

# North Pacific Fishery Management Council

Agenda Item 7  
May 1978

Harold E. Lokken, Chairman  
Jim H. Branson, Executive Director

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Mr. Terry Leitzell  
Assistant Administrator for Fisheries  
National Marine Fisheries Service  
3300 Whitehaven Street, Page Building 2  
Washington, D.C. 20235

Dear Terry,

I would like to make a preliminary response to your letter of May 1st to Harold Lokken on the Fishery Management Plan for the Gulf of Alaska Groundfish Fishery During 1978. Some of the questions you raise in that letter I can answer now, based on previous Council discussion and action. Others, including comments on the proposed regulations, will have to wait for Council action at the May 25th and 26th meeting.

## DELEGATION OF AUTHORITY

The section of the FMP giving the Regional Director authority to implement many of the management measures in the plan is a provision that will be found in all of the Council's management plans. Their intent was not to necessarily limit that authority to the Regional Director, but to make sure that he did have that authority when a timely response was required to facilitate management of the resource. One of the most prevailing fears among the fishing industry and the state regulatory agencies, is that Federal response to required management actions will not be timely enough to control changes in resource availability or harvesting capability. Prior to statehood, this, along with fish traps, was the greatest criticism leveled at Federal management of fishery resources in Alaska. Whether those fears are well founded or not, they are present. The subject of field control and rapid response to management needs has been a topic of conversation throughout the development of this management plan, as well as the others under development by the Council. I cannot stress too highly the importance the Council and its advisors place on this concept of field regulation and the need for the Regional Director to have the authority to implement management measures in as timely a manner as is humanly possible.

Prior to Statehood, when the Federal government was managing all of the fishery resources in Alaska, including salmon, which requires almost instance response to resource fluctuations and harvest capability changes, field personnel could institute closures and openings through the Regional

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Director. He could place the necessary notification in the Federal Register by wire to effect changes within a 24 to 48 hour period. That same capability will be necessary in some cases in the future. Although the salmon fishery is where this capability is most needed, I believe that we will find it necessary in some of the shellfish fisheries and perhaps even in the offshore finfish fisheries in the future.

#### ENFORCEMENT AGREEMENT WITH THE STATE OF ALASKA

By copy of this letter, I am asking the Alaska Department of Fish and Game to expand on their capabilities to receive and monitor DAH, FAC, OY and reserve data as necessary to implement the FMP. I will forward that material to you when available.

The current data gathering system used by the State of Alaska, primarily through fish tickets and landing monitoring is certainly the best that is currently available. The Council, through a contract with the Department, is aiding in upgrading their computer system to make this information available on a more timely basis than before. This system is being carefully integrated with ongoing National Marine Fisheries Service data gathering, both from the Northwest and Alaska Fisheries Center and from the Regional Office. The Council does not believe that any alternative is available now or in the near future that could supplant or improve on the State system.

#### OBSERVERS

You raise three problems relating to the requirement for domestic observers. The first two are adequately answered, at least for 1978 and 1979, by Council Contract No. 77-5 with the Alaska Department of Fish and Game "An Observer Program for the Domestic Groundfish Fishery in the Gulf of Alaska" (copy enclosed). This contract provides for an observer program to be administered by the Alaska Department of Fish and Game at a cost of \$50,000 a year. Observers are currently active on U.S. groundfish vessels working out of Kodiak. There was some delay in this program this spring because of problems of liability insurance to cover observers. That problem has been resolved by purchase of additional insurance coverage for observers by the State of Alaska and the program is now proceeding satisfactorily. To date U.S. fishermen have welcomed observers, in fact, they were instrumental in developing this program through their membership on the Council's Advisory Panel and by testimony at Council meetings and public hearings.

The second problem, that of requiring domestic operators to pay for accommodations of observers, is also answered in the contract. The observers will pay the boat operators for board and room while aboard. It is not expected that the program will require any direct expenditures by U.S. fishermen.

I hope this response will answer at least part of the problems you identify in your letter. This will be an agenda item for the next Council meeting and I hope to be able to respond more fully at that time.

Sincerely,

Jim H. Branson  
Executive Director

Enclosures

cc: Don Collinsworth  
Kim White

*Council #507*