

DRAFT MINUTES

SCIENTIFIC & STATISTICAL COMMITTEE

July 22-23, 1980

Anchorage, Alaska

The SSC meeting was called to order at 10:00 a.m. on Tuesday, July on Tuesday, July 22nd, 1980 by Chairman Steve Pennoyer. The following members were in attendance at the meeting:

- Steve Pennoyer, Chairman
- Don Rosenberg, Vice Chairman
- John Burns
- Larry Hreha
- Edward Miles
- H.A. Larkins
- George Rogers
- Jerry McCrary (alternate for Jack Lechner)

The meeting was reconvened on Wednesday, July 23rd, 1980 by Vice Chairman, Don Rosenberg. Present on the second day were:

- Don Rosenberg, Vice Chairman
- Larry Hreha
- John Burns
- Edward Miles
- H.A. Larkins
- George Rogers
- Jerry McCrary (alternate for Jack Lechner)

KING CRAB FMP (G-1)

G-2 Bering Sea/Aleutian Island Groundfish FMP

The SSC reviewed three items with regard to the Bering Sea/Aleutian Island Groundfish FMP: 1) the proposed amendments as dated July, 1980, 2) the DAH estimates as presented in the June 13th table by the NMFS and 3) a memo of July 21, 1980 regarding the incidental catch of salmon in the Bering Sea. Neither the incidental species proposals nor the supplementary EIS were available for our review.

Proposed Amendments

The SSC once again wishes to express concern regarding the review process. Our subgroup met with the team on June 24 to review the proposed final draft of the amendments. Based upon that draft, the subgroup developed its recommendation. At this meeting, we were presented with a differend version of the amendment package which not only makes modification as our subgroup proposed, but also other minor changes. Upon further review, we found that team members present were unable to comment on this draft because even they had not seen it in its final form.

The SSC, PDT and its subgroup did take the time to clarify the changes to the July, 1980 amendment package and are able to recommend to the Council that it be released for public review.

DAH Estimates

As is noted in more detail in our review of the Gulf of Alaska amendments (G-4), the DAH June 13th tables do not represent a critical review of DAH. These numbers are represented in the June 13th tables are included in the update of Annex II to the FMP. The SSC express is the same concern regarding critical analysis of actual performance and p projected performance of the industry and reserves its comments on these until a later review.

Incidental Salmon Catch

The SSC reviewed the answer provided to Mr. Branson questions

regarding the incidental catch of Salmon in the Bering Sea. These data and the issue were discussed extensively by the SSC with staff members from ADF&G and representatives of the Western Alaska Salmon Fishermen. It was noted that the trends in the river fishery were up but that the analysis had not been made on a river by river bases. There is some concern regarding the status of specific river systems.

The July 21st answers indicate that for the 1979 fishing year, that the incidental caught salmon in the Bering Sea was approximately 107,000 fish of which approximately 100,000 were king salmon. It should be noted that after taking into consideration natural mortality that this incidental catch could represent 15% to 30% of the subsistence and commercial harvest of the AYK region.

This new data is felt to show an increase in the catch of salmon over the previous year. It is noted that the increase could result from either increased abundance of salmon or an increase caused by difference fishing strategies or a combination of the two. It was also noted that there was also a potential problem of incidental catches of these same salmon resources in the Northern Gulf of Alaska, the impact of which is unknown.

The SSC considers that this issue of the incidental salmon catch is important. As in the past, the SSC requests that the NMFS continue and intensify its analysis of the foreign observer data base. Additionally, we have included in our recommendation of research projects studies of stream of origin, and age, and sex analysis on these trawl caught fish.

Additionally, we recommend that the PDT take under consideration development of possible amendments using all old and new data in order

to reduce this problem. It was also noted that the forth coming incidental species management proposal may help to solve this problem.

We additionally note that the salmon biologist assigned to the PDT has not met officially with the team. We recommend that he be included in team meetings and that the team start to include consideration of this problem.

GULF OF ALASKA GROUND FISH FMP (G-4)

The SSC reviewed three items regarding the possible amendments to the Gulf of Alaska Groundfish FMP, that of 1) an amendment to restrict the catch of Pacific Ocean Perch by foreign trawl fleets, 2) an amendment to close an area in the Kodiak region to foreign trawlers during king crab season, and 3) the estimates of DAH for 1981 season. The committee did not receive any amendments or new information regarding incidental species management or joint venture time/area closures criteria.

Pacific Ocean Perch Amendment

The SSC reviewed the proposed amendment with members of the PDT and received testimony from representatives of the foreign fishery industry which would be impacted by this admendment. The amendment would limit POP catch by foreign trawler to an incidental catch only in the Eastern Regulatory Area and would set the incidental rate at 5% of the total groundfish catch for the fishing year. The Council should note that the current OY for POP in the Eastern Regulatory Area is 14,400 mt and after the July reserve release, 245 mt are allocated for DAH and 14,155 mt for

TALFF. The proposed amendment would reduce the catch by the foreign fleet to no more than 3,250 mt during the fishing year.

It should be noted that the incidental harvest rate of 5% was based upon very limited data. The PDT feeling that this harvest rate is sufficient to allow the foreign fishing to continue.

The SSC concurs that POP in the Gulf of Alaska are of a level of abundance which is substantially below that required to produce MSY. We have no evidence that the current OY, which is estimated to be half of current EY, is so high as to be causing a further decline in abundance; however, neither is there any evidence that rebuilding is occurring.

With specific regard to the Eastern Regulatory Area, the SSC believes that any adjustment in the POP harvest levels should be addressed through an amendment to OY rather than designating the species for incidental catch only. Such an adjustment could be justified for socio-economic reasons, that of faster rebuilding of the depressed stocks.

For example, the OY in Eastern Regulatory Area might be reduced in 1981 from 14,400 to 7,200 mt, or from one-half to one-quarter of the current EY. Although we cannot say that halving the OY will double the rebuilding rate, we would expect some increase to occur. From the 7,200 mt OY would be subtracted the 4,700 mt estimate of DAH leaving a TALFF of 2,500 mt, or about 4½% of the total groundfish TALFF for the area (2,500 divided by 56,000).

Proposed Foreign Trawl Closure Around Kodiak

This amendment proposed changes in the time/area closure around the

Kodiak Island. This proposal resulted from changes in patterns of domestic fishing and potential gear conflicts with foreign fishermen. The SSC after discussing the proposed closure with foreign industry representatives has some concern regarding the impact of the proposal on the foreign harvest. The proposed closure would impact certain areas where substantial portions of foreign quotas have been taken in recent years. We did not make any analysis of time of closure with time of harvest. The Council may wish to consider further analysis of those particular areas (south of areas 2 and 3 of the current area closed). Since the proposed amendment is for the purpose of reducing potential gear conflicts and not for the purpose of conservation the SSC has no recommendations.

Estimates for DAH

The SSC reviewed the estimates for DAH as presented in the tables provided by the NMFS dated June 13, 1980. We also reviewed the 1980 modification to DAH as a result of the July release of reserves. The Council should note that the estimates of DAH as provided in the June 13th document are only of summation of individual inputs to a NMFS survey. There has been no analysis of these inputs nor adjustments for actual past performance. The figure represented for 1980 as presented in the report of July 22, 1980 do include a rather intensive analysis and projection of performance.

In this regard, the simple summation indicates that the industry will harvest 78,683 mt in 1980, where the more rigerous analysis reduces

that performance to some 28,166 mt.

The SSC could not accept the simple summation as the best available estimates of DAH.

We did note that the domestic harvest has been increasing at a rapid rate but the actual rate or change in rate is unknown or unanalyzed at this time. The SSC, therefore, recommends that the DAH estimates which were projected for 1980 in the plan be used for the 1981 fishing season. It should be noted that these estimates provided for a total DAH of approximately 50,000 mt and that when combined with the 20% reserve of 74,000 mt the total (124,000 mt) would be very close to the projection in the June 13th survey.

The SSC does wish to express concern regarding the speed of which the reserves are being released. We understand that this process can become bogged down and recommend that the Council take action to insure that said releases are accomplished in as fast a time as possible.

Additionally, we believe that before the 1982 fishing season, that the method for projecting DAH should be greatly improved. With the development of the domestic industry, much greater care must be taken in reviewing the actual fleet performance species by species and regulatory area by regulatory area. It was pointed out to the SSC, that; for example, DAH and reserves are being established under our current methodology for certain species in certain areas where no actual or very limited actual performance by the domestic industry is taking place. In another instance, the method has resulted in a 1981 estimated DAH which is below the projected 1981 harvest. The SSC could see no way to solve this problem for the 1981 fishing year but we do recommend a much more detailed analysis be made before the 1982 fishing year.

CONTRACTS (E)

Item I - Walrus/Clam contract (80-3) (Item D)

The SSC reviewed the quarterly report of contract 80-3 (Walrus/Clam). Based upon this report, the committee finds that the contractor is on schedule and is making sufficient progress toward the contract objective. We did note that the report does indicate the contractor problem in collecting actual walrus stomach. The contractor is making sufficient plans to insure that the collection will occur.

The SSC took note of the contractor problem regarding rising operational costs. We believe that the full 12 months of data should be collected and therefore, recommend that the contract be increased the amount necessary to cover these increased operational costs.

Item II - Domestic Groundfish Observer Program (77-5)

The SSC reviewed the final report on contract 77-5 (Domestic Groundfish Observer Program - Gulf of Alaska). We noted that this contract had been extended to include the Bering Sea/Aleutian Island Area and that this final report only covered the Gulf of Alaska portion of the contract. We also reviewed Mr. Barfin's letter of July 7 which reviewed the draft report. The SSC has no major problems with this report and recommends acceptance by the Council. We did request that the contractor append to the report the estimates of total halibut catch by statistical area in order for that data to be available to the Council.

Item III - Herring/Capelin Stocks Assessment (78-5)

The SSC reviewed the final report on contract 78-5 (Herring/Capelin Stock Assessment) and the report of our herring subgroup. The SSC recommends acceptance of this report. It was noted that the report does make recommendation for further work and therefore, have included their recommendation in our consideration of FY 81 research program.

Item IV - Micro-Wire Tag Recovery Program (79-3)

The SSC received the revised final report on contract 79-3 (Micro-Wire Tag Recovery Program). Neither the SSC or its subgroup had time at this meeting to carry out a review. The report has been assigned to our Salmon subgroup for review and we will be prepared to make a recommendation at the next Council meeting.

OTHER BUSINESS

Draft Scope of Work - Feeding Habits and Food Requirements of Marine Mammals in the Bering Sea

The SSC reviewed our members (Mr. Burns) review and draft scope of work for the Council's proposed study of the full utilization and trophic relationships of Marine Mammals in the Bering Sea. The SSC concurs with Mr. Burns modified scope of work and has included this proposed study as now described in our list of proposed research projects for consideration in FY 81.

Bering Sea Herring Research/ Experimental Production Project

The SSC reviewed a letter submitted by Marine Resources Company, (July 18, 1980) pertaining to herring research, which could be conducted from vessels engaged in joint ventures production fishery. The proposal was further elaborated on by Dr. Wally T. Pereyra.

The SSC recognizes the need for additional scientific data on herring, particularly as it describes population dynamics and pelagic phases of their life cycle. The SSC endorses the utilization of "platforms of opportunity," engaged in basic research or production fishery. In the latter instance, we recognize the possible significance of biases associated with sampling.

We did not address the issues relating to allowing or encouraging a production fishery for herring during autumn - early winter, justified in part on the basis of research which could be accomplished during production fishery. However, if a production fishery is allowed and opportunity to accommodate a research effort is present, the research should be conducted.

The SSC had several questions regarding future herring research programs of the NMFS utilizing the research vessel MILLER FREEMAN. These questions could not be answered.

Recommendation on Replacement for Bert Larkins

The SSC agreed that our recommendation for a replacement for Mr. Larkins be considered at our next meeting.

The SSC does wish to recognize the valuable contributions that Mr. Larkins has made to the SSC deliberations and are sorry to have leaving our group.

KING CRAB PLAN (G-1)

The SSC met with the King Crab PDT on Tuesday, July 22nd. The SSC subgroup on king crab had met with the PDT in Juneau on June 19th and 20th. Their report served as the basis for our review.

The subgroup and the committee both applauded the innovative approach taken by the team on their plan draft. Considering the new area being explored in a framework plan, we felt the team had covered most of the essential element very well.

The committee felt that some reordering and redrafting were necessary particularly in:

1. The definition and measuring of a framework plan including mechanics of implementation.
2. The MSY-OY-ABC-EAC sections to clarify their relationships.
3. The statement of objectives. It was noted that the team has not received much input on appropriate objectives for this plan, particularly in the area of socio-regulations.
4. Reworking the options section to clarify how they relate to the proposed ABC-EAC framework and the implementation of management regulations.

I should emphasize that none of the above changes are so substantial or complex as to require new data, new research or other outside input. They may take some time. Aside from this, the SSC would feel comfortable with the PDT making suggested the changes and sending the draft out to public review without sending it back to the committee.