

North Pacific Fishery Management Council

Clement V. Tillion, Chairman
Jim H. Branson, Executive Director

Mailing Address: P.O. Box 3136DT
Anchorage, Alaska 99510

Suite 32, 333 West 4th Avenue
Post Office Mall Building



Telephone: (907) 274-4563
FTS 271-4064

Certified by: Steve Pennoyer

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DRAFT MINUTES
SCIENTIFIC & STATISTICAL COMMITTEE
April 22-23, 1980
Anchorage, Alaska

The SSC meeting was called to order at 8:00 a.m. on Tuesday, April 22nd and again on April 23rd, 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
Jack Lechner
Edward Miles
Alan Millikan
H. A. Larkins
R. L. Burgner
Richard Marasco
George Rogers

SALMON FMP (G-1)

Review of Preliminary Draft, Final Report of Contract No. 79-3

The SSC salmon review group reviewed the April, 1980 preliminary draft, project completion report, for Contract No. 79-3, Ocean Salmon Wire Tag Recovery Program and an additional catch data table now available. The review group recommends that the report be revised and restructured to address specifically only the three items specified in the contract.

These are: (1) the 1979 incidence of micro-wire tags from marked fish releases coastwise, (2) the 1979 SE Alaska troll catch by time and area, and (3) the results of the tag recovery as they relate to management strategies and objectives. The extraneous and unsupported discussion in the report should be deleted.

With respect to contract item 1, the data are provided in the report, but the British Columbia data needs to be broken out by species (coho, chinook). The discussion on methodology of sampling, biases and

errors needs to be expanded. Data on escapement sampling and tag recoveries in the escapement should be included in the report.

For contract item 2, the data are provided but there is insufficient information on the source of the data and methodology of deriving the results. Any discussion of these data in the report should be relative to the 1971-1978 trends, not just 1978. Derivation of average weights should be explained, and it would be desirable to include them in the summary table (Table 1).

For contract item 3, movements of coho salmon as shown by tag recoveries need to be illustrated by presentation of actual data on time-area recoveries of tagged fish bound for specific streams. A fuller explanation of the data and methodology for calculating harvest rates of coho stocks of individual river systems is needed. The formulas and text methodology do not adequately explain how the number of tagged coho was determined for each sequential fishery and the escapement, whether necessary weightings for differences in rates of sampling were made, whether loss of samples differentially affected the analyses, or whether 1979 fishery closures influenced results and interpretations.

The SSC recommends that these general comments, along with detailed comments, be provided the contractor by the Council.

Joint Venture Processing in Bristol Bay

The SSC reviewed the documents provided by the Council staff. The SSC found that the proposed amendment is directed only to authorize the receipt in the FCZ by foreign processing vessels, salmon harvested by U.S. fishermen in the Bristol Bay area during the 1980 fishing season. We were informed that the harvest will still take place within the waters of the State and will remain primarily under State management.

The SSC therefore regards the issue to be one of Council policy and not one of the adequacy of scientific and statistical information and reasoning.

TANNER CRAB FMP (G-2)

The SSC reviewed the eight proposed Tanner crab regulation changes. Only amendment numbers one and eight were proposals of a nature which had scientific direct benefits. The remainder of the amendment were of socio-economic type, which did not require scientific support by the Committee, although certain comments will be addressed in respect to these amendments.

Amendment #1 - Establish new fishing sections descriptions for the Kodiak Tanner crab fishery.

This amendment describes geographic sections of the Kodiak management area which have been utilized for field order closures the past two seasons. The Committee was told that these sections describe the primary adult stocks of Tanner crab within the management area although no data was presented to support this.

The field order regulation for these areas in season is based on individual harvest ranges derived from historic catch levels, population index trends and fishing mortality estimates.

The description of these sections is intended to simplify opening and closure announcements to the fleet, particularly for fishermen receiving these announcements via radio.

Used in this manner, the SSC supports the proposed amendment.

Amendment #2 - Changes in Tanner crab season opening date.

This proposal changes the opening dates for Tanner crab fishing seasons in all areas except the Chignik district. The proposed seasons are within the season when it is biologically acceptable to harvest the resource. The SSC therefore has no problem with this amendment from a biological standpoint.

The SSC recognized that supporting data was not available to support these proposal changes. It is our understanding that they were proposed by processors, fishermen and by the Board of Fisheries' Sand Point Advisory Committee to improve product quality.

It was noted that delaying opening dates in the Bering Sea, Kodiak and South Peninsula districts would still allow ample time for harvesting bairdi Tanner crab. It was further noted that this amendment would decrease the time for harvesting opilio crab in the Bering Sea. This could affect the DAH in the plan. Since little fishing has for opilio historically occurred during the November-January period the SSC felt that the effect would be minor.

Amendment #3 - Establishing a 250 pot limit for Tanner crab in the Kodiak district.

This amendment has no scientific basis, but reflect socio-economic considerations by the individuals participating in the fishery. The 1978-79 season had no pot limit.

The SSC recognized that the pot limit amendment has received no formal economic review and represents a compromise reached between the large and small boat fishermen. We had no way to judge economic impact on the existing fleets.

Amendments 4 and 5 have to do with enforcement and fleet desire for a fair or equal start. The SSC had no comment.

Amendments 6 and 7 had to do with clarification and simplification of regulation. The SSC had no comment.

Amendment #8 - Requiring floating processors to report their intended processing location

Testimony was presented to the SSC that the purpose of this amendment is to provide the field biologist information that would allow

placement of biological observers at the processing location to insure catch reporting and biological sampling requirements are met.

The SSC noted that the amendment was not clear in respect to its effect on catcher/processors vessels. It is our understanding that Catcher/processors were not intended to be subject to this amendment, since a catcher vessels is required to register and obtain a tank inspection prior to fishing or having crab aboard. Required information concerning area of fishing, processing capabilities and other information could be obtained, without notification of exact latitude and longitude of processing location. This intent should be clarified in the final regulation.

HERRING FMP (G-3)

Assessment of Spawning Herring and Capelin Stocks at Selected Coastal Areas in the Eastern Bering Sea

The SSC conducted a preliminary review of the April, 1980 draft final completion report for Council Contract 78-5 "Assessment of Spawning Herring and Capelin Stocks at Selected Coastal Areas in the Eastern Bering Sea." The Committee received the report when we convened on Tuesday conducted a review with the PDT and the contractor.

The report appears to resolve the differences in the previous draft which were noted by the SSC and other reviewers.

The Committee and the author of the report discussed herring biomass estimates and other issues in the report which relate specifically to the Bering/Chuckhi Sea Herring Plan. The biomass estimates from aerial surveys for 1978 and 1979 are presented as ranges and are considered to be the best available. The range of estimates from the reports will be included in the Plan. The SSC felt the best estimate of biomass from a statistical standpoint would be the mid-point of the range but that it was acceptable that the team recommend use of the lower end of the range as ABC considering uncertainties in survey techniques, stock migration, timing, stock status, etc.

It was noted that work on infrared photography mapping, required by the contract was not completed. The SSC did not perceive this to be a problem since this will not significantly change the results or conclusions of the investigation and the contractor has agreed to complete and submit the work by November of this year for no additional cost.

The SSC provisionally approved the report but directed a subgroup to complete a comprehensive review and submit recommendations for final action at the next meeting.

It is noteworthy that major advances in knowledge of the Bering Sea herring resource were achieved through this contract. Further, ADF&G investigators are to be highly commended for the excellent execution of the project under extreme weather and logistic difficulties.

The Bering/Chukchi Sea Herring Fishery Management Plan

Issues and management options proposed for the Herring Plan were discussed extensively by the SSC and the Plan Development Team. Our comments on each issue are presented below in the exact order they appear in the April 15 "Issue Paper"

1. Goals and Objectives:

The SSC did not discuss the revisions with the Team and has no significant comment.

2. Incidental Catch Control:

The SSC unanimously agreed that under current stock conditions, herring should not be considered as a prohibited species and rejected Option 1 as without scientific merit or justification.

Allowable Incidental Catch (AIC), Option 2a seemed to provide adequate protection for herring stocks while allowing the foreign groundfish fishery to operate within reasonable conservation guidelines.

We recommend that AIC be determined by calculating the percentage of incidentally caught herring in the last year of record and that this percentage be applied to the projected current years catch.

3. Offshore Allocation:

The SSC majority opinion favored Option 1 - allocation of all surplus. There is no scientific evidence to support or suggest an appropriate downward adjustment. It was noted that major herring stocks are generally in good condition and most are increasing throughout the eastern Bering Sea. We received undocumented testimony from SSC members and the public that herring stocks near Unalaska and along the Northern Alaska Peninsula are depressed. If stock conditions change, other options should be reconsidered.

Some members expressed concern regarding overharvest of small discrete stocks in the offshore mixed stock fishery and the inability of resource agencies to evaluate this potential problem. We continue to support stock identification, status and migration research.

4. Marine Mammals:

The report from the Marine Mammal Laboratory was not available to the SSC. However, Dr. John Burns has reviewed the plan relative to pinnipeds and his comments will be incorporated in the plan.

5. Spawning Biomass:

This issue was discussed in the SSC report on the final report for Contract 78-5, "Assessment of Spawning Herring and Capelin Stocks at Selected Coastal Areas in the Eastern Bering Sea."



6. OY

No comment.

7. No items presented.

9. Spawn on Kelp:

The SSC did not review the State's ~~spawn on kelp management plan.~~

10. TALFF:

The SSC noted that ~~any reduction of TALFF must be a result of no surplus OY and not simply a preferential statement opposing TALFF.~~ However, since foreign fleet may be competing for the same markets as the U.S. industry, the Council may wish to have economic and marketing studies to evaluate this and other OY issues for future Council consideration.

11. Time/Area closures during the inshore roe season:

The SSC recommends that the FCZ be closed to herring fishing during the inshore roe fishery period to prevent potential conflicts between the inshore and offshore domestic fisheries. Under current plan priorities, preference is given to inshore fisheries.

12. Initial domestic food and bait fishery; harvest of initial allocation surplus:

Except for the previously noted closure of the FCZ during the roe fishery, the SSC supports Option 1, unrestricted fishing for any allocated quota. There was no evidence presented to justify restrictions on the harvest of a quota.

13. Herring savings issue:

This issue is complex and controversial. The SSC endorsed the concept of establishing a herring savings area to protect herring when stock condition is poor. However, there appears to be no problem for the 1980-81 fishing year and a closing area regulation is unnecessary. We suggest the discussion of closing areas remain in the plan but that no regulations be promulgated at present.

We have requested further evaluation of the herring savings area concept to determine what precise area should be considered under various conditions, what impacts to domestic and foreign herring and groundfish fisheries can be expected and how and when a closure should be implemented. The Council may wish to request increased Coast Guard surveillance in the proposed savings areas to prevent any directed targetting on herring stocks.

14. Longline Closures:



The SSC recommends that any closures resulting from achievement of herring quotas, AIC's, etc., not affect the management of the longline fishery which does not have an impact on the subject species.

GULF OF ALASKA GROUND FISH FMP (G-4) & BERING SEA/ALEUTIAN ISLAND GROUND FISH FMP (G-5)

The Committee understood that Gulf Groundfish amendments will be before us again in June and the Bering Sea amendments will be delayed until July. The report of the SSC Subgroup on groundfish on the amendments (Attachment 1) was accepted by the Committee for forwarding to the PDT. The SSC intends to interact with the PDT on these matters in June. Some public testimony on the amendments was received and summarized for the PDT.

REVIEW OF SSC ROLES, PROCEDURES AND MANAGEMENT PLAN DEVELOPMENT TEAMS (H-1)

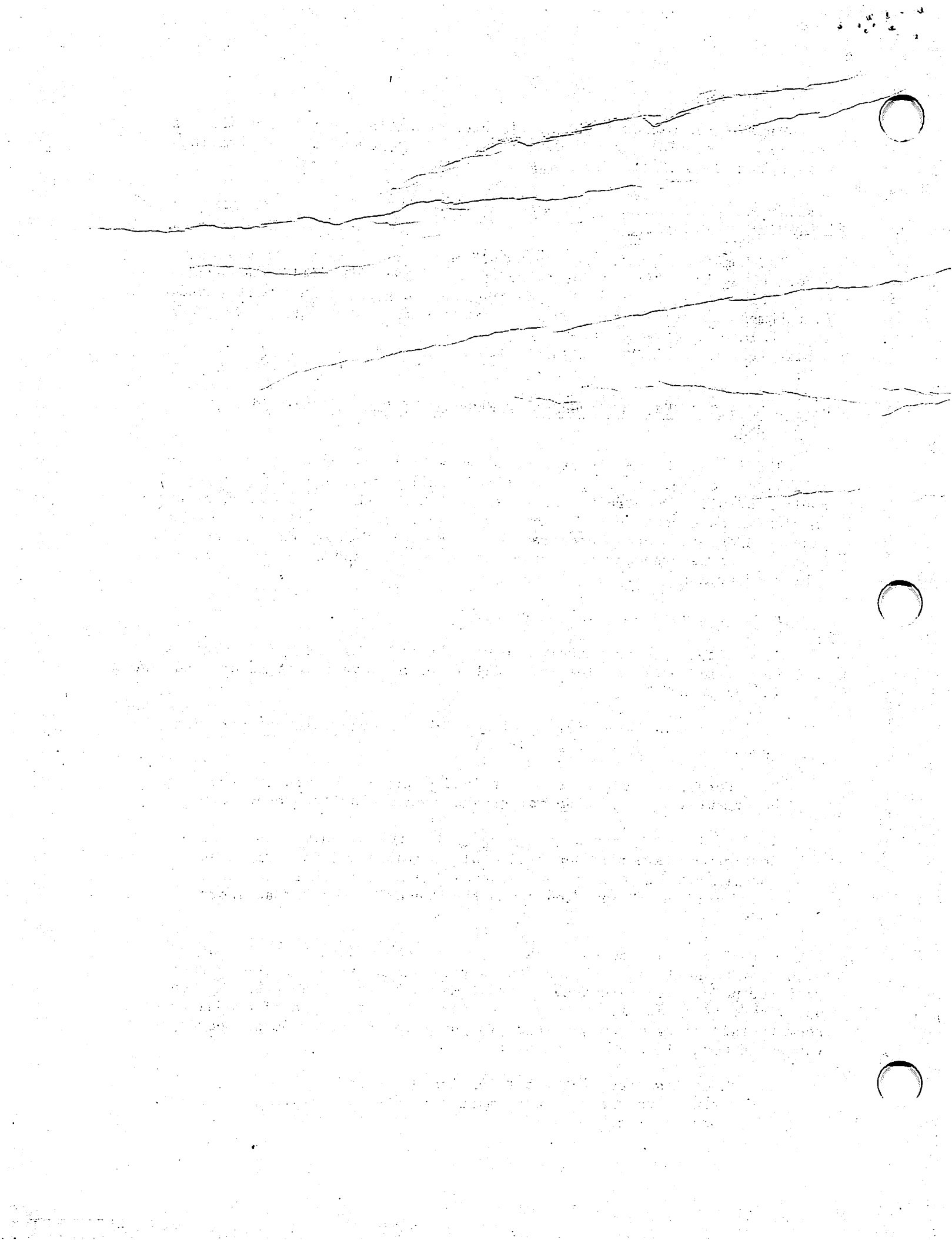
The SSC has become increasingly aware that we are unable to properly fulfill our obligation to provide the Council with appropriate technical reviews of plans, contracts, reports and other items. We discussed this problem in an executive session at which we reviewed a policy on the plan development process prepared by the Pacific Fishery Management Council. We have summarized our areas of concern and have suggested a course of action.

Particularly disturbing to us are:

1. A tendency we perceive to use the SSC "off the cuff" opinions on a variety of problems with little or no advance notice or opportunity for preparation.
2. Inclusion of a variety of unrelated topics some not germane to SSC review on every agenda.
3. Receipt of contract reports and planning documents at or just before meetings where decisions are required by the Council.
4. Lack of clear understanding of the roles and makeup of plan development teams as opposed to plan maintenance, amendment and special problem teams; how agencies function in this process and how all these players relate to the Council staff and advisory bodies.

Our discussion led us to the tentative conclusion that the basic method of Council operation and the way in which various advisors and resource people are forced to interact may be part of the problem. In our view meeting nearly monthly leads in part of the type of agenda we seem to face every 4 weeks. It seems possible that the SSC and perhaps the whole Council entourage should:

1. Meet less frequently but for longer periods.
2. Attempt to use subgroups more for interim problems, special studies, etc.



3. Meet only as required for short periods to take care of emergency or housekeeping problems.
4. More firmly schedule plan amendments coordinated with realities of fishery data, management, public input, agency workload, advisor review and schedules of other regulatory entities.

The SSC has formed a subgroup of Pennoyer, Millikan and Larkins to review these problems, meet sometime in May and prepare a report to the SSC prior to the June meeting. The SSC will discuss the matter and report its recommendations to the Council at its next meeting.

REVIEW OF THE EDF PETITION REGARDING GUIDELINES FOR FISHERY MANAGEMENT PLAN DEVELOPMENT (H-2)

The SSC found the petition to be troublesome in several respects. Our detailed comments are attached (Attachment #2 Subcommittee report) but generally we see the EDF proposal as an attempt to convert guidelines to directives, remove socio-economic consideration from fishery management, and to tip the FCMA-mandated balance between protection and over-exploitation toward the former.

The SSC recommends that the attached report be forwarded to NMFS as part of the Council's comment on the EDF Petition.

PROPOSAL TO CONDUCT A STUDY OF HERRING STOCKS AND POPULATIONS IN THE EASTERN BERING SEA (I-2)

The SSC briefly reviewed the proposal by Natural Resources Consultant to make an independent assessment of the status and character of the Bering Sea herring resources.

The SSC finds no need for this special study at this time. The SSC has completed its review of the contract report and the direction that the PDT was proceeding in this area. We did not feel that because there was concern regarding the estimates that there was a need to hire an outside contractor at this time. We note that ongoing research may result in modifications in estimates of ABC and management techniques even in the short term in this developing fishery.

SSC NOMINATION TO THE FINANCE COMMITTEE

The Committee recommends that Don Rosenberg be the SSC representative on the Finance Committee with Steve Pennoyer as alternate.

SSC JUNE MEETING

Assuming the Council meets in Kodiak June 5 and 6, the SSC will meet on June 3 and 4 starting at 9 a.m., plane schedule permitting. Topics will include:

- SSC-PDT Roles, Responsibilities and Procedures
- King Crab Draft Fishery Management Plan
- Final Review Herring Management Plan



- Final Review Herring Contract Report
- Gulf of Alaska Groundfish Plan Amendments
- Review Incidental Catch Policy Group Report
- Programmatic Budget Review Subgroup Report

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