

# North Pacific Fishery Management Council

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NEWSLETTER

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## Groundfish Amendment Proposals Approved for Public Review

At its March 18-20 meeting the Council reviewed and approved for public review several proposed changes to the Gulf of Alaska and Bering Sea/Aleutian Islands Groundfish Fishery Management Plans. A notice of availability will be mailed within the next two weeks to commence a 30-day public review period. The Council will take final action on the amendments in May and send them on to Secretary of Commerce review and implementation. Council also received reports on the development of a combined king and Tanner crab fishery management plan for the Bering Sea/Aleutian Islands, discussed their December decision to allocate most Gulf of Alaska pollock to domestic processors, and received updates on domestic and joint venture fisheries and enforcement. Details on these and other items are found in this newsletter.

## May Council Meeting Scheduled in Anchorage

The Council will meet May 20-22 at the Anchorage Hilton to review public comments on proposed amendments to the Gulf of Alaska and Bering Sea/Aleutian Islands groundfish fishery management plans and determine which should go forward for Secretary of Commerce review and implementation. The Council will also review the status of pollock stocks in the Western/Central Gulf of Alaska and U.S. processor needs. The Scientific and Statistical Committee, Advisory Panel, and the Council's Crab Management Committee will meet at the hotel May 18-19. A more detailed agenda should be available by May 4.

Other meetings of interest in the next few months are as follows:

<u>Date</u>	<u>Meeting</u>	<u>Location</u>
April 1	NMFS Allocation Board	Washington, DC
April 5-10	Pacific Council Meeting	Seattle
April 9-14	Alaska Board of Fisheries	Anchorage
April 20	Yukon Salmon Negotiations	Anchorage
April 22-23	Council Policy & Planning Committee	Anchorage
May 15-16	Council Chairmen's Meeting	Portland
May 18-19	NPFMC Crab Management Committee	Anchorage
	NPFMC Scientific & Statistical Committee	
	NPFMC Advisory Panel	
May 20-22	North Pacific Council	Anchorage

### Council Requests More Information on Gulf Pollock

As requested by the Under Secretary of Commerce for NOAA, Dr. Anthony Calio, the Council reviewed its decision, made in December, to apportion most of the Gulf pollock quota to domestic processing in 1987. NMFS had expressed concern that the preseason estimate of domestic harvesting and processing needs (DAP) was unrealistically high and should be adjusted to provide more fish to joint ventures (JVP), thereby more fully utilizing the pollock resource. The Council concurred with NMFS that some of the estimates obtained from their industry survey may need adjustment, but also recognized that some domestic processors may not have been included in the survey. They therefore requested that NMFS conduct a new formal industry survey to determine domestic processing requirements and present the results at the May meeting. The Council then will determine if adjustments are necessary.

The Council also received a very preliminary report from the NMFS hydroacoustic survey being conducted in Shelikof Strait. This annual survey provides the best scientific information with regard to pollock biomass in the Gulf of Alaska. There was concern that the pollock resource may not be rebuilding as rapidly as anticipated and the Council requested a more detailed report for May. Results from this survey could lead to an adjustment of the pollock target quota.

### Gulf of Alaska Amendment 16 Approved for Public Review

The Council approved proposed Amendment 16 to the Gulf of Alaska Groundfish Fishery Management Plan for public review. It addresses six main issues:

1. DAP priority within 100 miles of Unalaska Island.
2. Revise the definition of "prohibited species".
3. Improve catch recording requirements.
4. Establish a framework procedure for setting seasons.
5. Expand the existing halibut PSC framework to include all traditional prohibited species (i.e., halibut, salmonids, king crab, and Tanner crab).
6. Update the plan's descriptive sections, reorganize chapters, and incorporate Council policy as directed.

Members of the staff and plan team will edit the environmental and regulatory analyses associated with Amendment 16 and incorporate Council, SSC, and AP suggestions before sending the package out for public review. One significant change from the earlier draft is the deletion of the proposed minimum size limit for sablefish. This decision was made by the Council following their review of the plan team analysis, reviewed by the SSC, which showed that a minimum size limit would produce little benefit in terms of physical and economic yield.

A notice of availability will be mailed within the next two weeks to commence a 30-day public review period. The Council will take final action in May and forward the approved amendment for Secretarial review and implementation. Final implementation of the amendment is scheduled for late 1987.

Bering Sea/Aleutian Islands Amendment 11  
Approved for Public Review

The Council approved proposed Amendment 11 to the Bering Sea/Aleutian Islands Groundfish Fishery Management Plan (FMP) for public review. Amendment 11 addresses six main issues, several of which are common to proposed Amendment 16 to the Gulf of Alaska Groundfish FMP.

1. DAP priority within 100 miles of Unalaska.
2. Clarify the definition of "prohibited species."
3. Improve catch recording requirements.
4. Revise definition of acceptable biological catch (ABC).
5. Increase upper value of optimum yield (OY) range.
6. Prohibit pollock roe-stripping.

Staff and plan team members will edit the environmental and regulatory analyses for Amendment 11 in light of recommendations provided by the SSC, AP, and the Council at the March meeting. Two changes were made to the amendment package by the Council who added an alternative for seasonal release of apportionments of JVP pollock in the Bering Sea/Aleutian Islands to the DAP priority access proposal. The alternative proposes periodic releases of joint venture pollock. It will be analyzed and sent to public review with the rest of the package. The Council also deleted the sablefish minimum size proposal because the plan team and SSC analysis indicated it would produce little, if any, benefits.

A notice of availability will be mailed within the next three weeks to begin a 30-day public review period on the Amendment 11 package. The Council will act on the amendment in May, then forward it for Secretarial review and implementation, which is scheduled for late 1987. The Council noted that if the issues required further analysis and comment after the May meeting they would consider a midsummer meeting to expedite the amendment process.

Crab Management Committee and Plan Team to Continue  
Development of New Crab Plan

The Council's Crab Management Committee reported on the continuing development of the new king and Tanner crab fishery management plan for the Bering Sea/Aleutian Islands area. The Committee met with the Crab Plan Team on March 3-4 to review the first working draft and discuss management measures, roles of different management agencies, and procedures for appealing preseason and inseason management decisions. With the advice from that meeting the plan team will do a redraft and meet with the Committee again just prior to the May Council meeting.

NMFS, as requested by the Council, has developed a Secretarial amendment to repeal the old Tanner crab plan. A Notice of Availability was filed on March 2 and public comment will be taken until April 22. Comments should be sent to NMFS-Alaska Region, P.O. Box 1668, Juneau, Alaska 99802. Copies of the amendment are available by contacting Ray Baglin at (907) 586-7229.

### Sablefish Limited Entry

In January, the Council put this amendment proposal on a separate schedule and told industry representatives they expected them to develop a proposal for limited entry that the majority of the industry could support. Fishermen from Alaska and Washington State have since formed the North Pacific Longline Coalition and are in the process of surveying sablefish fishermen about their views of limited entry. The results of the survey should be available at the May Council meeting.

### Groundfish Industry Survey

As announced in the January newsletter, Dittman Research Corporation and Graystar Technical Services will conduct during April and May a survey of the groundfish industry off Alaska to gather opinions on how the groundfish fisheries should be managed in the future. Here is how the industry respondents will be selected:

Groundfish Fishermen: A sample (stratified by vessel size and gear type) of fishermen will be randomly selected from National Marine Fisheries Service and Alaska Commercial Fisheries Entry Commission groundfish permit lists for 1986-87. All permit holders on these lists will have an equal chance of being contacted for the survey. A total of about 400 fishermen will be surveyed.

Groundfish Processors: All onshore, floating, and catcher-processor-companies will be contacted, based on the Alaska Department of Fish & Game and Alaska Department of Environmental Conservation "Intent to Operate" lists for 1986-87.

If your vessel or company is not on one of these lists, but you think you still qualify to be surveyed, please contact Dittman Research at (907) 243-3345.

Important Note: Before the survey starts, Dittman Research will send a letter to those groundfish fishermen and processors to be surveyed, asking for the best times to contact you. Please be sure to respond to that letter as soon as you can. YOUR OPINIONS ARE ESSENTIAL TO THIS SURVEY AND TO THE COUNCIL.

### Non-profit Fishery Research Foundation

The steering committee for the non-profit fishing research foundation reported on progress since January. They have been reviewing a resolution on the creation of the foundation and will meet with industry representatives soon in Anchorage to discuss and act on the resolution.

Domestic Fisheries Report

Southeast Troll Fishery. Since the October 1 opening of the Southeast winter troll fishery, approximately 22,000 chinook salmon have been landed. The winter fishery will close April 14 and is projected to take 30,000-35,000 chinook salmon. Last year's harvest was 22,000 chinooks. The average price paid to fishermen is currently \$3.50-\$4.00 per pound.

Tanner crab. In the Bering Sea, 26.9 million pounds of C. opilio have been harvested since January 15. Another 12 million pounds of C. bairdi were harvested in the Gulf of Alaska and the Aleutians. Most areas opened in January. The Western Aleutians opened November 1.

Groundfish Fisheries. The total U.S. processed catch through late February was 53,425 mt with about 45,000 mt coming from the Bering Sea and Aleutians area. Catch composition was 28,632 mt pollock, 1,110 mt sablefish, 14,331 mt Pacific cod, 8,208 mt rock sole, and 1,144 mt various other species.

Joint ventures harvested 377,322 mt, all from the Bering Sea and Aleutians. Catch composition was 358,985 mt pollock, 16,208 mt Pacific cod and 2,129 mt various other species. The number of U.S. trawlers involved in joint ventures was 52 and 92 in January and February, respectively, up considerably from those months in previous years.

Foreign fisheries harvested only 15,293 mt by late February, mostly Pacific cod in the Bering Sea. There was concern expressed by the Council over foreign directed fisheries on pollock in the international waters ("Donut Hole") of the Bering Sea. Little information is available on this fishery. The Council is strongly encouraging all nations to provide accurate, timely catch information on their operations in the Donut.

Coast Guard Reports on Activities

U.S. Coast Guard enforcement efforts off Alaska through February 28 totaled 113 cutter days and 224 aircraft hours. Nineteen notices of violation and written warnings have been issued to foreign vessels and 4 to those from the U.S. The infractions were mainly for failure to maintain required logs and reports. A Japanese longliner was issued a notice of violation for failure to provide assistant to a NMFS observer as required, and a Chinese processor was cited for conducting fisheries support activities without a NMFS observer on board as well as logbook violations and not keeping its International Radio Call Sign legible.

The Coast Guard reported recent problems with Polish fishing vessels entering U.S. territorial waters without first obtaining Coast Guard approval and stressed the importance of vessels from the Soviet Union, Poland, and China complying with the appropriate regulations regarding entry into U.S. territorial waters or ports.

The Coast Guard also warned that they will be citing vessels running with their high intensity work lights on because of the hazard to navigation, particularly in congested or restricted waters. The lights may obscure navigational lights, deteriorate night vision, and blind other vessels.

### Legislative Update

The Council received a briefing on several bills that have been introduced since the beginning of the 100th Congress. There appears to be considerable interest in Washington, DC, in addressing the problem of plastics pollution of the marine environment. H.R. 474, H.R. 940, S. 62, S. 559, S. 560, and S. 633 all focus on various aspects of plastics pollution. The Senate is expected to ratify Annex V to the International Convention for the Prevention of Pollution from Ships in the near future.

The issue of the reflagging of foreign vessels is also being considered by Congress. Representative Young introduced a bill, H.R. 438, on January 7, 1987, that prohibits the reflagging of foreign built fishing, fish processing, and tender vessels as U.S. vessels after October 31, 1986. The Fisheries and Wildlife Conservation, Merchant Marine, and Coast Guard Subcommittees of the House Merchant Marine and Fisheries Committee will hold a joint hearing on H.R. 438 in Washington, DC, on April 29, 1987, at 2:00 p.m. in Room 1334 of the Longworth Office Building. Senators Stevens and Murkowski have introduced S. 377 that would impose a ten-year moratorium on the ability of foreign built vessels to engage in fish processing under the U.S. flag.

The Council was also briefed on the latest move by the Reagan Administration to implement user fees on commercial and recreational marine fisheries as well as Coast Guard user fees. The current proposal is to levy the fees as part of a Marine Fisheries Conservation Assurance Program. The fee schedule would require a \$6 federal permit to fish in marine waters for commercial and recreational fishermen, a \$25 stamp for buyers or sellers of certain marine fish, a landing tax of 1% of exvessel value of certain fish landed for commercial purposes and a \$25 federal game fish stamp for certain species. Most of the fees would double in two years under this proposal. The Administration is also discussing Coast Guard user fees that could raise \$355 million in FY88 and \$466 million annually thereafter. No draft legislation on either marine fisheries or Coast Guard user fees has, as yet, been circulated.

### Seafood Safety Study

The General Accounting Office (GAO), an information-gathering office for the United States Congress, is doing a study on the safety of seafoods and labelling of seafood products. Mr. Ike Eichner of GAO told the Council he is in Alaska to gather information which will help in their assessment of the current situation. The National Marine Fisheries Service and the National Fisheries Institute currently are also studying the possibility of a federal inspection system similar to the USDA inspection of meat products. These two studies will be used by Congress in considering the feasibility of a seafood inspection program.