



Governor Walker and Lt. Gov. Mallott Address the North Pacific Fishery Management Council

The day after meeting with Chinese President Xi Jinping (April 7th), Governor Bill Walker and Lt. Governor Byron Mallott shared the high points from their discussions at the North Pacific Fishery Management Council.



Governor Walker and Lt. Governor Mallott discussed their recent meeting with the Chinese president at the North Pacific Fishery Management Council. Photo by Paul Gronholdt.

“I thanked him (the Chinese president) for being the biggest buyer of our seafood,” said Governor Walker.

Walker said he asked ADF&G Commissioner Sam Cotten to figure out how much seafood is exported to China annually, and it came in at approximately \$800-million.

“So, I thanked him (the Chinese president) for that,” the governor said. “We had a wonderful dinner of king salmon at the Captain Cook, and he enjoyed that immensely. I’m always looking for ways that we can continue to market Alaska’s seafood.”

The governor said his visit with the Chinese President marked the longest period of time that he spoke without using the words ‘deficit, budget or permanent fund.’

“He didn’t really have an interest in that,” Governor Walker said. “So it was nice to just be a governor and talk international trade and commerce opportunities.”

Walker said our seafood industry remains a bright spot in Alaska’s future.

“We’re always careful to look for ways we can help as we change how we do business in Alaska,” he said. “Our mission is to make sure we don’t hurt any industry.”

Walker said when one of his representatives visits a foreign country, the question usually asked is, ‘what can we do to help?’ That was a question the governor anticipated when a state representative visited Russia recently.

“I said ‘lift the embargo.’ That limits our ability to send some of our seafood to Russia. That hurts our industry,” he said. “We want to make sure that our borders are open so that we can provide the biggest market possible for our fisheries.”

Lt. Governor Byron Mallott said he sat across from the vice premier of China during the meeting with the Chinese President. He said he discussed fishery imports, inshore fishery declines in China and climate change.

“Climate change is very important to them,” Lt. Gov. Mallott said. “He talked about changes in the oceans, and what that means. It was an incredible opportunity.”

Mallott got a few laughs when he shared a story about what happened after the governor and his team were briefed by security agencies on the importance of cell phones, among other things.

“They’re essentially a computer in your pocket,” Mallott explained. “When the governor sat down to have breakfast with Clem Tillion and myself, he said, “I walked away with someone’s cell phone. It may be that of the President of China. So, there may be a reason for a second contact.”

Mallott wrapped up his comments praising council members for their work.

“Working with the entire council, getting to know each of you from your states, we know that the national and international character of the issues you deal with are hugely important.”

North Pacific Fishery Management Council April 2017 Report

The first NPFMC meeting in Alaska this year was held at the Anchorage Hilton April 3rd through the 10th.

During Staff Tasking at the end of this meeting, the Council passed a [motion](#) to start an analysis to raise the Chinook prohibited species catch (PSC) limit in GOA non-Pollock fisheries. As of April 1st this year, the non-pollock non-rockfish catcher vessel trawlers in the Central and Western Gulf combined had taken 77% of the chinook PSC limit, sure to impact the fishery later in the year.

In 2015, the Council requested an emergency allocation of an additional 1,600 chinook after the limit was reached that year closing the trawl fishery. The Council also took action that year to allow greater flexibility to reapportion chinook PSC in-season between sectors. The genetic stock composition analysis continues to show the chinook salmon bycatch in the Gulf of Alaska trawl fisheries are largely British Columbia and West Coast U.S. stocks, not Alaska bound salmon.

The April Council motion on electronic monitoring (EM) designates Sand Point as an EM service port for pot gear vessels. The Council also supports accommodating up to 120 longline vessels and up to 45 pot vessels in the EM pool for 2018.

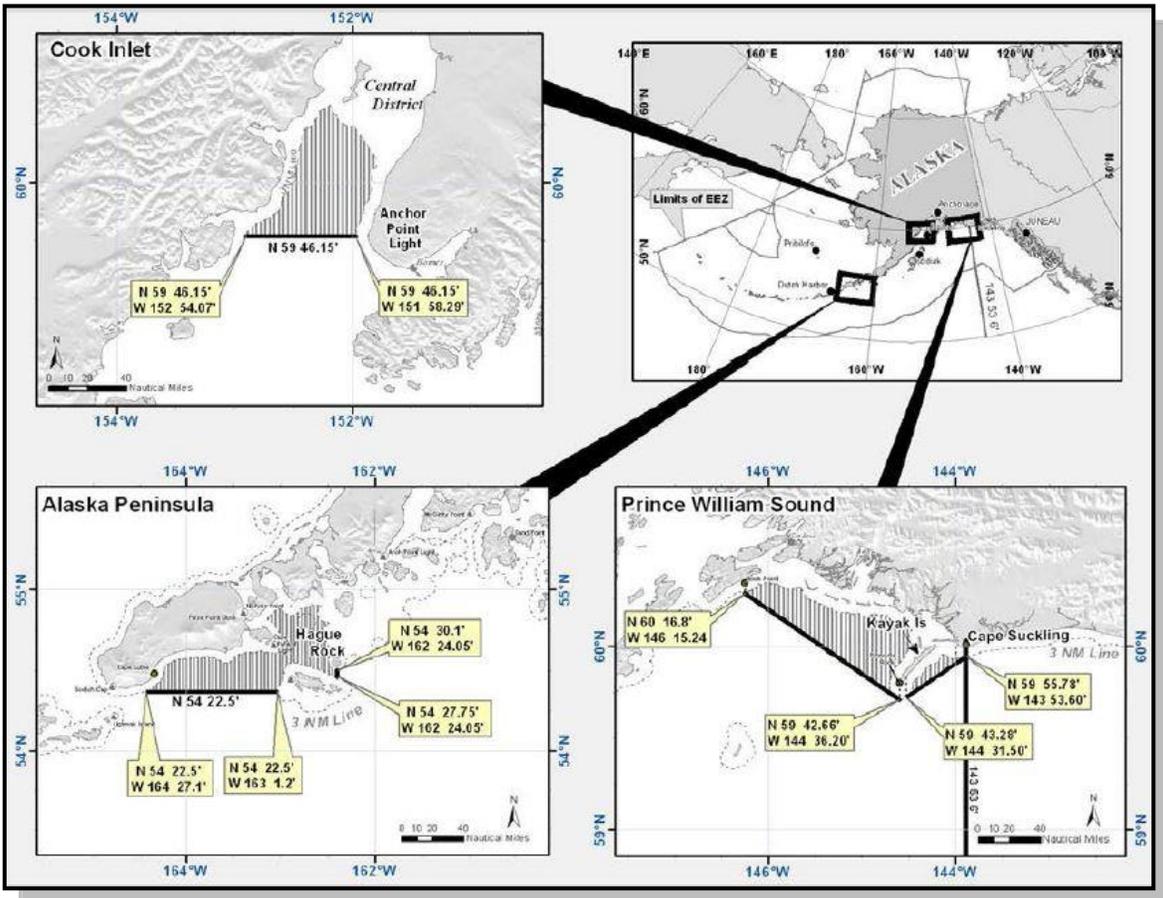
The complex abundance-based management of Halibut PSC action continues to make progress, but only in the Bering Sea; the GOA was removed from consideration at this time in the council's April motion.

The Council adopted updates to the essential fish habitat (EFH) descriptions and maps for the North Pacific, but did not open a process to identify new habitat areas of particular concern (HAPC), at this time.

At the April meeting, the Council adopted the 2017 Scallop Stock Assessment and Fishery Evaluation (SAFE) report, and set the 2017/2018 scallop allowable biological catch (ABC) at 1.161 million pounds of shucked meats, and set the over fishing level

(OFL) at 1.29 million pounds, as recommended by the Science & Statistical Committee (SSC) and Scallop Plan Team.

The NPFMC April agenda also included a discussion paper to begin the process to amend the North Pacific Salmon Fishery Management Plan (FMP), as required by the Ninth District Court of Appeals 9/21/2016 ruling in UCIDA v NMFS. The UCIDA case is a concern to the AEB because the South Peninsula salmon fishery is home to one of the three 'traditional net fishing' areas technically outside of Alaska state-waters, but that the State has always managed. The Council motion found [here](#), initiates an analysis and includes a preliminary purpose and need statement and preliminary range of alternatives.



The Council took no action on two BSAI crab items under discussion: the tanner crab custom processing exemption and the BSAI crab arbitration formula.

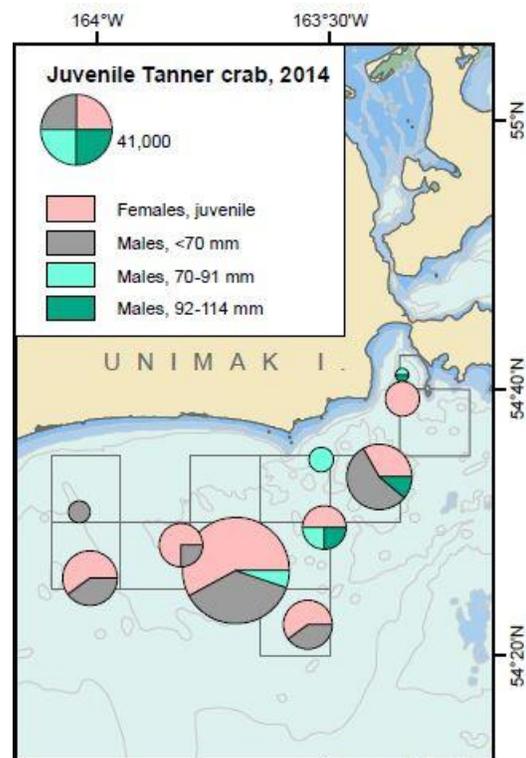
The agenda for the June NPFMC meeting in Juneau is scheduled to include up to two discussion papers related to the take of PSC in the Western Gulf of Alaska groundfish fisheries. In preparation for the June Council meeting, the Aleutians East Borough

Natural Resources Department and the Alaska Department of Fish & Game plan to conduct an outreach meeting in Sand Point to be scheduled sometime in late May, to discuss a number of issues with fishermen. ADF&G Commissioner Cotten and other Department staff, including salmon season managers, plan to be in attendance. The finalized date of the upcoming meeting in Sand Point, also to be teleconferenced, will be published in the next edition of *Fish News*.

South Alaska Peninsula Exploratory Tanner Crab Survey

In 2013, the Aleutians East Borough Assembly set aside \$50,000 that would allow ADF&G to expand their regular summer crab and groundfish trawl survey, specifically to make exploratory hauls around Unimak Bight to look for tanner crab. There has been no tanner crab fishery in the South Peninsula since 2013.

AEB/ADFG Cooperative Agreement 14-108 allowed the Department to complete exploratory hauls for tanner crab near Unimak, Cherni & Kupreanof. This month, the final project report to the Aleutians East Borough by ADF&G fishery biologist Kally Spalinger was published, and is now available through a link at www.aebfish.org.



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