

EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR'S REPORT

1985 is the year for reauthorization of the Magnuson Fishery Conservation and Management Act. We have been asked by Congressmen Breaux and Young for input into their deliberations for reauthorization. I'm sure that we'll receive similar requests from the Senate. Congressional staffers will start working on reauthorization items in the next week or two so we should have preliminary recommendations to them as quickly as possible.

The Council Chairmen met week before last for a preliminary discussion of Regional Council needs on a national basis. They have tentatively listed greater autonomy and financial freedom from National Marine Fisheries Service as their priority goal and reviewed a number of other sections of the Act to seek unanimity and common ground.

Their recommendation was for the Councils to get preliminary material to the Congressional committee staffers before the end of January and then finalize the Council positions at the Council Chairmen's meeting February 25-27. That meeting will be held in conjunction with the Western Pacific Council meeting and the MAFAC meeting in Hilo, Hawaii.

A possible procedure for this Council to meet the schedule recommended by the Chairmen would be to appoint an ad-hoc reauthorization workgroup to meet prior to the middle of January, review the recommendations made at the Chairmen's meeting and develop recommendations for a North Pacific Council position on reauthorization. Those proposals could go as preliminary material to committee staffers and then be reviewed and finalized at the February Council meeting. That would also enable the Council Chairman to have a firm Council position for use at the Chairmen's meeting the last week of February.

The meeting originally scheduled for November 9-12 between the U.S. fishing industry and the fishing industry of Japan was postponed by the Japanese because of uncertainty about the whaling situation. It has since been rescheduled for December 9-12, immediately following this Council meeting. We will be sending Jeff Povolny from the staff to assist the American delegation with factual material on fishery resources and Council policy and programs. The Chairman, or in his absence the Vice-Chairman, has agreed to assist the U.S. Delegation as an official advisor. Other official advisors will be Ambassador Ed Wolfe from the Dept. of State and Bill Gordon or his representative from the National Marine Fisheries Service.

We advised you in a previous mailing that it was necessary to shift the January meeting to the first week in February. The second phase of the U.S./Canada negotiations on a coastwide salmon treaty has been scheduled for the last two weeks in January. Our January meeting was to discuss and make decisions on the Salmon FMP for 1985 but it would be impossible for the Council to consider salmon before they know the results of those negotiations. The same is true of the Board of Fisheries and they too have rescheduled their meeting. We will still be meeting in Sitka with the Board of Fisheries, but the dates are now February 6-8.

Senator Stevens has asked the Council to sponsor and help organize a Forsythe roundtable discussion as one of eight similar discussions to be held during the Year of the Oceans (as declared by the President last summer). The Senator wants at least one of the roundtables to be held in Alaska and asked the Council and the University of Alaska to sponsor and arrange it. Funding will come through the Year of the Oceans Foundation.

There have been two steering group meetings to further the idea. At the moment it appears that a meeting can be put together for the latter part of May or the first part of June to discuss the oceanography and its relationship to fishery resources of the North Pacific. It's expected to be a two-day roundtable involving scientists from all of the Pacific Rim countries.

Council sponsorship should not involve any more than your approval of the concept and the participation of the Council staff as needed to organize the conference. Since the University of Alaska will be doing virtually all of the actual organization, I see little drain on Council staff resources. I or Clarence Pautzke will continue to serve on the steering committee and we will probably help with some administrative arrangements, much as we have in previous seminars and conferences that we and the University of Alaska have cosponsored.

I did not attend the debris conference in Honolulu last week as planned. Late breaking problems in developing material for this meeting dictated I stay home and work on them. I understand the conference was well attended, but I've heard nothing further.

STATUS OF FISHERY MANAGEMENT PLANS

1. Salmon FMP

Salmon is not on the Council's agenda for this meeting. The U.S. delegation to the U.S.-Canada Pacific Salmon Negotiations met in Seattle, November 18-20 to develop U.S. positions. The U.S. delegation was to meet alone again on December 1-2 in Vancouver and then meet December 3-15 with the Canadian side. A second round of negotiations is scheduled for January 14-28, 1985, in Oregon. The Council has therefore postponed its early 1985 meeting to February 6-8 when it will meet with the Board of Fisheries in Sitka to discuss salmon management.

2. Herring FMP

The Council will review a draft letter to the Secretary of Commerce requesting a Bering Sea herring research/data collection program. The Council has been developing its herring FMP since 1979, but placed it on hold last May until more information could be gathered.

3. King Crab FMP

King crab is not on the Council's agenda for this meeting. Secretarial review began on July 16, 1984 and a final rule for the FMP was published in the Federal Register on November 14, 1984, to be effective December 2, 1984.

4. Tanner Crab FMP

Tanner crab is not on the Council's agenda for this meeting.

The FMP's most recent amendment, #9, was partially approved by NMFS on August 24, 1984. NMFS approved the section revising MSY and ABC, "conditionally" approved broadening the Regional Director's authority to set seasons using biological, social, and economic data using rule-related notices and a 30-day comment period, and disapproved broadening the Regional Director's field order authority to make inseason adjustments. The Regional Director has been asked to clarify the "conditional" approval and provide alternative language for the disapproved section.

5. Gulf of Alaska Groundfish FMP

The Council will review groundfish stock status and set OYs for 1985. They will discuss management of 0-TALFF or 0-JVP species and make final recommendations on DAP, JVP, and TALFF for 1985.

Amendment 12, which would have banned pots in the Southeast sablefish fishery, was withdrawn by the Council in September 1984 to allow the plan team to analyze the advantages and disadvantages of pots and other gear types in this fishery.

December 7 is the deadline for proposed changes to the FMP. They will be processed with the coming annual management cycle starting in January.

6. Bering Sea/Aleutian Islands Groundfish FMP

The Council will review groundfish stock status and set TACs for 1985. They will discuss management of 0-TALFF or 0-JVP species and make final recommendations on DAP, JVP, and TALFF for 1985.

December 7 is the deadline for proposed changes to the FMP. They will be processed with the coming annual management cycle starting in January.



December 1984

**UNITED STATES DEPARTMENT OF COMMERCE**  
**National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration**  
NATIONAL MARINE FISHERIES SERVICE

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NOV 30 1984

F/NWC2:GS

Mr. Jim H. Branson  
Executive Director  
North Pacific Fishery Management Council  
P.O. Box 103136  
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Dear Jim:

Over the coming months, members of our staff will attempt to quantify the impact on the U.S. observer data base resulting from the manipulation of our observer system by segments of the Japanese fishing fleet. Our first task was to review the status of stock documents to assess the impact of potential biases in our statistics on the Japanese fisheries in developing management information on stock conditions. Our efforts to quantify the magnitude of any underestimates of total catch of targeted species or prohibited species are in the initial planning stages. As Dr. Collinsworth points out in his October 17 letter to the Council, precise estimates of these biases will be difficult to obtain. Various members of our staff will be investigating this problem in conjunction with their routine analyses of the Bering Sea and Gulf of Alaska fisheries.

Based on our review of the 1984 status of stock documents prepared by our staff for INPFC and by the Plan Teams for the Council, we have concluded that the quality and reliability of the management information contained in these documents has not been seriously impacted. This conclusion, which is contrary to Dr. Collinsworth expressed concern, is based on the fact that our NMFS directed, fishery independent resource surveys carried out in 1983 and 1984 form the basis of these assessments. The potential biases for the Japanese longline fishery should be limited to 1982 and 1983. The time frame for the Japanese landbased trawl fleet is not known. With nearly 100% coverage instituted in 1984, future problems should be greatly reduced. In general, the precision of fishery assessments are low because of the inherent variability in fish populations and the extent of measurement error in surveying fish in the ocean. Having alternative data sources for comparison is very important. However, a temporary loss of information from segments of the fisheries, while disconcerting, should not jeopardize the future of our status of stock analyses.

For the Gulf of Alaska, the Plan Team relied heavily on the preliminary results of our 1984 triennial Gulf of Alaska survey and our hydroacoustic survey of spawning pollock in Shelikof Strait. The PT assessment of sablefish for 1984 is almost entirely based on survey biomass estimates and dynamics of the stock derived independently of fishery information.



For most species in the Bering Sea and Aleutian regions, analyses of the fishery data are used to corroborate analyses of survey data. Potential biases in the fishery statistics are most critical for turbot in the Eastern Bering Sea, and POP and Atka mackerel in the Aleutian region. These stocks are fully harvested and the assessments have relied heavily on fishery data. Turbot CPUE from the Japanese landbased trawlers have been used to track annual changes in abundance, but the recommended harvest levels for 1985 are based on our current biomass estimates from our trawl surveys. In the case of Atka mackerel, the fishery is predominantly harvested by joint-venture fisheries where observer coverage has been high and reported Japanese catches relatively small. Underreporting of Atka mackerel catches would result in an underestimate of the production of this stock derived by the Stock Reduction Analysis method. The POP stock in Aleutian region is very low. The CPUE of Japanese landbased trawl fleet shows a decline from 385 kg/h in 1970 to 0.7 kg/h in 1983. Given this extremely low CPUE value for 1983, it seems unlikely that manipulation of the observer system has resulted in the wrong assessment of the condition of the POP stock. The more serious problem in this case is probably that the catch removals have been larger than reported.

Sincerely,



William Aron  
Center Director

cc: R. McVey - F/AKR  
D. Collinsworth - ADF&G, Juneau  
R. Marasco - F/NWC2  
M. Hayes - F/NWC1