



Fish News

Nov. 6, 2012

News from AEB's Natural Resources Department

By Ernie Weiss, AEB Natural Resources Director

AEB to Hold 2012 Fishermen's Meeting at Seattle's Silver Cloud Inn

The Aleutians East Borough will once again hold a fishermen's meeting this year on the first day of the Pacific Marine Expo in Seattle, November 27th. This year, we plan to teleconference the meeting to each of the AEB communities. Among the attendees will be ADF&G staff, AEB Natural Resources staff, NPFMC member Sam Cotten and AEB WASSIP Advisory Panel

Representative Denby Lloyd. Here is a draft agenda for the AEB fishermen's meeting:



AEB is planning to hold a fishermen's meeting at Seattle's Silver Cloud Inn from 9 a.m. – noon on Nov. 27, 2012.

Board of Fisheries upcoming meetings:

- Area M salmon
- Pacific cod
- Board of Fish participation
- WASSIP and SEDM genetic studies



NPFMC upcoming meetings & agenda items:

- CGOA trawl bycatch tools
- WGOA groundfish fisheries objectives

Updates:

- Crab season
- Observer program
- SSL case
- Acoustic Trawl survey



Discussion

Community teleconference sites TBD.

Steller Sea Lion meetings



The Steller Sea Lion Mitigation Committee is assisting the North Pacific Fishery Management Council in the preparation of alternatives to be analyzed in the environmental impact statement.

The 2010 Biological Opinion (BiOp) stated the endangered western population of Steller sea lions was at risk of jeopardy of adverse modification (JAM), and put in place harsh restrictions on groundfish fisheries in the central and western Aleutians (areas 541, 542 & 543). A court-ordered EIS is being prepared by

NFMS, and the Steller Sea Lion Mitigation Committee is assisting the NPFMC in the preparation of alternatives to be analyzed in the EIS.

The AEB submitted 4 SSL EIS proposals for alternatives concerning WGOA fisheries to the committee.

- Eliminate the D-season in the western GOA pollock fishery and reallocate the TAC from the D season to the three other seasons, equally.
- Change the opening date of the Pacific cod A-season in the WGOA for all gear types.

- Change the apportionment of the Pacific cod TAC in the WGOA from 60:40 to 80:20.
- Add six Steller sea lion Critical Habitat sites within the AEB to the Navigable Transit exemptions in SSL regulations, allowing vessels transiting the area to maintain a minimum of 1 nm from each site, rather than 3 nm, for vessel safety.

The committee accepted the AEB proposals, but is focused on actions for the western and central Aleutians at this time. Recent independent reviews of the BiOp have questioned the validity of the science behind the JAM determination, and raise questions of management measures throughout the range of the western SSL population. Committee Chair Larry Cotter suggested the AEB WGOA proposals could be more fully considered at a later date. Oral arguments in the Ninth Circuit court of Appeals case State of Alaska V. Jane Lubchenco will be heard in Seattle on December 4th.

Chinook Salmon in the Spotlight

The Alaska Chinook Salmon Symposium was presented October 22-23 at the Egan Center by ADF&G to look at Chinook salmon scientific research and to identify research needs. The event was a success and was attended by NPFMC, BoF members and state legislators. The format included ample time for the



audience to pose questions and interact with the panel experts.

According to a presentation at the Alaska Chinook Salmon Symposium in Anchorage, the extremely cold winters in the Bering Sea since 2006 may be a factor in the current Chinook crisis.

According to the first presentation, based on research of 12 data sets from 1976 to 2011 of Alaska river Chinook salmon stocks including Nelson River, we have not seen Chinook salmon abundance this low in about half of those stocks. Other presentations included distribution of Chinook in the pollock fishery, where the bycatch is highest in the B season and in daylight hours. The extremely cold winters in the Bering Sea since 2006 may be a factor in the current Chinook crisis. The first winter at sea is critical to the young adult salmon. Research on these salmon, demonstrates that their diet includes fish, squid and plastics. The Aleut word for Chinook was said to be Chavichax, during a discussion of the local, traditional and ecological knowledge of the salmon

The US Department of Commerce recently designated a Chinook salmon resource disaster for Cook Inlet and the Yukon & Kuskokwim rivers in response to a request from the State.

Other upcoming meetings will also highlight Chinook Salmon:

Chinook bycatch in all GOA trawl fisheries will be on the agenda for the NPFMC meeting in Anchorage December 3-11. Also, a Chinook Salmon Outreach Workshop will be held in Anchorage December 11 & 12, through the Arctic Yukon Kuskokwim Sustainable Salmon Initiative (AYK SSI).

AFN Resolutions



The 2012 Alaska Federation of Natives Annual Convention met at the Dena'ina Center October 18 – 20. The delegates adopted 43 resolutions out of 44 presented. The rules were not suspended to allow for resolutions from the floor. The following fisheries-related resolutions were considered:

- Resolution 12 -20 Reduction of Chinook, Chum Salmon Species and Halibut By-catch in the Bering Sea and Gulf of Alaska Pollock Fishery and in the Russian Economic Zone (adopted as amended)
- Resolution 12-08 Support for the Board of Fish Generated Proposal that would add Pacific Herring to the State of Alaska's Forage Fish Management plan. (resolution was tabled)
- Resolution 12-17 Supporting Alaska Chinook Salmon Disaster Declarations (unanimously adopted)
- Resolution 12-19 Request funding research on declining salmon stocks through Sustainable Salmon Initiative. (unanimously adopted)
- Resolution 12 – 28 Support of Active Salmon Rehabilitation including Habitat Nutrient Enrichment (adopted as amended)

- Resolution 12 – 37 Supporting the Ratification of the United Nations Convention on the Law of the Sea (adopted)
- Resolution 12 – 38 Request Review and Revision of the Yukon River Salmon Treaty to include provisions for Low-Chinook Salmon Productivity Years. (adopted as amended)
- Resolution 12 – 41 Calling for the Establishment of Inter-tribal and Alaska Native Fish Commissions. (adopted as amended)

All of the Alaska Federation of Natives 2012 Convention Resolutions are available here: <http://www.nativefederation.org/wp-content/uploads/2012/10/2012-afn-convention-resolutions.pdf>

King Cove Struggles through Poor Fishing Season



King Cove struggled through a poor salmon fishing season this past summer. Pinks were particularly scarce.

When an Alaska fishing community goes an entire month without fishing, the whole town suffers. That was the case in King Cove this past summer. But that’s only part of the story.

“For the first time in my life that I remember, I didn’t fish during the entire month of August,” said Dean Gould, King

Cove City Councilman, lifelong fisherman and president of the King Cove Corporation.

“It definitely hurts everybody – from the tenders, to the cannery to the fishermen. It hurts the whole town.”

“I set netted in Pavlof Bay during the month of June,” said King Cove Mayor and fisherman Henry Mack, “and it was definitely on the slow end. In July, it just went downhill from there. It was quite sad.”

“We often hear fishermen from other areas complain that Area M is taking all of the fish. But how could that be happening, when our boats are tied up in the harbor?” Gould asked. “We’re hurting just as badly as everybody else.”



Area M pink salmon returns in 2012 are near record lows. King Cove's harbor was full of boats tied up during the month of August as a result.

The 2012 pink salmon season that followed was far worse. The extreme shortfall of pinks on the South Peninsula had a significant impact on Peter Pan Seafood's bottom line as well as on the fishermen and the plant's employees.

“Seeing the King Cove and Sand Point boat harbors full of boats every day and seeing the King Cove cannery quiet every day of the pink season tells the tale of a run disaster,” said Dale Schwartzmiller, Vice President of Alaska Production at Peter Pan Seafoods.

In fact, the Area M pink salmon returns in 2012 are near record lows. Based on Alaska Department of Fish & Game's annual management reports and daily in-season harvest summaries, 2012 marks the lowest harvest of pinks on the Alaska Peninsula since the 1970s, with 660,781 pinks caught. Both the North and South Peninsula combined declined 65.8 % this year, compared to the previous five-year average (2007 to 2011) in numbers of all salmon caught.

“It was pretty pathetic in August for this area,” said Mayor Mack.

“There's an old saying in the fish business,” added Schwartzmiller, “the first case of salmon you can is the most expensive. That's because fish companies have huge overhead costs such as packaging supplies, crew costs and tender costs that need to be spread over a large volume of fish. Where there is no fishing, the result isn't good.”

The lack of fish hasn't been good for the wildlife either, creating additional safety concerns for King Cove residents.

"There have been very few fish in the creeks, so the bears are hungry," Gould added. "They were going from dumpster to dumpster."

The lack of salmon to local streams has brought out a record number of hungry bears. Throughout the summer and the fall, people reported seeing at least a dozen bears roaming throughout the City. Bears have been spotted walking up next to office buildings and homes.



The lack of salmon to local streams has brought out a record number of hungry bears in town.

"They're looking in the windows to see what you're eating so they can have the leftovers," Gould said.



Very few pinks could be seen in local streams during August. In years past, King Cove streams were teeming with pinks.

"This has definitely been one for the books," said King Cove Police Chief Robert Gould. "I was born and raised in King Cove. I started here with the police department in 1971, and I've never seen this many bears."

At times, the number of bears in town was just way too close for comfort.

"We had an incident right by my house," said Dean Gould. "A bear came off the beach, and Carter, my seven year-old grandson, was playing just outside the front door. By the time we grabbed him and got him inside, the bear was only ten feet from the house and was still heading this way."

Fortunately, the number of bears in town has dwindled since the warm weather was replaced with chillier temperatures and snow.

“Thank goodness we haven’t had anyone attacked or chased by bears,” added Police Chief Gould.

Aside from safety concerns, it’s clear the summer of 2012 has resulted in a financial setback for most Aleutians East Borough communities and fishermen. Nelson Lagoon, which relies solely on sockeye salmon, is waiting to hear whether its request for a disaster declaration will be approved by Alaska Governor Parnell and Acting U.S. Secretary of Commerce Rebecca Blank. Nelson Lagoon suffered a decline of at least 65% in the local sockeye catch two out of the last three years. AEB’s other five communities, on the other hand, have other species and fisheries to fall back on.



“There have been very few fish in the creeks, so the bears were hungry,” said Dean Gould. “They were going from dumpster to dumpster.”

“That helps to take some of the sting away,” said Mayor Mack. “But it doesn’t fix the shortfall by any means.”

Report Says Aleutians Have Most Year Round Seafood Processing Jobs in Alaska



A new report from the Alaska Department of Labor demonstrates that most people in the Aleutians region work directly or indirectly for the seafood industry. The study also appears in the November 2012 edition of the magazine, “Alaska Economic Trends”.

The study takes a close look at the economy of the Aleutians West census area. The report’s author says while most seafood processing jobs in Alaska are seasonal and are filled by transient workers, in the Aleutians, nearly 30 percent of the workers are residents of the area.

For more information on this report, click on the link below:

Remember to Vote Today

**Election Day is Today,
November 6, 2012**



The polls will be open 7:00 a.m. to 8:00 p.m. Make your vote count on Election Day!

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