

North Pacific Fishery Management Council

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NEWSLETTER

Council to Consider Heavy Agenda in March

The North Pacific Fishery Management Council will meet jointly with the Alaska Board of Fisheries at the Anchorage Westward Hilton at 9 a.m. on March 25 for a series of staff presentations, public hearings, and joint Council/Board discussions. The meeting will be largely devoted to final action on 1981 amendments to the Troll Salmon FMP and joint management of the king crab fishery. Joint sessions are scheduled for Wednesday and Thursday, March 25 and 26. The Council will meet alone on Friday the 27th and, if necessary, Saturday, the 28th.

The Scientific and Statistical Committee will meet at 9 a.m. on Tuesday, March 24, in the Council conference room. The Advisory Panel will also meet on the 24th at 9 a.m. in the Kenai/Aleutian Room of the Anchorage Westward Hilton.

April and May Meeting Schedules Altered

The Council has tentatively scheduled a meeting for April 23 and 24 in the Council conference room at the Post Office Mall. The Advisory Panel and SSC may not meet during April.

The May 28-29 Council meeting, previously planned for Kodiak, has been moved to Anchorage for budgetary reasons. Further details will be announced as they become available.

AP and SSC Appointments

The Council confirmed the appointment of Keith Specking to the Advisory Panel and Drs. John Clark and Steve Langdon to the Scientific and Statistical Committee. Specking, who served on the Panel from its beginning to October of 1979, serves as Special Assistant to the Governor. Clark is Chief Fisheries Scientist for the Alaska Department of Fish and Game, and Langdon is with the Department of Anthropology at the University of Alaska, Anchorage. The Council welcomes the expertise and Alaskan experience of these three gentlemen.

Finance Committee Issues New Advisory Panel Attendance Policy

Looking to the possibility of even more stringent budgetary limitations in FY 82, the Council's Finance Committee has suggested changes to the attendance policy for Advisory Panel members. The existing policy states that three consecutive unexcused absences warrant loss of membership. The new policy will allow AP members to attend meetings if an Advisory Panel report is required for the Council, but any member choosing not to attend when his particular expertise is not required will be excused. The Committee hopes to achieve substantial savings with the elimination of non-essential travel.

1980 Foreign Fisheries Statistics

Foreign vessels operating in the Bering Sea took 1.3 million mt of the 1.5 million mt TALFF during 1980. Pollock comprised 78% of the total catch, flounders 12%, Atka mackerel 3%, Pacific cod 2%, and all other species 5%. The 1981 Bering Sea catch through January 31 was 38,850 mt, 3% of the 1.2 million mt TALFF.

Enforcement and Surveillance

Since the December Council meeting the Coast Guard has issued eight reports of violation and two citations to six Polish vessels. Most of the infractions involved improper maintenance of daily catch logs. As of February 15 the 1981 patrol effort had logged 48,864 miles, 712 sightings, and 57 boardings.

Council Acts on Gulf of Alaska FMP

The Council unanimously approved an amended version of Option 3 for Amendment #10 to the Gulf of Alaska Groundfish FMP as its recommendation to the Secretary of Commerce for management of the 1981 fishery. The approved amendment prohibits foreign trawling in the Eastern Regulatory Area east of 140°W longitude, but allows year-round foreign trawling between 140°W and 147°W longitude with pelagic gear. Other provisions of the amendment set TALFF at 375 mt and DAH at 500 mt for Pacific Ocean perch in the Yakutat District and limit OY for sablefish to the current level. The Council also endorsed a communications system for use in resolving potential gear conflicts as an appendix to the package.

Bering Sea/Aleutian Islands Groundfish FMP

The Council approved the major part of Amendment #1 to the Bering Sea/Aleutian Islands Groundfish Fishery Management Plan which will manage the resource as a total complex. Optimum yield for groundfish will be set at a range of 1.4 to 2.0 million mt with total allowable catch of each commercial species of fish determined by formula. Release of reserves will be made on the following schedule: 40% in the fourth month; 40% in the sixth month; and 20% in the eighth month.

The Council approved new management objectives, set the fishing year on a calendar year, and redefined the Bristol Bay Pot Sanctuary, which redefined the Winter Halibut Savings Area. U.S. fishermen can trawl in the Bristol Bay Pot Sanctuary as long as the incidental catch of halibut is less than 1% of the directed catch. Year-round domestic trawling in the Winter Halibut Savings Area was approved on an experimental basis to be monitored closely by observers. The Council approved field order authority for the NMFS Regional Director to make time and/or area closures for conservation reasons and to prevent serious gear conflicts between the foreign and domestic fisheries.

The Council deferred action on the proposed closure of Areas I and II to all trawling from October 1 to May 31 in the Bering Sea until the March meeting. Representatives of the Japanese fishing industry proposed voluntary reductions of chinook catches in their high seas salmon fishery and the incidental catch in their trawl fisheries. The Council expects specific proposals from the Japanese fishing industry at the March meeting and at that time will decide if a closure is necessary.

Bering Sea Proposed Amendment #3 Goes to Public Review

The Council voted to send to public review an amendment proposal to help reduce the incidental catch of prohibited species in the Bering Sea. The package will be mailed to the public for review as soon as possible. The Plan Development Team's preferred option for handling this problem is based on conclusions contained in a report of the Prohibited Species Workgroup, "Reducing the Incidental Catch of Prohibited Species by Foreign Groundfish Fisheries in the Bering Sea," January 1981.

Council Recommends PMP Amendment to Remedy Salmon Interception Problem

The Council recommended that the National Marine Fisheries Service take steps to amend the PMP for the Bering Sea in an effort to remedy the problem of western Alaska chinook interceptions by foreign trawlers. The Bering Sea FMP and subsequent amendments have not yet been implemented. NMFS preliminary reports indicate that approximately 100,000 chinooks were intercepted by foreign trawls in the Bering Sea during 1980. Amending the PMP should offer some relief for this problem in time for the 1981 winter fishery.

Bering Sea Joint Ventures Begin

Marine Resources Company's Soviet joint venture in the eastern Bering Sea pollock fishery began on February 21. MRC reports good fishing in spite of inclement weather and looks forward to a successful operation.

KMIDC's joint venture began approximately February 15 in the Shelikof area where they have already taken 1,000 mt of groundfish.

Expanded Observer Coverage To Cost \$5 Million

The expanded observer program authorized by the American Fisheries Promotion Act will cost about \$5 million annually and employ 550 to 600 American observers, according to Dr. Richard Marasco of the Northwest and Alaska Fisheries Center. The current program, which provides about 14% overall coverage, costs \$1 million annually. The expanded program is scheduled to begin in early 1982.

Council Working on Voluntary Logbook Program

The Council gave the go-ahead to its Joint Venture Data Workgroup to institute a voluntary logbook program to gather important and needed data on groundfish from American fishermen. A trial effort asking volunteer fishermen to record fishing data will be implemented later this year. The Council hopes that the program's usefulness to fishermen will provide the incentive to contribute their efforts. Proposed statistical reporting areas will be large enough to protect specific information on favorite fishing areas.

Crab POTpourri

An ad hoc workgroup for king crab gear storage has suggested a new gear storage area in Area T north of the Bristol Bay crab grounds. The group feels that utilization of the new area will reduce fuel expense for fishermen. All other gear storage areas suggested are identical to current State regulations.

Council Adopts Draft Joint Statement of Principles for Discussion with Board of Fisheries

The Council adopted a draft Joint Statement of Principles between the Council and Board for management of domestic fisheries for discussion at the March Council/ Board meeting. The agreement, designed for joint management of the king crab fishery, will lay the groundwork for co-management of other domestic fisheries and sets forth the roles both entities will play in achieving the most effective and efficient management of selected domestic fisheries off Alaska. The draft will be mailed to the public on March 6.

NMFS Reports 1980 Japanese Salmon Catch

More than 700,000 chinooks, over 50% of western Alaskan origin, were caught in the Japanese high seas salmon gillnet fishery during 1980 according to analyses of catch and effort estimates by the National Marine Fisheries Service. The mothership fishery is authorized to gillnet for salmon under specific provisions of the International Convention for the High Seas Fisheries of the North Pacific Ocean (INPFC). The Convention, originally negotiated in 1952, was renegotiated by the United States, Canada, and Japan in 1977-78 after passage of the MFCMA. The new convention authorizes Japanese mothership gillnetting for salmon inside the U.S. FCZ in return for limitations on the mothership fishing effort beyond the U.S. 200-mile zone. A

primary purpose of the agreement is to allow Japan the opportunity to continue its traditional harvest of salmon of Asian origin while minimizing interceptions of North American salmon.

The 1980 chinook catch was an increase of 460% over 1979 levels and is the largest total chinook catch since initiation of the Convention. The 1980 mothership catch also included 2.4 million sockeyes, 3.1 million chums, 561,000 pinks, and 656,000 cohos for a total catch of 7.4 million salmon.

Council Recommends Allocation Sanctions for Serious Violations

At the recommendation of the Permit Review Committee, the Council approved a procedure for reducing allocations in lieu of permit sanctions to foreign nations committing serious violations. This procedure will be forwarded to the State Department as the Council's recommendation for handling and, hopefully, deterring repeated violations. For any violation warranting seizure of the offending ship, that foreign nation's allocation for the following year shall be reduced by the average annual catch of the type of ship committing the violation. Average annual catch figures are provided by NMFS.

Marine Mammal Permit for Japanese High Seas Salmon Gillnet Fishery

The Council will recommend that NMFS grant a permit to Japan under the Marine Mammal Protection Act to take marine mammals, primarily Dall porpoise, incidental to their salmon fishery in the U.S. FCZ. A formal hearing to consider the population status of Dall porpoise will be conducted by NOAA/NMFS in Seattle on March 5.

Marine Mammal Research Request for Proposals

The Council approved a request for proposals for a study on the compilation and evaluation of data on feeding habits and food requirements of marine mammals in the Bering Sea. The research may encompass information from English, Russian, and Japanese literature and should provide a comprehensive summary and evaluation of marine mammal data for potential application in the development of a Bering Sea ecosystem model. Proposals will be due by May 8, 1981. Please contact the Council office for further information.

New Publication Available

A new paper of interest to those involved in groundfisheries in Alaska, "The Joint Venture Fishery for Yellowfin Sole, The Bering Sea 1980: A Case Study in Fishery Development" by Barry Fisher, has recently been released. This report was sponsored by the Alaska Fisheries Development Foundation and the North Pacific Fishery Management Council. Copies may be obtained through AFDF at 814 West Second Avenue, Anchorage, AK 99501.