

North Pacific Fishery Management Council

James O. Campbell, Chairman
Jim H. Branson, Executive Director

411 West 4th Avenue
Anchorage, Alaska 99510



Mailing Address: P.O. Box 103136
Anchorage, Alaska 99510

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

Certified by: Jim H. Branson

Date: 3/1/85

MINUTES

SCIENTIFIC AND STATISTICAL COMMITTEE

February 4-5, 1985
Sitka, Alaska

The Scientific and Statistical Committee of the North Pacific Fishery Management Council met in Sitka on February 4-5, 1985. Members present were:

Don Rosenberg, Chairman
Larry Hreha
Donald Bevan
John Burns

Richard Marasco
Tom Northup
Scott Marshall
Bud Burgner

William Aron
Steve Langdon
Doug Eggers

C-1 Election of Officers

The SSC recommends the following Chairman and Vice-Chairman for Council approval: Don Rosenberg for Chairman and Richard Marasco for Vice-Chairman.

C-2 Net Discard Regulations

The SSC reviewed the proposed net discard regulations and the comments the Council has received from the New England Council. The SSC also received the initial comments developed by the Advisory Panel.

In our opinion, this issue requires attention by the Council. Comments received by the Council indicate that interest in implementing this type of measure on a national basis is limited. The SSC, therefore, recommends that the Council proceed with its own draft regulations. To assist the Council in this process the SSC has drafted a proposed regulation for Council consideration (Attachment 1). A draft has been provided to the Advisory Panel for their review and comment.

The SSC recommends that this draft be approved by the Council and that the Council and Regional staffs be instructed to include such wording in the regulations which will be drafted this year during our FMP amendment process.

C-3 MFCMA Reauthorization

The SSC discussed the proposals we wish to have considered by the Council Workgroup for amendments to the Magnuson Act. Our proposals are:

1. An amendment which allows the Council staff access to confidential information from the Secretary.

2. An amendment which will allow the Council the use of economic incentives and disincentives to manage domestic and/or foreign fisheries with funds collected being used to support research and/or stock assessment activities associated with fisheries under Council jurisdiction.

In its discussion, the SSC received the January 29, 1985 document entitled "Section-by-Section Analysis Staff Discussion Draft - MFCMA Reauthorization." The SSC noted that Appendix B makes no sense, nor were we able to understand where the numbers come from. We understand that the NWAFC will examine these data and the appropriate numbers will be provided to the Council.

C-6 Other Business

The SSC received a staff report by Douglas Larson and Ronald Rogness entitled "Some Economic Aspects of Alternative Management Methods for the Pacific Halibut Fishery" dated January 1985. The SSC will review this report and has agreed to provide the authors with our comments by the end of the month.

D-1 Salmon FMP

The SSC received a report from the Council staff on the status of the FMP and proposed 1985 management measures. Additionally, we received a review by Dr. Bevan of the terms of the proposed U.S./Canada Salmon Treaty. We also reviewed the document entitled "Report of the U.S./Canada Technical Committee on Chinook Salmon" dated December 3, 1984. The SSC found the technical committee report to be excellent and wish to thank the individual scientist who worked to compile this information. This report points out that major naturally-spawning chinook stocks remain depressed relative to established escapement goals and that stock rebuilding is still needed in order to achieve minimum sustainable yield.

The SSC strongly recommends that the Council support the treaty. As we have in the past, we would like to point out that there are many long term benefits which will result from increased enhancement in addition to the rebuilding of the natural runs.

With regard to the FMP, the SSC supports the recommendation that the Salmon Plan Team revise the plan to bring it up to date. We understand that a schedule and a statement of the issues to be addressed will be available at the March Council meeting.

With regard to the 1985 proposals, the SSC recommends the harvest guideline/OY that is in support of the proposed treaty, 263,000 all year ceiling plus new enhancement, be adopted.

With regard to season, the SSC still expresses concern over any proposal which makes major shifts in the fishing season. The SSC has reviewed the draft report which summarizes the results of a study undertaken to determine how various stocks might be affected by shifts in seasons. Comments have been submitted to the author, but the final report has not been received. We were informed that additional information on potential stock sizes is now available through ADF&G, which will be useful in evaluating the major season changes.

The SSC does not have any comments on the other proposals.

D-2 Gulf of Alaska Groundfish FMP

D-2(b) Bycatch Limits

The SSC reviewed the Council document under D-2(b) and the associated tables. The SSC recommends that whatever action is taken on bycatch at this time be considered a short term solution. The SSC believes that the long term solution to this issue must be addressed in the plan amendment process which examines the formulation of OY, the bycatch issue and/or establishing a PSC process.

To assist the Council in a short term solution, the SSC did examine the bycatch rates being used by the Council staff to project future bycatch amounts.

Domestic. The rates being used by the Council staff are derived from information collected by the NMFS observer program. The rates used were based on 1984 JVP catch data. The SSC notes that the 1984 rates are lower than those for 1983. The rates being used are considered to be the best information for projecting the 1985 incidental catches in the JVP fishery.

The SSC notes that these same rates were used by the Council staff to project the DAP bycatch amount in Table 2.

Foreign. As with the domestic fishery, the rates being used by the Council staff are based on data collected by the NMFS observer program. The rates developed from the observer program data are fisheries-specific. To calculate the PSC limit, the Council staff has selected the lowest rate for the selected type of fishery. The SSC believes the rates from the observer program are the appropriate data from which to select a rate, but has no comment on the selection of the lowest rate. These rates were then applied by the Council staff to a set of assumed foreign allocations to develop projections of bycatch. The SSC noted that the column labeled TALFF in Table 2 should be labeled PSC limit. It is our understanding that these fish would be treated as prohibited species.

D-2(b) North Pacific Fishing Vessel Owner's Association Request

The SSC reviewed the request of the North Pacific Fishing Vessel Owner's Association that the SSC undertake the construction of a model which would assist in the determination of incidental bycatches. The SSC does not feel that what is being proposed differs significantly from the procedures being used by the team and does not feel that this type of effort is needed at this time.

D-2(c) Longline Only Fishery

The SSC received a presentation by Ronald Hegge from A.L.F.A. and Richard White from Universal Seafoods on the proposed emergency actions to establish the Eastern Gulf as hook and line only fishery for sablefish. The SSC also reviewed the various letters that the Council has received on this subject. The SSC is concerned in that no complete and systematic examination of the proposed action is available.

Lacking these analyses and data, the SSC is unable to make a recommendation. This issue is considered by the SSC to be primarily allocative in nature. Conservation is not currently a source of concern. However, it could be if use of pots increases significantly and steps are not taken to prevent pots from ghost fishing if lost. The SSC suggests that the following types of information will need to be prepared and examined:

1. Number of vessels participating in the fishery by size, gear type and residency of the vessel owner.
2. Percentage of gross stock (gross revenue) accounted for by sablefish for each category identified above.
3. A history of participation in the fishery by various gear types.
4. Relative fishing power of various gear types.
5. Comparison of prices and costs-per-pound of production for each gear type.
6. Location of sablefish processors and their dependence upon the sablefish resource.
7. Importance of the sablefish fishery to various Alaskan and non-Alaskan communities.
8. Nature and extent of gear conflicts.

With this information, the Council will be able to evaluate the issue in a more thorough fashion.

D-2(d) Amendment Proposals

The SSC reviewed the method that the plan team undertook to prioritize the proposals received by the Council. We wish to compliment the team both on the process and the presentation of the information. In this regard, we would like to recommend that the method and presentation of ranking used by the Gulf of Alaska team be used in the future.

In developing our recommendations, the SSC discussed the schedule, the available manpower and what made up an acceptable amendment package. The Council schedule calls for all of the discussion documents to be ready by March 27, 1985 for consideration for public review. The team has less than two months to prepare the required documentation. These discussion documents should include all the information required by the Council to make its decision. Included will be the options for changes to the FMP, the information and analysis which is required in the environmental and regulatory impact assessments of those options, and possibly the draft regulations. To accomplish the compilation and analysis of this information, we have only limited resources. The manpower consists only of Council staff and team members supplemented by what the other personnel agencies can loan. The Council does not have a financial resource to be able to contract out the gathering and analysis of the required information. Additionally, the SSC was informed that the National Marine Fisheries Services has travel restrictions which could make it difficult for their participants to travel. The SSC, in developing its recommendations, took this workload and manpower restrictions into account.

The SSC also divided the proposals into those which we felt the information and analysis could be compiled simply and into those which we felt were complex and requiring extreme effort by the team.

Our recommendations (using the description in Attachment 3 to the draft team report) are:

High Priority - to be completed by March 27 deadline.

Simple Amendments:

- A. Incorporate Habitat Policy (28) - Note: manpower to develop this amendment package is being provided by the NMFS Regional office.
- B. New '85 OY values (28).
- C. Halibut limit domestic trawl (28).
- D. Expanded time/area field authority (21.2, 28).
- E. Weekly catch reports - catcher/processor (18).
- F. FCZ intrusion areas in Southeast (16.1).

Complex Amendments:

- A. OY framework (22.3, 28) combining the single species OY closures (22.1) and possible parts of the PSC package.
- B. Shelf rockfish management (all proposals).

High Priority - to be worked on during the next year so they are ready for consideration in 1986.

- A. All proposals under sablefish.
- B. Domestic observer program (21.1, 28.6).
- C. JVP allocation procedures (29.4); if the Council wishes to proceed on this issue.
- D. Remaining parts of those proposals under the PSC package.

Low Priority - we do not recommend action on the following proposals:

- A. Foreign fishing season (15).
- B. Combine management area (25.1, 25.2, 26).

Review of Dr. Wilson's Paper. The SSC has reviewed the paper entitled "Using Market/Demand Analysis to Assist in Allocation Decisions between Domestic Users: The Case of the North Pacific Sablefish Fishery" by J.R. Wilson. Detailed comments by SSC members have been submitted to the author.

The SSC commends Dr. Wilson for his efforts and encourage him to continue with his research. While the study represents an addition to the information base, we feel that there is little that can be used by the Council at this point in making allocation decisions. The research undertaken was hampered by a lack of price data of acceptable quality and statistical problems.

D-3 Bering Sea/Aleutian Islands Groundfish FMP

D-3(a) Turbots

At the request of the Council staff the SSC reviewed our action regarding turbot. Apparently, an error was made in interpreting our final recommendations regarding EY and TAC for the species. The correction of this error results in a slight modification of the initial TAC for those species used in balancing to the 2.0 million net OY.

D-3(c) Amendment Proposals

The SSC considered the same criteria as used in the Gulf of Alaska FMP in developing our recommendations [using Table 3 in agenda item D-3(c)].

High Priority - to be completed by March 27.

Simple Amendments:

- A. Raise upper end of OY range (1).
- B. Decrease the resource (4).
- C. Require catcher/processors weekly catch reports (10).
- D. Implement NMFS Habitat Policy (15).

Complex Amendments:

- A. Close area within 20 miles of Aleutians to all foreign trawling [recommendation is based on Council action](12).

High Priority - Considering in 1986

- A. Gear requirement made consistent [sablefish] (6).
- B. Incidental catch of salmon in JV (8).
- C. Establish different/smaller quota area for POP and blackcod (13).
- D. Control incidental catch of halibut and crab in domestic trawl fishery (14).
- E. Allocation of JVP to individual operation (16).

Low Priority - we do not recommend action on the following proposals:

- A. Restrict legal gear to three types (5).
- B. Allow sablefish fishermen to return and sell incidental catch of halibut (7).
- C. Merge management area (9).
- D. Close foreign fishing from December 15 to January 31 (11).

DISPOSAL OF FISHING GEAR AND OTHER ARTICLES

- (A) No fishing vessel shall intentionally discard or abandon fishing gear, net fragments, or other articles which may interfere with fishing activities or cause damage to fishery resources and other marine animals. Exception to this rule will be permitted in case of an emergency involving the safety of the ship and/or crew or when officially authorized to do so.
- (B) If abandoned or discarded fishing gear, net fragments, or other articles are encountered, or in the event of accidental or emergency placing of such article into the fishery conservation zone, the operator of the vessel shall make a reasonable attempt to recover the article or immediately report the incident to the appropriate official giving:
1. the name of the reporting person and his vessel;
 2. the nature of the article;
 3. the location of the article; and
 4. the time and date of the incident.