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Date: April 8, 2022

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

From: Frank Kelty, Fisheries Consultant

Re: Fishery Activities for the week ending 4-8-2022. North Pacific Fishery Management Council and Bering Sea Fisheries Research Foundation Board meeting.

Last Friday April 1st I attended a Bering Sea Fisheries Research Foundation (BSFRF) the first item was to approve the February financials which once again little to no revenue coming in less that \$12,000 from the snow crab landings. The end of February fund balances was \$1.63 million dollars down from on 2021 February revenue of \$1.89 million dollars. The board moved on to legislative activities appointing board members, electing officers, and reviewed the FY23 budget the board decline to pass the budget at this meeting and wanted to have another special meeting on how to increase revenues next year's budget which is facing a huge decline.

We then moved on to the update by Council staff member, Sam Cunningham, and Ben Daly, of ADFG the two presenters updated us and took questions on Bristol Bay Red King bycatch discussion paper that will be before the Council at the April NPFMC meeting. Some of the comments included why this document had gone to the SSC for review this a will happen if so, directed by the Council. It was discussed on how the agencies will get a handle and provide more information on unobserved bycatch of BBRKC at this time they will continued to use an estimated percentage until current information and update science before much more can be done on unobserved mortality on BBRKC. It was discussed the Red King Crab savings area is still the most critical area to protect from all gear types at this time, but would the Council go that far, and this would be significant impact on the Pollock fishery. The board supported the

executive to testify at the NPFMC meeting and provide information on science related issues to the Council. The board had a brief discussion on a bycatch strategy for use in the future.

The executive director gave an update on the on going BBRKC tagging study which is completed on the male king crab and still waiting on the tags to pop up on the tagged female crab. We are also working with ADFG on getting three hundred Snow crab tags on before the end of the fishing season.

The board discussed the ongoing relationship with North Pacific Research Board and at this time we do not have any cooperative projects schedule to work on. We then moved on to discuss the Responsible Fisheries Management (RFM) program which is the certification program that covers all the BSAI crab fisheries finished product that carries the certification sticker on all finished product in the marketplace. The cost to the BSRF is close to \$70K which the board will continue to support this RFM program.

The board received and update and reviewed the minutes of the Bycatch research group which includes members of the Amendment 80 Bottom Trawl, Alaska Bering Sea Crabbers, Scott Goodman of the BSFRF and agencies members of ADFG and NOAA. The purpose of this group is to conduct research to help find a balance between crab conservation efforts and flexible fishing options. The group has a lot of back and forth the main topic at this meeting was to develop cooperative search plan to fill in information gaps related to spatial distribution and crab bycatch. Evaluate the Red King Crab saving area to see if its appropriate or if a more dynamic approach would be better for conservation and fishing. This group will continue meeting and we hope they will make some progress.

Lastly, we had a short update on Bairdi Tanner on stock dynamics and the Alaska Crabbers will be asking the Board of Fisheries (BOF) for a size reduction to four”1/2 inches from five” I believe this request will come up at the October BOF work session and hopefully this change will take for the 2023 crab season. The Board also support a funding request for Madison Shipley a long-time researcher for the BSFRF for five years as she goes for her doctorate at the University of Washington School of Fisheries. The BSFRF will meet again on April 24, 2022.

North Pacific Fishery Management Council Motions April -6-10-2021

The North Pacific Fishery Management Council (NPFMC) convened on Wednesday April 6th and adjourned on Saturday evening April 9, 2022. On Wednesday morning the Council spent the morning on reports from staff and from various State and Federal agencies I will attach some of the most important staff reports such as the ADFG, NOAA fishery harvest reports and the USCG enforcement reports. The Council after lunch moved into its agenda and started on the following items.

C-1 IFQ Omnibus: this issue was up for final action and updated the IFQ slinky pot gear for fisheries for Sablefish and Halibut in Southeast Alaska West Yakutat and Central Gulf. Some of the changes included slinky pots are legal gear for IFQ and CDQ fisheries, and the Council revised regulations to allow use of biodegradable twine in the door latch or pot tunnel. The Council allowed use of jig gear for IFQ and CDQ Sablefish fisheries. They also adjusted pot limit up to two hundred for West Yakutat they did not change the limits for Southeast outside. They also changed the gear retrieval requirement to 7 days of all areas of the Central Gulf except for Southeast outside which will be 5 days. The last change will be allowing the removal of the Adak residency requirement for 5 years which will help Adak development a shoreside fishing industry again. The Motion passed the Council unanimously. That wrapped up the first day on Thursday the Council started the day on C-2

C-2 Recreational Quota Entity Fee Collection- Final Action: The Council recommended Alternative 2 as their preferred alternative. This alternative would establish a fee collection system for the Charter Vessel Operators to fund the Recreational Quota Entity. Option 1: Would be a Charter Halibut Stamp charge stamp to be purchased for anglers over 18 years old. A. one day stamp \$20 three-day stamp \$40 and a seven-day stamp \$60 after 3 years they may increase the fee.

- 1.The fee payment the sportfish guide owners would be responsible for all fees.
- 2.Charter Vessel Guides would be responsible for there is a validated Halibut Stamp on each vessel.

3. The fee payment and charter stamp validation would need to occur before departure leaves for fishing. The Motion passed the Council unanimously. The Council moved on to item C-3 Scallops.

C-3 Scallops: The Council move the Science Statical Committee recommendation on Scallops allocation for the 2022 season as follows Overfishing limit 1.284 million pounds and the Allowable Biological Catch of 1.156 million pounds. The State of Alaska ADFG sets the Total Allowable Catch at a later date. The Motion passed the Council unanimously.

D-1 Bristol Bay Red Crab Information: This was a very contentious issue that had over thirty testifiers on this issue it had to do with the total collapse of the Bristol Bay Red King Crab fishery. The Council took the staff report on D-1 and then adjourned for the day. On Friday morning the Council accepted question of staff members the discussion paper they reviewed showed information of the importance of the Red King Crab saving area to the Red King Crab stock especial during mating and molting time late January through March when Red King Crab are in a very is very venerable being in a Soft-Shell condition. The discussion paper pointed out that the pelagic trawl gear that is allowed the saving area during the Pollock A the study pointed out that a good portion on time the gear was on the bottom damaging Red King Crab when they are in a soft-shell condition.

During public testimony, the Crab industry testifiers supported a total closure to trawl gear in the Red King Crab saving gear to protect both male and female in the saving area. They spoke forcibly that with the stock at all time low amounts, and the directed fishery closed and closed again in 2022 that action should be taken by the Council for protection of the saving area to save this historic fishery. The trawl sector naturally was concerned with where this was heading, the saving area during A season is a very productive area for the Pollock sector during the A season. The trawl sector stated that there is no real evidence that the Pollock fleet is at fault of the collapse. They mentioned the high amount of bycatch in the direct King Crab Fishery, sixty 'ft over and under sixty' foot Pot Cod sectors with little no observer coverage at this time. They were also concerned that if the saving area is closed to the trawl sector that it may never open again. The AP panel had a motion that listed many items that should be looked at forming a work group of all fishing sectors, increase observer coverage and caps on bycatch in both the pot fleet in both the directed crab fishery, and in both over sixty' and under sixty' pot cod fleets. Naturally, the pot sector disagreed with the significant percentage of amount morality rate that

NOAA uses and would like a study on how the percentage of mortality is developed. We had quite a bit of back and forth by both sector in the end I believe all sectors would look at what they came due voluntarily to work do things to assist in changing fishing measures that will assist in the protection of Red King Crab. Testimony went all day Friday and finished up on Saturday morning. Ms. Baker the representative for ADFG on the Council made the Motion on D-1. Some of the highlights on this long motion are as follows. (The full motion will be attached with this memo.)

- Voluntary actions in the to avoid and reduce, mortality in the non - directed fisheries.
- Measures should be taken directed crab fishery reduce, mortality of Bristol Bay Red King Crab. (BBRKC)Research that would inform the development of more flexible and effective spatial management measures on gear modifications to reduce impacts on the BBRKC stock or to evaluate mortality in the trawl sector.

The Council requests and expanded discussion paper to look at the following.

1. Analysis of the impacts of annual or seasonal closures to pelagic trawl, groundfish pot and longtime gear in the Red King Crab Saving Area including mating and molting avoidance.
2. Tables for all sources of BBRKC mortality across federal water fisheries. For the pot, longline and trawl fisheries PSC in Area T and in Zone 1 as well as PSC rates in the Red King Crab Saving Area. For the directed BBRKC fishery and the Tanner Crab fishery in the Eastern sub-district estimated mortality presented in table 3-3 from the April 2022 discussion paper that contains total returned catch, mortality and the portion of crab discards that are female crab.
3. A discussion on scientist information needed to create dynamic closed areas such as seasonal or annual shifting closed areas, to protect mature female BBRKC.
4. Information needed to allow Amendment 80 sector to create rolling hot spot closure system to avoid and reduce BBRKC PSC as well as tradeoffs on encounter rates on Halibut
5. Provide information on impacts of groundfish predation on BBRKC. Analysis of prohibiting fishing Pacific Cod with pot gear in Area 512 PSC hard cap for the sixty' under pot cod sector and the over sixty 'Pot Cod sector.

The Motion on D-1 passed the Council unanimously.

D 2 Area Based Management: The Council made two short comments on this issue.

- The Council recommends to Council Coordination Committee (CCC) the need for GIS funding to compete the work of the CCC sub-committee. The calculation of total closed area is an important input on the America the Beautiful Act, as guidance, and an atlas to account for overlapping areas.
- The Council also recommends that CCC sub-committee report highlight that the implementation of conservation areas is most effective when developed through a ground up collaborations with diverse stakeholder groups and agency involvement.

The Motion on D-2 passed the Council unanimously.

Staff Tasking Motion #1 Ideas for Council Process Change: The last five bullet points on areas that could be address and changed.

- Reduce the number of Council meeting from 5 to 4.
- The length and nomination process of AP and SSC appointments.
- Reevaluate the crab and groundfish harvest specifications considering fishery needs stock issues.
- Further consideration of how to address agency B-reports.
- More opportunities for public comment.

The Motion on Staff Tasking #1 passed the Council unanimously.

Staff Tasking Motion #2: The Council recommends: a subgroup be develop the scope of a full day SSC workshop for the February 23 meeting on the management of federal fishery stocks in the Northern Region due to the many changes being seen in many species.

The Motion on Staff Tasking #2 passed the Council unanimously.

Regards

Frank Kelty

Attachments:

1. NOAA Fisheries Report
2. ADFG Fisheries Report
3. USCG Report March 2022
4. C-1 Council Motion IFQ Omnibus
5. C-2 Council Motion Recreational Quota Entity Fee Collection

6. C-3 Council Motion Scallops
7. D-1 Council Motion Bristol Bay Red King Crab Information
8. D-2 Council Motion Area-Based Management
9. Staff Tasking Council Motion 1 Ideas for Process Change
10. Staff Tasking Council Motion 2 Recommendation to the SSC
11. IFQ Fisheries Report