

## MEETING SUMMARY

Joint Meeting  
North Pacific Fishery Management Council  
and  
Alaska Board of Fisheries  
February 3, 1998  
Anchorage Hilton Hotel  
Anchorage, Alaska

The North Pacific Fishery Management Council (Council) and the Alaska Board of Fisheries (Board) met in joint session on February 3, 1998, to receive staff reports on groundfish, scallop, halibut, and Bering Sea/Aleutian Islands (BSAI) crab fisheries, and on salmon bycatch in the BSAI. The Council and Board also reviewed a protocol for development of local area management plans that each approved at their respective meetings.

Board members present were: Dr. John White (Chair), Dan Coffey (Vice Chair), Ed Dersham, Larry Engel, Grant Miller, and Virgil Umphenour.

Council members present were: Rick Lauber (Chair), Wally Pereyra (Vice Chair), Dennis Austin, Linda Behnken, David Benton, Dave Fluharty, Dave Hanson, Joe Kyle, Bob Mace, Kevin O'Leary, RADM Cross/Capt. Vince O'Shea, Steve Pennoyer, and Robin Samuelsen.

Following is a summary of agenda items discussed.

### **BERING SEA/ALEUTIAN ISLANDS CRAB**

Peggy Murphy, Crab Plan Team chair, provided an overview of the Team's written report. The Team is currently drafting an amendment to the crab fishery management plan (FMP) to redefine overfishing in order to comply with the Magnuson-Stevens Fishery Conservation and Management Act amendments, as well as other "housekeeping" amendments to the plan. Ms. Murphy noted that the overfishing amendment will be a difficult task because there are 18 stocks of BSAI king and Tanner crabs and overfishing definitions will differ according to the amount and type of data available.

The Team has determined that there is sufficient scientific data to define two stocks of *C. bairdi* in the Bering Sea: a Pribilof Islands stock and a Bristol Bay stock. The Team will submit the proposal for stock separation in the FMP overfishing amendment. In addition, the Team plans to recommend splitting the prohibited species catch (PSC) for Bering Sea *C. bairdi* among the two stocks and redefine the bycatch zones to correspond with stock distribution.

### **PNCIAC**

Garry Loncon, chairman of the Pacific Northwest Crab Industry Advisory Committee (PNCIAC) reported to the Council that industry is concerned about the *bairdi* resource and the PNCIAC looks forward to reviewing any harvest strategy developed by ADF&G. PNCIAC also requested that they receive any draft amendments proposed for the Crab FMP, particularly any regarding overfishing definitions and the assessment report for essential fish habitat. The industry is also concerned over the status of the *opilio* stock, specifically the failure of the recruitment of small crab for the past two years even though the current ongoing fishery seems to be healthy. The Committee recommended a review of the current PSC limits and bycatch for *opilio*. The Committee

will meet again in early May to take up issues regarding the results of the March meeting of the Board, as well as other issues of concern.

During public comment, Tom Casey (Alaska Fishery Conservation Group) requested that industry representatives be allowed to attend a staff meeting between state and federal crab scientists when they meet to iron out differences in stock assessment procedures.

### Discussion

Captain O'Shea expressed his to the Board for their cooperation and rapid response to safety concerns in the red king crab fishery expressed by the Coast Guard.

With regard to Mr. Casey's comments regarding differing stock assessment procedures, both Steve Pennoyer and Dave Benton agreed that this is a technical dispute and that state and federal scientists will be meeting to discuss the issue. With regard to Mr. Casey's recommendation that the Council's Crab Rebuilding Committee reconvene, Council member Dave Fluharty, Committee Chairman, said that he would wait until hearing the results of the meeting among the scientists before making any decision. Council member Robin Samuelsen recommended that the Board and Council develop research projects to help resolve issues of statistical differences.

## **SCALLOP FISHERIES**

Staff presentations were provided by Dave Witherell (Council staff) and Jeff Barnhardt (Alaska statewide scallop coordinator).

In December 1997, the Council approved Amendment 3 to the Scallop FMP. The amendment, when approved by the Secretary of Commerce, will delegate all management, with the exception of limited access measures, of the scallop fisheries in Alaska to the State. The Council also has directed staff to begin preparing a limited access program for the fishery.

Jim Chase, *F/V Forum Star*, and Teresa Kandianis, *F/V Provider* provided public comments on this agenda item.

### Discussion

Board member Larry Engel advised the Council that the State of Alaska is willing to undertake the management of the scallop fisheries, however there is still some concern regarding the differences between the State's current moratorium on entry to the scallop fisheries and the Council's moratorium. Earl Krygier (ADF&G) advised Board and Council members that the State will accept the delegation with the intent to resolve the moratorium issue and that there should be no problem with managing the fisheries in the meantime.

## **HALIBUT**

Local Area Management Plans/Sitka Plan. During their meeting in early January, the Council and Board Committee developed a draft protocol for development of local area fishery management plans. Council and Board members discussed the necessity to work closely on local area management plans. Jane DiCosimo (Council staff) presented a status report on the Sitka local area management plan that was scheduled for final action by the Council later in the week. Two changes had been made by the Sitka Advisory Committee which had not yet been formally endorsed by the Board. However, the joint Council/Board committee had reviewed the changes at their January meeting and there were no objections to the changes at that time.

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Halibut GHLS/Committee. The Council and Board received an overview of management measures used to control recreational halibut fisheries off Oregon and Washington from Joe Scordino of the National Marine Fisheries Service, Northwest Region, and a report from Doug Vincent-Lang, ADF&G, on the State's progress in developing a logbook program for the charterboat industry.

Public comment on halibut issues was provided by the following: Eric Jordan (Sitka Task Force), Mel Erickson (Kenai River Professional Guide Assn.), Mike Bethers (Alaska Sportfish Council), Nancy Hillstrand (Homer), Tim Evers (Deep Creek Charter Assn.); John Yarbor (Charter operator), Gail Vick (Afognak Native Corporation), and Duncan Fields (Old Harbor Native Corp.).

### **Discussion**

The Board and Council discussed the time frame for submission and approval of local area management plan and amended the draft schedule accordingly. It was recommended that agency representatives, particularly those from ADF&G, law enforcement, and Coast Guard, be involved in developing the plans at the community level. After discussion, the joint protocol was amended slightly, and subsequently approved by both bodies at their meetings later in the week. (see Appendix I to these minutes for the final, approved protocol).

## **GROUND FISH ISSUES**

The Board and Council received reports on the State waters Pacific cod fishery, crab pot and trawl gear fisheries interactions, and progress on implementing improved retention and utilization regulations for state fisheries. Staff reported that the GHL for Pacific cod was not reached for any of the areas except for the Alaska Peninsula. NMFS reported that they will increase the federal GOA Pacific cod TAC if the Board determines that the Kodiak area did not meet its GHL in 1997.

Public comments on groundfish issues were received from Chris Blackburn (Alaska Groundfish Data Bank), Michael Brooks (Millennium Seafood Solutions), Glenn Carroll (fisherman), and Duncan Fields (Old Harbor Native Corporation).

### **Discussion**

There was some discussion of the state Pacific cod fishery and the state's management regime that specifies that the GHL will increase by a certain percentage if the previous year's GHL is reached. NMFS reported that any unused State Pacific cod GHL should be released to the federal fishery by October if possible. One area of concern was the timing for release of federal TAC held in reserve until it has been determined whether or not the state fisheries will reach the GHL. ADF&G staff indicated that every effort will be made to make that determination in a timely manner so that NMFS can release any unneeded catch to the federal fisheries.

Earl Krygier reported on efforts within industry to resolve gear conflict issues in the *opilio* fishery during the pollock 'A' season, in the State water Pacific cod pot fishery, and the pot storage area after the end of the Pribilof/St. Mathew's blue and red king crab fishery. The industry committee suggested that industry continue seeking resolution of conflicts through communication on the grounds, reevaluating the existing pot storage area, and increasing gear visibility. They also suggested the Board and Council send a jointly-signed letter to appropriate sectors of the industry encouraging industry resolution of these issues. Board and Council members approved a draft letter to be finalized and signed by the Board and Council chairmen, to be sent to the industry as recommended by the industry committee. The final letter is included as Appendix II to these minutes.

## **SALMON BYCATCH - BERING SEA ALEUTIAN ISLANDS**

The Board and Council received reports on bycatch management measures and estimation procedures, as well as the status of federal salmon retention regulations. Nancy Hillstrand from Homer, Alaska commented on salmon bycatch issues.

### **Discussion**

Discussion centered around the recommendation of NMFS to rescind the Council's regulation requiring that salmon bycatch in other fisheries be retained until counted by an observer. NMFS pointed out that the original program was instituted partially in response to an industry request to support the Salmon Research Foundation which assessed fees on the industry based on salmon bycatch. However, the Foundation is no longer functioning and NMFS is not using the data collected under this regulation, and other means of assessing the bycatch are used. The Alaska Board of Fisheries had instituted a similar regulation in order to have complementary regulations in state and federal waters. Board members indicated they are not inclined to rescind the state requirement at this time. Council members were scheduled to take up the issue during their plenary session later in the week.

### **MARINE MAMMAL REPORT**

Dr. Andrew Trites of the North Pacific Universities Marine Mammal Research Consortium reported on research relating to Steller sea lions and their diets.

Before adjourning the joint session, Board and Council members agreed to convene the joint committee in July to review any new local area management plans and other issues of mutual interest.