

Public Testimony

Agenda Item C-5, Sablefish Management

Raymond Campbell, Kodiak. Fishermen shouldn't be punished because they didn't fish for blackcod this year because of the oil spill. He is a serious fisherman and has been for a long time in several fisheries. Surveys done in the past did not include crew members, processors, etc. If an ITQ system is implemented, he would like to see non-transferable shares. Also would like to see blackcod made a super-exclusive fishery; if a person competes in blackcod, they should not be able to fish in other fisheries.

Eric Olsen, FVOA. They want to have a viable fishery with a future. They not looking for a "freebie." Many are in the blackcod fishery because they couldn't get into the other limited access fisheries - salmon, herring, etc. They favor a limited access system that would be very restrictive, reducing number of vessels to a maximum of 324. They propose the following criteria: one year of participation between 1984-88 and with a harvest of at least 50,000 lbs for vessels over 50' and 10,000 lbs for vessels under 50', and must have participated in 1989. Any vessel that did not fish blackcod between 1984 and 88 and didn't catch over 50,000 lbs must not serious about fishing blackcod. They have also proposed in the past concurrent openings in all areas; with the fishery starting later, like June 1 when they think quality is better. If the Council can't get the number of vessels down to 324, then they would be opposed to limiting access.

Per Odegaard, FVOA. Favors license limitation because it's a simple system and easy to understand. ITQs are fairly complicated with a fair amount of fine tuning required. As a group, they are concerned that factory longliners receive a higher ex-vessel price than longliners and are in a position to buy ITQs at a higher rate and since they have extensive foreign investment, they could "re-foreignize" the fishery.

Jessie Nelson, NPFA, Homer. In favor of individual fully-transferable quotas. Ideally, they would prefer open access, but fleet cannot keep expanding. They recommend that the original issuance of ITQs should be split, 50% to boat owner and 50% to permit holder; after that would just go to the permit holder. Each person should be limited to the amount of ITQ they can possess. There is a great fear of corporations buying up large shares of quota. Original ITQs should be issued be based on participation in any one of the past 5 years; ITQ units should be kept small so they're easier to transfer. They have also discussed the idea that a share of the TAC should be kept aside for small boats and should not be leasable.

John Melchior, Washington State Chef's Assn. Believes there's a strong market for fresh sablefish on a year-around basis. Supports the ITQ system so that fish can be available all year.

Robert Smith, F/V THOR. After everything he's heard in AP and in the Council meeting, he's changed his mind from supporting a strict license limitation system to an IFQ system. He would like to see a model developed to take into account a person's prior participation in the fishery and would like to see the Council move ahead as quickly and decisively as possible, and if they aren't going to do anything, they should say so now. He also pointed out that making any serious decision in April when they are just beginning to get into the fisheries, etc., is not a good idea.

Mark Lundsten, Seattle. IFQs are the fairest and most equitable way to deal with the problem. A license limitation plan will put additional effort on the grounds. But, halibut and blackcod are not separate fisheries; halibut should be dealt with at the same time using the same criteria as for sablefish. He agrees that the fairest way is to take a 5-year record and use a model. Suggested the Council consider three kinds of shares: industrial - catcher boats - small boats, and a five-year test period. Transferability should be given to three-year veterans of the fishery only, and a cap on catcher boat and small boat shares; industrial boats should have full ITQ. Share should be leasable only for one year in five. There doesn't need to be any more studies; industry was given notice in 1985 that participation after that date might not count.

Dennis Hicks, Sitka. The fishery is a mess the way it is now; the worst part is the wanton waste of the resource. Overcapitalization is irreversible. There are only two ways to get a handle on it: strict license limitation or an IFQ program. He thinks the Council should go with an IFQ system for sablefish and halibut. The Council needs to address the problems of too many shares in too few hands and highgrading.

Paul Clampitt, F/V MAJESTIC. Thinks license limitation is way of leveling the playing field; if you add some gear limitations it would solve some of the problems with dead loss and gear on the grounds. If the number of vessels is brought down to 300 or so boats, it might lengthen the season and improve safety. One fundamental problem with ITQs is that they give fish away.

Jack Crowley, FVOA. Favors license limitation, but thinks system should include the 1989 boats.

Bill Rotecki, Ketchikan. Strongly favors some kind of ITQ system. With that you can buy a small portion and work your way into the system incrementally. The only system that will address the bycatch problems is an ITQ system.

Anton Bowers, Sitka. He fears foreign investors could gain a large share of the quota under an ITQ system. Initial shares should be an average of the years 1984-89 to give advantage to those who've been in fishery a more than just a couple of years. There is no need for a buy-back program; everyone was warned 5 years ago that limited access was coming.

Jack Knutsen, FVOA. The staff's ITQ and license limitation systems are too liberal on size upgrades. Suggests freezing at a 10 ft. upgrade. Also recommended no consideration for 1989 boats who participated in oil spill cleanup. Opposes setting aside license or allocations for coastal communities. If there is some percentage set aside for coastal communities, should be restricted to only be used by their boats, not saleable or leasable to an outsider. Favors years of 1984-86 for qualification for license. Thinks 324 boats is way too liberal; industry has had plenty of notice that they may not be included if they participated after 1985. Also thinks there should be separate licenses for Gulf and Bering Sea/Aleutians. Prefers non-leasable and non-transferable, but saleable. Has decided that IFQs are the way to go although he at first preferred license limitation.

Pete Knutsen, FVOA. Also somewhat of a convert to an IFQ system. If a workable license limitation plan could be instituted, would still favor it, but seriously questions whether that can be done. Favors IFQs based on participation. Asked Council to make some decision now, even if it is to say they are not going to do anything.

Charles Christensen, PVOA. Encouraged Council to put resource first. Favors transferable IFQs limitation on ownership of quotas. Sees benefits for communities -- longer working time; savings on fuel, etc., and greater revenue. Doesn't think highgrading is a problem. Suggested that the staff have some involvement by industry in analysis between now and the April meeting. Staff working on the analysis are non-fishermen; they don't have the insight on how this would apply to fishermen. Industry participation would also eliminate a lot of speculation on how things are going to work.

Robert Wurm, Kodiak. Prefers status quo. The Council has traditional management tools available to correct some of the problems in the industry; some are already included in the current amendment cycle. The observer program should facilitate an incentive to clean up fisheries, document gear loss, waste, and gear conflicts. Asked Council to proceed very cautiously; he thinks they are getting ahead of themselves on this issue. Alaska Dragger's Association supports their position.

Linda Kozak, KLVOA. Supports open access fishery; feels there are problems with the alternatives being addressed. License limitation does not appear to address the problems; if license limitation is imposed in the sablefish fishery, then it's only a matter of time until it's in all the groundfish fisheries. Feels license limitation will lock boats in a fishery and cause more problems than the status quo. With the observer program coming on line a lot of information will be forthcoming that may help determine the right system to be used. Traditional management methods should be researched and used.

Al Peeler, PVOA. Would like to see a more rational management system. Favors IQs; should be some limitation on transferability to avoid too many shares in too few hands. 1985-89 should be base years for participation. Also, some consideration should be made for hired skippers so they won't be left out, a 50-50 split of the IFQ would be equitable. Would like a system that would keep the price of the license or IFQ down so he would have a chance of buying in as an individual.

Nick Delaney, Kodiak. Believes that if the Council moves forward with limited entry it could be the biggest fiasco they have dealt with. Favors free enterprise--open access. Thinks the development of such a huge undertaking as limited access for blackcod and then the 20 other federal fisheries is an impossible task.

Gary Painter, Oregon. Prefers status quo. Doesn't think there's that much wrong with the current system. IF the Council has to implement a limited access system, it should be for all groundfish fisheries.

Wally Pererva, ProFish Int'l. Very concerned about negative impacts of a limitation on sablefish without addressing all the fisheries simultaneously to avoid the problem of excessive cross-over. Supports license limitation or IFQ at this time since the Council is not currently addressing all fisheries. Personally prefers IFQs, but his greatest concern is about controlling rapid growth in the sablefish fishery. It's important for the Council to make a decision on a final alternative at this meeting; to delay further only means additional effort may enter the fishery.

John Crowley, FVOA. Agrees with Eric Olsen's testimony on behalf of FVOA. Should be a cap on share quotas so that no vessel can have more than a certain number of pounds. Personally favors license limitation system.

Bob Trumble, IPHC. Decisions the Council will make on sablefish will affect the halibut fishery in the future. Recommended the Council implement the same system for halibut as they do for sablefish. The IPHC position is to favor the IFQ system. They believe that it provides the most opportunity to solve most of the problems in the two fisheries.

Bruce Jackson, DSFU. Any program should have as its primary consideration resource conservation. He would prefer to be given the right to buy into a fishery rather than the current open access system. Prefers license limitation. Licenses should be size exclusive and not transferable. Quota system would be most fair if based on an average of all five years, 1984-89. No corporation should be able to own excessive shares.

Jerry Nelson, Baranof Fisheries. His boats were eliminated from the Gulf by Amendment 14; Council should review what's happened in the fishery since 1984-85 before making any decision. Council was told Amendment 14 would eliminate all the same problems limited access is supposed to solve. Just the opposite has happened, fishery participation has expanded, etc. Urged the Council not to do anything hastily and to implement any system in a fair and equitable manner. Supports a limited entry program based on IFQs that would sincerely solve these problems. If any quota system is developed, pot boats still active in the fishery should be able to re-enter with hooks if they desire. Thinks they're owed that because the Amendment 14 didn't solve the problem by eliminating pot fishing. Also, one reason some didn't fish in 1989 was because they were refitting their pot vessels to fish in a fishery they had been pushed out of.

John Bruce, DSFU. Whatever system the Council chooses, he urged that some provision be developed to give credit and a means for entry for people who have been in the fishery as crew members, skippers, etc.

Chuck Kekoni, Eagle River. If the Council goes with a limited access system, the only one he believes would work is IFQs. He also believes it's the only one to address biological problems in the longer term under a multi-species fishery. All fisheries will have to be limited access to avoid cross-over and other problems. All license holders should be eligible with their quota determined by years of participation; quotas should be transferable.

Steve Hughes, MidWater Trawlers. Sablefish constitutes only a small percentage of the species the Council manages. What is needed is a 3-5 year cooling-off period. Suggested a moratorium on entry during this period which would allow fishermen to pursue fisheries during natural cycles. Limited access on sablefish alone without a moratorium on other fisheries isn't feasible.

Ted Smits/Konrad Uri, NPFVOA. Confirmed their support for the status quo - no limited access. They don't know enough about what kind of system is being considered. Called for a moratorium on all fisheries strictly for a 3-year period, to be reviewed once every 12 months, to determine whether there's a need to continue study of limited access. No new entries with a cut-off of 1/90. When the moratorium sunsets, either have a better system or revert back to old system.

James Phillips, F/V NANCY K. Urged Council to consider IFQs first; otherwise suggested the status quo with a cut-off date for participation. The Council should use traditional management tools. He doesn't favor a buy-back program.

Agenda C-6, Halibut Management

William Nicholson, Bristol Bay Halibut Co-op. Their group proposed the small fishery in the Bristol Bay closed nursery area because they feel they have a socioeconomic need to diversify into other fisheries within their geographic area. They do not believe that this small fishery will present a conservation problem for the halibut stocks.

Bert Larkins (AFTA)/Bob Trumble (IPHC). AFTA had seminars some time ago on bycatch avoidance. They've now asked IPHC staff to work with them to design a specific halibut avoidance/survival program, which is still in the preliminary stage. IPHC has developed a series of programs they think have promise in reducing bycatch or bycatch mortality rates. Some may be more suited for trawlers, but they hope to apply these techniques for the whole industry. Tentatively plan to do a study of bycatch by net sizes or types.

Jon Zuck, Bering Sea Fishermen's Assn. Residents of these Bristol Bay communities have few market options available to them. In 1988 the interest was there, they just didn't have the opportunity to deliver to the market. In 1989, during the oil spill clean-up, oil barges got pulled to work the oil spill impacting local areas because they didn't have fuel for their boats in time for the fishery.

Anton Bowers, Sitka. The Council should not reschedule consideration of halibut limited access--it should be dealt with at the same time as sablefish. Requested that September openings be moved back to late August because of inclement weather around the equinox period of September. Opposes any halibut retention by trawlers.

Jon Rowley, F.I.S.H. Wants halibut decisions to proceed on schedule.

Ray Campbell, Kodiak. Crew members aren't getting anything out of an IQ system. If there is a moratorium on halibut then they won't have any more options to enter the fisheries. Natives have political clout for disadvantaged communities, crew members don't.

Agenda C-8, Inshore/Offshore Allocation

Steve Hughes, Ted Smits, Doug Gordon, Chris Blackburn, Paul MacGregor, John Iani, Vince Curry. They all agree with the AP recommendation that the Council assign a high priority to this issue and direct staff proceed on the analysis. This is not the time to debate the issues, but to analyze. Iani - this is an important issue and PSPA stands ready to provide whatever information they can. Under Alternative 3 they would like to have a definition of operational areas included.

Agenda D-1(a), Groundfish Amendment Proposals

Chris Blackburn, Alaska Groundfish Data Bank. The preseason halibut bycatch rates which will be used until observer data are available are the best available at this time; they would ask that should there be a closure on the first or second quarter, every effort be made to evaluate the inseason data. They support a formal system for exploratory fisheries, so everyone knows what is involved, and to ensure viable data collection.

Steve Hughes, MidWater Trawlers. The two main premises for Amendment 12a were that bycatch regulations should be uniform for user groups and that PSC caps should be allowed to change in proportion to changes in the biomass; the final regulations incorporate neither one of those concepts. They strongly urge the Council to ensure they are included in the re-draft of Amendment 12a.

Linda Kozak, KLVOA. They agree with the SSC recommendation with regard to extending Amendment 12a. KLVOA's highest priority would be bycatch proposals in the Gulf of Alaska. Other proposals which they feel are important include #26 ("housekeeping" proposals), which should be handled as a medium-to-high priority; #9, #12, #15 dealing with blackcod (these are assuming open access), also are an important priority; and #27, biodegradable panels on pots, is also extremely important and should be a high priority.

In the interest of time and to allow some members of the public to catch planes, the Chairman provided time for peoples to comment on a variety of agenda items, therefore the following comments will not be categorized by agenda item.

George Anderson, regarding item C-9, priority research. The Council is deluged with many immediate decisions at the moment; research requires the same urgency. Urged the Council to adopt the following priorities: (1) gathering observer data; management of that data; and the implementation of data to assist in immediate or inseason management of fisheries; (2) full examination of critical species under Council purview: pollock, crab, rockfish; (3) continuation of current surveys, but they should be enhanced by any methods available; adopt a policy utilizing any means possible to gather research data, via scientific or exploratory fisheries; industry is willing to help. Also, the Council should demand that this resource been given adequate federal funding.

Billy Lincoln, Sr., Tooksook Bay, item D-1 herring bycatch proposal. Herring has always come back in abundance, and harvest time was 5 days, even with conservation in mind, but around 1960 large numbers did not come back; they were being harvested in high seas. In the 1980s the stocks started to decrease again; they think it is because of interception in the high seas and trawling. In order for herring to recover, there has to be something done to stop the trawling; if no action is taken, this resource will be extinguished. Herring is one of the most important aspects of their subsistence and their people will be hurt if the stocks are not protected.

James Sipary w/representatives of Toksook Bay, Tununak, Nightmute, Newtok, and Chefornak, regarding D-1, herring bycatch. Codfish is completely wiped out in the Nelson Island area because of overfishing by the Japanese in the 1940s, and now herring is declining with no evidence of spawning. Their commercial fishery is in danger of closing in Nelson Island area. Requested that interceptions by foreign fisheries be stopped and that there be more restrictions on domestic trawlers in coastal waters.

Mark Charlie, Nelson Island herring fisherman. In the past several years they have seen a dramatic decline in herring stocks and attribute it to bycatch by domestic trawlers and on the high seas. Participation in the herring fishery is very important to their people as there are not many other jobs. Urged Council to put a cap on the bycatch of herring or a limitation on trawling in areas where herring are present.

David Bill, Thomas Jumbo, Peter John, Qaluyaat Fishermen's Assn., regarding D-1, Herring Bycatch. Herring stocks have declined even though an amount has been set aside for subsistence fishing; their income has declined substantially in the last several years. If the commercial herring fishery for Nelson Island is hurt, their livelihood is threatened. Asked Council to close the EEZ for any kind of bycatch to save their stocks.

Howard Amos, Mekoryuk City Council, Nunivak Island, regarding D-1, herring bycatch. Since their commercial fishery opened in 1985 they have seen a steady decline of herring stocks and they attribute it to interception by international and domestic trawling fleets. Asked the Council to cut out bycatch; if it continues at the present rate, herring stocks will be depleted. Saltwater cod has also disappeared from his region.

Tommy Hooper, Tununak, regarding D-1, Herring bycatch. Subsistence is important where they live; they depend on the water and land to feed their families. Herring stocks are declining in the Nelson Island area, and they attribute the decline to the trawlers.

Dick Lincoln, Tununak, regarding D-1, Herring bycatch. They must catch enough herring to last the family the whole year; it is their main source of food. He has heard that large boats using big nets on the high seas are intercepting their herring. He has also heard that domestic trawlers are catching and discarding them because of they don't have markets; that's like taking their food and dumping it. Asked the Council to stop bycatch and dumping of herring.

Charles Moses, Toksook Bay, regarding D-1, herring bycatch. He has businesses which draw from four villages which depend on the herring fisheries. If herring is depleted, it will affect all facets of their lives.

Joe Paniyak, Chevak and Hooper Bay, regarding D-1, Herring Bycatch. People of their village are very concerned about herring bycatch by trawlers and interceptions on the high seas. Chevak and Hooper Bay don't have salmon or other money-making fisheries. They need to have herring to survive.

Dave Fraser, Cape Flattery Fisheries. Regarding agenda items C-7, C-8, D-1. The Council should proceed as quickly as possible on limited access schedules and institute a moratorium, but keep it simple - all those who have participated should be included. Asked the Council to review the emergency rule to handle roe stripping-he's not sure the final rule developed follows Council intent because it requires discard of the most valuable part of fish.

Wally Pererya, ProFish Int'l, regarding D-1, herring bycatch. He is sympathetic to the situation the herring fishermen face in Western Alaska and assured the Council that his company does not purposely catch herring and that they take special measures to avoid them. He are trying to improve their efforts to minimize bycatch of herring.

Regarding agenda items C-7 & C-8, he agreed with Dave Fraser that the Council needs to take action on the inshore offshore issue, a plan for future groundfish management, and a cap on further entry in both harvesting and processing sectors. Strongly supports the AP's recommendation on a 4-year moratorium; at-sea processing vessels should be included, but supports exemption of boats under 40 ft.

Harold Sparck, Yukon-Kuskokwim Fishery Task Force, regarding D-1, herring bycatch. In November ADF&G announced that the commercial herring fisheries around Nelson Island and Nunivak are projected to close in 1990; if enough stock doesn't show up, subsistence fisheries will also have to close. He also supports AP recommendation on the salmon fishery management plan.

Doug Gordon, AHSFA, regarding agenda item C-7, future management planning. supports the AP's recommendation to implement a moratorium as a precursor to a final regime. Opposes any special allocation to Iceland.

Paul Fuhs, Unalaska, regarding agenda item C-8, inshore-offshore allocation. Shorebased plants are the backbone of their community; the problem is not just inshore vs offshore, it's overcapitalization. Also concerned about compressed seasons.

Ted Smits, NPFVOA, regarding agenda item D-3, Crab. They have some concerns with the State observer program, including (1) crab observers are not trained to do biological observations, thus there is a possibility of a crab vessel having two or more observers on board; (2) there only about 20 catcher-processors involved in the crab fisheries while there are many more catcher vessels; any observer program for collection of biological data would have to be applied to the whole fleet, not just a small segment, and the cost would have to be shared; (3) observer observations reported are available to the operator of the vessel, but not the owner. The operator could do something illegal and the owner would not be aware. They feel that a good observer program should be based on the

current needs of biological information and require participation by all fishermen, preferably funded by the government; if not, the cost should be shared by the whole industry, No single vessel should be expected to carry more than one observer at any one time.

Bob Trumble, IPHC, regarding agenda D-2, groundfish amendment package. Bycatch management - IPHC has two goals - to lower bycatch, and to minimize disruption to groundfish fisheries. IPHC believes that incentives is one of the best ways to achieve these goals. Requested that an incentive program be included in the analysis, especially for the BSA, but GOA also. Zone management is ineffective. Thinks analysis of new bycatch measures should commence now, not continue Amendment 12a for two or three years.

Ralph Hoard, HANA. Agenda items C-6/7, halibut and future fishery management. Disagree with the comments of the organization F.I.S.H. with regard to the "glut" of halibut at certain times of year. Their members have taken measures to adapt to the halibut seasons and halibut quality is the best it has been in industry. Although the industry isn't proud of the "derby-style" openings, they are part of the business and must be dealt with. Markets prefer the frozen product in many instances. Halibut bycatch is a much more serious problem to them.

Anton Bowers, Sitka. Agenda item C-6, Halibut Mgmt Planning. With regard to any IFQ system, he assumes it will be area-specific. Asked that the Council attempt to implement a management program in 1991 along with blackcod. He wants to be sure that any IFQ system prohibits control of shares by foreign interests. Feels person with the permit should get the IFQ. Qualification should include landings from 84-89, paralleling the blackcod system.

Mark Lundsten, F/V MASONIC. Agenda item C-6, halibut. Qualifying years should be the same for both halibut and blackcod. The bycatch issue for halibut is definitely a problem. Waste of legal size fish would be solved if both fisheries are treated the same; but still need a bycatch committee to monitor the fisheries and deal with any problems.

Arni Thomson, ACC. Agenda item D-1(a), amendment proposals. Supports analysis of the proposals as prioritized by the PAAG, AP and SSC. Regarding proposal #34, modification of Amendment 12a, supports the SSC recommendation to take steps during this amendment cycle to continue for another year in case development of a new system is delayed. Bairdi caps in Zones 1 and 2 could be reduced according to data collected in the 1988 survey. Crab observer program - ACC supports continuation of State program with some improvements in training requirements. Also recommended that ADFG perform an analysis of the data collected in the fisheries and transfer it periodically to NMFS, Council and the industry. There is interest in developing industry-wide funding of the crab observer program, which they will probably discuss at the PNCIAC meeting.