

North Pacific Fishery Management Council

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

605 West 4th Avenue
Anchorage, Alaska 99501



Mailing Address: P.O. Box 103136
Anchorage, Alaska 99510

Telephone: (907) 271-2809
FAX: (907) 271-2817

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COUNCIL APPROVES BYCATCH PROPOSALS FOR ANALYSIS

During a teleconference on July 3, 1991, members of the North Pacific Fishery Management Council approved bycatch proposals for analysis. A draft analysis will be available for Council review at their September 23-27, 1991, meeting before being sent out for public comment. A final decision will be scheduled for December 2-6 and those proposals approved will be implemented sometime in 1992.

A total of twenty-six proposals were considered; however, limitations on staff and analysis time required the Council to choose top priority items, deferring others until next year's amendment cycle. Those proposals chosen for immediate analysis include:

1. Enhance the NMFS Regional Director's "hotspot" authority in the Bering Sea/Aleutian Islands, and extend it to the Gulf of Alaska.
2. Improve the current bycatch incentive program, including the addition of the midwater pollock fishery to address compliance problems with the revised pelagic gear definition, and salmon bycatch in the Gulf of Alaska rockfish and Bering Sea and Aleutians midwater pollock fisheries.
3. Delay the Gulf of Alaska rockfish opening date to July 1 or July 15.
4. Delay all groundfish fishery opening dates for the Bering Sea/Aleutian Islands and Gulf of Alaska to January 15, February 1, or July 15. (Including an option to maintain the status quo of January 1 for fixed gear fisheries.)
5. Establish a separate halibut PSC limit for longliners within the overall halibut PSC for the Bering Sea/Aleutian Islands. Options for the longline apportionment include 500 mt, 1,000 mt, and 1,500 mt.
6. Prohibit all trawling for species in the "Other Fishery" category when the bycatch allowance is reached and assign a separate bycatch allowance for Pacific cod and bottom trawl pollock.

In addition, the Council requested the Alaska Department of Fish and Game to commence analysis of a proposal to close all trawling east of 140°W longitude off Southeast Alaska.

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Several of the proposals, for example numbers 1-4, help address the salmon bycatch issue. Analysts were instructed to use a range from 0.004 salmon/mt groundfish up to the groundfish fleet's current average in analyzing potential extension of bycatch incentive programs and hotspot authority to cover salmon bycatch. The Alaska Department of Fish and Game was also requested to continue its analysis of salmon bycatch data to help shape time/area closures and bycatch limits for consideration of the Bycatch Committee when it meets next by teleconference, at 2:00 p.m. ADT, on July 25. Please contact the Council office for further details on the teleconference.

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