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To: Erin Reinders, Mayor Tutikoff, and Council Members

From: Frank Kelty, Fisheries Consultant

Re: January Fishery Activities

This week I have been attending NOAA Crab Plan team meeting for three days online via adobe connect. Some of the major take ways from this week meeting is the commitment by NOAA to do the Bering Sea Crab survey work this summer including the Northern Bering Sea area, this is especially important on getting confirmation on the growing Snow Crab (*Opilio Tanner*) biomass which surveys two years ago showed large increase in this stock. I believe if we would have had a survey last year, we would be having a 2021 allocation of 60 million pounds or more instead of the 45-million-pound allocation that was approved. I have attached their power point presentation on the survey work they plan to do. I have had some text correspondence with crab boats on the grounds and they are seeing lots of small crab that they must sort through this is a major issue with the severe cold temperatures they are facing on the fishing grounds.

Scott Goodman Executive Director of the Bering Sea Fisheries Research Foundation (BSFRF) made two presentation to the Crab plan team; the presentations are attached with this memo. Scott gave an overview of the growth studies the BSFRF has been doing on *Opilio* and *Baiardi Tanner Crab* they have been working with ADFG and the NOAA Lab in Kodiak on these the foundation delivers live crab to the Kodiak lab for the study work. He also updates the plan team on the tagging studies that the foundation has been doing for years in 2019 the foundation started using the expensive acoustic tags 300 Red King Crab were tagged 2019 along with the standard ribbon tags. The sail drones will be retuning to hunt for the acoustic tags in April and May and we hope we get good information on Red King Crab movements.

The second part of his presentation was on the BSFRF *Opilio Crab Workshop* to be held virtually on January 21-22<sup>nd</sup> 2021 via Zoom. The workshop will be covering, bycatch research projects such as crab pot modifications on pots used top fish Pacific Cod to reduce bycatch of small crab. The workshop will also cover the *Opilio* and *Baiardi* growth studies, tagging, monitoring studies and work being done on standardized survey data. The workshop will have speakers from the fishing industry, government agencies including Canadian Dept of Fisheries Crab biologists. I plan on attending the workshop next week.

The next presentation was by NOAA personal on the Sail Drone tagging study work they explain how the drones operate and find the acoustic tags. The presentation also covered upcoming work they plan to do with the Drones.

The plan team had a long discussion on the Opilio Tanner Snow Crab modeling change that they plan on using soon the Model is called a GMACs model that most of the scientist believe that this model will be more accurate modeling job on the modeling of the total Snow Crab stock assessments. But before the can move forward the have to get the North Pacific Fisheries Management Council Science and Statistical Group to sign off on the use of this new model.

I have included a couple of other presentations that were made at the plan team meeting, they include from the Alaska Bering Sea Crabbers a Captains survey of what they have been seeing on the fishing grounds, a climate change presentation by NOAA and the impacts on climate changes on crab stocks, we then had Crab PSC bycatch presentation this was interesting, this presentation points out that the largest percentage of bycatch is from the crabbers themselves, the trawl sector bycatch percentage of crab is much lower. The final attached is the Crab Industry Economic Safe Document which covers all the economic data on the Bering Sea Crab fisheries. The Crab plan team meeting wrapped up on Thursday meeting after a day and half crab modeling workshop.

Regards

Frank Kelty

Attachments:

1. BSFRF Research Update and Opilio Workshop Information
2. Crab SAFE: Economic Status Report on Crab Fisheries 2020
3. NOAA Crab PSC Bycatch Report
4. Alaska Bering Sea Crabbers Captains Survey Report
5. NOAA Climate Report Impact on BSAI Crab Stocks
6. Sail Drones Crab Research
7. North Pacific Council February Meeting Agenda and Schedule