



Fish News

December 17, 2007

North Pacific Fishery Management Council Proposes Lower Pollock Limit

During its December meeting in Anchorage, the North Pacific Fishery Management Council (NPFMC) recommended lowering the commercial catch limit in the Western Gulf to 17,602 metric tons of pollock for 2008. That's down from 25,012 metric tons in 2007. Pollock is divided into four seasons.

The NPFMC also proposed a total allowable catch (TAC) of 19,449 metric tons of Pacific cod for next year. That compares to 20,141 metric tons this year. The Pacific cod TAC is reduced by 25% for the state waters fishery, and 10% is allocated to the offshore sector. The remainder is divided into two seasons, A and B, per the SSL (Steller sea lions) protection measures. The NPFMC recommended a TAC of 1,890 metric tons of sablefish for 2008, compared to 2,470 tons this year.

In addition, the council lowered the commercial catch limit on the Bering Sea pollock next year to 1 million metric tons. That's a 28 percent reduction from the previous year. Scientists say the cut is a response to the downward trend in the fish population following several years of high catches of nearly 1.5 million metric tons. In addition, the council recommended a total allowable catch of 170,720 metric tons for Pacific cod in 2008 and 225,000 metric tons for yellowfin sole. Recommendations from the council must be approved by the U.S. Secretary of Commerce before they become effective.

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[NPFMC Web site link](#)

Other NPFMC Actions Taken:

- Crab custom processing exemption was approved. Peter Pan Seafoods will be able to process Aleutia PQS (processor quota share) crab.
 - Adak (American Fisheries Act) AFA permit application denied. NPFMC took no action on the permit application resulting in Adak not getting pollock processing rights.
 - A draft letter to the Commissioner of the Alaska Department of Fish & Game is being circulated regarding concerns that the developing fishery on the south side of Unimak Island is cutting into the Area M state waters Pacific cod fishery.
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NPFMC Appoints Beth Stewart to Advisory Panel

The NPFMC appointed Aleutians East Borough Resource Director Beth Stewart to a term on the advisory panel. The panel advises the NPFMC on issues that come before the council. Stewart and AEB resident Kylie Thompson recently testified before the council about the importance of decreasing pollock sideboard amounts if trawl recency regulations eliminate some of the AFA trawlers' GOA (Gulf of Alaska) endorsements.

Overall, the Borough has observed several positive changes in the North Pacific Fishery Management Council under the direction of Governor Sarah Palin. AEB residents have waited a long time for a council that responds to the concerns of Alaska's fishing communities.

Items of Interest on NPFMC's Upcoming Agendas:

Week of February 4, 2008 meeting in Seattle – at the Marriott Renaissance:

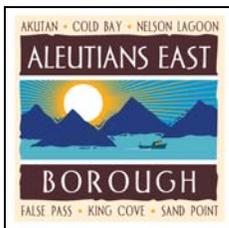
- BSAI/GOA (Bering Sea Aleutian Islands/Gulf of Alaska) trawl LLP (license limitation program) Recency.
- GOA (Gulf of Alaska) salmon/crab bycatch.
- Observer program amendments.

Week of March 31, 2008 meeting in Anchorage – at the Anchorage Hilton:

- GOA sideboards for crab vessels.
- Steller sea lion recovery plan.
- GOA Pacific cod/LLP Recency.
- GOA Pacific cod sector split.

Week of June 2, 2008 meeting in Kodiak:

- GOA sideboards on Bering Sea pollock vessels.
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Shakedown Cruise is a Success

The shakedown cruise, a cooperative research project between the Aleutians East Borough (AEB) and the National Marine Fisheries Services (NMFS), is proving to be very successful. The project tests whether small boats such as local trawl vessels can perform the hydroacoustic pollock survey. The winter survey determines the ABC (acceptable biological catch) for the Western Gulf of Alaska (WGOA) pollock. The trawl survey is not specifically designed for pollock. However, it provides NMFS with data about Pacific cod and other bottom-dwelling marine life. The trawl ABC calculations include the summer trawl survey and the winter hydroacoustic surveys, geared specifically toward pollock. Some trawling is required to verify that the sign on the screen is indeed pollock.

NMFS is facing declining budgets, and the costs of using their own vessels are high. Therefore, the agency has been exploring the possibility of contracting with local vessels to run the survey.

The AEB was able to get funding to outfit the F/V Temptation with ES60 hydroacoustic equipment, a standard for scientific hydroacoustic data. Data from the survey is transmitted directly to NMFS. Martin Dorn with NMFS, and AEB Consulting Scientist Vidar Wespestad, traveled to Seattle recently for a test run and were very pleased with the results. They will return next month for more testing. A successful program means local vessels will be able to contract with NMFS for surveys.

3B Halibut Up in 2008, But Total Catches To Be Cut, If Staff Follows Recommendation

Consumers will have to dig deeper into their pockets if they want to buy halibut next year. Total catches will be cut by about 9 % in 2008. Total catch limits will decrease from 65.17 million pounds this year to 59.24 million pounds in 2008. In Southcentral Alaska, Area 3A, the recommended catch limit is about 24 million pounds, a decline of 7.6 percent. On the other hand, the Western Gulf, Area 3B, is seeing an increase from 9.22 million pounds in 2007 to 10.90 in 2008. The scientific staff of the International Pacific Halibut Commission brought the recommendation forward. It's expected to be finalized at the full commission meeting scheduled for January 15 – 18, 2007.



Regulatory Area	2007 Halibut Fishery Catch Limit	2008 IPHC Staff Recommended Halibut Fishery Catch Limit
2A ^a	1.34	1.00
2B ^b	11.47	8.06
2C	8.51	6.21
3A	26.20	24.22
3B	9.22	10.90

4A	2.89	3.10
4B	1.44	1.86
4CDE ^c	4.10	3.89
Total	65.17	59.24

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The Bills Are Due for Halibut, Black Cod/Sablefish Quota Shares



More than 2,300 Alaska longliners have until January 31, 2008 to pay fees to the federal government for holding quota shares of halibut and black cod or sablefish. These fees cover the costs of managing and enforcing those fisheries. The fee ranges from 1 percent to 3 percent. They are based on the dock price paid to fishermen and are averaged across the state. The price for halibut this year was \$4 per pound for halibut and \$2 per pound for black cod. The combined fisheries generated \$2.7 million for coverage costs, based on the 2007 fee of 1.2 percent.

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Hundreds of Workers Needed for Alaska's Biggest Fisheries

Major seafood companies are looking for hundreds of workers for Alaska's biggest fisheries: pollock, cod and snow crab. The seasons begin next month and will run through April. Employers are searching for workers to staff shore plants in King Cove, False Pass, Kodiak and Dutch Harbor. Companies are also looking for employees to work aboard the at-sea fleets.

For more information, call the Job Service at (800) 473-0688.

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Cooperative Commercial Fisheries: New Study Looks Promising

A study published this month in the journal, *Science*, says commercial fishermen can increase their income by fishing less if they are part of a cooperative fishery, such as those operating in New Zealand and Australia. Such cooperatives allow individual fishermen to own a share of the total harvest, also called individual transferable quotas. It's a concept that's somewhat foreign to American commercial fishermen who take part in competitive fisheries. The idea behind the cooperatives is when more fish are available and there's no rush to catch them, fishermen spend less money on fuel and other costs to fill their nets. Quentin Grafton, the lead author of the study and research director at the Crawford School of Economics and Government at Australian National University, says instead, cooperative fishermen focus on delivering a high-quality product to the dock.

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Alaska Plans to Start Collecting Harvest Data

The Alaska Department of Fish and Game (ADF&G) says it's important to begin collecting harvest data to paint a clear picture of the economic importance of commercial fishing to the state's economy. The data will include detailed information on topics such as the number of active crew members in each fishery and the number of days active crew license holders work all



together, either by community or by fishery. Geron Bruce, ADF&G's assistant director of commercial fisheries, says solid data on crew participation would help create a complete analysis of commercial fishing's vital importance to the state's economy. Under the current data reporting system, it's impossible to connect crew members to a specific fishery or area because their licenses are general to all commercial fisheries.

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2007 Nets the Fourth Largest Salmon Harvest in History

This year's salmon harvest of 212 million pounds of fish is going in the books as the fourth largest catch on record. The preliminary end-of-season report issued by the Alaska Department of Fish & Game shows the catch had an estimated value of \$374 million. Pink and sockeye salmon were significantly above pre-season forecasts. The statewide sockeye harvest totaled more than 47 million pounds of fish. The pre-season projection called for 40 million pounds. It was the largest Alaska sockeye catch in a decade. It was also the eighth largest sockeye catch during the last century. The Bristol Bay harvest accounted for nearly 30 million pounds, the largest sockeye catch in ten years. Coho, chum and Chinook catches, on the other hand, were substantially below projections.

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Caribou Season Closed on Federal Lands in Unit 9D

The Federal Subsistence Board has approved a request to close the hunting season on federal public lands in Unit 9D on the lower Alaska Peninsula from Nov. 15, 2007 to March 31, 2008. The board took the action after current surveys of the Southern Peninsula Caribou Herd in Unit 9D showed a noticeable decrease in both population and calf survival. Poor nutrition is believed to be the main cause. Human harvest and predation by wolves and brown bears are also factors. The 2007 draft plan for management of the herd calls for closure to hunting when the herd falls below 850 animals. The Izembek National Wildlife Refuge staff observed only 770 caribou during a 2006 survey.

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State Won't Interfere with Merger of Two Japanese Seafood Companies

After investigating whether Maruha and Nichiro have violated antitrust laws, the State of Alaska has decided it will not try to block the merger of the two large Japanese seafood companies. Ed Sniffen, with the Alaska Attorney General's Office, said the investigation found no violations. The two companies completed their merger on Oct. 1, 2007, becoming Maruha Nichiro Holdings Inc. Some fishermen and fishing communities raised concerns about the merger, wondering whether the new firm might pay less for catches or consolidate processing plants. That's when Governor Sarah Palin ordered an antitrust investigation. In addition to the State of Alaska, the U.S. Justice Department's Antitrust Division and the Federal Trade Commission also investigated the merger and found no violations.

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Governor announces appointments to North Pacific Research Board

Governor Palin appointed Steve MacLean and reappointed Dorothy Childers, Gerry Merrigan, Pam Pope and Denis Wiesenburg to the North Pacific Research Board this week. MacLean is an Inupiaq subsistence whale hunter who crews a whaling boat in Barrow. He has served on the Research Board's advisory committee and its local and traditional knowledge committee. The research board is responsible for managing a comprehensive science program associated with the fisheries and the marine ecosystems in the North Pacific Ocean, Bering Sea and Arctic Ocean. The board's 11 members are drawn from federal and state management and research agencies, including five appointed by Alaska's governor, to serve three-year terms.



AEB Exhibits Services at 2007 Pacific Marine Expo in Seattle



The Aleutians East Borough showcased its port services to fishermen at the 2007 Pacific Marine Expo in Seattle last month. Flyers highlighting available community services and ongoing projects were displayed along with an eye-catching slide show featuring scenic photos. Several representatives from the Borough, including AEB Mayor Stanley Mack, AEB Assemblywoman Carol Foster, AEB Consultant Sam Cotten, Ken Smith with APICDA,

King Cove Harbormaster Dave Bash, King Cove Administrative Manager Bonnie Folz, AEB Finance Director Roxanne Newman and AEB Public Information Officer Laura Tanis, answered questions while working in the booth.

More Fish Offered to Breastfeeding Moms & Babies in WIC Program

The U.S. Department of Agriculture (USDA) is encouraging breastfeeding moms to eat a larger variety of fish because it contributes to optimal health and development of children and adults. The USDA recently decided to align Women, Infants and Children (WIC) food packages for breastfeeding women with the Dietary Guidelines for Americans and current infant feeding practice guidelines of the American Academy of Pediatrics. Those guidelines call for increasing the monthly amount of fish available to 30 ounces of a variety of canned fish including light tuna, salmon, sardines and mackerel. The government urges women who are pregnant, planning to become pregnant or nursing to choose 12 ounces (2 – 4 servings) a week of a variety of seafood.



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