


MEMORANDUM

TO: Council, SSC and AP Members

FROM: Clarence G. Pautzke
Executive Director 

DATE: June 16, 1992

SUBJECT: Gulf of Alaska and Bering Sea/Aleutian Islands Groundfish

ACTION REQUIRED

- (f) Receive NMFS report on defining pelagic trawl gear.
- (g) Receive staff status report on the Council's Discard/Full Utilization Committee.
- (h) Review 1993 recordkeeping/reporting requirements.
- (i) Receive NMFS report on the status of total weight measurements and interactive communications.
- (j) Review policy on setting of overall OY.

BACKGROUND

Pelagic Trawl Definition

In April the Council requested NMFS to proceed with a proposed rule which would redefine pelagic trawl gear as indicated in item D-2(f)(1). This action was based upon an AP recommendation which offered a definition intended to help close the loopholes in the existing definition. At the same time, the Council also requested NMFS to examine the potential for a performance-based pelagic trawl definition. Because NMFS is pursuing the performance-based definition, a proposed rule for redefining pelagic gear has not been submitted. NMFS Region staff will report to the Council on the status of this initiative.

Discard/Full Utilization

Also in April, the Council established a committee to address the issue of utilization of discarded catch. This committee is currently comprised of three Council members, including Rick Lauber (Committee Chair), Wally Pereyra and Larry Cotter.

The committee met in Seattle on June 4 to scope out the issues present in utilizing discarded catch, receive staff reports on the current magnitude of discarded catch in the North Pacific fisheries, and to define the committee's objectives. Attached as Item D-2(g)(1) is a summary of this meeting. Also included (Item D-2(g) Supplemental) are discarded catch data generated from both the reported catch data from the Alaska Region and from the observer program database.

The Council will receive a report on the Discard Committee's first meeting and can assist the committee by determining how to proceed.

1993 Recordkeeping/Reporting Requirements

A summary of NMFS proposed changes for 1993 recordkeeping and reporting requirements will be provided to the Council, AP, and SSC at this meeting. Council review of these proposed changes is conducted annually before NMFS proceeds with the proposed rulemaking process. An evening session involving staff and interested industry participants may be scheduled during the week of the Council meeting to provide industry an opportunity to comment on the proposals prior to Council review.

Catch Measurements and Communications

At the January 1992 Council meeting, NMFS advised the Council that it intended to file an Advanced Notice of Proposed Rulemaking concerning requirements for total weight measurements and interactive communications. In the interest of collecting more information on the feasibility of different options for accomplishing this goal, NMFS is instead preparing a regulatory amendment analysis for this proposal. This will also allow for more interaction with industry regarding the feasibility of the alternatives in the regulatory amendment. NMFS Region staff will report to the Council on the status of this initiative.

Optimum Yield Caps

At the April meeting the Council requested that a review be undertaken of the OY caps for Opilio crab in the Bering Sea. As part of this motion, the Council also requested that staff examine the policy on setting overall OY caps. In terms of groundfish, changing of the OY caps would require amendment of the FMPs. The BSAI cap is 2 million metric tons (mt) and the GOA cap is 800,000 mt. The Council has examined this issue in previous years. Clarification of Council intent on this issue is requested so that staff can assess the direction and degree to which the Council intends that it be pursued.

A PELAGIC TRAWL means a trawl which:

(revised section)

1. a) Does not have discs, bobbins, rollers, or other chafe protection gear attached to the foot rope (or fishing line)*, but which may have weights on the wing tips and,

b) Has stretched mesh sizes of at least 60 inches, as measured between knots,

1.) starting at all points on the fishing line, head rope, and breast lines and extending aft to the fishing circle and going around the entire circumference of the trawl, and

2.) which has the webbing tied to the fishing line with no less than 20 inches between knots around the circumference of the net

c) Has stretched mesh sizes of at least 60 inches continuing from the fishing circle,

1.) for a distance equal to or greater than one half the vessel's length and,

2.) for an additional distance equal to or greater than one half the vessel's length has webbing which shall be of stretched measure larger than 15 (or 30 or 60) inches and,

3.) contains no configurations intended to reduce the mesh size of the forward section.

d) (May have parallel lines spaced no closer than 64 inches in the forward section ahead of the required minimum length of large mesh, but such parallel lines shall not substitute for the required length of large mesh.)

(new section)

2. Shall be permitted to have small mesh

a) within 10 feet of the head rope and breast lines for the purpose of attachment of instrumentation and/or lifting devices (i.e. - kites or floats)

b) within 32 feet of the center of the head rope for the purpose of attachment of instrumentation (i.e. - netsounders).

3. Shall have no more than one each fishing line and (or) foot rope, for a total of no more than two (one) weighted lines on the bottom of the trawl between the wing tip and the fishing circle.

4. Shall have no metallic components except for connectors (i.e. - hammerlocks or swivels) aft of the fishing circle and forward of any mesh greater than 5.5 inches stretched measure.

THE FISHING CIRCLE is defined as the circumference of the trawl measured from the center point of the fishing line. This center point shall be clearly marked with a yellow marker.

* NOTE: Underlined text represents new or replacement wording to the existing definition. Text in (parenthesis) represents options resulting from comments received in response the draft circulated as a result of the Ad Hoc Gear Committee's work group meeting.

SUMMARY OF JUNE 4 MEETING OF THE DISCARD COMMITTEE

The NPFMC Discard Committee, consisting of Larry Cotter, Rick Lauber (Committee Chair), and Wally Pereyra, met at the AFSC on June 4, 1992. This was the committee's first meeting. Industry representatives and NMFS, NPFMC, IPHC, and ADF&G participated in the Committee's discussion of discard issues. The following statements summarize what occurred at the meeting.

1. The Committee received reports from AKR and AFSC staff concerning the levels of discards in the groundfish fisheries off Alaska in 1990 and 1991.
2. The need for similar information from other fisheries that the Council manages was agreed to. These are the BS/AI king and Tanner crab, halibut, and salmon troll fisheries.
3. The committee agreed to address discard problems in all of these fisheries; however not necessarily simultaneously.
4. The need to improve estimates of total catch was identified.
5. There was a discussion and some uncertainty about EPA requirements to grind up all discards.
6. The discards resulting from bleeding nets and the non-catch fishing mortality of size selective trawl gear were discussed.
7. The sources of the problem of discards and eliminating the principal source of the problem with individual transferable quotas (ITQs) for groundfish and other species were discussed.
8. The need for prompt action as well as progress on solutions that might take several years to implement was discussed, as was the desire to prevent immediate partial solutions from delaying more complete solutions.
9. The need to have unambiguous and noninflammatory definitions of terms was recognized.
10. The current groundfish management was identified as a source of the discard problem.
11. The potential adverse and beneficial ecological effects of discards and the definition of discards were discussed.
12. The importance of the public's perception of the problem of discards and the need to respond to it both by making progress on solving the discard problem and by attempting to eliminate misconceptions concerning the problem were discussed.
13. It was recognized that the problems of discards are that they can have adverse effects on: (1) the environment, (2) the quantity and quality of the food and byproducts produced from fishery resources and the net value of those products, (3) the effectiveness of the fishery management regimes, (4) the public's perception of the industry and fishery management.
14. The Committee developed the following statement as the goal of discard management.

Increase the quantity and quality of food and byproducts produced from the fishery resources harvested in the BS/AI and GOA by reducing the amount of harvest discarded to the maximum extent practicable while recognizing the contributions of these fishery resources to our marine ecosystems and the economic and social realities of our fisheries.

15. Several alternatives for achieving this goal were discussed briefly but it was determined that more time would be required to develop a list of alternatives to recommend to the Council. The Committee will try to develop such a list for the September Council meeting.
16. The Committee asked staff to prepare the following:
 - a. estimates of observer coverage in terms of groundfish catch,
 - b. a comparison of discard estimates based on weekly processor reports and observer reports,
 - c. discussion of the best estimates of discards,
 - d. estimates of discards that identify whether discards were required by fishery closures,
 - e. an evaluation of differences of discard rates between vessels with and without observers,
 - f. discussion of the positive and negative effects of discards on the ecosystem,
 - g. discussion of the effects of current fishery regulations on discards,
 - h. estimates of discards for each fishery by species, size, sex, season, and area, where fisheries are defined by gear and target species and include the BS/AI and GOA groundfish and halibut fisheries, the BS/AI king and Tanner crab fisheries, and the salmon troll fishery,
 - i. frequency and magnitude of net bleeding,
 - j. concentration/distribution of discards among vessels within a fishery, and
 - k. evaluation of factors affecting validity of observer estimates of discards.
17. The Committee agreed to hold a work session in Sitka during the week of the June Council meeting.

NEWS RELEASE (92-66)
Steven Pennoyer
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June 17, 1992
11:16am
For Immediate Release

JUN 17 1992

**VOLUNTEER CATCHER VESSELS NEEDED
FOR TESTING OF TOTAL CATCH WEIGHT EQUIPMENT**

National Marine Fisheries Service (NMFS) is investigating methods to accurately determine total catch weight on vessels at-sea. The NMFS has identified two manufacturers of weighing and measuring equipment and is seeking shore delivery catcher vessels as volunteers to test an inline conveyor belt scale and an ultrasonic bin level sensor. The NMFS intends to establish a list of vessels interested in participating in at-sea field testing of this equipment. The NMFS will coordinate arrangements to obtain and install the equipment, which will be provided on a loan basis by the manufacturers. Only those vessels meeting the following criteria will be considered suitable for the field tests.

GENERAL: All vessels.

1. Minimum vessel length overall (LOA) must be 125 feet to meet 100 percent observer coverage requirement. Vessels less than 125 feet LOA wishing to participate in the field tests must carry an observer at their own expense 100 percent of the time the equipment is being tested.

2. The vessel must deliver its catch to a shoreside processing plant using state certified scales to weigh the raw catch received directly from the vessel.

CONVEYOR SCALE: Vessels eligible for this equipment must have at least one conveyor belt transporting catch from each haul past a single point at which a conveyor scale can be located.

BIN LEVEL SENSORS: Vessels eligible for this equipment must have at least one holding bin or live tank whose dimensions can be accurately determined in which the catch is held for transport and delivery to the shoreside processing plant.

The NMFS is especially interested in vessels which meet all of these criteria and could carry both pieces of equipment.

For further information, contact Dave Cormany, Fishery Management Division, NMFS, 907-586-7228 or by FAX at 907-586-7131.