

North Pacific Fishery Management Council

Richard B. Lauber, Chairman
Clarence G. Pautzke, Executive Director

Telephone: (907) 271-2809



605 West 4th Avenue, Suite 306
Anchorage, AK 99501-2252

Fax: (907) 271-2817

Certified Richard B. Lauber
Richard B. Lauber, Chairman

Date June 21, 1996

MINUTES

**121st Plenary Session
NORTH PACIFIC FISHERY MANAGEMENT COUNCIL
January 30-February 3, 1996
Hilton Hotel
Anchorage, Alaska**

The North Pacific Fishery Management Council met with the Alaska Board of Fisheries on Tuesday, January 30, 1996 and held their 121st Plenary Session January 31-February 3, 1996 at the Hilton Hotel in Anchorage, Alaska. The Advisory Panel and Statistical Committee met January 29-31 at the Hilton. The following members of the Council, staff, SSC and AP attended the meetings.

Council

Richard Lauber, Chairman
Morris Barker for Robt. Turner
CAPT Bill Anderson for RADM Riutta
Linda Behnken
David Fluharty
Dave Hanson

Walter Pereyra, Vice Chair
Bob Mace for R. Rosen
Kevin O'Leary
Steve Pennoyer
Dave Benton for Frank Rue
Clem Tillion

NPFMC Staff

Clarence Pautzke, Executive Director
Darrell Brannan
Marcus Hartley
Jane DiCosimo
David Witherell

Chris Oliver, Deputy Director
Diane Provost
Helen Allen
Gail Bendixen
Linda Roberts

**MINUTES
NPFMC
JANUARY 1996**

Support Staff

Lisa Lindeman, NOAA-GCAK
Ron Berg, NMFS-AKR
Earl Krygier, ADFG
Steve Meyer, NMFS Enforcement
Seth Macinko, ADFG
Sue Salvesson, NMFS-AKR
Ken Griffin, ADFG

Sally Bibb, NMFS-AKR
Kent Lind, NMFS-AKR
Bill Karp, NMFS-AFSC
Joe Terry, NMFS-AFSC
Jay Ginter, NMFS-AKR
Galen Tromble, NMFS-AKR
John Lepore, NMFS-AKR

Scientific and Statistical Committee

Keith Criddle, Chair
Jim Balsiger
Seth Macinko for Doug Eggers
Doug Larson
Rich Marasco

Marc Miller
Phil Rigby
Farron Wallace for Jack Tagart
Al Tyler
Hal Weeks

Advisory Panel

John Bruce, Chair
Ragnar Alstrom
Dave Benson
Al Burch
Bruce Cotton
Craig Cross

Stephanie Madsen, Vice Chair
Kris Fanning
Justine Gundersen
Scott Highleyman
Spike Jones
Hazel Nelson

Dean Paddock
John Roos
John Sevier
Robert Wurm
Lyle Yeck

Other Attendees

The following people signed the attendance register:

Joan Travostino
Lance Nelson
Steve Toomey
Jim Hale
Gordon Blue
Jack Hill
Joe Plesha
Todd Hiner
Chris Mitchell
Mary Stadum
Garry Loncon
Bill Jacobson
Jim Yonker
Andy McCracken
Robert Newman
Bob Mikol
Shari Gross

Debby Swenson
Dick Tremaine
Arni Thomson
Jeff Stephan
Harold/Marcy Jones
Steve Hughes
Bob Scofield
Gary Stewart
David Lethin
Joe Kyle
Paul MacGregor
Mike Atterberry
Thorn Smith
Margaret Hall
Jim McManus
John Henderschedt
John Pipkin

Steve Davis
John Iani
Cary Swasand
Vince Curry
Ed Glotfelty
Bruce Hull
Chris Blackburn
Betsy Knutson
Linda Kozak
John Juliussen
Tom Rueter
Steve Grabacki
Joe Sullivan
Denise Fredette
Ellen Lockyear
F.G. Baker
Bob Trumble
Suzanne Sanford
Bill Arterburn

A list of those who gave public testimony during the meeting is found in Appendix I to these minutes.

JOINT MEETING OF THE ALASKA BOARD OF FISHERIES AND NPFMC

Chairman Lauber called to meeting to order at 10:10 a.m. on Tuesday, January 30, 1996. The following Alaska Board of Fisheries (Board) members were present:

Larry Engel, Chair
Dick Bower, Sr.
Dick Jacobsen
John White
Virgil Umphenour
Lance Nelson, Attorney General's Office

Council and Board members received reports from State, Council and NMFS staff, the Bering Sea/Aleutian Islands Crab Plan Team, and the Pacific Northwest Crab Industry Advisory Committee on the status of crab fisheries, current management regimes, industry concerns and recommendations for future regulatory action. Board members were particularly concerned about the recent trawl closure for the Red King Crab Savings Area and asked the Council to extend the closure to year-round. Council and Board members heard public comments from eleven people, mostly concerned with the trawl closure area.

During the meeting Council and Board members participated in a conference call with Alaska's Senator Ted Stevens. The Senator reported on the progress of Magnuson Act reauthorization and advised that some type of moratorium on new IFQ programs will likely be adopted as an amendment to the Act. An amendment to give states limited authority to manage fisheries in the EEZ, such as the Alaska scallop fishery, is also pending in the current amendment package.

Council and Board members agreed that regular joint meetings of the two bodies are essential for the management of crab fisheries; however, Board Chairman Engel stressed that there are more and more groundfish issues of mutual concern and that future joint meetings should include groundfish issues of mutual interest, as well as crab.

NPFMC PLENARY SESSION

A. CALL TO ORDER/APPROVAL OF AGENDA/MINUTE(S) OF PREVIOUS MEETING(S)

Chairman Rick Lauber called the Council's plenary session to order at 8:15 a.m. on Wednesday, January 31, 1996. The agenda was approved as printed.

Draft minutes from the September 1995 meeting were available for approval and Council members were advised that the Chairman will approve the minutes if no changes or corrections are received by the end of February.

B. REPORTS

B-1 Executive Director's Report

Clarence Pautzke provided Council members with tentative meeting dates for 1996 - 1999, with the January meeting dates scheduled for later in the month. Council members agreed that a later meeting would be acceptable

**MINUTES
NPFMC
JANUARY 1996**

and, after discussing other meetings held during that period, directed the Executive Director to explore the possibility of an early February meeting.

Council members were advised that the SSC elected Keith Criddle and Jack Tagart to serve as Chair and Vice Chair, respectively, for the current year. The Advisory Panel elected John Bruce and Stephanie Madsen to serve as Chair and Vice Chair, respectively. By unanimous consent the Council approved the appointments.

The Council also approved the addition of Dr. Michael Sigler, Auke Bay Lab, to the Bering Sea/Aleutian Islands groundfish plan team.

B-2 NMFS Management Report

Ron Berg provided Council members with a summary of current fishery management amendments being prepared or reviewed. He also gave a brief report on implementation of the groundfish and crab vessel moratorium and the sablefish and halibut IFQ program prepared by the RAM Division. Bob Mace requested that a summary of costs for the IFQ program be provided; Mr. Berg responded that the full report, due out in June, will contain much more detail, including costs. Wally Pereyra suggested that the report should try to quantify benefits of the program so that the Council can determine whether those receiving benefits of the program are bearing the costs of administering it.

Sally Bibb, NMFS-Alaska Region, provided a status report on regulations that would require processors participating in the BSAI directed pollock fisheries to weigh catch. Although NMFS believes that motion compensated belt-conveyor, or "scales, are the only type of scale currently available for purchase that could accurately weigh at sea in the conditions experienced in the BSAI pollock fisheries, these type of scales have never been evaluated by a U.S. weights and measures agency, nor do any performance or use standards currently exist that are fully applicable to these types of scales. NMFS has developed a proposed certification and testing process for at-sea scales and in December submitted an Advanced Notice of Proposed Rulemaking (ANPR) for the process to NMFS headquarters. Implementation of the process described in the ANPR is contingent upon NMFS receiving funding to either contract the inspection program to the State of Alaska, Division of Measurement Standards, or to establish the program within NMFS. As yet, no funding for this program has been provided in NMFS's budget. NMFS estimates that 1998 is the earliest the program would be implemented.

NOTE ON NEW FORMAT FOR COUNCIL MEETING MINUTES:

Each agenda item requiring Council action will begin with a copy of the original "Action Memo" from the Council meeting notebook. This will provide a "historical" background leading up to the current action. This section will be set in a different type than the actual minutes. Any attachments referred to in the Action Memo (e.g., C-1(a), etc.) will not be attached to the minutes, but will be part of the meeting record and available from the Council office on request. Following the Action Memo will be the reports of the Scientific and Statistical Committee, Advisory Panel, and any other relevant committee or workgroup on the subject. Next will be a section for discussion and motions on the subject. Finally, there will be a brief summary of actions taken, unless there is only one action and it is self-explanatory.

C. NEW AND CONTINUING BUSINESS

C-1 Bering Sea/Aleutian Islands Pacific Cod Allocation

ACTION REQUIRED

- (a) Review problem statement.
- (b) Review analytical outline and scope of work.

BACKGROUND

Problem Statement

The original BSAI Pacific cod gear allocation (Amendment 24) was developed in 1993 to address the following problem statement, which emphasized the need for a bridge to comprehensive rationalization:

The Bering Sea/Aleutian Islands Pacific cod fishery, through overcapitalized open access management exhibits numerous problems which include: compressed fishing seasons, periods of high bycatch, waste of resource, gear conflicts and an overall reduction in benefit from the fishery. The objective of this amendment is to provide a bridge to comprehensive rationalization. It should provide a measure of stability to the fishery while allowing various components of the industry to optimize their utilization of the resource.

At the December 1995 meeting, members of the Council felt that significant changes have taken place in the Pacific cod fishery since Amendment 24 went into effect on January 1, 1994. These changes were viewed as biological, economic, and regulatory in nature. Staff was asked to incorporate these changes in the analysis, with specific focus on PSC mortality, impacts on habitat, and discards of Pacific cod by various industry sectors.

Staff is seeking guidance from the Council in developing a problem statement. The Council may wish to use the original problem statement that was provided above, develop a new statement based on the concerns expressed at the December meeting, or a combination of the two.

Analytical Outline and Scope of Work

At the December 1995 meeting the Council provided staff with the alternatives to be analyzed. Analysis of the basic gear split alternatives will be completed by the April 1996 meeting. Final action is scheduled for the June 1996 meeting in Portland. Given this time line, a program would be in place, if approved, when Amendment 24 expires at the end of 1996.

The Council's action in December also included an analysis of a further split of the trawl gear allocation between catcher and catcher processor vessels. The range of that allocation was defined as 60/40 to 40/60. During the Council discussions in December, it was recognized that this portion of the Pacific cod allocation issue would be done concurrently with the basic gear split, but on a different time line, with that analysis coming back to the Council for initial review in June. Because of the integrated nature of these issues, there is probably good reason to try and combine them and have initial review of the entire package in April, with final action in June. With the commitment of Center economists to assist in the overall analysis, we feel that we can accomplish this by April. The tradeoff which needs to be considered by the Council is that further analytical work on the IBQ/VBA program will have to be delayed until after the April meeting. This probably would not disrupt the date for eventual implementation of VBAs, currently scheduled to begin in 1998, at the earliest. (Implementation of a VBA program in 1998 may be optimistic, even if they were approved in June 1996.)

Imbedded in the proposal to split the trawl allocation among catcher vessels and catcher processors was language which would re-apportion the split based on the discards in the previous year. After discussing this

**MINUTES
NPFMC
JANUARY 1996**

issue at length, it was felt that, since its effects would not be felt until 1998 at the earliest, this issue could best be studied at a later date, perhaps as part of the Improved Retention and Utilization issue. Therefore, this portion of the proposal will not be included in the current analysis.

The alternatives selected by the Council would allocate specific percentages of the BSAI Pacific cod fisheries between trawl, fixed, and jig gear fishermen. Seven alternatives were identified by the Council, representing a wide range of options with potential impacts to vessel owners, processors, and coastal communities. Alternative 1 is the "no-action" alternative, which would eliminate explicit allocations of Pacific Cod. Each of the remaining six alternatives contain three sub-options pertaining exclusively to the trawl sector. Specifically these would:

- a. not explicitly allocate between catcher vessels and catcher processors;
- b. designate 40% of the trawl allocation for use by catcher vessels and the remainder for catcher processors;
- c. designate 60% of the trawl allocation for use by catcher vessels. The range between 40% and 60% would also be available for Council consideration.

In all there are 19 possible allocation options under consideration. These are shown in the table below. Alternative 2a represents the current allocation, and Alternative 3a the reciprocal of the current allocation. Alternatives 4-7 are ordered from high to low allocations for the trawl fleet.

Table 1. Alternative Allocations of Pacific Cod in the BSAI

Alternative	Trawl		Fixed	Jig
	Catcher Vessels	Catcher Processors		
1	No Action - Current allocation will expire at the end of 1996.			
2a (Current)	54%		44%	2%
2b (40/cp=60)	21.6%	32.4%	44%	2%
2c (60/40)	32.4%	21.6%	44%	2%
3a (Reciprocal)	44%		54%	2%
3b (40/60)	17.6%	26.4%	54%	2%
3c (60/40)	26.4%	17.6%	54%	2%
4a	69%		29%	2%
4b (40/60)	27.6%	41.4%	29%	2%
4c (60/40)	41.4%	27.6%	29%	2%
5a	59%		39%	2%
5b (40/60)	23.6%	35.4%	39%	2%
5c (60/40)	35.4%	23.6%	39%	2%
6a	39%		59%	2%
6b (40/60)	15.6%	23.4%	59%	2%
6c (60/40)	23.4%	15.6%	59%	2%
7a	29%		69%	2%
7b (40/60)	11.6%	17.4%	69%	2%
7c (60/40)	17.4%	11.6%	69%	2%

Staff has developed a summary of the organization of the analysis as currently envisioned. Also included are the primary assumptions which will be used, and the information that will be compiled. The paper is presented under Item C-1(a). Following this is a preliminary compilation and discussion of tables showing catches by gear group for 1994 and 1995. These may provide additional background information for the Council in their problem statement discussions, or if additions or deletions to the list of alternative are contemplated.

Again, to be sure everyone understands, for the staff to have the analysis of the gear split and the CP-CV split available by April, the IBQ/VBA analysis must slide to this summer. An initial IBQ/VBA package most likely could be made available for September and a final decision scheduled for January 1997. Given Secretarial approval, VBAs could possibly be implemented in 1998, at the earliest, or perhaps more likely, 1999.

**MINUTES
NPFMC
JANUARY 1996**

Report of the Scientific and Statistical Committee

The SSC noted that some of the current alternatives could potentially change the previous allocation splits in a significant way and suggested that the original problem statement should be updated. The SSC reiterated their comments from December 1995 when they expressed concern that data limitations and analysis complexity would make it extremely difficult to characterize the nature and magnitude of the impacts, given time constraints imposed on the analysis. Further, the SSC stressed the need for a sustained commitment of resources over time to improve the quality of economic performance data which are needed regularly in evaluating Council decisions. (See the SSC Minutes, Appendix II to these minutes, for more detailed comments.)

Report of the Advisory Panel

Due to time constraints and the need for the comprehensive analysis necessary to justify a change in the current Pacific cod allocation, the AP recommended a simple analysis of only the status quo and a rollover of the current allocations for one year. During that one-year period, staff should undertake a comprehensive analysis with regard to the other alternatives identified. The AP also had several recommendations for several areas of the analysis (see the AP Minutes, Appendix III to these minutes, for specific recommendations). The AP also recommended the Council initiate an analysis for a ban on trawl target fishing for Bering Sea Pacific cod during the hours between dusk and dawn (as listed in the Civil Twilight tables) and that an industry group be appointed to help work out any enforcement, management or operational problems.

International Pacific Halibut Commission Report

The Council also received a brief report from IPHC staff member Bob Trumble indicating that the Commission had discussed the issue of Pacific cod allocation and halibut bycatch. The Commission has no position regarding the allocation of cod since this is a domestic matter; however, the Commission has encouraged reductions in halibut bycatch in the groundfish fisheries off Alaska and has supported a preference for clean gear types in allocation decisions where bycatch can be reduced. The Commission requested the Council consider giving maximum consideration to bycatch reductions as it proceeds with deliberations on allocating Pacific cod among gears.

DISCUSSION/MOTIONS

Kevin O'Leary moved to approve the following problem statement:

The Bering Sea/Aleutian Islands Pacific cod fishery continues to manifest many of the problems that led the NPFMC to adopt Amendment 24 in 1993. These problems include compressed fishing seasons, periods of high bycatch, waste of resource, and new entrants competing for the resource due to crossovers allowed under the NPFMC's Moratorium Program.

Since the apportionment of BSAI cod TAC between fixed gear, jig, and trawl gear was implemented on January 1, 1994, when Amendment 24 went into effect, the trawl, jig, and fixed gear components have harvested the TAC with demonstrably differing levels of PSC mortality, discards, and bycatch of non-target species. The objective of this amendment is to ensure that the cod TAC is harvested in a manner which minimizes PSC mortality, reduces non-target bycatch of cod and other groundfish species, and takes into account the impacts of the fishery on habitat. In addition, the amendment will continue to

promote stability in the fishery as the NPFMC continues on the path towards comprehensive rationalization.

The motion was seconded by Linda Behnken.

Mr. O'Leary cited changed circumstances in the fisheries since the original allocation was approved. In addition, he pointed out that the Council has not achieved the 10%-per-year reduction in the overall halibut PSC as requested by the International Pacific Halibut Commission in 1991, nor a marked reduction in the levels of halibut discard mortality.

There were several suggestions for changes to the wording of the problem statement and, after a break to provide a written statement, the following statement was offered for approval:

The Bering Sea/Aleutian Islands Pacific cod fishery continues to manifest many of the problems that led the NPFMC to adopt Amendment 24 in 1993. These problems include compressed fishing seasons, periods of high bycatch, waste of resource, and new entrants competing for the resource due to crossovers allowed under the NPFMC's Moratorium Program.

Since the apportionment of BSAI cod TAC between fixed gear, jig, and trawl gear was implemented on January 1, 1994, when Amendment 24 went into effect, the trawl, jig, and fixed gear components have harvested the TAC with demonstrably differing levels of PSC mortality, discards, and bycatch of non-target species. Management measures are needed to ensure that the cod TAC is harvested in a manner which reduces discards in the target fisheries, reduces PSC mortality, reduces non-target bycatch of cod and other groundfish species, takes into account the social and economic aspects of variable allocations and addresses impacts of the fishery on habitat. In addition, the amendment will continue to promote stability in the fishery as the NPFMC continues on the path towards comprehensive rationalization.

Steve Pennoyer moved approval of the revised statement and Kevin O'Leary seconded the motion which carried without objection.

David Benton moved to direct staff to proceed with the analysis pursuant to the analytical outline developed and presented by staff with the intent of having an analysis for review at the April meeting, in accordance with the schedule proposed by staff. The motion was seconded and carried, 9 to 1, with Pereyra voting no and Samuelsen absent. (This action would allow the analysis for the basic gear split alternatives and the analysis of a further split of the trawl gear allocation between catcher and catcher processor vessels to be available for initial review in April.)

Steve Pennoyer stressed that he would prefer that this analysis not delay preliminary work on a vessel bycatch accounting or individual bycatch quota program. His preference would be to have a program implemented by the 1998 fishing year.

Bob Mace moved to adopt the AP's recommendation to initiate analysis for a ban on trawl target fishing for Bering Sea Pacific cod during the hours between dusk and dawn (as listed in the Civil Twilight tables) and that an industry group be appointed to help work out any enforcement, management or operational problems. The motion was seconded and carried without objection.

**MINUTES
NPFMC
JANUARY 1996**

Steve Pennoyer pointed out that the IPHC has done some preliminary work on this subject and recommended the Council request a report from them before proceeding with any analysis. The Council agreed to request the report from the IPHC before further tasking staff or appointing an industry group.

SUMMARY

The Council approved a problem statement for the analysis of BSAI Pacific cod allocation between gear types and approved an analytical outline developed by staff. The analysis will focus on alternatives for allocating Pacific cod among trawl, fixed, and jig gear, as well as between catcher vessels and catcher processors within the trawl fleet. The analysis will be before the Council for initial review in April. A report on banning night trawling will be given in April.

C-2 Halibut and Sablefish IFQs

ACTION REQUIRED

- (a) IFQ Industry Implementation Team Report
- (b) Final Review of Vessel Buy-Down Amendment (Amendment 42 to the BSAI and GOA FMPs)
- (c) Initial Review of Sweep-up Amendment (Amendment 43 to the BSAI and GOA FMPs)

BACKGROUND

IFQ Industry Implementation Team Report

The IFQ Industry Implementation Team met on November 1-2, 1995 to discuss the status of the IFQ fisheries, proposed amendments, and new industry proposals. Their minutes are attached as Item C-2(a)(1).

Vessel Buy-Down Amendment

At its December 1995 meeting, the Council approved Amendment 42 to the GOA and BSAI FMPs for public review. This plan amendment addresses the need for increased flexibility of halibut and sablefish QS use on Category B, C, and D vessels, while maintaining the goals of the IFQ program and modified block amendment to limit consolidation, allow new entrants into the fishery, and protect coastal communities. Small boat fishermen have reported the scarcity of medium to large size blocks ($\geq 5,000$ lb) in some areas and have requested that the Council enable them to rationalize their operations by purchasing shares from QS holders in larger vessel size categories. Large vessel operators (Category B) have reported difficulties in utilizing or marketing small Category B blocks and have requested the opportunity to downsize their operations or sell QS to owners of smaller vessels. The proposed amendment responds to these requests by enhancing flexibility while maintaining consistency with the basic tenets of the IFQ program.

The increased flexibility in QS use under the proposed amendment may also benefit crew members. Crewmen who purchase Category B or C shares will have access to a larger pool of vessels from which to harvest their shares while working on deck. They could also subsequently purchase their own smaller vessel from which to harvest their shares as they stair-step their way into the fishery.

Final action by the Council for the amendments is scheduled for the January 1996 meeting. The alternatives included in the analysis are:

Alternative 1: Status quo.

Alternative 2: Allow the use of larger vessel category (Category B & C) QS on smaller category vessels (Category C & D).

Public comments received on the amendment are under Item C-2(a)(2).

Sweep-up Amendment

At the September and December 1995 meetings, the Council considered various alternatives to increase the sweep-up levels implemented under the Modified Block Program (Amendments 31/35 to the BSAI and GOA FMPs). Amendment 43 (Item C-2(b)(1)) evaluates the need to increase the sweep-up levels for halibut and sablefish IFQs currently defined under the Block Amendment as less than 1,000 lb for halibut IFQs and less than 3,000 lb for sablefish IFQs, based on 1994 TAC levels. The IFQ longline industry has reported that current sweep-up levels do not equal the harvest of a worthwhile fishing trip. Industry has requested a moderate increase in the sweep-up levels to allow greater amounts of QS to be swept-up into economically "fishable" amounts, without overly increasing consolidation or allowing the creation of large-sized blocks.

The effectiveness of the Block Program may be eliminated at large sizes since large blocks and unblocked shares have been reported to sell at roughly the same price and would eliminate entry level QS. Price structure goals of the Block Program would be lost, as well. The differential pricing of larger blocked and unblocked QS is further exacerbated by the paucity of financing for the IFQ industry, particularly for crewmen and new entrants without capital or assets.

Fishermen are also unable to transfer very small, blocked QS due to a lack of a market for those shares because of the block cap. A moderate increase in the sweep-up levels would likely increase the transfer of very small blocked QS to crewmen and small boat fishermen who seek to increase their holdings. Industry members have reported that the smallest blocks can be purchased at relatively low prices with respect to price per pound and total price. This is an economic disadvantage to crewmen and new entrants to the fishery.

The following sweep-up levels are included in this analysis:

Alternative 1: Status quo.

- QS blocks less than 1,000 pounds of halibut can be combined as long as the resulting block does not contain QS that would equate to more than 1,000 pounds of IFQ at 1994 levels.
- QS blocks less than 3,000 pounds of sablefish can be combined as long as the resulting block does not contain QS that would equate to more than 3,000 pounds of IFQ at 1994 levels.

Alternative 2: Increase the halibut sweep-up levels under the Modified Block Program to:

- Option A. 3,000 lb.
- Option B. 5,000 lb.

Alternative 3: Increase the sablefish sweep-up levels under the Modified Block Program to:

- Option A. 5,000 lb.
- Option B. 7,000 lb.

Report of the Scientific and Statistical Committee

The SSC did not comment on either of the amendments to the IFQ program. They did note, however, that they had taken public testimony regarding a request to use longline pot gear for sablefish in the Bering Sea. Recent experience in the longline fishery and survey suggests that the incidence of gear stripping by orca whales is increasing. The SSC noted that, intuitively, use of pot gear could reduce gear stripping and the probability of

**MINUTES
NPFMC
JANUARY 1996**

incidental takes of short-tail albatross. However, there has been no analysis of these impacts or of any potential distributional effect.

Report of the Advisory Panel

The AP recommended that the Council send out the "sweep-up" amendment for public review but that final action on the "buydown" amendment be delayed until final action is taken on the "sweep-up" amendment. The AP further recommended that an analysis be initiated to examine Bering Sea ownership caps, including options in a range of .5 to 2%. The AP also recommended the Council initiate an analysis for a regulatory amendment to authorize black cod longline pots in the Bering Sea area.

Report of the IFQ Implementation Team

The Council was provided with a written report from the Team's November 1-2, 1995 meeting. The report contained recommendations on several issues. Following are their recommendations on the two amendments described in the above action item. The full Team report is attached to these minutes as Appendix IV.

Sweep-ups. The Team was reluctant to recommend major changes to the IFQ program before a full evaluation of the program has been conducted. However, recognizing that there is a lot of concern with the current program, the Team recommended that the Council initiate an analysis for review in April, including the following alternatives:

1. Increase the analysis of the sweep-up by area to include 3,000; 5,000; 7,000 and 10,000 lb for halibut and 5,000; 7,000; 10,000; 15,000 and 20,000 lb (round weight) for sablefish.
2. Include analysis of block ownership caps of 2,3, and 4 (by area) for the lower range of sweep-up levels (3,000 and 5,000 lb for halibut and 5,000 and 10,000 lb for sablefish).
3. Consider the effects of the buydown provision, if adopted.
4. Consider the end of season report on the 1995 IFQ season.

Buydown. The Team supported Council adoption of the one-way use of QS from larger vessels on smaller vessels.

International Pacific Halibut Commission Report

Bob Trumble, IPHC staff, reported to the Council on several issues discussed by the Commission at their recent annual meeting. He advised the Council that the IPHC does not support a proposal for retention of halibut during the extended sablefish season in the Aleutian Islands. The Commission feels this would set a precedent for other fisheries who may wish to retain halibut during the same period and there could also be a market advantage to those participating in the early fishery. Mr. Trumble also reported that the IPHC has adopted an overage/underage program similar to the Council's. They voted to allow fishing in multiple areas in Area 4 with an observer on board and a requirement to keep the fish separate so biological samples can be collected. In the Gulf of Alaska, fishing in multiple areas will also be allowed under the same conditions. Clearing in and clearing out regulations will be in force in Area 4 although local vessels will be exempted. Logbook regulations have been simplified to allow the NMFS logbook to be used for halibut data. The IPHC approved a one-year pilot program for Northwest Food Strategies to use halibut delivered to shorebased processors in Dutch Harbor by vessels that do not sort at sea to be provided to food banks. This program will be limited to a maximum of 50,000 lbs. The

IPHC will clarify regulations allowing cheeking of halibut heads at sea on freezer vessels, but did not approve fletching at sea on catcher vessels.

Of major concern to the Commission was the Council's inability to meet the 10%-per-year reduction in halibut discard mortality. The IPHC supports an individual vessel incentive program, similar to the vessel bycatch accounting program proposal being pursued by the Council. The Commission suggested a joint meeting with the Council in June to discuss bycatch issues.

DISCUSSION/MOTIONS

Amendment 42 - Buydown

Clem Tillion moved to adopt **Alternative 2: Allow the use of larger vessel category (Category B & C) quota share on smaller category vessels (Category C & D).** The motion was seconded by Dave Benton.

Linda Behnken moved to amend as follows: **With regard only to Category B shares in halibut area 2C and sablefish southeast area, buydown of B Category quota share would be allowed only for blocks which must be less than 5,000 lbs (based on 1996 quotas).** The motion was seconded by Kevin O'Leary and carried, 8 to 2, with Barker and Mace voting no (Samuelsen absent).

Wally Pereyra moved a substitute motion:

To approve the AP's recommendation to act on both the buydown and sweep-up amendments at the same time, with the motion by Mr. Tillion on buydowns identified as the preferred alternative for that amendment. The motion was seconded and failed, 6 to 4, with Baker, Fluharty, Mace and Pereyra voting in favor (Samuelsen absent).

The main motion, as amended, carried 7-3, with Barker, Mace and Pereyra voting against (Samuelsen absent).

Dave Benton moved to send the sweep-up amendment out for public review with final action scheduled for April. The motion was seconded by Linda Behnken and carried without objection.

Steve Meyer, NMFS Enforcement, advised Council members that enforcement is very difficult when there are many special exceptions. He suggested that as few changes as possible be made until the program has been in place long enough to identify major areas of concern.

Morris Barker moved to approve the AP's recommendation to begin an analysis of the Bering Sea/Aleutian Islands halibut ownership caps in the range of .5% to 2%. The motion was seconded by Wally Pereyra.

Dave Fluharty moved to amend to designate the January meeting each year for an annual review of sablefish/halibut IFQ implementation issues, charging the IFQ Implementation Team with submitting a prioritized list of issues at that time. The Council would address the ownership caps and longline pot proposals in the Bering Sea at that time. The motion was accepted as a friendly amendment.

After discussion of a possible annual amendment cycle for changes to the IFQ program, the Council tabled this issue until later in the meeting under the discussion of council operations, agenda item C-6.

**MINUTES
NPFMC
JANUARY 1996**

SUMMARY

The Council approved the "Buydown" amendment that allows catcher vessel quota share (QS) to be used on vessels of the same size class or smaller. This amendment would allow the use of larger vessel category (Category B and C) quota share (QS) on smaller category vessels (Category C and D respectively), except that in halibut area 2C and sablefish southeast area, buydown of B category QS would be allowed only for blocks that are less than 5,000 lbs (based on '96 quotas).

The Council also approved for public review a plan amendment to increase the 1994 sweep-up levels of 1,000 lbs for halibut and 3,000 lbs for sablefish. Options in the analysis include 3,000 and 5,000 lbs for halibut, and 5,000 and 7,000 lbs for sablefish. The analysis is available from the Council office. The Council will take final action in April 1996. If approved, implementation of these changes would not occur until the 1997 IFQ fishing season.

The Council approved an annual amendment cycle for proposed changes to the sablefish and halibut IFQ program, and requested analyses proceed on changes in the halibut ownership caps in the Bering Sea and allowing the use of longline pots in the Bering Sea IFQ sablefish fishery.

C-3 Crab Management Issues

ACTION REQUIRED

- (a) Summary of Board-Council Consultation.
- (b) Discussion of issues raised by PNCIAC.
- (c) Initial Review of plan amendment to increase Tanner Crab PSC flexibility among Bycatch Zones.
- (d) Further direction to Crab Rebuilding Committee.

BACKGROUND

Council and Board of Fisheries Meeting

In October 1993, NMFS and ADF&G approved a "State/Federal Action Plan for Management of Commercial King and Tanner Crab Fisheries" to foster improved coordination and cooperation with respect to crab management. As a result of the plan, a consultation group consisting of Council and Board members was formed to meet publicly on an annual basis to discuss crab issues. Minutes from the last meeting in January 1995 are attached. The Council and Board will meet again on January 9.

PNCIAC Issues

The Pacific Northwest Crab Industry Advisory Committee provides a special means of access to the regulatory process for non-residents of Alaska. The PNCIAC operates under the authority of the Council, and, under the Crab FMP, occupies the same consultative role on preseason and inseason management measures as all other existing State of Alaska Fish and Game advisory committees. Minutes of the October 16 meeting with ADF&G are included as Item C-3(a). Chairman Garry Loncon or Secretary Arni Thomson will be on hand to discuss PNCIAC concerns and recommendations.

Tanner Crab PSC Flexibility

In June, 1995, the Council initiated analysis of an industry proposal for a BSAI groundfish plan amendment that would allow greater flexibility in management of Tanner crab PSC limits in Zones 1 and 2. Currently, the FMP establishes bairdi PSC limits for trawl fisheries at 1 million crab for Zone 1 and 3 million crab for Zone 2. Attainment of a trawl fishery allowance forces movement of fishing operations into Zone 2. Because Zone 2 typically has higher bycatch rates of halibut, there is increased potential for attainment of halibut allowance, resulting in closure of the entire BSAI to that fishery. This situation, which occurred in the yellowfin sole in 1994 and the Pacific cod fishery in 1995, may have been avoided with increased flexibility in the management of bairdi PSC limits between Zones. The analysis examined the following alternatives:

Alternative 1.	Status quo.
Alternative 2.	Increase the Zone 1 bairdi PSC limit and reduce the Zone 2 limit by that amount.
Alternative 3.	Combine Zones 1 and 2 to create a single annual limit of 4 million bairdi crab.
Alternative 4.	Based on in-season data, allow Regional Director to increase the Zone 1 bairdi PSC limit and reduce the Zone 2 limit by that amount for specified fisheries.

The analysis was distributed for Council review in September, but was not taken up at that meeting due to time limitations. A copy of that document is included in your supplemental folders for reference. Both the BSAI groundfish and crab Plan Teams reviewed the analysis, and excerpts from their minutes are attached (Item C-3(b,c)). NMFS analysts will be available to present their findings. If the document was released for public review at this meeting, with final action in April or June, regulations could be in place for 1997.

Crab Rebuilding Committee

In January 1995, the Council requested member Dr. David Fluharty to chair a committee composed of members of the BSAI groundfish and crab plan teams to develop a rebuilding plan for the Bering Sea crab stocks. The teams met jointly on March 21-22 in Seattle. The goal of the meeting was to synthesize available information on sources and magnitude of crab mortality and ecosystem relationships and to identify alternative strategies the Council might use to enhance the survival of crab stocks and thus promote rebuilding. Minutes of the meeting were distributed in April.

Two major components of a rebuilding plan were suggested by the Committee and by the industry at a feedback session in April: (1) The first component would be to protect juvenile red king crab habitat by closing areas to all fishing. The Committee reached consensus that it was important to retain a minimum spawning stock and provide adequate habitat and protection for juvenile red king crab. Juvenile red king crab have been found to occupy nearshore areas of Bristol Bay, and require living substrate (such as bryozoans and stalked ascidians) for predator protection. A subsection of this area would include the northern Bristol Bay closure that the Council approved for analysis in January. (2) The second component would examine ways to reduce competition and predation by groundfish on Tanner and snow crab. Stomach samples indicate that Pacific cod, yellowfin sole, flathead sole, and rock sole may consume a very large proportion of young Tanner and snow crab. Individual bycatch quotas (IBQs) have been suggested as a means to increase the catch of these groundfish without impacting more crab.

In addition to establishing the rebuilding committee, the Council initiated several analyses to examine impacts of proposals to control crab bycatch in the groundfish fisheries. The first analysis was a trawl closure area in central Bristol Bay to protect adult red king crabs, and was adopted by the Council in September as Amendment 37. A second analysis

Proposals currently being analyzed by the Council to protect crab stocks.

1. Institute a trawl area closure in northern Bristol Bay
2. Reduce existing crab bycatch limits, and initiate bycatch limits for snow crab
3. Institute an individual vessel bycatch accounting program

**MINUTES
NPFMC
JANUARY 1996**

examines the effects of instituting a trawl closure area in the northeast section of Bristol Bay to protect juvenile red king crab, seabirds, marine mammals, and spawning herring stocks. A third analysis examines the impacts of reducing the existing crab bycatch limits for groundfish trawl fisheries. In addition, in June, the Council adopted for analysis an individual vessel bycatch accounting program for all BSAI non-pollock fisheries as part of a proposed ITQ program for the pollock fishery. Dave Witherell and Gretchen Harrington (NPFMC intern) prepared a discussion paper that made a preliminary evaluation of these proposed management measures from a crab rebuilding perspective. Their paper was distributed in September.

At this meeting, the Council needs to determine how to proceed with crab rebuilding. I suggest that the Rebuilding Committee meet in March to review the draft EA/RIR analysis for the northern Bristol Bay Trawl Closure and the analysis of Crab PSC Limit Reduction. The analyses are scheduled for initial review by the Council in April or June.

Report of the Scientific and Statistical Committee

The SSC suggested that because stock composition is different now than when the initial bycatch cap was set that the issue of additional flexibility in allocating bairdi PSC among bycatch limitation zones should be more closely examined to determine whether any increase in bycatch is advisable. They had several specific recommendations for the analysis if the Council decides to go ahead with this proposal (see SSC Minutes, Appendix II to these minutes). The SSC also suggested that the various crab bycatch proposals being considered separately should be considered simultaneously to provide a comprehensive program for crab bycatch management.

The SSC requested that the Crab Plan Team and agency staff provide presentations in April on the new models for crab assessment and rebuilding, and a review of the related crab actions by the Alaska Board of Fisheries.

Report of the Advisory Panel

The AP recommended the Council not proceed with the analysis of PSC flexibility for *C. bairdi* Tanner crab bycatch caps and supported the SSC's summary and recommendations. In addition, the AP recommended that the Council place a high priority on all analyses of PSC crab caps and that the Council initiate an analysis for appropriate Tanner and red king crab caps in the Gulf of Alaska for all gear types. The AP tabled until April a motion to request that the Council reconsider its prior action and close the Bristol Bay red king crab area to year-round bottom trawling.

Report of the BSAI Groundfish Plan Team

The Plan Team reviewed the EA/RIR for the proposed amendment to allow additional flexibility in allocating *bairdi* PSC among bycatch limitation zones. They did not recommend a specific alternative but noted that biological impacts of the proposed amendment were minor.

Report of the BSAI Crab Plan Team

Plan Team members were concerned about impacts of allowing increased trawling in certain areas where crab occur and also expressed serious concerns for the status of the *bairdi* stock, and therefore recommended that the Council not proceed with an analysis to reapportion *bairdi* PSC among bycatch limitation zones at this time.

Report of the Pacific Northwest Industry Advisory Committee

The Council was provided with a written summary of the Committee's recent annual meeting with the Alaska Department of Fish and Game and Bering Sea crab industry. The Committee heard staff reports on crab stocks

and management proposals the Alaska Board of Fisheries will be reviewing in March. Committee Chair Garry Loncon stressed the Committee's support for aggressive action to develop additional protection areas and restraints on the trawl industry with regard to the bycatch of crabs and the grave concern of the Bering Sea crab industry over the status of the crab stocks.

DISCUSSION/MOTIONS

Bristol Bay Red King Crab Closure Areas

Following their discussion earlier in the week with the Alaska Board of Fisheries, Council members discussed ways of re-addressing the Bristol Bay king crab trawl closure area. In September the Council adopted a January 1 to March 31 closure to trawling in the area as part of Amendment 37. For 1996, because the amendment would not yet be in place, NMFS had planned to close the area to all trawling through March 31 by inseason management authority. Recent information has suggested that the red king crab stock remains in poor condition and the Council was concerned about potential impacts of trawling on red king crab during the molting and mating period.

David Benton moved that the Council request NMFS to implement, for 1996 only, management measures to extend the closure in the area identified as the red king crab savings area, to apply from January 1 through June 15. The motion was seconded by Linda Behnken.

There was considerable discussion over whether the Council needed to rescind its previous action on this closure. Chairman Lauber ruled that this motion was sufficiently modified from the original and could stand on its own. Steve Pennoyer advised that the Council will need to go forward with an emergency rule in order to accomplish Mr. Benton's motion and will need to justify the need for the emergency.

Mr. Benton withdrew his previous motion and moved the following:

That the Council request NMFS to close by emergency rule the 2-block area west of 163°W of the Bristol Bay red king crab savings area to trawling for a period extending up to and including June 15, for 1996 only. The motion was seconded by Linda Behnken and carried, 8 to 1, with Pereyra voting no and Lauber abstaining (Samuelsen absent).

Crab PSC Caps in the Gulf of Alaska

Kevin O'Leary asked that the issue of crab caps in the Gulf of Alaska be explored, with Council and ADF&G staff reporting at a future Council meeting the parameters of a possible analysis, i.e., scope and data availability. Steve Pennoyer said the Region will consult with ADF&G on data availability and bycatch information and report back to the Council.

Tanner Crab PSC Flexibility Between Limitation Zones

Dave Benton moved to adopt the AP's recommendation with regard to the plan amendment to increase Tanner crab PSC flexibility among bycatch zones. (The AP motion was to not pursue the amendment.) The motion was seconded by Linda Behnken and carried without objection.

Linda Behnken moved to request that analysis of PSC crab caps be made a priority and kept on an accelerated track. However, after discussion she withdrew the motion. Steve Pennoyer suggested that it would be better to approach the problem of crab bycatch in a more comprehensive manner and not on a piece-meal basis. Dr.

**MINUTES
NPFMC
JANUARY 1996**

Fluharty's Crab Rebuilding Committee will be looking at these issues and will begin to develop a suite of management measures for the Council to consider with regard to crab rebuilding and crab bycatch.

Linda Behnken moved to initiate analysis of (1) Bering Sea caps, including caps for subareas and the indexing concept proposed by the Alaska Crab Coalition; (2) the Bristol Bay trawl closure areas, the original closure in effect and the proposed northern Bristol Bay closure, and to look at alternatives for (a) annual closure, (b) 6-month closure, and subdivisions of those closure areas; and (3) to look at the interaction between caps and closure areas. The Crab Rebuilding Committee would review the analysis as it is being prepared. The motion was seconded by Wally Pereyra and carried without objection.

SUMMARY

The Council requested that NMFS take emergency action to extend the Bristol Bay Red King Crab Savings Area trawl closure to June 15. For 1996, NMFS has closed the area (162° to 164° W longitude, 56° to 57° N latitude) to all trawling through March 31 by inseason management authority. Because Regulatory Area 516 (162° to 163° W longitude) closes from March 15 to June 15 under existing regulations, the emergency rule will affect only the western portion (163° to 164° W longitude, 56° to 57° N latitude) of the Red King Crab Savings Area. Proposed longer-term changes to the Bristol Bay Red King Crab Savings area include a 3-month, 6-month, or year-round closure to non-pelagic trawling. Also included in a comprehensive amendment addressing crab rebuilding and bycatch will be the issue of interaction between caps and closure areas. The Council has also requested that NMFS provide crab bycatch data from Gulf of Alaska fisheries to assess whether bycatch management measures for that area may be necessary.

Based on recommendations from its advisory committees and testimony from the public, the Council decided not to pursue a BSAI groundfish plan amendment that would allow greater flexibility in management of Tanner crab bycatch limits established for Zones 1 and 2.

C-4 Improved Retention and Utilization

BACKGROUND

The lengthy furlough of government employees precluded much additional work since the December meeting on the proposed measures to improve retention and utilization in the groundfish fisheries. The following committee was appointed recently to address implementational issues and they will meet briefly Wednesday night at 7:30 p.m. to determine when and where to meet in February and March in order to report back to the Council in April:

Joe Kyle, Chair
Chris Blackburn
Vince Curry
John Henderschedt
Steve Hughes
John Iani

Paul MacGregor
Bob Mikol
Lisa Polito
Thorn Smith
Arni Thomson

There was lengthy discussion of the committee's role at the December meeting. I originally had envisioned the committee to be a sounding board for the analyst, Dr. Lew Queirolo, to work through the plethora of implementational issues that inevitably will arise, particularly concerning the improved utilization aspects.

The original motion placed on the table in December was very general in that it identified three fisheries to be examined for improved retention and utilization, but did not specifically identify measures to be analyzed. The thrust of the motion was to leave that up to the committee. This original motion was amended, however, to

include very specific measures, as shown in item C-4(a). After reviewing the Council's discussion in December, I have concluded that those measures are the ones you wanted analyzed, and that the role of the committee is to consider the practicality and enforceability of the measures, not develop a whole new set of measures that the Council might pursue.

This is not to say that the committee might not come up with compelling arguments to adjust or even drop some of the components. I do believe, though, that the committee's primary purpose is to tell us how we can best implement the measures if the Council decides to adopt the new standards for retention and utilization. If this does not track with the Council's intent for the committee, we need to know now.

I envision the following schedule of events. Dr. Queirolo will work on the bulk of the analysis between now and April. The committee probably will need to meet twice, in February and March. Upon hearing the committee report in April, the Council then can decide if the alternatives need adjustments. The analysis will be available for initial review in June, and go to public review over the summer. A final decision can be scheduled for September. Barring any big hangups in writing the regulations, we should have a Secretarial decision by sometime in late March 1997. This will give the industry ample notice that the new retention and utilization rules will take effect in January 1998.

The Scientific and Statistical Committee did not address this agenda item.

Report of the Advisory Panel

The AP noted that industry operations personnel are not represented on the Improved retention and Utilization Committee, specifically the offshore surimi operators.

DISCUSSION/SUMMARY

This was an information-only agenda item; no action was scheduled. The AP's concern was discussed. Chairman Lauber indicated that it would be difficult to form a committee including a technical person from each industry sector and that committee members would be encouraged to invite technical personnel from their sector to attend committee meetings to provide that type of support. The committee will meet in late February and again in early March to review implementational aspects of the options the Council has identified for analysis, with recommendations to be presented to the Council in April.

C-5 Comprehensive Rationalization

(a) BSAI Pollock IFQ Program

ACTION REQUIRED

Review qualitative analyses prepared by staff and provide further direction on alternatives.

BACKGROUND

Last June the Council began developing an IFQ program for BSAI pollock fisheries, which included both harvesting and processing sectors. The initial suite of alternatives, elements, and options for such a program has been re-typed and is included here as Item C-5(a)(1). For reference, Item C-5(a)(2) is the list of elements

**MINUTES
NPFMC
JANUARY 1996**

and options from June 1994, when the Council redirected its focus from an all-species IFQ program to license limitation for groundfish and crab. The Council has indicated it may draw upon both the old and new alternatives in structuring a final program.

The Council last discussed the BSAI pollock IFQ program at its September 1995 meeting in Seattle, when the staff presented an initial outline of the analytical document (EA/RIR) envisioned for this program. It would be a two-part document: (1) a general analysis of the alternatives, including details of the actual mechanics of the fisheries under each alternative, and (2) a section which deals exclusively with various alternatives for initial allocation of pollock QS/IFQs/IPQs.

Our most current proposed outline for this document is under Item C-5(a)(3), which includes a much more detailed breakdown of Chapter 5 where we would expect to examine, among other things, the management of the pollock fisheries under various aspects of the proposed system. That chapter will describe the complexity of the management change proposed and likely conclude that many aspects of the current management of pollock fisheries (and some of the associated fisheries) will need to be revisited. The Council will face many decisions such as: (1) whether or not to make a distinction between pelagic and on-bottom pollock fisheries; (2) whether IFQs will be allocated for only 'directed', or target, pollock fisheries; (3) whether or not allocations for bycatch should be made, for both PSC and non-PSC species; and (4) how to deal with 'A' versus 'B' season pollock fisheries in the context of IFQ initial allocations, and subsequent prosecution of fisheries throughout the year. These decisions are independent of the initial allocation alternatives.

In the limited time we have been able to devote to this project since September, we have concentrated on some of the issues identified above. Many lend themselves only to qualitative assessment, but are still extremely critical in understanding how a pollock-only IFQ program would work, and in defining the various elements and options for the system. We hope that these discussions, found under Item C-5(a)(4), will shed light on some of the mechanics of this program, and help the Council make some basic decisions early on which will make the process much more tractable for both the Council and the analysts. This is the area in which we will concentrate the remainder of our report.

Item C-5(a)(5) is a short discussion from September which focuses on one initial allocation issue which has the potential to greatly simplify the complexity, and perhaps the contentiousness, of the initial allocations of QS/IFQs/IPQs. These allocations options are contained in the original proposal from June 1995 and are suggested in a letter from Alaska Ocean Seafoods. In essence, these options would guarantee a minimum IFQ in the initial allocation - for example, not less than some percentage (75% to 95%) of a vessel's catch in a recent time period. Under this type of alternative, the impact of historical participation (catch), or weighting factors, is greatly reduced.

Finally, Item C-5(a)(6) contains letters received on this issue since the June 1995 meeting, including a letter to Rollie Schmitt from Congressman Bob Livingston and Senator Ted Stevens regarding further implementation and development of IFQ programs by NMFS and the Councils. How far and fast we move ahead in ITQs will in part depend on the outcome of Magnuson Act reauthorization.

Neither the AP nor SSC addressed this agenda item.

DISCUSSION/MOTIONS

The Council received a brief overview of staff work on the outline for the analysis of a pollock IFQ program in the BSAI. Council also received a staff discussion paper on the components of such a program. Council members did not discuss the various elements and options of the plan at this meeting. However, based on earlier reports on the status of crab stocks and public comments, the Council did consider adding the BSAI crab fisheries

to the analysis for an IFQ program. Council members also discussed Senator Steven's comments with regard to a potential moratorium on future IFQ programs. Some felt that the Council should delay any further work on IFQ programs until after the Magnuson Act is amended; however, others felt it would be better to continue work on a program so that one could be implemented as soon as possible after any moratorium expired.

Dave Fluharty moved that the Council consider bringing the BSAI king and Tanner crab fisheries back into the IFQ analysis. The motion was seconded and failed by a tie vote, 5-5, with Barker, Fluharty, Berg (for Pennoyer), Pereyra and Tillion voting yes and Behnken, Benton, Mace, O'Leary and Lauber voting no (Samuelsen was absent).

Wally Pereyra moved to direct staff to take a more comprehensive look at the transferability vs. non-transferability issue in the analysis. The motion was seconded and carried, 8 to 2, with Mace and Lauber voting no (Berg voting for Pennoyer; Samuelsen absent).

Dave Fluharty moved that the Council notify the public that the next time the Comprehensive Rationalization issue is on the agenda that the subject of adding the BSAI crab fisheries back into the IFQ analysis for pollock will be discussed. The motion was seconded and carried, 7 to 3, with Benton, Mace and Lauber voting no (Berg voting for Pennoyer; Samuelsen absent).

SUMMARY

The Council asked staff to further develop the discussion of transferability and non-transferability in the pollock IFQ analysis. The Council also voted to notify the public that they intend to consider the addition of the BSAI king and Tanner crab fisheries to the study of IFQs the next time IFQs are on their agenda, which will be the June 1996 Council meeting in Portland, Oregon.

(b) VBA/IBQs

ACTION REQUIRED

Review analytical outline, review list of elements and options to be analyzed, and provide further direction to staff.

BACKGROUND

During discussions on staff tasking in September, the Council identified development of a system of individual bycatch accountability as one of the top priorities for staff resources. Staff with the NMFS' Alaska Fisheries Science Center developed an analytical game plan, and initial list of alternatives to be analyzed, for presentation at the December 1995 meeting in Anchorage. The list of alternatives (elements and options for such a system) was based primarily on a proposal for VBAs submitted by United Catcher Boats (UCB). At that meeting the Council decided to postpone further discussion of this agenda item until January 1996, so that they would have more time to review the materials presented in December and to be able to devote the time necessary for meaningful discussion of this issue.

The schedule proposed by the analysts would allow for initial review of the analysis in April, with a final decision possible in June, dependent upon the Council finalizing the elements and options for analysis. As with previous

**MINUTES
NPFMC
JANUARY 1996**

"IFQ type" management programs, a variety of options may be examined with regard to: initial allocations; use and transferability; ownership; monitoring; and, other components of the system. The briefing materials from the December meeting are included here under Item C-5(b)(1), with the draft list of alternatives (elements and options) contained on pages 4-8 of that document. The December reports from the SSC and AP are included under Item C-5(b)(2).

Neither the AP nor the SSC addressed this agenda item.

DISCUSSION/MOTIONS

Joe Terry provided the Council with a report on a revised analytical outline for the evaluation of a vessel bycatch account program. Because of other priority tasking, further work on this analysis may be delayed until after the Pacific cod allocation analysis is completed. However, Steve Pennoyer suggested that Council members discuss the program and provide direction to the analysts at this meeting so that work can begin as soon as time permits.

Dave Benton moved that the Council schedule consideration of a vessel bycatch accounting program for the June 1996 meeting and that, between now and then, NMFS outline for Council consideration a proposed monitoring and enforcement program. The motion was seconded by Bob Mace.

Wally Pereyra moved to amend that the Council schedule at the same time consideration of the elements and options for the pollock IFQ program, including the issue of non-transferability. The motion was seconded by David Fluharty and failed, 6 to 4, with Barker, Fluharty, Pereyra and Tillion voting in favor (Berg voting for Pennoyer; Samuelsen absent).

The main motion carried, 9-1, with Pereyra voting no (Samuelsen absent).

SUMMARY

The Council decided to postpone further discussions and development of a VBA program until the June 1996 meeting. The Council specifically requested a report from the NMFS at that time addressing monitoring and enforcement aspects of this proposed program. Though an analytical outline and some preliminary analyses have been developed, further work between now and June will likely be very limited. At the June meeting, the Council will address the specific alternatives, elements, and options to be included for further analysis.

C-6 Council Operations

ACTION REQUIRED

Consider establishing committee to review Council operations and report in April or June.

BACKGROUND

Last April the SSC made the following comments concerning Council operations:

In its January 1995 minutes, the SSC noted the current magnitude and complexity of the workload undertaken by the Council is overwhelming its staff, the staffs of cooperating agencies, and the advisory bodies of the Council. This is compromising the effectiveness of

the Council management efforts and adversely impacting the preparation and review of documents prepared by the Council staff and outside organizations (such as oil and gas lease sales).

The SSC thanks the Council's Executive Director for making available earlier Council reports dealing with workload issues and the development of its processes and procedures for operations. The SSC reviewed documents prepared following five meetings held by the Council between 1984-1990 with particular attention focussed on the current policy document (1990) on annual management cycles.

The SSC believes that strict adherence to the 1990 rules would provide a step forward to enhancing Council operations. The SSC, however, believes that more must be done in the face of declining budgets and staffs and the growing complexity of management issues which include ITQs, increasing diversity of constituents, the high level of overcapitalization, and bycatch and use issues.

The SSC accordingly suggests that a special meeting of a newly formulated policy and planning group be held as soon as possible. The group would include representation of the Council, its staff, the AP and the SSC, as was done effectively in the past. The group should be charged with updating the current operating procedures in the face of human resources limits. While not trying to limit the agenda, the SSC suggests that an examination of the meeting schedule, particularly in regard to frequency and the timing of meetings, alternate schedules for TAC determination, and the development of a new approach for prioritizing amendment proposals might be particularly helpful to the Council process.

Last March, I had provided the SSC with a review of past Council considerations of operations. The cover memo with a short history is provided here as C-6(a). It may be appropriate to establish a committee as the SSC suggests to review our schedule and operations and report back to us in April or June, depending on progress made.

Neither the AP nor the SSC addressed this agenda item.

DISCUSSIONS/MOTIONS

Council members agreed that at this time they will rely on the Executive Director to channel new amendment proposals back into the normal annual amendment cycle whenever possible and will not establish a review committee at this time. Council members also agreed with the Director's suggestion to move the early January meeting to early February.

Linda Behnken moved to establish an annual amendment cycle for proposals for changes to the sablefish and halibut IFQ program, as follows:

- Summer: Call for Proposals**
- September: Proposals forwarded to IFQ Implementation Team**
- October: IFQ Implementation Team reviews proposals**
- December: Council receives Team report; tasks staff with analyses**
- April: Initial review of amendments by Council**
- June: Final review of amendments by Council**

**MINUTES
NPFMC
JANUARY 1996**

Under this schedule, any changes to the IFQ program would be implemented for the following fishing season. The motion was seconded and carried without objection.

Dave Fluharty moved to place an analysis of ownership caps for halibut in the Bering Sea (in the range of .5% to 2%, as recommended by the AP) on the current staff tasking list. The motion was seconded and carried without objection.

The Council also discussed the issue of allowing the use of pots in the directed IFQ sablefish fishery in the Bering Sea. A request from industry indicated that the use of pots would help alleviate the loss of sablefish to killer whales in the area that have become adept at removing the sablefish from the lines.

Ron Berg moved that NMFS prepare a discussion paper on the subject of longline pots in the Bering Sea directed IFQ sablefish fishery for Council review in June. The motion was seconded and carried without objection.

Linda Behnken suggested that the analysis include a discussion of temporally separating the longline and pot fisheries to avoid gear conflicts, possibly prohibiting pots during a portion of the good-weather summer months.

Clarence Pautzke clarified that Council staff would prepare the Bering Sea ownership cap and Bering Sea sablefish longline pot analyses for the April 1996 meeting, under the Council's newly-initiated IFQ amendment cycle.

SUMMARY

The Council agreed to move the January Council meetings into early February and to rely on the Executive Director to channel new amendment proposals back into the normal annual amendment cycle whenever possible. The Council also approved an annual amendment cycle for proposed changes to the sablefish and halibut IFQ program, and requested analyses proceed on changes in the halibut ownership caps in the Bering Sea and allowing the use of longline pots in the Bering Sea IFQ sablefish fishery.

C-7 Research Priorities

ACTION REQUIRED

Final review of research priorities for submission to NMFS.

BACKGROUND

In November the plan teams recommended the research priorities as listed in item C-7(a). We circulated these to both the Center and Region on December 22 seeking NMFS comments. We have not received a response yet, probably due to the government shutdown. After receiving any comments from NMFS and the SSC at this meeting, the Council needs to forward the priorities to NOAA for use in preparation of its annual budget.

The AP did not address this agenda item.

Report of the Scientific and Statistical Committee

The SSC provided an extensive list of research ideas they feel deserve attention by NMFS, ADF&G, IPHC, other agencies, and institutions of higher learning (see SSC Minutes, Appendix II for complete list). The SSC requested that the list be provided to the agencies and appropriate universities and also recommended that the Council solicit a list of ongoing research activities from these institutions that may be related to groundfish and crab management.

DISCUSSION/SUMMARY

The Council instructed the Executive Director to submit the research recommendations of the SSC to agencies and universities as recommended by the SSC, including crab research needs and groundfish extrusion mortality studies, and to inquire about current research in areas of Council interest.

D. FISHERY MANAGEMENT PLANS

D-1 Groundfish Amendments

(a) Overfishing Definition

The amendment was not available for review at this meeting. The SSC did hear a status report from Grant Thompson, however. Please see their minutes (Appendix II) for a summary.

(b) Halibut Grid-Sorting Amendment

ACTION REQUIRED

Final review of a regulatory amendment for grid-sorting of Pacific halibut in the non-pelagic trawl groundfish fisheries.

BACKGROUND

At its September 1995 meeting, the Council approved the draft analysis for requiring grid-sorting of Pacific halibut in the non-pelagic trawl groundfish fisheries, after adding another suboption: a proposed incentive wherein any halibut released overboard in the first 20 minutes after the net comes on board would not count against bycatch mortality limits. The draft analysis previously had been revised to (1) address SSC comments from January 1995 on the effects of grid sorting on: bias and variability of catch and bycatch estimates; the viability of the VIP program; and calculation of vessel and across vessel halibut bycatch; and (2) incorporate potential improvements in halibut mortality rates based on comments from an ad hoc halibut grid-sorting working group. The revised analysis was released to the public on December 14, 1995.

The proposed action was originally suggested by industry to evaluate methods of increasing survival of halibut taken as bycatch in bottom trawls. In October 1993, staff of the International Pacific Halibut Commission (IPHC) and NMFS-AFSC and representatives of the Highliners Association conducted an experiment aboard the *F/T Northern Glacier* which sorted halibut from the groundfish catch more rapidly than currently practiced. The experiment intended to target on Pacific cod, but ended up targeting pollock because Pacific cod was not available in large schools as had been expected based on the commercial fishery in the spring. In June 1994,

**MINUTES
NPFMC
JANUARY 1996**

IPHC staff evaluated changes in halibut discard mortality rates and presented the results and implications of their study. The Council recommended preparation of a regulatory amendment for grid-sorting of Pacific halibut in the non-pelagic trawl groundfish fisheries.

This regulatory amendment would require the deck crew on all factory trawlers and catcher boats that dump groundfish directly to a stern tank before sorting to use a grid over the entrance to the hold and sort out as much halibut bycatch as practicable for immediate return to the sea. The analysis also provides information to help the Council select the species for which grid-sorting would be required.

The following alternatives are considered in the analysis:

Alternative 1. Status quo. Normal sorting in the factory below deck. Typically, a single, short conveyer leads from the hold to the exit chute.

Alternative 2. Require that the deck crew on all factory trawlers and catcher boats that dump groundfish directly to a stern tank before sorting use a grid over the entrance to the hold and sort out as much halibut bycatch as practicable for immediate return to the sea. Specific fisheries may be selected. Openings in the grid must be at least 9 inches by 11 inches.

Option 1: Require vessels to grid-sort all halibut, but observers would not collect data for grid-sorted halibut.

Suboption 1: Use special projects to establish discard mortality rates.

Suboption 2: Establish a window for the first 20 minutes after the net comes on board during which bycatch would not count against bycatch mortality limits.

Option 2: Require vessels to grid-sort only the hauls that the observer does not intend to sample.

Option 3: Require vessels to grid-sort all hauls, and observers count, measure, and determine viability on a subsample of grid sorted halibut.

Suboption 1: Vessel deck crews would be required to sort halibut for the entire catch, regardless of time to sort.

Suboption 2: Vessel deck crews would be required to sort halibut only for the first 20 minutes of dumping, and could not sort after 20 minutes; the observer would be on deck for all sorting.

Suboption 3: Vessel deck crews would be required to grid-sort halibut on deck only for the first 20 minutes of dumping, and additional sorting would be voluntary; the observer would be on deck for all sorting.

Enforcement Committee comments are attached as Item D-1(b)(1).

Report of the Scientific and Statistical Committee

The SSC received a report from Bob Trumble, IPHC, indicating that the Commission has withdrawn support of a grid-sorting amendment because they have determined that rapidly returning bycaught halibut to the ocean would compromise collection of essential data on halibut bycatch and bottom trawl catch composition and would also interfere with the Vessel Incentive Program (VIP). The SSC agreed that accurate documentation of fisheries removals is essential and therefore could not support the grid-sorting amendment. The SSC encouraged the Council, IPHC and Observer Program to continue to pursue techniques which will reduce halibut bycatch and discard mortality rates while maintaining the integrity of data collection efforts.

Report of the Advisory Panel

The AP supported IPHC's position to withhold a grid-sorting amendment at this time, keeping it as a possible enhancement to future bycatch reduction programs. The AP also urged the Council to examine other experimental programs such as possible grid-sorting on catcher vessels delivering to shoreside processors as well as addressing the problems of conflicts with the VIP and degradation of data as identified in the analysis.

DISCUSSION/MOTIONS

Linda Behnken moved to approve the AP recommendation - to withhold approval of a grid-sorting amendment at this time. The motion was seconded by Steve Pennoyer and carried, 6 to 4, with Barker, Mace, Pereyra and Lauber voting no (Samuelsen not present).

Council members expressed a strong desire to move ahead with some mechanism to reduce halibut bycatch and discussed the voluntary use of grid-sorting.

Later in the meeting, a motion to reconsider action on the grid-sorting amendment was submitted by Dave Benton and carried without objection. **Mr. Benton offered an amendment to the motion to request a report from NMFS at the June meeting which would detail issues regarding verification and enforcement and any other issues that they identify with regard to a grid-sorting program and that the Council request NMFS explore with industry the possibility of developing a pilot program on an experimental basis to evaluate the successful implementation of a halibut grid-sorting program.** The motion was considered a friendly one by the maker of the original motion and was approved without objection.

Steve Pennoyer clarified that voluntary grid-sorting could occur on vessels without observers and on observed vessels during unobserved tows.

A summary of all D-1 action items will follow the last D-1 item (e).

(c) Pollock Trimester Seasonal Allocations in Gulf of Alaska

ACTION REQUIRED

Final review of Amendment 45 to the Gulf of Alaska groundfish FMP to set pollock trimester seasonal apportionments.

**MINUTES
NPFMC
JANUARY 1996**

BACKGROUND

At its December 1995 meeting, the Council reviewed Draft Amendment 45 to the Gulf of Alaska groundfish FMP to combine the third and fourth quarter pollock allowances in the Western/Central (W/C) Regulatory Area of the GOA. Under this proposal, the first and second quarter allowances would remain unchanged and would be released on January 1 and June 1. However, the third and fourth quarter allowances would be combined into one release of 50 percent of the TAC. The initial review draft included options of September 15 and October 1. The Council added September 1 as an option for a third release date. The analysis was revised to include this additional alternative and was released for public review on December 14, 1995.

This proposal has several management objectives: First, to reduce bycatch of "other" salmon which has been excessively high in recent years during the third quarter (July 1) opening; second, to eliminate conflicts with salmon processing which peaks for GOA processors in July; third, to reduce the potential for harvest overruns and other difficulties associated with managing extremely short fourth quarter openings; and finally, to limit effort by reducing the incentive for Bering Sea-based vessels to crossover and participate in GOA pollock openings.

The FMP is very specific with respect to how seasonal allowances of pollock TAC in the W/C Regulatory Area must be made. Amendment 19 to the FMP, implemented as a measure to prevent roe stripping, requires that the W/C Regulatory Area pollock TAC be divided into four equal quarterly allowances. Consequently, an FMP amendment is required to delete the quarterly allowance system, and provide the Council with greater flexibility in setting seasonal allowances of pollock TAC. New plan language would allow, but not compel, the Council to divide the pollock TAC by seasons. A regulatory amendment then would follow to implement the current proposal to allocate the W/C GOA pollock TAC in trimesters.

The Council further recommended that the analysis include a provision that whenever the GOA pollock TAC is 80,000 mt or higher, the GOA pollock seasonal allocations would return to a quarterly system. This proposal will be analyzed as a separate regulatory amendment because it will not be needed this year.

The following alternatives are included in the analysis.

Alternative 1: No Action. The pollock TAC in the W/C Regulatory Area would continue to be released in four equal quarterly allowances as required by the FMP.

Alternative 2: Amend the FMP to framework greater flexibility in setting seasonal allowances of pollock TAC, and combine by regulatory amendment the third and fourth quarterly allowances into a single release of 50 percent of the TAC. The first and second quarterly allowances of 25 percent of the pollock TAC in the W/C Regulatory Area would remain unchanged.

Option 1: Establish a September 1 opening date for the combined third and fourth quarter allowance. Analysis of this option was requested by the Council at the December 1995 meeting.

Option 2: Establish a September 15 opening date for the combined third and fourth quarter allowance. This option reflects the proposal submitted to the Council by representatives of the GOA pollock fishery.

Option 3: Establish an October 1 opening date for the combined third and fourth quarter allowance. This option was included at the request of an organization of catcher vessels that participate in both BSAI and GOA pollock fisheries.

Report of the Scientific and Statistical Committee

The SSC noted that the analysis suggests that moving to a trimester allocation scheme may offer a range of benefits including industry cost savings, more manageable harvest targets, and chum salmon bycatch reductions, although none of these benefits was quantified. The SSC had no recommendation on a specific alternative but pointed out that the earlier the third/fourth quarter release date is set, the likelihood of adverse impacts on Steller sea lion populations would be mitigated.

DISCUSSION/MOTIONS

Based on an industry recommendation, Kevin O'Leary moved the following:

To amend the GOA FMP to framework greater flexibility in setting seasonal allowances of the pollock TAC and combine by regulatory amendment the 3rd and 4th quarterly allowances into a single release of 50% of the TAC. The 1st and 2nd quarterly allowances of 25% of the pollock TAC in the Western regulatory area would remain unchanged. Establish a September 1st opening date for the combined 3rd and 4th quarter allowance in the areas of 620 and 630, and establish an October 1st opening date for the combined 3rd and 4th quarter allowance in area 610, Western Gulf.

The motion was seconded by Bob Mace who requested that the AP recommendation to begin analysis of an amendment to provide an area-based trigger mechanism to return to the quarterly allowance system be incorporated in the motion. The recommendation was included in the original motion as a friendly amendment.

The motion carried, 7 to 3, with Benton, Fluharty and Tillion voting no (Samuelson not present).

(d) Delay of the BSAI Pollock "B" Season

ACTION REQUIRED

Provide direction to staff on alternatives to be examined between now and April.

BACKGROUND

Beginning in 1993 the opening of the BSAI pollock 'B' season was delayed from June 1 until August 15 for two primary reasons: (1) to allow the opportunity for catcher/processors to participate in salmon processing during the summer months, and (2) to move the pollock 'B' season to a period when product yields and flesh quality are higher than in the summer months. A proposal was received in this past groundfish amendment cycle to further delay the opening date until September 1, to more fully realize both increased value from the pollock fishery and increased salmon processing and marketing opportunities. Item D-1(d)(1) contains that proposal and letters in support. In September, the Council directed staff to include a 'B' season delay in their current tasking priorities.

In addition to industry input, the Council's original decision to delay the season until August 15 was based on an analysis prepared under contract by the University of Alaska's Institute for Social and Economic Research (ISER). That analysis included a cost/benefit assessment and an economic impact (distributional) assessment,

**MINUTES
NPFMC
JANUARY 1996**

both based on a fairly extensive modeling exercise. Intrinsic to that modeling exercise was an examination of potential bycatch implications for both non-target and PSC species. Other factors examined in the analysis included:

- seasonal weather considerations and effects,
- impacts to the pollock resource itself,
- potential impacts to marine mammals,
- yield, price, and market effects,
- timing of salmon runs,
- potential increases in salmon processing, and
- impacts to existing processors and communities.

The analysis explicitly examined three alternatives to the status quo, June 1 opening date: July 1, August 1, and September 1, and also covered any intermediate dates which might be chosen by the Council (August 15 was the date finally chosen). However, the results of that analysis rapidly lose their applicability to any opening dates later than September 1. If the date being considered by the Council at this time is limited to September 1 (only a two-week change from the current status quo), we intend to use the existing analysis as the basis for the Council's decision in April 1996. The following issues will need to be re-examined to supplement the existing, baseline analysis:

Marine Mammal Interactions

The original analysis discussed possible marine mammal interactions, though no formal Section 7 consultation was performed. Of all of the alternatives examined, the September 1 opening date was found to be the most likely to impact marine mammals, particularly Steller sea lions. Because of this finding in the original analysis, and due to the current status of sea lions, this iteration of the analysis will likely require a formal Section 7 consultation pursuant to the Endangered Species Act.

Salmon Bycatch Implications

Since the time of the original analysis the Council has adopted and implemented bycatch measures (caps and closure areas) for both chum and chinook salmon. Though the original analysis examined PSC and other bycatch implications of a 'B' season delay, the models concentrated on halibut, crab, and herring, species for which caps existed. This time we would examine recent spatial/temporal trends in salmon bycatch information collected by the Observer Program for 1993, 1994, and possibly 1995.

In addition to the two specific issues identified above, we may also endeavor to identify the number of processors which have to date taken advantage of the current August 15 opening, and the amount and types of salmon processing opportunities developed. A final Council decision in April may allow for this measure, if approved, to be in place for 1996. For SSC members, the original analysis and your previous minutes on this issue are included in your notebooks.

The Scientific and Statistical Committee did not address this agenda item.

Report of the Advisory Panel

The AP recommended the Council direct staff to begin an analysis of the following alternatives: (1) status quo; (2) a September 1st opening date; and (3) delay of the "B" season for the offshore sector only. They requested that the analysis include the impact to the existing 5-block salmon closure and the effects on the yellowfin sole fishery.

DISCUSSION/MOTIONS

Bob Mace moved to approve the AP recommendation to send the "B" season delay proposal forward for analysis of the following alternatives: (1) status quo; (2) a September 1st opening date; and (3) delay of the "B" season for the offshore sector only, and with an analysis of the impact on the existing 5-block salmon closure and the effects on the yellowfin sole fishery. By friendly amendment, the motion was amended to include a November 1st shut-off date for the fishery to avoid impacts on Steller sea lions. The motion was seconded and carried without objection.

It was clarified that the November 1 shut-off date would not apply to the CDQ fisheries.

(e) Salmon Foundation Report

ACTION REQUIRED

Status report on Salmon Foundation.

BACKGROUND

The Salmon Research Foundation, a non-profit corporation, uses income generated from salmon bycatch assessment payments to develop a salmon bycatch avoidance program for the BSAI trawl fisheries. The Foundation also funds research on stock origin of salmon taken as bycatch. The Council received it's last report from the Foundation in April 1995. The Foundation will provide an update of its activities at this meeting.

Bycatch of salmon in the Bering Sea was much lower in 1995 than in recent years. As of December 14, 1995, bycatch in BSAI trawl fisheries totaled 23,901 chinook salmon and 21,722 "other" (chum) salmon. An additional 14,662 chinook salmon and 69,955 "other" salmon were taken in GOA trawl fisheries. Salmon bycatch in the past few years is shown in the table below.

Two plan amendments were implemented recently to control bycatch of salmon in the Bering Sea. Amendment 35 authorized closure of a special area to trawling from August 1 through August 31 to control chum salmon bycatch, beginning in August 1995. The closure continues through October 14 in years when a 42,000 non-chinook (chum) salmon bycatch limit is reached. Amendment 21b authorizes closure of three areas to trawling through April 15 once a 48,000 chinook salmon bycatch limit is reached. This amendment became effective on January 1, 1996.

YEAR	BSAI		GOA	
	<u>chinook</u>	<u>other</u>	<u>chinook</u>	<u>other</u>
1991	48,821	31,987	37,592	13,288
1992	41,903	38,919	15,694	10,126
1993	45,964	240,776	19,193	85,834
1994	44,437	96,402	13,990	40,482
1995	23,901	21,722	14,662	69,955

**MINUTES
NPFMC
JANUARY 1996**

There were no SSC or AP reports on this agenda item.

This was an information-only agenda item. The Council received a brief report from Joe Sullivan on the current status and activities of the Salmon Research Foundation. Mr. Sullivan reported that analysis of the 1994 pollock "B" season salmon bycatch indicates that about half the chum salmon taken during that fishery were non-Alaska in origin. In 1995 the Foundation funded additional observers for the 1995 "B" Season to collect approximately 1,500 samples for analysis.

SUMMARY FOR ALL D-1 ACTION ITEMS

The Council decided to withhold approval of a halibut grid-sorting amendment and has requested that NMFS report in June on issues regarding verification and enforcement as well as a possible pilot program for grid sorting. The Council gave final approval of an amendment which would allow greater flexibility in setting season allowances of the pollock total allowable catch in the Gulf of Alaska. An accompanying regulatory amendment will combine the third and fourth quarterly allowances into a single release of 50 percent of the TAC on September 1 for the Central Gulf and October 1 for the Western Gulf. They also approved initiating an analysis of an appropriate trigger mechanism to return to quarterly releases, and initiated an analysis of the impacts of delaying the opening of the BSAI pollock "B" season to September 1, including an option for a mandatory November 1 closure to protect Steller sea lions, and the possibility that the amendment may be applied only to the offshore fleet.

D-2 Staff Tasking

The Council was provided with an update on current plan and regulatory amendments and other Council projects. There are over 25 regulatory and plan amendments either in progress or planned, as well as several other issues that require reports from staff at future meetings.

Executive Director Clarence Pautzke reported that available NPFMC and NMFS economists will be busy at least through June on current projects.

Dr. Fluharty suggested that the Council office have a "home page" on the Internet; Dr. Pautzke replied that he has requested staff to look into that possibility. Dr. Fluharty also requested staff input on getting the Ecosystems Committee under way.

This was an informational item; no further staff tasking was discussed.

E. FINANCIAL REPORT

There was no financial report at this meeting.

F. PUBLIC COMMENT

There were no further public comments.

G. ADJOURNMENT

Chairman Lauber adjourned the meeting on Saturday, February 3, 1996, at approximately 1:25 p.m.