

FINAL Pacific Northwest Crab Industry Advisory Committee (PNCIAC)

Meeting Minutes and Recommendations

5.22.2024 9-11 am AKT

ATTENDEES

Committee Members: Sean Dwyer (Chair), Lance Farr (Vice Chair), Elizabeth Reed, Steve Minor, Dean Fasnacht, Jake Jacobsen, Gary Painter, Mark Casto, Edward Poulsen, Jamie Goen (Secretary, non-voting)

(Committee members not in attendance: Brett Reasor, Mike Simpson)

Quorum = greater than or equal to 50% (>=6)

Others in Attendance:

Council staff - Sarah Marrinan

Other Analysts for Program Review: Mike Downs, Darrell Brannan

ADFG staff – Kendall Henry, Karla Bush

NOAA Fisheries –Alicia Miller, Caleb Taylor

Mateo Paz-Seldon

Scott Campbell Jr

AGENDA

1. BSAI Crab Rationalization Program Review
2. Other business

MINUTES

Chairman Sean Dwyer called the meeting to order.

1. BSAI Crab Rationalization Program Review

The BSAI crab review program is on the agenda for the June Council meeting. While it is not an action document, PNCIAC or the public could bring forward elements to consider. Proposals for changes to the program would take on their own life for a discussion paper or analysis but could be initiated during this agenda item. PNCIAC can provide comments or recommendations at the Council meeting as an advisory body.

PNCIAC received a high-level overview of the program review document from Council analysts. This is the required 7-year review of the program. It also serves as the allocation review. The review grew larger and more comprehensive than was originally envisioned in the workplan stage. However, there are many important dimensions to the understanding this LAPP and the impacts it has had in light of the changing stock conditions and other external factors that warrant additional consideration. Additionally, feedback during the workplan stage guided additional content and direction, including an expansion of social and community information.

The analyst provided some of the select findings of the review including issues of concern. Many of the challenges facing the fishery currently are the result of stock status conditions and low allowable harvest levels. The program provides several benefits, including allowing a fishery to be open in times of low quota when it likely wouldn't be otherwise.

The issue of share-matching and arbitration continues to be talked about. Harvesters are concerned that processors may not be financially stable. Processors are more concerned with arbitration.

Discussed ROFO. Low interest loans for crew to buy quota. New table on costs that harvesters and processors share. Concern that these costs must be incurred even if fishery is not opened due to timing of requirements. Crew wages ongoing concern by Council. Crew pay tends to track with ex-vessel value.

Buyback loans update shows interest higher than principle in some fisheries. Cost recovery fee does not cover costs of the program in recent years. NMFS must cover those costs. Data quality improved with the program compared to before. However, aging computer structure in NMFS has caused some challenges, largely within RAM. Barriers to entry remain a concern. Sideboards in GOA have been effective but might be a concern given Bering Sea crab status.

Regionalization has been effective, especially at protecting the community on St. Paul Island. CDQ groups now hold or are associated with people holding more quota than all other Alaska owners combined and utilizing community quota allocations to increase holdings. Eligible crab communities and their holdings are included in the document.

Question of whether the document breaks down information on harvesters by independent harvester, CDQ-owned, and processor-owned vessels and fishing quota. Noted NMFS Science Center working on information that should be available soon. Program review does get at CDQ and tribal but not independent harvester and processor owned.

Question about community protection tools and how the program is performing among the National Standards in general? Response that the document makes some connections to National Standards but could do a better job in the future.

Clarification for the document that emergency relief from regionalization has only been used for golden king crab fisheries not for the other Bering Sea crab fisheries.

Comment that participants in the fishery are changing and might consider raising ownership caps on the vessel and processing side to improve efficiency and reduce fallout where industry can't afford to participate. Facility use caps were recently raised to allow more flexibility for processing and custom processing. Document discusses these issues and notes vessel caps don't apply when in a cooperative (can stack on one vessel). On the processor side, noted custom processing exempt from use caps. Welcome solutions coming from industry if the program isn't addressing all the components needing to be addressed.

NMFS has approved FMP Amendments 54/55. The regulations will be implemented soon to increase flexibility for c-shares and facility use caps.

Comment that more flexibility in the system is needed.

General comment that PNCIAC supports the exercise of a program review and appreciates staff's work. PNCIAC thinks the program is working overall and continues to work even in this dire situation. Flexibility in the program has allowed the industry to survive and the recent additional flexibility through Amendment 54/55 helps.

Comment that there is not a community member representative on PNCIAC.

MOTION (Sean/Elizabeth): PNCIAC supports the BSAI Crab Rationalization Program and the benefits and flexibility it allows for involved harvesters, processors, and communities. The review is an important part of this process and PNCIAC appreciates the staff's help.

PASSED Unanimously

2. Other business

Noted there are some processor seats where the representatives have not been attending recent meetings. Term is every 2 years and the December Council meeting is where flag any new members or changes. Encouraged to follow-up with those inactive members to see if they intend to be active and remain. Like other committees, the Council would approve changes when the terms were up. Everyone's terms are on the same timeline/2-year cycle.

Discussed whether PNCIAC should present at the upcoming Council meeting or just have the report available. Support for presenting.

Council request for committees to establish or review Terms of Reference. Staff will check whether PNCIAC should consider this at a future PNCIAC meeting.

ADJOURN 10:14 am AKT