


M E M O R A N D U M

TO: Council, SSC, and AP Members

FROM: Jim H. Branson 
Executive Director

DATE: May 16, 1985

SUBJECT: Gulf of Alaska Groundfish Fishery Management Plan

ACTION REQUIRED

Consider emergency action to minimize joint venture and foreign interception of salmon.

BACKGROUND

In March the Council received a report on the high incidental catch of salmon in 1984 by the fall joint venture and foreign pollock fishery. During September-December, joint venture and foreign vessels caught 58,900 and 12,100 salmon, respectively. Most were chinooks caught by pelagic trawls around Kodiak.

The stock composition of the chinook population near Kodiak is unknown. However, coded-wire tags from foreign and joint venture trawl operations clearly show that north migrating chinook stocks, including many of concern in the US/Canada Salmon Treaty, are present and abundant at certain times. Roughly 0.7% of the sampled chinooks carried tags originating in Washington, Oregon, British Columbia and Southeast Alaska. The U.S. may have a Treaty obligation to account for some portion of this incidental mortality. The Treaty specifically addresses incidental mortalities and states that such mortalities should be minimized.

On May 13, 1985 the Gulf Groundfish Plan Team reviewed the incidental catch data and concluded that while most of the salmon were caught southeast of Kodiak Island, salmon were caught wherever pollock fishing occurred (Figure 1). The Plan Team discussed possible measures to reduce the incidental harvest of salmon including time/area closures, fishery closures, voluntary measures, and prohibited species catch (PSC) limits. They provide the following comments to the Council:

1. The Gulf Plan Team recommends that the Council consider voluntary measures for reduction of the incidental catch of salmon proposed by the industry. Self-imposed bycatch rates, or numbers of salmon per metric ton of groundfish could be used.
2. If formal regulatory action is required, the Plan Team recommends PSC limits for salmon in the Central and Western Regulatory Areas. A proposed PSC limit and its derivation are in your supplemental materials.

The team did not discuss how the PSC limit might be apportioned between joint ventures and foreign fisheries.

3. The Plan Team reviewed the current status of the pollock fishery and noted that JVP has been taken and joint ventures are currently fishing out of the reserve. The foreign fishery for pollock has not begun, but both Japan and Korea have a TALFF. The team believes it is possible that all pollock fishing may end by October 1. However, salmon may be caught at any time during the summer and fall and the potential bycatch cannot be estimated.
4. It appears after reviewing the NMFS observer data that salmon will be caught wherever fishing occurs. The Polish joint venture caught over 19,000 salmon in one relatively small area southeast of Kodiak. A time/area closure, while preventing pollock fishing in an area, is no guarantee that salmon will not be incidentally harvested elsewhere.

Figure 1. Observed incidental catch of salmon by the Us/Polish Joint Venture during September-December 1984.

Figure shows: Number of Salmon / Metric Ton Groundfish;
(actual salmon counted)

Source: NMFS Observer Program

