

North Pacific Fishery

Management Council

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NEWSLETTER

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SUMMARY OF THE NORTH PACIFIC COUNCIL EIGHTH PLENARY SESSION:

The North Pacific Fishery Management Council met with its Scientific and Statistical Committee and Advisory Panel on June 23, 24 in Anchorage. Highlights of the meeting follow.

- The Council approved for printing and distribution to the public drafts of the "Fishery Management Plan for Alaska Tanner Crab" and "Fishery Management Plan for the Gulf of Alaska Groundfish Fishery During 1978." Attached to the plans when they are mailed will be changes suggested during this Council session by the Scientific and Statistical Committee, Advisory Panel, and Council. It is expected that the plans will be in the mail by mid-July.
- Dates and locations for public hearings on the two plans were set. The public is invited to testify on the plans, related environmental impact statements, and/or joint ventures. Testimony may be either written or oral. See back page for hearing dates.
- The Council recommended for funding three research projects at a total cost of \$228,500 for one year. Projects recommended in priority order are: (1) development of a fisheries information system, to be headed by the Alaska Department of Fish and Game, (2) investigation of the origin of sockeye and coho salmon caught in the high seas Japanese land-based fisheries, to be conducted by the University of Washington Fisheries Research Institute, and (3) an observer program for American-caught groundfish in the Gulf of Alaska to be headed by the NMFS Northwest and Alaska Fisheries Center. The Council made its recommendations on the basis of information presented by the SSC and the Council's ad hoc finance committee.
- The Council learned from Jack Lechner, Alaska Department of Fish and Game, Kodiak, that the domestic harvest of tanner crab in the eastern Bering Sea this year included more than 50 million pounds of Chionocetes bairdi. The harvest doubled last year's U.S. catch and was very near what the industry had predicted it would be.

- The Council recommended that the 1978 foreign allowable catch of eastern Bering Sea herring be reduced (a) to account for an unexpected U.S. catch in 1977 (3,000 tons in addition to the domestic subsistence harvest of 1,000 metric tons), and (b) to accommodate a rapidly accelerating U.S. fishery expected in 1978.
- NMFS reported on foreign fishing activity indicating that the 639 vessels operating off Alaska during June is an increase of 302 from last month and a decrease of 120 vessels from June 1976. The large increase from May was due to the arrival of the Japanese high seas gillnet fleet.

Only 20 Soviet fishing vessels were reported off Alaska during June. This is 68 fewer vessels than reported in June 1976.

NMFS reported that while the Japanese have taken two-thirds of their sablefish quota off southeast Alaska, of the total foreign quota of 10,150 metric tons for the rest of the Gulf of Alaska about 3,200 metric tons has been taken.

- Admiral J.B. Hayes reported for the U.S. Coast Guard that no significant violations had occurred off Alaska during June. It was noted that an inordinate amount of time had been spent on specialized fisheries such as the herring fishery in Bristol Bay and that this effort diluted Coast Guard patrol and surveillance activities. The Coast Guard presented information prepared with NMFS outlining in detail ramifications of joint ventures.
- The Council considered the draft fee schedule for 1978 prepared by NMFS. The Council agreed that fees should be based on current ex-vessel prices. The Council also agreed that it had not had enough review time to make any more meaningful recommendations.
- Five foreign permit applications were reviewed and acted upon:

Poland: M/S Sougeuta, disapproval recommended as the vessel is registered in France and there are not quotas for France off Alaska. The application was also found to be incomplete.

M/S Halniak, disapproval recommended as application was incomplete and was also more appropriate for review by the Pacific Council.

Japan: Ise Maru #8 independent snailpot boat was recommended for approval. (The Council recommended approval of this vessel during the May Council meeting as a replacement for the damaged Ryoyoshi Maru #18, but the application had not been received at that time.)

Kotoku Maru, refrigerator/transport vessel recommended for approval with the stipulation that the vessel receive fish from Japanese vessels only.

Kohoku Maru #7, snailpot vessel, recommended approval.

SUMMARY OF THE FISHERY MANAGEMENT PLAN FOR TANNER CRAB OFF ALASKA

This plan represents the initial steps in the development of a comprehensive management program for tanner crab in Alaskan waters in response to requirements of the Fisheries Conservation and Management Act of 1976 (U.S. Public Law 94-265). The necessity for having a management plan in force by March 1978 that permits continuation of the fishery without disruption to the fishery industry mandates that the existing tested, and familiar management measures and mechanisms be adopted.

The plan proposes that the Secretary of Commerce adopt the relevant Alaska statutes and regulations currently in force. These statutes and regulations require registration, designate zones where fishing is permitted, establish limitation on sex and size of tanner crab which may be retained, limit the type and amount of gear which may be employed, and other mechanisms to facilitate the administration and enforcement of the necessary and appropriate measures to manage tanner crab.

- The plan outlines conservation and management measures necessary to achieve optimal yield while perpetuating sufficient brood stock to maintain the resource at a level capable of sustaining the optimal yield. These include a system of fishing seasons, area closures, fishing gear regulations, restrictions on sex of crab harvested, harvest levels, and minimum size limits.
- Mechanisms included in the plan to implement management measures and to facilitate enforcement must be handled by indirect methods, such as a landing/law approach, area landing/loading laws, area registration and inspection, and a description and marking of tanner crab gear.
- A section on management measures and rational for foreign fishing details foreign fishery conditions and regulations and statistical reporting requirements. It closely follows the 1977 Preliminary Fishery Management Plan for the Eastern Bering Sea King and Tanner Crab. It identifies, however, a portion of the Bering Sea where foreign fisheries may take only the tanner crab species Chionoecetes opilio. Crab fishing is prohibited south of 58 N. latitude and east of 164 W. longitude. The allocation to foreign pot fisheries directed at tanner crab in 1978 will be set at the 1977 level of 27,550,000 pounds (12,500 metric tons).
- The major Alaskan tanner crab fisheries are located around the Gulf of Alaska rim and from southeastern Alaska westward to the Bering Sea. Target species in all major areas is the Chionoecetes bairdi. Alaska's tanner crab resources are generally judged to be in healthy condition and will support an Acceptable Biological Catch (ABC) of 158.8 - 187.8 million pounds (72,030 - 85,190 metric tons) of C. bairdi and 333 million pounds (151,050 metric tons) of C. opilio.
 - . from the "Executive Summary of the Fishery Management Plan for Tanner Crab Off Alaska" prepared by Jerry Reeves, NMFS; Guy Thornberg, Rod Kaiser, and Don Collinsworth, ADF&G

MEETING DATES:

The Council decided not to meet in July. The next Council meeting will be August 25, 26 in Kodiak at the Elks' Lodge. Early travel arrangements are recommended.

Public hearings and locations have been determined for hearings on the tanner crab and Gulf of Alaska groundfish fishery management plans. Testimony, either oral or written, will be accepted as well on draft EIS statements pertinent to the plans and on the problem of foreign-U.S. joint fishing ventures. The joint venture portion of the hearings is being conducted at the request and in cooperation with NMFS.

Hearing dates and locations are:

August 3, Wednesday	Petersburg
August 5, 6 Friday and Saturday	Seattle
August 22, Monday	Anchorage
August 23, Tuesday	Sand Point
August 24, Wednesday	Kodiak

All hearings will begin at 8:30 a.m. in locations to be announced. Anyone wishing to testify may contact the North Pacific Council office in Anchorage by mail or phone or may sign-up at the hearings. The two management plans will be distributed in mid-July to about 750 individuals and businesses throughout the U.S. If you do not receive a copy and would like to review the plans, copies will be available at the North Pacific Council office, NMFS in Juneau, and the Northwest and Alaska Fisheries Center in Seattle. Plans will also be mailed to the following Alaskan community libraries: Bethel, Cordova, Dillingham, Homer, Fairbanks, Juneau, Kodiak, Sitka, Ketchikan, Kotzebue, Anchorage, Petersburg, Sand Point, Seward, Soldotna, Unalaska, Valdez, and Wrangell.

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