

Frank Kelty
43915 Via Granada
Palm Desert, CA 92211
fvkelty@gmail.com

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To: Erin Reinders, JR Pearson, Michelle Price, Mayor Tutikoff and City Council

From: Frank Kelty, Fisheries Consultant

Re: Fishery Activities and for the week ending 11-24-2021.

Last week via Zoom I attended the Bering Sea Groundfish Plan Team meeting Tuesday thru Thursday. The Plan Team reviews all the NOAA species assessment authors recommendations on all the species in the Bering Sea, Aleutian Islands and in the Gulf of Alaska. The Plan team recommendations then move to the NPFMC Science and Statistical Panel for their review, and they make the final recommendations on the Overfishing Limit (OFL) and Allowable Biological Catch (ABC) to the full Council and the Council then set the Total Allowable Catch (TAC) for the 2022 fishing season that starts on January 1, 2022. I will touch on the Pollock and Pacific Cod assessment which are the two most important species to Unalaska 2% raw fish tax and the State Shared Alaska Fisheries Business Tax and Resource Landing Taxes. The other species harvested by the Amendment 80 sector such as Atka Mackerel, Perch and Sole species will be address later when we receive the full spread sheet report from the Plan team that address all species in 2022 assessment.

Eastern Bering Sea Pollock

The plan team recommend a huge decrease of 32% for ABC amount for the 2022 fishery amount the ABC in 2021 was 1,625,000MMT the Plan Recommendation is 1,111,000MT. Please remember the NPFMC could change this at the December meeting and there is a Max ABC number at 1,251,000MMT that could be used. The main reason for this reduction is the continuing large year class small fish in the water once again much of the stock is 2- and 3-year fish. I heard one comment that we need to reduce the harvest to let those small fish grow, so a reduction is warranted to get better product into the fishery in future years. If these numbers hold this would be a reduction in the share of the Pollock for Unalaska from 480,218MT (1.1 billion pounds) in 2021 to 326,000MT (728 million pounds) for 2022 fishing season this amount will be spilt at 40% in the A season FY22 budget and 60% in the B season with much of the B season in the 2023 budget year. We will have the final numbers on ABC and TAC amounts after the December NPFMC meeting.

Eastern Bering Sea Pacific Cod

Surprisingly, the Plan Team recommended an increase on the Eastern Bering Sea Pacific Cod stock due to an increase of some stronger year classes moving into the fishery. The Plan team recommended a 24% increase from 123,805MT (276 million pounds) in 2021 to 153,383MT (342 million pounds) for 2022 fishing season. Unalaska harvests between 15% to 17% of the harvest so that in that would be about 54-55 million pounds. This increase will also increase the percentage for the sixty' under pot cod State Water fishery which is based on a percentage of the federal water fishery. Once again, we will see what the SSC recommends to the NPFMC and what they set the TAC amount.

MSA Reauthorization

On Tuesday I listen to the MSA Hearing held in Washington DC by Chairmen of US House of Natural Resources Subcommittee on Water Oceans and Wildlife Rep. Jared Huffman D California. The ranking member of the committee is Don Young R of Alaska who has worked long and hard on the Reauthorization of MSA. The hearing went on for 3-4 hours and had testifiers from all sectors of the country. It was fairly split between NGOs, commercial fisheries, and local native and subsistence users, and sport fishers. Mary Peltola, from Bethel representing Kuskokwim River Inter-Tribal Fish Commission, made her case on the impacts on depleted salmon runs in her region and the impacts they face on the lack of traditional foods, and their way of life and culture she pointed the finger at Alaska trawl fisheries as the cause of the decline. She also wanted the North Pacific Council system changed to add two native seats. The representative from the Ocean Conservancy supported many of Mary Peltola's ideas and weighed in on more work that must be done on climate and ecosystem changes from fishing impacts. Also testifying was an executive with Trident Seafoods who challenged and objected to many of Mary Peltola's comments. He testified about that most of the Chum salmon caught as bycatch were Asian in origin from hatcheries in the far east. He discussed the significant reduction in bycatch in the Pollock and Cod fisheries by the trawl sectors. He pointed out the large dependence that Alaska coastal communities have from the Alaska Seafood industry. He agrees that a better understanding on climate change and ecosystem impacts have further research. Rep Young stated that he would continue to work in good faith with Rep Huffman on making the MSA reauthorization bill a good piece of legislation.

State of Alaska House Fisheries Committee Legislative Hearing on Bycatch

On November 15th Monday late in the day I listen in on this hearing the committee had testifiers from Glenn Merrill, of NOAA David Witherell, NPFMC Executive Director, and ADFG Commissioner Doug Vincent-Lang. They all made great presentations to the committee members I will attach their presentations with this memo. Many of the questions by committee members focused on the bycatch of salmon, Halibut, Sablefish,

Herring and Crab. It was pointed out by Mr. Merrill that only 1% of the Chum bycatch of 500,000 salmon was from fish destined to the Yukon River systems. Many of the legislators from interior and Mat Su Valley did not really understand the presentation and their frustrations became apparent they asked that their presentations are not relevant anymore and need to be changed and update. The legislators from Kodiak, Southeast Alaska and Kenai Peninsula had a better understand of how the Council, NOAA, and ADFG manage fisheries. It also became apparent that many of the legislators that they did not understand the revenues that the Seattle and Oregon based fleets bring to the State of Alaska and to the fishery dependent communities they deliver too. We heard support of including native seats to the North Pacific Council. It was also pointed out and explained how the CDQ system works and that the CDQ groups all have made major invested in seafood industry in Alaska buying harvester quota, processing quota, and entire companies, including harvesting vessels. This was a very frustrated hearing, but Gov. Dunleavy must have been listening shortly after the hearing he has asked that a Commission on bycatch be formed to address bycatch.

Bering Sea Fisheries Research Foundation (BSFRF) monthly board meeting.

On Tuesday November 23, I attended the monthly BSFRF Board meeting. The financials for the BSFRF look particularly good for now, we have reserves of \$1.9 million but we will have few dollars coming in for the next two years due to the decline in all major crab stocks.

The Board of Directors authorized Mr. Goodmen the Executive Director of the BSFRF to wright a letter in support to the Alaska Bering Sea Crabbers grant application for a Saltonstall-Kennedy Grant to assist in funding for research on crab stocks in the Bering Sea. We also authorized Mr. Goodwin to inter-to a Memorandum of Understanding with the North Pacific Research Board and the Bering Sea Fisheries Research Board Foundation to cooperatively fund on research projects on crab stocks in the Bering Sea and Aleutian Islands. We also discussed some cooperative research projects with NOAA, ADFG with funding from the Amendment 80 trawl group we encouraged the Executive Director to follow up on the participation for funding with the AM80 bottom trawl group. We also had a brief discussion on planning issues on how to seek additional funding for the foundation, cap limits on funding projects, staffing and research support. We will follow up with a work session in December on all the above, including the FY 22 budget preparation.

Regards

Frank Kelty

Attachments:

1. Assessment of the Walleye Pollock in the Eastern Bering Sea
2. Assessment of Pacific Cod in the Eastern Bering Sea
3. Article on the MSA Reauthorization Hearing in Washington DC
4. Article on the Bycatch Hearing held by the State Legislature House Fisheries Committee.
5. Presentation on Bycatch by David Witherell, North Pacific Fishery Management Council Anchorage, AK
6. Presentation on Bycatch by Glenn Merrill NOAA Juneau, AK