



Fish News

April 22, 2013

Comfish Alaska Communities and Catch Share Forums

ComFish Alaska is held in Kodiak each spring and is Alaska's major commercial fishery trade show. This year, Comfish was held April 11 - 13 in the Kodiak Convention Center, and forums/meetings were held across the street at the Kodiak Inn. The show is a lot like the Pacific Marine Expo held in Seattle each fall, at about a tenth of the size. However, the first two days of the show, they serve free beer at happy hour, and this year there were some great forum discussions associated with the show.

Two of the Thursday forums were of particular interest to Gulf of Alaska communities:

- ***GOA Trawl Bycatch Management and Catch Shares – Where Are We Now?*** featured North Pacific Fishery Management Council (NPFMC) staff member Sam Cunningham, ADF&G federal fisheries coordinator Nicole Kimball and Council member Duncan Fields. This panel discussed the Council process and what possible solutions may look like.
- ***Catch Shares, Communities & Conservation: Challenges, Solutions & Perspectives*** featured Leesa Cobb, Executive Director of the Port Orford Oregon

Research Team; Ed Backus, Vice President of Fisheries for Ecotrust; Nick Muto, Chair of Cape Cod Commercial Hook Fishermen's Association and Becca Robbins Gisclair, Fisheries Advisor to Alaska Marine Conservation Council. This panel discussed catch share programs from other regions and how to secure access to the fisheries for fishing communities.



Nick Muto

Nick Muto talked about managed risk pools – fishermen's coops - that formed in Cape Cod in response to a dwindling resource and greatly reduced allocations. These coops – called 'sectors' on the East Coast - have become the norm as a system of fisheries trusts that float the risk of the fishery. The Cape Cod Hook Association originally came to NMFS with scientific research gained through use of an experimental fishery permit. They eventually were able to establish the first fishermen's association sector, in an effort to support

historic fishing communities and to ensure a fish resource for future generations. Their model maintains opportunities for new entrants to the fisheries, and fair crew compensation is monitored by a community development office.

PSC, a term meaning bycatch or 'prohibited species catch' in the North Pacific, is an acronym in the Northeast Atlantic fisheries for 'Percentage Sector Contribution'. Another difference between Cape Cod and the North Pacific is they are working with a nearly depleted cod resource. We need to develop a program in the Gulf of Alaska that sustains our plentiful fishery.

Leesa Cobb spoke about West Coast trawl rationalization and how local communities were left out of that program. Trawlers who were allocated quota have the ability to convert to fixed gear to access the fish, however communities who wish to enter the fixed gear fishery, must first purchase an expensive trawl license that doesn't even come with quota, just to participate in a fishery right off their shore. These unintended consequences were chalked up by the courts to the assertion that there are always winners and losers in a catch share program, and the community is just one of the losers. Leesa advises: don't accept the premise that there are always winners and losers – you need to set up a program that has a win – win solution.

Both of these panelists were asked whether they would support a program where all quota was held by the community. Nick is somewhat against this idea, favoring individual business ownership. Leesa thinks this is a good idea – a community fishing association

could give out annual catch entitlements at a lease rate of 5% or less, compared to what has become standard in the industry, lease rates of 50 to 70%.

Panelists took questions after each session. One final comment from a Kodiak fisherman in the audience: “Talk is cheap, but right now, the beer is free.” The group broke and headed across the street.

For more info on catch shares and the discussion at Comfish, visit the link below:

[Cordova Times article](#)

A Short History of Catch Share Initiatives in the GOA

By Ernie Weiss, AEB Natural Resources Director

A catch shares program in the Gulf of Alaska has been tried before. Recently Aleutians East Borough Anchorage office staff came across a document dating back to 2006 containing 350 original signatures of stakeholders opposing processor quota shares in any rationalization program. I served as a member of the Gulf Rationalization Community Committee back in 2006. The Gulf Rationalization initiative was set aside at the request of the Governor of Alaska.

Like many residents of coastal Alaska communities, the phrase ‘catch shares’ makes me uncomfortable. As a longtime resident of King Cove, I was able to see firsthand ‘the aftermath of crab rationalization’ that began in 2005. Crew members, local businesses and communities got short-changed in the federal catch share program called BSAI Crab Rationalization. The NPFMC is still trying to fix the community protections part of the program.

So in June 2012, when the Advisory Panel to the NPFMC took up the issue of

Comprehensive Bycatch Amendments, I voted against the motion to begin a ‘process of developing a catch share program’ in the Gulf of Alaska and was surprised to be the only member of the 21 member panel to vote against it. I was surprised again when the written minutes were published and the motion specified a catch share program only in the Central GOA. Fortunately, the Council motion from the June ’12 meeting in Kodiak only called for ‘developing a program to provide tools’ for effective management of bycatch.

At an earlier meeting of the NPFMC in December 2011, during a discussion of Chinook bycatch, the AP passed a similar motion by a smaller margin, only 11 votes to 8 against, to ‘move forward with a catch share program for trawl fisheries in the Gulf of Alaska’. The Council disregarded that recommendation.

However, at the October 2012 NPFMC meeting, the Council motion for GOA Trawl PSC tools requested a discussion paper outlining catch share options for the CGOA Trawl sector and set a Control Date of December 31, 2012 for that sector.

Suddenly the WGOA was left as potentially the last open access trawl fishery in the GOA. Fixed gear participants also began to get nervous about the race for fishing history using pots, long line or jig gear. Both the WGOA and fixed gear sectors spoke up at the December 2012 meeting, and the Council agreed to hear proposals, including from the WGOA, during the catch share discussion paper agenda item at the February meeting in Portland.

The February Council motion did recognize the WGOA by setting a Trawl control date of March 1, 2013 for the WGOA and replacing all reference to *CGOA* in the Purpose and Need statement with *GOA*. But the Fixed gear sector is still not included. Reasons for this vary, but some say you simply can’t change the fishery all at once. Others think fixed gear issues may become clearer after the State Board of Fisheries tackles Pacific cod issues in October 2013.

Catch shares are a type of limited access privilege program (LAPP), and define the amount of fish each participant in the fishery can harvest. Examples of catch programs in Alaska are the Pacific halibut and sablefish Individual Fishing Quota (IFQ) system, BSAI Crab Rationalization Program, AFA & Amendment 80 Cooperatives and the GOA Rockfish program.

Catch share programs can typically result in consolidation of the fleet through the sale of privileges, sometimes to absent owners who live outside Alaska and charge a lease fee, or rents, to have the quota fished. Lease rates of up to 70% to an investor are not

uncommon. Advocates of catch shares say that the fishery is easier to manage and safer when there is no race for fish.

A recent article in Fish News regarding catch shares can be found in the [December 21, 2012 edition](#). The process to develop a comprehensive bycatch management program, which may or may not include catch shares, will take years in the iterative public process of the NPFMC. The June meeting in Juneau will be the next opportunity to offer comment. Written comment on June agenda items, to be included in the Council materials packet, will be due May 28th.

Aleutians East Borough Assembly & the First Voyage of the Kennicott to the Aleutians

The Assembly held its April meeting in Cold Bay after the ferry docked today (April 22, 2013), with a workshop at 1 p.m. and the meeting at 3PM. Some members of the Assembly traveled from the communities of Sand Point and King Cove on the ferry to the meeting in Cold Bay.

One of the items on the agenda for the Assembly is a resolution supporting the appointment of Duncan Fields to the North Pacific Fishery Management Council. Duncan has been a strong advocate for communities for his first two terms. Governor Sean Parnell nominated Mr. Fields for a third and final term, along with David Long, a long-time Alaskan fisherman. The Governor also nominated Special Assistants to the Governor, Stephanie Moreland and John Moller as alternates.



Some Assembly members were on the first voyage of the ferry m/v Kennicott to the AEB. The Alaska Marine Highway vessel m/v Kennicott, built in 1998, was constructed to be a cross-Gulf ferry, specifically designed for the roughest Gulf of Alaska seas. However, according to locals, the vessel has never made the trip to the Aleutians East until now. The Kennicott has temporarily taken over

the Aleutian Chain route while the m/v Tustumena undergoes repairs. 2013 is the 50th year of the Alaska Marine Highway System, and the 50th anniversary of the AMHS seems an appropriate year for the Kennicott to make the first trip out here.

June Council Meeting Draft Agenda Items:

North Pacific Fishery Management Meeting – June 3 – 11,
2013 – Juneau, Alaska



- **Observer Program:** First year report; electronic monitoring strategic plan; OAC report.
- **GOA Trawl Bycatch Management:** Initial Review; GOA Trawl Data Collection.
- **GOA Chinook Bycatch non-pollock trawl fisheries:** Final Action.
- **GOA P. cod sideboards for FFL:** Final Action.
- **GOA Groundfish Tendering:** Report

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