

North Pacific Fishery Management Council

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NEWSLETTER

March Council Meeting Held in Anchorage

The North Pacific Fishery Management Council met on March 29-April 1, 1983 at the Anchorage Westward Hilton Hotel and in the Old Federal Building. The Council heard technical reports on the status of the king and Tanner crab fisheries, met with the Alaska Board of Fisheries on shellfish and salmon management, and took final action on a proposed moratorium on new entrants into the Alaskan halibut fishery.

Council to Meet in Anchorage in May

The Council will meet next on May 25 and 26 in the Old Federal Building, 605 West Fourth Avenue, Anchorage. The Council's Scientific and Statistical Committee and Advisory Panel will meet on May 23 and 24 in the same location. The main topics up for discussion will include groundfish fishery management in the Gulf of Alaska and Bering Sea/Aleutian Islands area, further consideration of the Bering/Chukchi Sea Herring Plan, and a review of king and Tanner crab management decisions made by the Alaska Board of Fisheries in early April. A detailed agenda will be sent to the public about two weeks before the meeting.

Three-year Halibut Moratorium Recommended

The Council voted 8 to 2 to recommend to the Secretary of Commerce that a three-year moratorium on new entrants into the North Pacific halibut fishery be implemented prior to the start of this halibut season on June 15. The moratorium will permit only those who made legal commercial landings of halibut during any of the seasons from 1978 through 1982 to fish during the 1983, 1984 or 1985 seasons.

For those fishermen who made landings during the 1978 through 1982 base period with a vessel five net tons or over, they must, during the term of the moratorium, use that same vessel or any other that was used to land halibut during the base period. Those who have acquired replacement vessels since they qualified during the base period may use those vessels during the moratorium provided the vessel was acquired on or before March 31, 1983.

Replacing a vessel over five net tons that is sunk, destroyed or otherwise rendered unusable is allowed provided the replacement vessel's net tonnage is not more than 10% greater than the vessel it replaces. These replacement restrictions do not apply to boats less than five net tons; however, a person

who fished a vessel under five net tons during the base period could not use a vessel five net tons or over during the moratorium unless that vessel had been used to land halibut during the base period or was acquired on or before March 31, 1983.

If a person eligible to fish during the moratorium is not able to do so due to injury, disease, age or death, then he or his closest relative may designate in writing a substitute to fish his vessel. The substitute may be an individual who would not otherwise qualify to fish during the moratorium. The written designation of substitution must state the time period it is in effect and must be in possession of the substitute at all times that person is fishing for halibut.

The moratorium does not apply to those Alaskan rural villagers west of 156 degrees west longitude who are in the initial stages of a halibut developmental fishery in the Bering Sea north of 56 degrees north latitude.

Fishermen should be aware that there are no guarantees that participation during the three-year moratorium period will be translated into eligibility criteria under any halibut limited entry system that may be implemented in the future.

Council Recommends Further Negotiations on U.S./Canada Salmon Treaty

The Council voted unanimously to urge the State Department to make an effort to reconcile remaining differences between the U.S. and Canada concerning the proposed salmon treaty. The Council reaffirmed their view that a treaty between Canada and the United States is essential if salmon resources of the two countries are to be saved from destruction. The Council stressed the necessity to move as quickly as possible because of the impending opening of the 1983 salmon season. Following further negotiations, the Council will express their views on the draft agreement, probably at their May meeting in Anchorage. The Council took no action on salmon harvest guidelines, the chinook salmon OY range will remain the same as it was in 1982, 243,000 to 272,000 chinooks with a harvest goal of 255,500 fish.

Update For 1983 Chinook Winter Troll Fishery

The winter troll fishery for chinook salmon commenced on October 1, 1982. Through March 14, 1983 about 22,000 chinook have been recorded on fish tickets. ADF&G projects the total winter fishery (through April 14) catch will be about 25,000 to 30,000 chinook, substantially above the historical level of 10,000 to 15,000. Apparent high availability levels and higher effort stimulated by high prices and good weather, were cited as factors contributing to the higher figures.

Salmon Prohibited Species Amendment Sent Out to Public Review

The Council recommended sending out for public review Amendment #8 to the Bering Sea Groundfish Plan which will specify the numbers of chinook and other salmon that can be taken incidentally to foreign trawling before sanctions are imposed on the foreign fleets. Representatives from Western Alaska and from the Japanese trawl fleet agreed that the limits for 1984 should be 35,750 chinook salmon and 38,441 total salmon. In 1985 the limits would be 26,000

chinooks and 27,957 total salmon. Compared to the incidental catches averaged for 1977-80, this is a reduction of 52% in 1984 and 65% in 1985. This scheduled reduction is part of a long-term commitment by the Council to reduce the incidental catch by foreign trawlers of chinook salmon bound for Western Alaska streams. Final action on Amendment #8 will be taken in May.

Joint Ventures Successful for Pollock in Shelikof Straits

Seven joint venture companies using up to 31 U.S. trawlers delivering to 18 foreign processing vessels caught 84,102 mt, almost all pollock, in the Shelikof Straits by March 12, 1983. Four of the companies were Japanese and three were from the Republic of Korea. At the time of the Council meeting, several companies were still working and pollock catches are expected to surpass 100,000 mt. This compares to a total groundfish catch by joint ventures last year in the Gulf of Alaska of 74,503 mt, mainly pollock. In the Bering Sea and Aleutians, only the Soviet/Marine Resources Company joint venture has operated so far this year. Their catch using four U.S. trawlers was about 3,000 mt of yellowfin sole by March 23 from the Cape Sarichef area.

Joint Venture and Foreign Permit Applications

The Council reviewed several applications for joint ventures and foreign permits and took the following actions:

A joint venture permit application for the longline/processor RYUSHO MARU NO. 18 to receive 400 mt of sablefish from 10 to 20 U.S. longline vessels in the West Yakutat area during August, 1983 was approved by the Council. To reduce the potential for gear conflicts, Japanese longliners will cease fishing activities in the area during this joint venture.

The Council also approved an application for the Japanese trawler, KYOWA MARU NO. 11, to add the Gulf of Alaska to its bottomfish permit which previously covered the Bering Sea and Aleutian Islands only.

A permit application from Spain requesting 8,000 mt Pacific cod and 4,000 mt pollock in joint ventures in the Gulf of Alaska for 1983 was not approved because the application did not include sufficient information.

The Council approved a joint venture application submitted by the U.S.S.R., in conjunction with Marine Resources Company, for six large stern trawlers KONTAIKA, SVETLAJA, MYS EGOVA, TIGIL, TURKUL, and KORENGA to receive 10,000 mt herring and 1,000 mt other species from U.S. vessels in the Bering Sea and Aleutian Islands area beginning next September. Actual performance of the vessels is contingent on the fish being available, which can happen only if the in-shore herring fishery failed for some reason and a surplus was declared under the provisions of the Council's herring plan. Even then the joint venture could only harvest that portion of the offshore surplus not required by U.S. processors.

The Council reviewed a Portugese request for an allocation of 1,500 mt of Pacific cod and 500 mt of pollock in the Gulf of Alaska. The Council voted to approve this permit only if Portugal commits in writing to buy a major tonnage of Pacific cod from U.S. shore-based processors at an acceptable market price.

Council Reviews Limited Entry Reports

Dr. Robert Stokes of Northwest Resources Analysis gave the Council an overview of the points covered in his report to the Council, "Limited Entry in the Pacific Halibut Fishery: The Individual Quota Option." On the recommendation of the Scientific and Statistical Committee, the Council requested Dr. Stokes to submit an appendix to the economic analysis section of the report before it is approved for distribution to the public. The Council staff was instructed to prepare a summarized edition of the report to facilitate review by everyone. The summary and full report should be available for public distribution in approximately six weeks.

The Council also reviewed the report, "Fishermen's Perceptions of Halibut Limited Entry," submitted by Marc L. Miller, Steve Langdon, and Penelope Cordes. The Council approved release of this document to the public after minor editorial additions.

Alaska Department of Fish & Game Reports on Tanner Crab

Tanner crab catches totaled approximately 2.9 million pounds in Southeastern Alaska and 72,000 pounds in the Yakutat fishery during the 1981/82 season. The harvest was a record high for the Southeastern area and a record low for the Yakutat area. During the 1982/83 fishing season the Southeastern fishery produced 962,000 pounds of Tanner crab. This fishery experienced a dramatic increase in fishing effort and an extremely short season. The 1982/83 Yakutat season remains open with very poor catches being reported.

The total Prince William Sound Tanner crab catch for the 1981/82 season was 2.9 million pounds; the price averaged \$1.45/lb. Twenty-nine vessels participated in the fishery. The harvest was up slightly from the previous season but down significantly from the 14-year average of 5.2 million pounds. The 1982/83 season opened by regulation on November 15, 1982. Through March 9, 1.1 million pounds have been harvested. Recruitment to the fishery is generally poor and this situation is likely to continue through the 1983/84 season.

The 1981/82 Tanner crab harvest in Cook Inlet, 2.4 million pounds, was 44% of the 14-year average. Vessel effort decreased during the 1981/82 season to a four-year low of 51 boats. Ten processors participated in the fishery; price paid to the fishermen varied from \$1.00 to \$1.70 per pound. Catch per unit of effort declined from 13.8 crabs per pot during the 1980/81 season to 9.8 crabs per pot during the 1981/82 season. For the Southern district, the 1982/83 season ran from December 1 to December 29, 1982, with a harvest of 0.6 million pounds. To date 1.0 million pounds from the Kamishak-Barren Island districts and 0.5 million pounds for the Outer and Eastern districts have been landed.

Council Approves Herring FMP Revision

The Council accepted two revisions to the Bering/Chukchi Sea Herring FMP recommended by the Herring Workgroup. The revisions exempt the Nelson Island herring biomass from being used in determining the acceptable biological catch and eliminate reference to mandatory logbooks. The Council retained the provision that OY pertain only to the FCZ. The final FMP draft will be presented to the Council at the May meeting for submission to the Secretary of Commerce.

Foreign Fisheries Update

By March 12 foreign fleets working the Gulf of Alaska had caught 7,463 mt of groundfish or about 3 percent of the TALFF for the Gulf. About 95 percent of the catch was Pacific cod. Of the 230,504 mt TALFF, only 78,719 mt or 34 percent has been allocated to individual foreign nations so far this year.

In the Bering Sea and Aleutians area, foreign fisheries had caught 100,657 mt by March 12. This catch was 79.5 percent pollock, 13.5 percent flatfish, and 4.5 percent Pacific cod. The catch represents 16.3 percent of the current allocations and 7.4 percent of the current TALFF for the area.

The number of foreign vessels operating off Alaska was 120 on March 22 which is about normal for this time of year. They include 106 from Japan, 12 from Korea, and two from the U.S.S.R.

USCG Enforcement Activities

Since the December Council meeting the Coast Guard has issued 16 reports of violations and 17 citations to 12 Japanese, nine Korean, two Soviet, and two Taiwanese vessels, and seized two Taiwanese vessels for MFCMA infractions.

On December 20, 1982, the Coast Guard Cutter CONFIDENCE seized the Taiwanese stern trawlers HIGHLY NO. 301 and HIGHLY NO. 302 for fishing in a year-round closed area and logging discrepancies. Both vessels were initially sighted with gear in the water in the longline sanctuary south of Sequam Island in the Aleutians. Upon boarding, Coast Guard officers found fresh, unprocessed fish on both vessels with no log entries made for the days fished since December 15.

New Council Document on Marine Mammals Available

Recently-completed Council Document #19, "Feeding Habits, Food Requirements and Status of Bering Sea Marine Mammals," is now available in limited quantities. An annotated bibliography for the report is also available (Document #19a).