



Fish News

June 17, 2011

Highlights from Recent Council Meeting in Nome

By Sam Cotten, AEB Fisheries Consultant & Council Member



**Sam Cotten, AEB Fisheries
Consultant**

The meeting in Nome allowed interested parties from western Alaska easier access to the council. Issues on the agenda included Chinook salmon bycatch in the Gulf of Alaska, chum salmon bycatch, trawl issues in the Northern Bering Sea research area and catch specifications for Norton Sound red king crab and Aleutians Islands golden king crab. Once again, there will be no season for Adak red king crab.

Gulf of Alaska Chinook Salmon Bycatch:

Gulf of Alaska Chinook salmon bycatch has been a concern for many years. The concern was elevated to alarm in 2010 when record numbers were caught in the pollock fishery. The council set a limit of 25,000 Chinook salmon, after which the pollock fishery would be halted. The 25,000 was apportioned between the Central Gulf (Kodiak) and the Western Gulf (Sand Point and King Cove). The split, 18,316 for the central Gulf and 6,684 for the western Gulf, reflected numbers that would curtail the pollock fisheries only in unusually high bycatch years. New information over the next few years gained from improved genetic studies and an expanded observer program may prompt the Council to revisit the issue.

Chum Salmon Bycatch in the Bering Sea Pollock Fishery:

Historically, chum salmon bycatch in the Bering Sea pollock fishery has varied widely, from under 10,000 to more than 700,000 fish. The Council has analyzed numbers from 50,000 to 350,000 as we attempt to establish control measures, including hard caps. Rather than set a simple hard cap, the Council is exploring other methods of control, including specific area closures and specific time periods when pollock fishing would close after a certain number of salmon have been caught. The issue is likely to come up again within the next year.

It's interesting how much attention the Area M June salmon fishery receives during these discussions. Many folks from the Nome area as well as much of Western Alaska feel the Area M takes much more of the salmon bound for Western Alaska than the pollock trawlers. The State of Alaska and the Alaska Board



The Council is exploring other methods of chum salmon bycatch control, including specific area closures and specific time periods when pollock fishing would close after a certain number of salmon have been caught.

of Fisheries manage salmon. Area M will again be considered in March 2013. The ongoing genetic work dealing with Western Alaska salmon will be complete in time to be considered at the 2013 meeting. It remains to be seen what the new work will show, but most of the work to date suggests that while the June fishery does intercept chums bound for Western Alaska, it doesn't have a significant impact on any particular run. The new genetic work being done is referred to as the Wassip study (Western Alaska Salmon Stock Identification Project). That work has been closely followed by AEB WASSIP representative Beth Stewart, me, Dick Jacobsen, Denby Lloyd (contractor for the Area M seiners) and others interested in ensuring that Area M is treated fairly.

Crab Action:

There were no real surprises on any of the crab actions. Pribilof Blue king crab is still classified as over-fished, and the Council is working on a rebuilding plan. Adak red king crab has very little data available, and the few fish available were not enough to open the fishery. Aleutian Island golden king crab catch levels will likely remain in the six million pound range.

Borough Recognizes Local Fishermen for Participation in Chinook Bycatch Measures



Taylor Lundgren (left) and Kylie Thompson testify during the Council's April 2011 meeting in Anchorage.

Now that the dust has settled and the Council is moving forward on the Chinook bycatch control measures, the Borough would like to acknowledge a group of local fishermen who participated in this issue. Several fishermen, including Dwain Foster, Kylie Thompson, Taylor Lundgren, Paul Gronholdt, Mike Alfieri, A.J. Newman, Marvin Mack, Danny Cumberlandidge, Tom Evich and Dale Peterson attended Council meetings and brought some very positive energy

to the process as well as a list of ideas on how to mitigate the Chinook bycatch issue. These ideas were implemented in the Council's final motion. (See link below: GOA Chinook Salmon Bycatch Final Council Motion - pg. 3 - last paragraph). Some of these ideas include:

- Correlation between bycatch rates and time of day, based on observer data or anecdotal information. (This reflected the ideas of local fishermen, such as not fishing at night).
- Information on the flexibility under Steller sea lion measures to adjust season dates (Local fishermen suggested eliminating Western Gulf pollock D season and redistributing that pollock back into A, B and C seasons).
- Current trip limit management and implications of lowering GOA pollock trip limits. (The suggestion was to reduce pollock trip limits from 300,000 pounds to 200,000 pounds).

The Borough appreciates the time and efforts put forth by these local fishermen. For more information on the final motion, click on the link below.

[GOA Chinook Salmon Bycatch Final Council Motion](#)

Report from AEB Natural Resources Director

By Beth Stewart, Borough Natural Resources Director & A.P. Member

I returned from a week in Nome where I attended the North Pacific Fishery Management Council meetings. The Council had three agenda items addressing salmon bycatch. One was our own Chinook bycatch during the pollock fishery. The other two were Chinook and chum salmon bycatch in the Bering Sea/Aleutian Islands pollock fisheries.



Beth Stewart, AEB Natural Resources Director

The Nome sub-district in the Arctic Management Area is still experiencing low chum runs even though other districts in the Arctic Management area are doing fine. Several local residents testified about the chum salmon problem at the Advisory Panel meeting and at the Council meeting. Nearly every one of these people spent a lot of time discussing the Area M fishery.

On the positive side, they all referred to our area as the Area M fishery instead of the misleading "False Pass" fishery label. We have spent a lot of effort over the last twenty years clearing up the perception that the fleet sits in False Pass and blocks passage of all westward migrating salmon, and it looks like it has paid off. However, there were two disturbing perceptions that still need attention.

1) Nome area fishermen looked at the total Area M chum catch (June through September) and believed that all of that catch could be taking large numbers of AYK (Arctic/Yukon/Kuskokwim) chums. During AP discussions, I took the opportunity to point out that Area M is managed for local chum stocks and that it is only the June season that has been managed by caps for chums taken during the sockeye fishery.

2) Nome area fishermen believed that the Board of Fisheries has ignored their concerns because Nome is a small, remote village without political power. That belief floored me. Nome has a population of over 3,000 people, paved streets, three grocery stores, three jet flights a day, a big new hospital, paved roads, etc. Compared to Sand Point, King Cove, False Pass, Nelson Lagoon, Akutan and Cold Bay, Nome is downright cosmopolitan. I was totally surprised to hear that locals believed that they had less political power than people in the Aleutians East Borough.

It's a sobering reminder that people outside our region have very little understanding of our communities and the Area M salmon fishery. I hope that the WASSIP work will allay some of the science issues, but it's clear that we need to focus on clearing up some of the bigger misconceptions about our salmon fisheries.

Ideas anyone?

Arni Thomson Begins Second Term as UFA President



Arni Thomson began his second term as president of UFA this week.

Arni Thomson of Anchorage began his second term as president of the United Fishermen of Alaska this week. Thomson was re-elected as president in March. He is also the executive director of the Alaska Crab Coalition.

Salmon seiner Bruce Wallace was elected as vice-president and salmon troller Rich Davis was elected as secretary-treasurer. Both Wallace and Davis are from Juneau and are serving their first terms.

Click on the link below to learn more about the announcement of new officers, at-large board members and committee chairs.

[Read more - UFA press release](#)

ADF&G Provides New System for Commercial, Subsistence & Personal Use Fishery News Releases

(Juneau) – The Alaska Department of Fish and Game is providing a new online system for distributing and subscribing to news releases for commercial fishery openings,

closings, fishing areas, times, and non-regulatory updates about specific fisheries. This system will also allow users to find announcements about subsistence fisheries and those personal use fisheries managed by the Division of Commercial Fisheries.

All fishery news releases and announcements are available in the new system, and subscribers will automatically receive their news releases and announcements via email.

The new system, instructions for use, and subscription sign up is available at: <http://www.adfg.alaska.gov/index.cfm?adfg=cfnews.main> .

Once at the link above click on the “Subscribe to News Releases” button in the lower right corner of form.

Then make the following selections:

Species Group: *salmon*

Gear Class: *All*

Activity: *All*

Management Area: *Alaska Peninsula*

District: *Select the district that you are interested in receiving information about.*

If you select “All”, you will receive all fishery announcements for the South and North Alaska Peninsula. If you do not wish to receive fishery announcements for all, you will need to repeat steps for each individual district you wish to receive notices for. For example, you choose southwestern then click Subscribe. Once you subscribe to that district and want another district, for example, southcentral you then click “Search for News Release” in lower right hand of form to bring you back to the first step again to add another district...repeat steps.

You are reading FISH NEWS, published quarterly by the Aleutians East Borough to help keep the lines of communication open among Alaska's commercial fishing interests. If you would like to have FISH NEWS delivered to you via e-mail subscription, send an e-mail message to ltanis@aeboro.org . For more information about our fisheries, our people, and our communities, please visit us at www.aleutianseast.org and check out our new blog at <http://aebfishblog.blogspot.com/> .