

North Pacific Fishery Management Council

David Benton, Chairman
Clarence Pautzke, Executive Director

Telephone: (907) 271-2809



605 West 4th Avenue, Suite 306
Anchorage, AK 99501-2252

Fax: (907) 271-2817

Visit our website: www.fakr.noaa.gov/npfmc

September 12, 2001

MEETING SUMMARY

North Pacific Fishery Management Council
September 7-8, 2001
Sitka, Alaska

At its meeting last week, the Council welcomed two new Council appointees, Stosh Anderson and Stephanie Madsen. Mr. Anderson is from Kodiak, Alaska, and fishes salmon, halibut, herring and black cod, and is a founding member of the Alaska Marine Conservation Council. Ms. Madsen, a resident of Juneau, Alaska, is a Vice President for Pacific Seafood Processors Association in Juneau, Alaska. She was appointed to the Council's Advisory Panel in 1993, and served as their Vice Chair from 1996 until her appointment to the Council. The Council also welcomed Captain Richard Preston as the new Council designee for Rear Admiral Thomas Barrett of the Coast Guard.

The Council also re-elected David Benton as Chairman for the upcoming year, and Dennis Austin, Washington Department of Fisheries, as Vice Chair. This will be Mr. Benton's second term as Chairman and Mr. Austin's first term as Vice Chair.

During the meeting, the Council reviewed the draft Supplemental Environmental Impact Statement (DSEIS) on Steller sea lion protection measures, together with a draft biological opinion. The DSEIS evaluated five alternatives to modify fisheries in such a way that the fisheries neither jeopardized the continued existence of Steller sea lions, nor modified their critical habitat. The National Marine Fisheries Service had tentatively identified Alternative 4, the area and fishery specific approach, as the preferred alternative. This was the alternative originally proposed by the Council's RPA Committee. The draft biological opinion, pursuant to the Endangered Species Act Section 7, concluded that the proposed action implemented by this alternative would not be likely to cause jeopardy or adverse modification. The DSEIS and biological opinion are available on the NMFS Alaska region website (www.fakr.noaa.gov).

The Council adopted Alternative 4 (with additional clarifications and details) as its preliminary preferred alternative. The additional details for Alternative 4, along with revisions and additional information to be included in the next draft SEIS, are included in the Council's action (attached). The Scientific and Statistical Committee also suggested numerous revisions and clarifications for the SEIS and biological opinion. At the upcoming meeting in October, the Council will review additional information prior to adopting a final preferred alternative.

**Council Action on Steller Sea Lion DSEIS and Draft BiOp
September 2001**

DSEIS

The Council reaffirmed its selection of Alternative 4 as the preferred alternative with the following modifications:

A Incorporate all of the additional recommendations of the RPA committee included in the minutes of the Aug. meeting:

- 1 W/C-GOA pollock C season start date of Aug. 25
- 2 Revised platooning for the Atka Mackerel fleet
- 3 Additional restrictions for the Bering Sea cod and pollock fishery
 - a) Closure of Area 8 haulouts (at Reef, Lava, Bishop Pt) to 10 miles for longliners >60'
 - b) Implement a 3 season split of trawl cod at 60/20/20 (50/30/20 for CP and 70/10/20 for CV) with rollover provisions.
 - c) Limit A season SCA pollock harvest to 28% of annual TAC prior to April 1st

B Incorporate the following recommendations on issues identified by staff, and presented by RPA Committee Chairman Cotter:

- 1 The 19 additional "RPA" haulouts should be treated consistently with CH haulouts.
- 2 The 5 northern BS 20 mile haulout closures should apply to the Atka Mackerel, pollock, and P.cod fisheries only.
- 3 Assignment to mackerel platoons should be random (so switching of assignments between vessels is not allowed) and apply to a specific vessel (not a permit).
- 4 Seasonal splits of P. cod do not apply to longliners <60 (catch fixed gear vessels <60 between the open access seasons accrues to the <60 reserve quota).
- 5 Maintain the <99' safety exemption in the SCA. NMFS should set aside such A season pollock quota in the SCA as needed for vessels <99' to harvest their full A season pollock quota in the SCA during the period from Jan. 20th – Mar. 31st.
- 6 The SCA pollock limit in the A season should be allocated amongst the sectors proportionally (each sector would be limited to 28% of its annual pollock allocation.)
- 7 300,000lb trip limits in the GOA and tender restrictions east of 157 degrees W lon in the GOA, as well as stand-down provisions and exclusive registration provisions would be retained.
- 8 Cod rollovers within the trawl sector should occur within a season prior to allocating to other gear types. Rollovers will continue into subsequent seasons but may be reapportioned if one sector is unable to reach its TAC.
- 9 Jig gear is exempt from haulout closures except in Area 9 and in the Seguam Foraging Area.

The Council also requested that the Alaska Board of Fisheries seriously consider adopting parallel restrictions in the parallel cod, pollock and mackerel fisheries in state waters in a timely manner.

Additionally, the added an option to Alternative 4, or some other remedy, which would create an exemption for longline cod catcher vessels >60 in Area 8 to operate between 3-10 miles.

DRAFT BiOp

- A Review the use of the CS+/- methodology for consistency (are effects evaluated primary, secondary, or tertiary effects – do secondary or tertiary effects rely on assumptions or documented causal relationships). Clarify that there is no weighting assigned to these findings (one CS+ for species “A” doesn’t necessarily cancel one CS- for species “B”), and that these ratings are only relative comparisons of the alternatives (option 1 may be negative relative to option 2, but the underlying condition may be negative, positive, or trivial in both options.)
- B Include a table (as presented by Chairman Cotter) of the rookery/haulout closures by gear type listing each site (as per table 21 for 2001 RPAs) and clarify that table 3.6 does not reflect the Alt. 4 closure specifications.
- C Review using 1998 TAC as the reference point for “question 2” (prey availability) is the SSL CS+/- analysis
- D A more extensive discussion of the importance of AFA in the gathering of data, monitoring of the fishery, enforcement and management.
- E Amplify the discussion on VMS issues, including:
 - 1) implementation schedule
 - 2) reliability
 - 3) consequences of failures
 - 4) fisheries and sectors where VMS monitoring may not be needed to achieve quota monitoring goals.
- F Clarify that application of Alt. 4 Global Control Rule reduces TAC to the amount necessary for bycatch and puts that species on MRB only status.
- G Analysis of the economic impacts to industry of management and enforcement measures as proposed in each alternative, including compliance costs for vessels to carry observers, observer costs, increased transit costs, impact of lost crew space on production.

Staff were tasked with completing these modifications to the best of their ability within the time available before The October Council meeting when final action is scheduled. The Council also requested that comments provided by the Scientific and Statistical Committee be incorporated in the analyses to the extent practicable.

Finally, for ongoing SSL issues, the Council approved the following recommendations of the Advisory Panel:

- 1 An ongoing analysis of the telemetry data that integrates both location and dive behavior from individual at sea trips, to directly estimate spatial and temporal foraging patterns.
- 2 An ongoing study to outline the statistically significant and biologically important differences in SSL demographics and population trends in the 1970’s and 1980’s compared to the 1990’s.
- 3 Reassessment of the listing status of the western and eastern SSL stocks.