

**PACIFIC NORTHWEST CRAB INDUSTRY ADVISORY  
COMMITTEE (PNCIAC)**

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May 7, 2007

**PNCIAC Meeting Minutes from April 17, 2007 (Note change of address above)**

Committee Area and Species: Bering Sea and Aleutian Islands king and tanner crab

Committee present: Steve Minor, Chair, North Pacific Crab Assn.; Rob Rogers, Icicle Sfds., Vice Chair; Tom Suryan, President, Skippers for Equitable Access; Lance Farr, F/V Kevleen K; Kevin Kaldestad, Kaldestad Fisheries LLC and ICE Group; Phil Hanson, V.P. UniSea Sfds.; Gary Stewart, F/V Polar Lady; Bering Sea Arbitration Organization; Gary Painter, F/V Trailblazer, BSFRF and ICE Group; Vic Scheibert, Trident Sfds.; Keith Colburn, F/V Wizard; Arni Thomson, Alaska Crab Coalition, Secretary, non-voting. Absent, Garry Loncon, Royal Aleutian Sfds.

Agency representatives present: Diana Stram, NPFMC Crab Plan Team Coordinator; Bill Tweit, WDFW and NPFMC; Dave Benson, NPFMC; Jack Turnock, Pat Livingston, NMFS, AKFSC; via teleconference: Shareef Shideek, Jie Zheng, Doug Woodby, Herman Savikko, Doug Pengilly, Forrest Bowers, ADFG; Gretchen Harrington, NMFS.

Industry present: Clyde Sterling, PPSF Inc.; Walt Casto, FV Pinnacle; Ron Lloyd, FV Pacific Mariner; Leif Mannes, FV Ocean Harvester; Jack Tagart, Tagart Consulting; Margo Posten, MSDH; Oystein Lone, skipper, crab boats; Thomas Parks, FV Katie K; Larry Hendricks, FV Sea Star; Gordon Kristjanson, FV Aleutian Mariner; Tim Kennedy, FV Mystery Bay; Svein Nyhammer, FV Rollo; David Wilson, FV Destination; Steve Hughes, Natural Resource Consultants, BSFRF; Dale Schwarzmiller, PPSF Inc.; Florence Colburn, Crab Group; Ron Brill, FV Cascade Mariner; David Harris, FV Arctic Mariner; Edward Poulsen, FV Artic Sea; Staale Brekkaa, FV Silver Dolphin; Dennis Thompson, FV Mystery Bay; Jim McManus, FV Royal Viking; Jim Stone, Ocean Fisheries LLC; Margaret Hall, Rondys Inc.; **(sign-up list attachment)**

Meeting called to order at 9:20 am.

**1. Presentation by Diana Stram, approximately one hour. (powerpoint attachment)**

Diana reviewed the 2006 MSFCMA revised requirements to prevent overfishing by requiring that FMPs "establish a mechanism for specifying annual catch limits in the plan (including a multiyear plan), implementing regulations, or annual specifications, at a level such that overfishing does not occur in the fishery, including measures to ensure

accountability.” Amendment 7 of the Crab FMP which established the current definitions of overfishing, implemented by the NMFS in March 1999 called for a revision in five years or in the case of a change in environmental conditions.

Diana also noted further purpose and need for the new amendments to overfishing definitions to reflect current scientific information and to accomplish the following:

- Provide and FMP framework for definition values to facilitate use of the best available scientific information as it evolves.
- Provide a new tier system that accommodates varying levels of uncertainty of information and takes advantage of alternative biological reference points.
- Define the status determination of criteria and their application to the appropriate component of the population.

A major problem with the current overfishing definition components (Alternative 1 in the Environmental Assessment) is that it is based on total survey mature biomass----however the fishery targets on large males only. Crab scientists have determined that this can lead to overfishing under certain conditions. Alternatives 2 and 3 will correct this as it will use mature male biomass in the control rules. The model is only intended to be used in the short term as the Plan Team is planning to develop an “egg production index” incorporating female mature biomass modified by changes in male mature biomass.

2. Presentations by Gary Stauffer, Steve Hughes and Jack Tagart relating to the Bering Sea Fisheries Research Foundation concerns about the development of the snow crab model and the revision of the overfishing definitions, a review of the material and issues identified in Tagart Consulting correspondence of November 13, 2006; and February 6, 2007; and correspondence from BSFRF of March 21, 2007 to Doug Demaster requesting BSFRF permission to gain access to the “Turnock Model” (snow crab population dynamics) to conduct a series of sensitivity analyses that are listed; and DeMaster response of March 21, 2007 which only provides for BSFRF peer review in the winter of 2008, following proposed NPFMC action in the fall of 2007. **(Attachments)**

3. Concerns raised by committee members during presentations:

Annual Catch Limits and Accountability Measures have not been defined by the Agency yet ... how can the Council adopt a new assessment model without defined parameters?

Alternative 1, which could be combined with Alternative 2 or 3 under final action, could give the State exclusive management of several smaller crab fisheries by removing them from the FMP. This is a huge policy issue that needs further discussion.

The plan to use an "Egg Production Index" in modeling raises a lot of questions. Has this been used before in any fishery, anywhere?

Handling Mortality and Natural Mortality are not specified. There are not only significant variables, there is also concern that the CPT is relying on pre-rationalization data for these variables, and we know that handling mortality is changing (for the better) under the new rationalization system.

The preliminary analysis indicates that the new assessment models may further increase fleet consolidation. This is an already controversial issue that needs further discussion.

It appears that the Aleutian Islands Golden King Crab (AIGKC) fishery TAC may be permanently constrained at the current level, even in the face of rising CPUE,s.

It appears that Pribilof Red Crab may be closed indefinitely, even though there is a harvestable surplus under the current model. This poses potential major economic disruptions to St. Paul island's recovery plan.

#### 4. PNCIAC Motion

The Pacific Northwest Crab Industry Advisory Committee provides the following comments and recommendations concerning the new stock assessment models and overfishing definitions under development in response to MSA requirements.

1. The potential impacts to industry and crab-dependent communities are not well known or understood by these shareholders.
2. CPUE's in the major crab fisheries are improving significantly, indicating there is no immediate crisis.
3. There is a general concern that the stock assessment models are largely based on recent derby-style management and fleet behavior, which has changed significantly under the crab rationalization program.
4. There is no immediate legal deadline for implementation of the new OFL definitions.

Now therefore PNCIAC requests:

- A. The new assessment models be provided to the Bering Sea Fisheries Research Foundation, as requested in their letter of March 21, 2007; for public peer review and greater understanding of the potential impacts.
- B. That the BSFRF be afforded the opportunity to test the models and report back to industry and the Council as part of the public comment process.
- C. That the Council defer final action on this issue until that peer review process is complete.

Motion by: Kevin Kaldestad; second, Rob Rogers.  
Motion passed unanimous.

All the PNCLAC Committee members made positive comments on the motion during discussion period, some of those comments are noted below.

Keith Coburn, Tom Suryan and Lance Farr all related experience-based comments as vessel captains generally noting that catch per unit of effort has improved dramatically in both the king and snow crab fisheries signaling an upswing in the mature biomass of the stocks. In addition they feel strongly that fishing mortality impacts have been greatly reduced under the new system, however, the proposed new fishing mortality estimates do not reflect this, but they should reflect these changes. They also noted that since there was no immediate time constraint to implement the revisions to the overfishing definitions, that final approval by the NPFMC should be delayed one season until the BSFRF has time to conduct a peer review.

Phil Hanson:

In the brief time since crab rationalization came into being we have seen dramatic changes in the fishery, the number of pots hauled, soak times, discard mentality changes, and a much lengthened season.

Vic Scheibert:

Trident is involved in both processing and catching. Regarding potential mortality we have seen a big change in the amount of pot pulls, sharing of gear, etc. from our recent Olympic style fishing history.

Arni Thomson: ACC generally concurs with the comments and supports the work that the BSFRF is doing and we support requesting a delay on final action to allow for peer review of the new models.

5. PNCLAC elections:

Steve Minor reelected to Chair; Gary Stewart elected Vic Chair.

Chair appoints Overfishing Definitions subcommittee; Rob Rogers and Tom Suryan are co chairs.

Adjourn at 12:00 pm.

Steve Minor, Chair, PNCLAC

Attachments: 7