



Fish News

Aug. 29, 2011

Legislative Overview Hearing on Pacific Halibut Management Scheduled for Sept. 1st in Anchorage

The House Special Committee on Fisheries is scheduled to meet at 1 p.m. this Thursday, Sept. 1, 2011 at Anchorage's Legislative Information Office (LIO) for an overview hearing on Pacific halibut management.

The hearing is anticipated to concentrate on the catch share plan that the federal government is considering. That plan proposes allocating halibut between the commercial and charter boat sectors.

Those in attendance will include Stefanie Mooreland with ADF&G, Glenn Merrill with NMFS, North Pacific Fishery Management Council Executive Director Chris Oliver, Mark Vinsel with United Fishermen of Alaska and Kathy Hansen with the Halibut Coalition.

The LIO is located in downtown Anchorage at 716 W. 4th Avenue #220.

BiOp Review Document Commended at Public Meeting

By Ernest Weiss, AEB Community Development Coordinator

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The industry panel brought forth other theories for the Steller sea lion decline during the public meeting on the BiOp review document.

A large crowd turned out for a public meeting in Anchorage last week (Aug. 22, 2011) to provide comments about an independent scientific panel review report on the Biological Opinion (BiOp) Fisheries Management Plan for the Bering Sea/Aleutian Islands. An industry panel member praised the BiOp Review document and the agency sponsors for setting a new bar on how a scientific review should be conducted.

The industry panel also brought forth other theories for the Steller sea lion (SSL) decline,

including a contamination theory related to three underground nuclear detonations at Amchitka between 1965 and 1971.

In November 2010, The National Marine Fisheries Service (NMFS) accepted comments between the draft release and the final publication of the 2010 North Pacific Groundfish Fishery Biological Opinion (BiOp). However, at that time, there was no immediate independent scientific review of the document, even though there was an obvious lack of consensus among scientists and from those in the industry.

In April 2011, the Washington State Department of Fish and Wildlife (WDFW) and Alaska Department of Fish & Game (ADFG) initiated an independent panel to review the BiOp. The panel released the draft document, *An Independent, Scientific Review of the Biological Opinion (2010) of the Fisheries Management Plan for Groundfish Fisheries in the Bering Sea/Aleutian Islands Management Area* on July 21 2011. The draft BiOp Review disputes much of the analysis and many of the conclusions in the BiOp.

In the executive summary, the independent scientific panel said, “We do not agree with the finding of JAM (jeopardy or adverse modification) for Steller sea lions in the western and central Aleutian Islands as concluded in the BiOp for the FMP.”

During last week's meeting, the BiOp Review Panel Co-Chair Dave Bernard gave a review of the draft BiOp at the meeting and then turned the presentation over to Doug DeMaster of NMFS. Dr. DeMaster was somewhat defensive of the BiOp, but said, "the agency erred on the side of the species at risk".

Former North Pacific Fishery Management Council member Dave Benton testified that the 10-plus years of closure to the pollock fishery in the Western Aleutian Islands has not resulted in increased levels of the SSL in that area. He also said that fact was not analyzed in the BiOp, and should also have been mentioned in the draft BiOp Review.



In the executive summary, the independent scientific panel said, "We do not agree with the finding of jeopardy or adverse modification for Steller sea lions in the western and central Aleutian Islands as concluded in the BiOp for the FMP."

Written comments on the draft BiOp Review will be accepted until August 31st at StellerSeaLionComments@dfw.wa.gov

The BiOp can be found [here](#).

Click on the link below to read the draft Biop review:

http://wdfw.wa.gov/conservation/steller_sealions/fmp_biop_ind_sci_rev_21july2011.pdf

Coast Guard Proposes Rule to Waive Citizenship Requirements for Crewmembers on Commercial Fishing Vessels

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The U.S. Coast Guard has posted a proposed rule on the Federal Register that provides a waiver of citizenship requirements for crewmembers on commercial fishing vessels. A waiver request would have to be accompanied by a successful dockside safety examination. Comments on the proposed rule are **due by November 16, 2011**.

For more information, visit the link below:

[Waiver of Citizenship Requirements for Crewmembers on Commercial Fishing Vessels](#)

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