

The Wheel Watch

a newsletter of the

Fishing Vessel Owners= Association
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Thank you for your support!

Dear Longliner:

This newsletter will bring you up-to-date on the Marine Stewardship Certifications, the North Pacific and Pacific Council actions, IPHC, and Washington, D.C. events.

****Eat on the Wild Side ****

There is great news! U.S. produced halibut was officially certified as sustainable by the Marine Stewardship Council, out of London, on April 18, 2006, and Alaskan sablefish will be certified on May 10, 2006. Whole Foods requested to be the first to use the Halibut MSC certification, so on May 3rd, Whole Foods will be doing a national special through their 90 stores. We have supplied them with a 12-minute tape on the benefits of our longline industry. The first five companies to sign up to be certified for sablefish and halibut are: Bering Select Seafoods, Icicle Seafoods, Norquest Seafoods, North Pacific Seafoods, and Seafood Producers Cooperative. I would like to thank Paul Gilliland from Bering Select Seafoods and Tom McLaughlin from Seafood Producers Cooperative for their early help in this project. If you are interested in a copy of our DVD, please call the office at (206) 283-7735.

The Marine Stewardship Council (MSC) certified Bering Sea freezer longline Pacific cod earlier this year. This was received with great interest in Europe. Bering Select controls that certification.

The world's largest retailer, Wal-Mart, announced they would sell only sustainable seafood. Wal-Mart also announced they are to buy all its wild-caught fresh and frozen seafood for North America from "certified as sustainable fisheries." Wal-Mart will put the MSC eco-label on their MSC products, according to Seafood International.

Aquaculture. Strong demand for all types of finfish along with shortages of cod and even some shortages of Tilapia have created a climate for a surge in whitefish aquaculture. Fundy Fish Farms harvested 10,000 Atlantic cod and Norway claims to have harvested 13,000,000 pounds of Atlantic cod early in April. Atlantic cod are genetically dumb and easy to grow. I hope there isn't an Atlantic cod anti-defamation league. Norway's goal is to raise 600 Mt of aquacultured Atlantic cod.

Both Canadian and Scottish fish farms are allowed to shoot sea lions. Oh say it ain't so! This could have an impact on fish farm exports from Canada, Chile, and Europe. It is reported that over 5000 Sea lions and seals have been killed since 1990 in British Columbia. Wild fish harvesters need to press this issue with the Commerce Department. -Canadian Sablefish Association

****North Pacific Council****

I would like to thank Jack Knutsen for attending on behalf of the members of the Fishing Vessel Owners' Association (FVOA) for a full week of council activity in Anchorage.

Subsistence. The Council voted last year on additional reductions to slow up the subsistence harvest and to make it more enforceable. There still seems to be some holes. Here is a 2004 summary produced by NMFS.



Amendment 80. Jack testified with the greens before the Council and the Council voted their preferred action to reduce halibut PSCs by 20 % in Area 4. This would occur with a 5% reduction over four consecutive years. This would be a good outcome. Final action on this should come in Kodiak at the NPFMC meeting.

Charter Halibut Management. The Council reviewed the public draft analysis that considered a range of Guideline Harvest Level management measures to reduce charter halibut harvest to the respective guidelines harvest levels of 1.432 million pounds in Area 2C and 3.65 million pounds in Area 3A. The council recognized that the ADF&G Commissioner plans to enact State regulations to prohibit retention of groundfish (including halibut) by skippers and crew, except for certain terminal fisheries areas. A limit on the number of lines equal to the number of clients aboard a charter vessel is already in place for Southeast Alaska. Therefore, the Council adopted an annual limit of five halibut per charter angler in area 2C to further reduce charter halibut harvests.

The Council reviewed a discussion paper on a commercial industry proposal for separate accountability of charter and commercial allocations. The Council took no action on the proposal but will further consider it.

The Council initiated an analysis for a moratorium on entry into the charter fishery using the December 9, 2005 control date. The Council will consider whether to analyze the moratorium for all of Area 2C and/or 3A. I am concerned that 3A is not being treated as serious as 2C.

The Council urged the GHL Committee to consider a package of a modified GHL that moves with abundance, some form of separate accountability, and the provision of the proper management tools to management agencies so that each sector of the halibut fishery can be managed not to exceed its allocation.

Bering Sea & Aleutian Pacific Cod Allocation. The Council resolved a long-standing debate concerning the apportionment of Pacific Cod. The allocations are as follows:

<60 Hook-and-line/Pot CV	2.0
AFA Trawl CP	2.3
Trawl CV	22.1
Jig CV	1.4
Hook-and-line CP	48.7
Hook-and-line CV ≥60'	0.2
Non-AFA Trawl CP	13.4
Pot CP	1.5
Pot CV ≥60'	8.4
Total	100.0

The Council's newsletter suggests these allocations were made on historical deliveries; however, there are some that are quick to point out that the catcher processor hook and line fleet were over 50% of the harvest and lost some fish. The jig guys and trawl catcher vessels, who deliver shoreside, got a few more fish than their average. The H&G trawlers lost fish. The lesson here is **do not ask for a reallocation from the NPFMC unless you have six votes or you just might be reallocated.** Then to top all this off, our friend Clem Tillion, representing the

Adak folks, got the Board of Fish to give them 3% (6000 Mt) of the BSAI cod TAC. Apparently, the Board did not make the restrictions very tight and all gear groups assisted the Adak folks in the harvest. Adak ended up with about 15% of the 3%. Something tells me the noose will be tightened next year if Tillion is holding court.

Gulf Rationalization. The Council added options for delivery restrictions that required delivery to the historical processor; deliveries to the community without reference to the processor; and no restrictions. Then the Council took Gulf Rationalization off the June and October agendas. This is definitely a debate with issues. At the Seattle meeting in February, the Advisory Panel presented the Council with 32 pages of how to make the option better. Does LaBrea Tar Pits sound like a metaphor?

IPHC

The Annual Halibut Commission meeting was held in Bellevue, Washington the week of January 16, 2006, and came off without much fuss. The Commission adopted the staff recommendations in all areas. This will result in a 5.37% decrease in the 2006 catch from 2005. The halibut stock is healthy in the central and southern portions of the range but is believed to have declined in Areas 3B and Area 4. The 1994/1995 recruitment classes look strong in all areas except 4B. The PIT tag experiment seems to have gone bust in the westward areas for reasons unknown.

Area	2005	2006	% of change
2A		1,380,000	
2B	13,250,000 includes sports catch	13,220,000	Same
2C	10,930,000	10,630,000	↓3%
3A	25,470,000	25,200,000	↓1%
3B	13,150,000	10,860,000	↓17%
4A	3,440,000	3,350,000	↓3%
4B	2,260,000	1,670,000	↓26%
4C	1,815,000	1,610,000	↓11%
4D	1,815,000	1,610,000	↓11%
4E	359,000	330,000	↓10%
Total	73,819,000	69,860,000	

In 2006, the Commission will double its survey hauling stations in Area 4 in order to better

understand the movement and population trends in the Bering Sea.

Area 3B may be a sleeper for future investment. The IPHC said Area 3B has four good year classes yet to recruit over the next four years. Area 2C seems to be robust as well but at historical highs. Area 3A may continue a decline, however, the scientists left an out. They claim 10% of the 3B resource migrates to the east each year, which could increase the luck for 3A and 2C IFQ holders at the expense of 3B.



IPHC is soliciting applications for IPHC Merit Scholarship. Please call Christine Carr at (206) 634-1838. Applications must be received by July 1, 2006. IPHC is also taking bids for the 2006 Stock Assessment. Please contact Bruce Leaman, Executive Director at (206) 634-1838.

****Pacific Council****

I want to thank John Crowley for assisting at the Council meeting in Sacramento. He serves on the Advisory Panel and has been nominated by the Governor as one of five nominees for my replacement on the Council.

The tier limits for the primary fixed gear fishery for 2006 will be as follows:

Tier 1 = 62,700 lbs. round
Tier 2 = 28,500 lbs. round
Tier 3 = 16,300 lbs. round

The Council adopted the same landing limits on incidental halibut harvest in the fixed gear primary sablefish fishery north of Point Chehalis, as in 2005. Beginning May 1, 2006, for fishing north of Point Chehalis, you can have 100 pounds (dressed weight halibut) for every 1000 pounds (dressed weight sablefish), and up to two additional halibut in excess of the 100 pounds per 1000 pound ratio. Retention of halibut is allowed May 1 through October 31.

For 2007 and 2008, the Council adopted harvest limits. The sablefish harvest limits in 2007

and 2008 will drop approximately 24% from the 2006/07 harvest levels. This has occurred due to the new stock assessment that puts into question the strength of recruiting year classes, assumes that the stock strength was more robust pre 1950, and a change in environmental assumptions known as steepness. Due to questions raised on each of these points, both pro and con, and the trawl survey from 2005 not being part of the new assessment, the Council has requested a full new assessment for sablefish. This could be completed or at least reviewed by this summer 2006.

FVOA has met with the NMFS and the Washington Department of Fisheries this month to try and begin developing some new data assessment for the fixed gear fleet. Due to a large amount of the fixed gear fleet who H&G their products, the heads are not available for aging by the shoreside port samplers. There is also little CPUE data from the longline fleet, as there is no log book program. We are pushing to get this information collected. The lack of this information is resulting, in part, to the lower harvest limits. The Pacific Council area is data poor!

The Council's preferred action is to keep the 100 fathom restriction on the North Coast for the fixed gear fleet in 2007 and 2008 as a preferred action. This will hopefully be finalized in June. We will give up two hot spot areas for yellow-eye in 2007 and 2008. We need to have our members work with the Washington Department of Fisheries on these closed areas.

NOAA Fisheries has published a small entity compliance guide for the sablefish stacking program. It covers the program in a very understandable format. Permit questions, phone (206) 526-4353. We have a copy if you are interested.

****Washington, D.C.****

Magnuson-Steven's Act. The Senate finished its business in December of last year. The House has introduced several MSA bills. I believe the one offered by Congressman Pombo will be the primary vehicle in the House. This bill is similar to the Senate bill. Several items of interest are: (1) the bill exempts the CDQ folks from the 3% IFQ fee—everyone else gets to pay; (2) the bill fails to designate who has fishing authority over fishery regulations in the sanctuaries; (3) when you sell your IFQ's, there will be a 1% tax; (4) there are no processor shares authorized, however, processors can be allocated IFQs; (5) it would allow a Council to force deliveries to a given port, which is probably a violation of the Port Preference Act of the U.S. Constitution; (6) the New England Council cannot have any IFQs unless two-thirds of the permit holders voted for it and the Gulf Council has a similar limitation that requires a simple majority vote. I expect this bill to pass the House this year and MSA to be finalized late this year.

CCF The Capital Construction Fund amendments have made progress, but due to this being a revenue issue, there are multiple committees in the House that this must get approval from. It is making progress but whether it passes before the end of the year is a big question. The bill would allow you to transfer the funds to an IRA and may allow the purchase of fishing permits.

Markets

Halibut. FVOA vessels have experienced hot markets this spring. The price flirted with \$4/pound early in the season. Volume picked up but prices were still averaging over \$3/pound in Seward. When the volume slowed up, \$3.20 to \$3.40 prices were recorded. There is still a lot of demand for halibut. It is unbelievable! As the volume of deliveries increases, the price should settle down but I expect that average price this year to be better than last year. One FVOA vessel ran a trip back to Bellingham and got prices from \$3.40 to \$3.80 the first of April. He also received \$3.95/pound in Alaska the opening week.

Individual Fishing Quota (IFQ) Allocations and Landings From 05 March 2006 through 21 April 2006

Area	Species	Vessel Landings	Total Catch Pounds	Allocation Pounds	Percent Landed
2C	Halibut	472	2,300,232	10,630,000	22
3A	Halibut	418	5,238,469	25,200,000	21
3B	Halibut	45	628,845	10,860,000	6
4A	Halibut	0	0	3,350,000	0
4B	Halibut	3	41,676	1,336,000	3
4C	Halibut	0	0	805,000	0
4D	Halibut	0	0	1,127,000	0
4E	Halibut	0	0	0	0
Total		921	8,209,222	53,308,000	15

Sablefish is hot also. The yen versus the dollar has been in the 116 to 120 range the last month. This is a bit weaker for the Japanese; however, new demand in China and North America has resulted in greater demand overall. "The Canadian sablefish, sold in the early spring, is normally priced lower than product from the Gulf of Alaska, and Canadian sablefish produced in January through March has received \$5.16/pound for larger sizes." – Bill Atkinson Report

Individual Fishing Quota (IFQ) Allocation and Landings From 05 March 2006 through 21 April 2006

Area	Species	Vessel Landings	Total Catch Pounds	Allocation Pounds	Percent Landed
AI	Sablefish	5	236,413	3,968,280	6
BS	Sablefish	7	92,793	2,486,789	4
CG	Sablefish	98	1,415,925	11,234,642	13
SE	Sablefish	151	1,919,087	7,760,192	25
WG	Sablefish	9	340,684	4,709,026	7
WY	Sablefish	47	1,121,658	4,387,154	26
Total		317	5,126,560	34,546,083	15

****Second Watch****

Automatic Identification Systems (AIS). For this 2006 season, commercial vessels larger than 65' will need to have an AIS system. **Commercial fishing vessels over 65' are currently exempt.** However, the Coast Guard announced that shortly they will give notice that all commercial fishing vessels over 65' length overall, will be required to have this on their vessels. The Coast Guard said the fleet will be given plenty of time to comply. I expect that you will need this device for the 2008 fishing season. Vessels less than 65 feet LOA get to skate for awhile.

On April 18, the President of China visited Seattle and had dinner at Bill Gate's home. They served fresh Alaskan Halibut with Walla Walla onions!

The Economist reported omega 3 fatty acids from fish are a crucial component of a healthy diet, particularly, it seems for pregnant women wanting bright, sociable children. The article went on to say "omega-3 helps to determine a child's intelligence, fine motor skills, and also propensity to anti-social behavior. Omega-3 helps. Perhaps this answers the question why Congress is so anti-social these days. Congress needs a diet of Omega-3!

****Calendar of Events****

May 7, 2006 @ 2 p.m.	Seattle Fishermen's Memorial Service	Fishermen's Terminal Seattle, WA
Week of June 5, 2006	NPFMC Meeting	Westmark Hotel Kodiak, AK
Week of June 12, 2006	PFMC Meeting	Foster City, CA
Sept. 9, 2006	Fishermen's Fall Festival	Fishermen's Terminal Seattle, WA 98199
Week of Sept. 11, 2006	PFMC Meeting	To be determined

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Have a safe fishing season!