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To: Chris Hladick, Bill Homka, Marjorie Veeder, Michelle Price:

From: Frank Kelty, Fisheries Consultant

Re: Fishery Activities Memo, Crab Plan Team Meeting Information.

The A season trawl fisheries start today at noon. The Pollock A season total allowable catch for 2023 is 40% of the 1.3 MMT allocation which is 520,000 metric tons (1.14 billion pounds) the shoreside allocation is 260,000MT the Unalaska plants Pollock A season allocation is 63.7% of that amount, and come in at 165,000MT in pounds 365 million pounds at and ex-vessel value at \$0.17 per pound would be a value of \$62 million putting the local 2% local landing tax at \$1.2 million the Alaska Fisheries Business tax at \$900,000 and the Resource Landing tax at \$1.6 million (At Sea Processors have a larger piece of the Pollock allocation with the CDQ 10% allocation and Mothership allocation in there sector) With good fishing Pollock A season will last until mid to late March. The trawl fisheries for Pacific Cod, and all the Amendment 80 bottom trawl species Mackerel, Perch, and all Sole Flatfish species also open today as well. The 20-24 crab vessels that worked the Pacific Cod Pot fishery which closed last week are switching over to fish Baiardi Tanner crab which still has 1.2 million pounds to harvest in both the East and West districts. The 4-5 vessels that are working the Golden King Crab fishery fleet, have also started working again they still have 2.3 million pounds to harvest.

The NPFMC Crab Plan Team (CPT) has been meeting since Tuesday I have been attending via Zoom and they wrapped up their meeting at noon today. The CPT spent most of Tuesday and Wednesday morning on a modeling workshop on Generalized Modeling for Alaska Crustacean Stocks (GMACS) on incorporating this new model into all of the crab various crab models. It appears so far that GMACS does a better job in incorporating the survey data in the models. On Wednesday afternoon they went through the Economic Safe (Stock Assessment and Fishery Evaluation) document went through all the various economic inputs of fishery values, employment, community impacts, harvest values etc. etc. The CPT finished up the day doing the Norton Sound Red King Crab SAFE document this stock is in a decline the upcoming winter ice commercial harvest did not take place to have a larger summertime Red King Crab fishery. The CPT recommended and OFL 1.0 million pounds and the ABC 600,000lbs. The TAC amount for the Norton Sound Red King Crab fishery is set by the State of Alaska.

Thursday January 19<sup>th</sup> the morning session was started by Scott Goodman of the Bering Sea Fisheries Research Foundation (BSFRF) Scott gave the CPT a overview of the tagging work we have commented in the past years and the excellent news on the incoming State and Federal dollars for increased tagging studies on Red King Crab by two crab boats for a 30 day charter this spring the project will be manage by the BSFRF. He also discussed the incoming Murkowski \$2.5 million direct appropriation to the BSFRF that will fund crab research for the next three years. I will provide his power point with this memo.

The CPT moved on to Snow Crab Rebuilding Plan which is up for final action at the NPFMC meeting in February. The CPT reviewed the documents Purpose and Need Statement and the Preferred Alternative which is Alt. 2 with Option 2 which would allow a directed Snow Crab fishery under the current State of Alaska harvest strategy. The CPT reviewed economic data and ownership of share in the rebuilding plan. The CPT made no changes.

The next to the issues taken up was Crab updates and Crab conservation and prioritization.

Council requests the Crab Plan Team add discussion of the following items to their 2023 CPT schedule and provide feedback on the relative prioritization of these issues and their ability to improve stock condition.

**Consider the efficacy and ability to identify areas (static and/or dynamic) for groundfish fishery closures to protect snow crab, and suggested areas that could bring meaningful savings.**

1. Align crab PSC limit boundaries with the crab stock management area for snow crab
2. Remove or revise trawl crab PSC limit floors for Bristol Bay red king crab and Eastern Bering Sea snow crab
3. Update trawl crab PSC limits based on status of crab stocks
4. Establish non-trawl crab PSC limits The Council approves the SSC recommendation to form a working group to develop a framework for how to estimate the magnitude of unobserved mortality for crab stocks and how these estimations may be utilized in BSAI crab stock assessments.

**Consider the efficacy and ability to identify areas (static and/or dynamic) for groundfish fishery closures to protect snow crab, and suggested areas that could bring meaningful savings.**

1. Fixed year closures: General spatial distribution of Snow Crab at different life-stages.
2. Fixed partial-year closure areas: a) Distributional shift of life stages intra-annually, b) Determine the extent to which seasonal patterns are consistent across years c) Identify

seasons of particular importance for the biology of the crab (e.g., molting and mating; larval settlement).

3. Dynamic closures that shift in both time and space a) All of the above information is needed b) AND predictive variables that inform distribution in an upcoming season, which would trigger the opening/closing of certain areas.

This topic also reviewed the history of various actions taken by NMFS over the years to reduce bycatch the document it lists bycatch numbers, by species, and gear types areas that have been closed and a whole bunch of other data. I will attach the presentation with this memo for your review.

The CPT finished up Thursday by reviewing models runs for Aleutian Island Golden King Crab and Pribilof Island Golden King Crab. The goal is to get these two crab species also to be included in the GMACS model setup at some future date.

Friday January 20<sup>th</sup> the morning session started a short discussion on moving the start dates for model changes.

We then had a great presentation on the most current tagging studies done by NOAA, ADFG, and the BSFRF the CPT was pleased with amount of work by ADFG, NOAA , and the BSFRF with the satellite tags and other tags we have used to track the movement of Red King Crab and Tanner Crab. I have attached the PowerPoint presentation for your review. Next up was another interesting presentation on Ocean Acidification most of the studies that were done in labs at NOAA Kodiak lab, it is a proven fact that Acidification can cause a great harm to shellfish some interesting take aways from today's presentation was that larval crab didn't seem to be impacted, but juvenile crab were impacted the most mature crab that were impacted the most were Red King Crab and Tanner Crab. But Snow Crab, Blue King Crab, and Golden King not as much they will be doing more studies to try and understand why some species are impacted more than others. No doubt that Acidification is something that has to be monitored, especially since we are seeing the impacts. This is a major impact when we have so many depressed crab stocks at this time and rebuilding programs ongoing that could be impacted further by acidification.

The last topic discussed before adjournment was a presentation on Bristol Bay Red King Crab bycatch distribution models,. This study tracked Red King Crab bycatch in two trawl Amendment 80 fisheries Yellow Sole during April and May and September and October and Rock Sole during April and May. It appears the highest amount of Red King Crab happened in the Yellowfin Sole fishery which is not a surprise since that fishery is the target species for a much longer period of time during the fishing year, The Yellowfin harvest is usually in the 150,000MT range and Rock Sole in the 15,000- to 20,000MT range also the September and October time range had the lowest amount of bycatch of King Crab since the Amendment 80 fleet had left that area. I have attached the PowerPoint with this memo.

The Crab Plan Team will meet again in May possibly in Juneau or Anchorage.

Regards

Frank Kelty

Attachments:

- 1.Fishing Activities Memo
- 2.Crab Plan Team Meeting Information