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# Fish News

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## North Pacific Fishery Management Council Meets in Sitka

*By Ernie Weiss, AEB Natural Resources Director*

### Halibut Bycatch

The North Pacific Fishery Management Council meeting in Sitka this month was



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meeting in Sitka this month was dominated by the pending final action on BSAI Halibut PSC limits. The Council ended up with 150 people signed up to testify. The Advisory Panel heard 75 public commenters, and the Scientific & Statistical Committee also had record attendance for the issue.

In the end, the Council motion on the issue satisfied very few stakeholders, if any. The directed

halibut fishermen in the Bering Sea Areas 4CDE, and other Pacific halibut fishermen, who rely on the migration of juvenile halibut from the 'nursery area' in the Bering Sea outward coast-wide, didn't believe the action went far enough. Some groundfish fishermen like those in the Amendment 80 sector, who utilize halibut PSC to prosecute their fishery, think the cuts are too deep.

The final Council motion made the following reductions to BSAI halibut PSC limits:

- Amendment 80 cooperatives halibut PSC limit reduced by **25%**
- Amendment 80 limited access fishery halibut PSC limit reduced by **40%**
- BSAI Trawl Limited Access Sector halibut PSC limit reduced by **15%**
- Hook and line and other non-trawl sectors halibut PSC limit reduced by **15%**
- CDQ halibut PSC limit reduced by **20%**

Two Council actions during Staff Tasking ensure that this issue will come back to the



**The Council agreed that the Council Chair and Executive Director will develop a plan to bring back to the Council at the October meeting on how to proceed on further halibut actions. File photo.**

Council. The Council agreed that the Council Chair and Executive Director will develop a plan to bring back to the Council at the October meeting on how to proceed

on further halibut actions, working with the IPHC, SSC & other stakeholders. The

Council also voted to require Amendment 80 cooperative groups to provide detailed reports to the Council in December on how they plan to not only meet, but exceed the new halibut bycatch limits.

The final motion combined with the subsequent motions during Staff Tasking, are a compromise that promises to be revisited. The State of Alaska Commissioner of Fish & Game Sam Cotten simply did not have the votes for the deeper cuts requested by the members of the directed halibut fishery. Members Simon Kinneen and David Long were forced to recuse themselves due to financial interest in the groundfish fishery. Long and Kinneen were allowed to vote on a procedural motion to delay action, but that motion failed as two other Alaskans, Glenn Merrill & Ed Dersham voted against it.

Glenn Merrill (former AEB fisheries analyst) is the Alaska Regional Assistant Administrator for NMFS and sits on the Council as an alternant for Jim Balsiger, Director who is conflicted on this issue because his wife, Heather McCarty advocates for the Central Bering Sea Fishermen's Association. Ed Dersham voted with the Washington/Oregon block on this issue at every turn. June was Dersham's last Council

meeting, because the Governor had instead nominated Andy Mezirow from the Advisory Panel to fill the seat.

The Council plans to call for a review of the recusal process, to possibly be presented at the Council Coordination Committee meeting later this month.

### **Other NPFMC Actions of Interest**

The Council moved forward an analysis for Public Review that would exempt several vessels that harvest Western Aleutian Islands Golden King crab from the partial delivery restriction. The current regulation requires all crab vessels in the rationalized BSAI program to finish offloading before resuming fishing. If approved at final action, tentatively scheduled for the October meeting, these 3 or 4 vessels affected would be allowed to deliver a partial load of crab at Adak, taking advantage of the large Adak airport and the developing market for live crab shipments. The Council did not forward a separate broader analysis, as was recommended by the Advisory Panel, to remove the partial delivery restriction from all BSAI rationalized crab fisheries.



The Council moved forward an analysis for public review that would exempt several vessels that harvest Western Aleutian Islands Golden King crab from the partial delivery restriction. File photo.

At Staff Tasking the Council voted to request the Secretary of Commerce to promulgate emergency regulations to allocate an additional 1,600 Chinook salmon to the PSC limit established for the non-pollock, non-Rockfish trawl catcher vessel sector in the Gulf of Alaska for the remainder of this year. That fishery was closed May 3<sup>rd</sup> for the year, when the chinook cap was reached in part due to the extrapolation of errant sampling data. The Council also requested an analysis that would allow rollover movement of PSC between the rockfish, pollock and non-pollock sectors.

Also at Staff Tasking, in an action important to AEB fishermen, the Council agreed to prioritize the ‘observer coverage on vessels delivering to tenders’ issue up on the Observer project priority list, moving the issue up from #9 on the list to #6.

## **Honoring Gail Bendixen**

As part of a well-deserved tribute, Aleutians East Borough Assembly Member Paul Gronholdt and Natural Resources Director Ernie Weiss presented AEB Resolution 15 – 22 to born & raised King Cove local Gail Bendixen, just as she was preparing to leave her final Council meeting as a member of the NPFMC staff:

‘Whereas, Gail Bendixen was born and raised in the small fishing community of King Cove, near the end of the Alaska Peninsula, within the Aleutians East Borough; and whereas, Gail’s parents Xenia and Herman Bendixen (also known as Rocky and Buddy) raised Gail and her seven sisters and one brother to value a fishing lifestyle and to protect the ocean’s resources; and whereas, in 1986 Gail went to work for the North Pacific Fishery Management Council (NPFMC or Council), the regional council that manages



**AEB Assembly member Paul Gronholdt (right) and AEB Natural Resources Director Ernie Weiss (left) present NPFMC staff member Gail Bendixen with AEB Resolution 15 – 22 during her final days on the job.**

fisheries in the waters 3-200 miles off Alaska’s coast; and whereas, after 29+ years of dedicated service, Gail will retire in June 2015 from employment with the NPFMC, where she has served in various positions over the years including as Executive Secretary, Finance Officer and Administrative Officer; and whereas, the fishing industry of the North Pacific has benefitted from Ms. Bendixen’s tireless service to the

Council; and whereas, the ecosystems of the Bering Sea, Aleutian Islands and the Gulf of Alaska have also been well-served by the good stewardship of the

Council and Staff; and whereas, Gail’s professionalism and cheerful demeanor during her tenure on the Council Staff have been a positive reflection of the people of King Cove and the Aleutians East Borough.

Now therefore be it resolved the Aleutians East Borough Assembly proudly acknowledges Gail Bendixen’s 29+ year employment with the NPFMC as a significant achievement and considers her service an ambassadorship for the people of the region to the Council family; and be it further resolved, the Aleutians East Borough Assembly thanks Gail Bendixen for her long service with the NPFMC, and wishes her all the best in retirement.’

Thanks Gail. Happy trails!

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