Republic of Korea, Poland and Taiwan; (2) Japanese, South Korean, and U.S.S.R. 1976, 1977 fishery statistics and (3) 1977 foreign fishing allocations off Alaska.

The U.S. Coast Guard report on extended jurisdiction activity included the following: (1) by March 1 all uncertainties relating to Congressional relief of the requirement to display the Permit in the wheelhouse had been resolved for the Soviet Union but NOT for Canada, South Korea or Japan; (2) by March 1 all uncertainties relating to FCMA enforcement and violations had been clarified; (3) after three weeks' experience the attitudes displayed by Japan and the Soviet Union have been very good; (4) violations have been very minor (two Soviet vessels) and have been dealt with harshly by Soviet authorities (the Coast Guard initiated civil process through the Director, NMFS); (5) 70% of the vessels checking in to the Fishery Conservation Zone, by radio, have been sighted and 21% have been boarded; (6) the high seas Japanese fishery for salmon is still enforced and governed by the International North Pacific Fisheries Convention and will remain the same as in the past; (7) there exists a doubt concerning treatment of Canadian violations as either violating the FCMA or the joint agreement.

During public presentations on Monday afternoon several matters were brought to attention of Council: (1) a potential funding reallocation which may have an adverse effect on baseline biological information being assembled for an BLM/Outer Continental Shelf study; (2) the Alaska Board of Fisheries might promulgate an emergency closure on certain Bering Sea tanner crab stocks if overfishing occurs during 1977; (3) the difficult nature of representing all Alaskan communities on Council panels; (4) a possible industry operation off Kodiak utilizing U.S. fishermen and Korean floating processor and (5) an appeal by New England Fish Company to favorably prioritize U.S. catching and processing activities over those involving foreign processing.

The Scientific and Statistical Committee report to the Council touched on the following subjects: (1) they recommended (and received) Council endorsement of a University of Alaska, Sea Grant economic and marketing study dealing with tanner crab; (2) they recommended (and received) Council approval supporting a much needed salmon, coded-wire tag recovery project; to be financed by the Council if no other funding could be found; (3) they formed a high seas salmon management plan drafting team and named the NMFS as lead agency (this action separates the troll salmon plan from the high seas salmon plan); (4) tanner crab fishery management plans, trawl fishery (Bering Sea and Aleutian Island) management plans and trawl fishery (Gulf of Alaska) management plans will be submitted to the Council by June 1977; (5) reported that they were proceeding with a short-term (8 weeks) study financed by NWAFC on U.S. tanner crab catching and production capacity and marketing potential.

A report by the ad hoc committee to review foreign permit applications resulted in the following action by the Council. The Council disapproved 31 Japanese applications for independent tanner crab boats, and approved 18 Japanese applications for snail pot fishing boats, 9 Japanese application for trawlers for the Soyo Maru and 1 (one) Japanese application for an additional refrigerator vessel.

Jack Cotant, Chairman of the Advisory Panel reported on his attendance and official presentation at the public hearing in Seattle February 19, concerning the Pacific Council's ocean troll salmon draft management plan. Cotant's report discussed (1) the troll caught, chinook size limit differences between the Pacific Council recommendations and the Alaska Board of Fisheries' previous recommendation and (2) the difficulty in interpreting the U.S.-Canadian short-term agreement.

The Council directed the Management Plan Drafting Team to consider limited entry as a component in the North Pacific Council Ocean Troll Salmon Management Plan.

In recognition of the problems inherent in a re-negotiation of the IPHC with Canada, the Council appointed a special study task force to consider the problem of halibut management, and report back to the Council on their findings at the next meeting.

The Council staff was asked to investigate research vessel capabilities, budgets and subsequent schedules for the North Pacific and Bering Sea referring to the utilization of vessel(s) with capabilities similar to the R/V Oregon for stock surveys and other related activities.