

The Wheel Watch

a newsletter of the
Fishing Vessel Owners' Association
Room 232, West Wall Bldg., 4005 - 20th Ave. West
Seattle, WA 98199-1290
Phone: (206) 284-4720/283-7735
Fax: (206) 283-3341
Website: www.fvoa.org

Robert D. Alverson
Manager

Carol M. Batteen
Executive Assistant

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****Magnuson Act Amendments****

The sand is shifting all the time. Senator Snowe (R-ME) has introduced Magnuson Act amendments. Her original bill proposed to extend the IFQ moratorium by three years with no exceptions. Recently, there have been suggestions for a one-year extension and possible regional exceptions to the moratorium. Senator Stevens (R-AK) has indicated he is hopeful the Bering Sea crab fleet can negotiate something with the processors for a special exception. They are discussing a “two-pie” concept wherein the harvester is tied in some fashion to a market, based on past deliveries. Senator Hutchison (R-TX), and Governor George W. Bush (R) have asked for an exception for “red fish” and certain reef fish in the Gulf of Mexico. Senators Murray (D-WA) and Gorton (R-WA) are trying to work out some relief for the beleaguered West Coast groundfish industry. Senators Kerry (D-MA) and Hollings (D-SC) have an interesting bill that sets some IFQ guidelines for consideration, but does not mandate specifics for IFQs. It also requires a 60% positive vote from the harvesters to have an IFQ. I think it looks pretty good. It also grandfathers the halibut/sablefish program. Sounds like a winner to me.

It would appear that an actual Magnuson Act amendment bill will not happen, as there is little time to put together all the pieces in the Senate. The House of Representatives does not have a corresponding bill at this time. It is anticipated that Senator Stevens could attach certain Magnuson Act amendments to an appropriation’s bill, which would address the IFQ moratorium as well as other fishing related issues.

The negotiations on the IFQ moratorium are centered around the processors’ position, as articulated by NFI, that they want 50% of the value of an IFQ program or a form of “two-pie” system. To this date, neither the processors nor their organization have put in writing how 50% of the value transfers from fishermen to themselves or which processors are in or out of receiving processing privileges. Without a written position paper on details, the whole process becomes academically weakened. FVOA and the Alaska Crab Coalition submitted written proposed legislation early their year and FVOA and the lower coast fixed-gear sablefish fishermen have had written positions for four years. There is a theory that certain significant politicians want the Councils to have IFQs as a management tool and may use an inability on industries part to negotiate a compromise as an excuse not to do anything, in which case the IFQ moratorium expires on October 1,2000. I discount this. I believe there will be a one-year moratorium with some exceptions.

****Pacific Council****

Strategic Plan - The Pacific Council’s Strategic Plan for the future of managing the lower coast fleet was reviewed by the public over the summer. There were over 70 written responses and over 200 people testified at the hearings. I want to thank Eric Olsen, Art Hodgins, Arnold Jarstrom, Otto and Gary Bogen, John and Jack Crowley, John Haram, Don Jester and Laura Deach for attending and participating in the Seattle hearing. The Plan recommends a minimum of 50% reduction in harvest capacity. It suggests using minimum landing poundages to reduce the open access fleet from 1700 vessels to 1100, as well as stacking trip limits for both trawl and fixed gear operations to reduce capacity further in the open access fleets and limited entry fleets.

The ability to accomplish much of what the Council wants will depend on what Congress does with the IFQ moratorium. The Council's ability to allow stacking will be greatly limited with the fixed gear fleet as well as with the trawl fleet without some relaxing of the IFQ moratorium. The Council will receive a draft of the fixed gear stacking and extended season proposal at the September meeting in Sacramento. If the Council thinks the package is complete, it could be sent out for public comment with final action in November. Some of the fixed gear options include (1) stacking permits of either pot or longline on the same vessel as long as one permit has the proper length requirements, (2) a limit of up to three permits per vessel and ownership limitations, (3) permit may be stackable as well as unstackable, (4) season of April 1 through October 31, (5) restriction on at-sea processing of sablefish, (6) second generation owner on board. Of course these options become difficult to achieve if Congress does not allow the moratorium on IFQs to expire.

The Portland November Council meeting will be very important for you as a permit holder to attend if you wish to help make the above happen. In addition to this, you need to call Senator Gorton (Jeanne Bumpus, fisheries aide) @ 202-224-3441, and Senator Murray (Anna Knudsen, fisheries aide) @ 202-224-2621, and Senator Wyden @ 202-224-5244, and tell them of your support. These Senators have been very helpful on our issues and are willing to listen. Tell them what it is like to fish in a 9-day season.

You should be aware that the West Coast Seafood Processors Association has changed their June position and object to the stacking option presented above and the rationalization of the fixed-gear sablefish fishery until federal IFQ guidelines protecting processors are negotiated. They want another year to negotiate something. Make a phone call!

****North Pacific Council****

Sea Lions and Pacific Cod - The Council will be asked to comment on restrictions proposed on the trawl and longline/pot fleets for Pacific Cod in the Bering Sea and Gulf of Alaska. The reason for the restriction is that NMFS does not want you competing for cod that the sea lions might want to eat. There are a set of very complicated options being proposed by NMFS. Option 2, below, seems to be the preferred action by NMFS. It has been determined that sea lions eat approximately 35% pollock and cod in their diet. Salmon and herring account for 65-75%. Some of you have asked if the salmon fishery will be affected. My guess is no. I believe the environmental lawsuit is intended to affect primarily the trawl fleets and even though it may seem illogical not to focus on the near shore fleet closest to the sea lions primary food source, salmon and herring, I suspect the powers that be, will leave salmon alone. Similarly, the inside three mile jig and pot fishery for cod, which takes up to 20% of the quota of Pacific Cod, will not be restricted. The argument will be that the offshore trawl and fixed gear restrictions will satisfy the Endangered Species Act requirements. I suspect those industry people who get hit with restrictions may sue to get others to share the pain of conservation. This issue is a horrible situation. At this time, sablefish and halibut are not part of the ESA focus. However, there is a new enviro group in Juneau that has suggested that closure of the Aleutian Islands to all fishing would protect Stellar Sea Lions and satisfy President Clinton's request to set up no fishing marine reserves. The following are options for the Pacific Cod fleets.

BSAI - Create a separate Aleutian Islands management area for Pacific cod with a separate TAC

Bering Sea Subarea

Area	Seasonal % of Annual TAC	
	A (Jan. 20 - April 30)	B (May 1 - Nov. 1)
Bering Sea harvest amount	40%	60%
Limit within Bogoslof Foraging Area (critical habitat within the Sea Lion Conservation Area [SCA])	20%	Based on avg survey biomass in SCA (1995-99) 6%. Limit = (6%*60%) = 3.6%

Aleutian Island Area

Area	Seasonal % of Annual TAC	
	A (Jan 20-April 30)	B (May - Nov 1)
Aleutian Islands harvest amount	40%	60%
Limit within critical habitat	20%	Based on survey biomass in CH (1997) 80.5% Limit=(80.5%*60%)=48.3%

Close rookeries and important haulouts to fishing for Pacific cod (same sites as previously considered for pollock trawl exclusion zones under the December 1998 biological opinion with additional sites for the Aleutian Islands Area;)

Options:

- Close the Aleutian Islands to fishing for Pacific Cod

GOA

Area	Seasonal % of Annual TAC	
	A (Jan 20 - April 30)	B (May 1 - Nov. 1)
GOA harvest amount	40%	60%
Limit within Critical habitat	20%	Based on survey biomass in CH (1999) = 53% Limit = (53%*60%) = 31.8%
	<i>Western Limit</i>	<i>Central Limit</i>
	Biomass = 66% Limit = (66%*60%) = 39.6%	Biomass = 45% Limit = (45%*60%) = 27%

Options:

- Consider no B season CH limit (closure around rookery and haulout sites only)
- July 1 B season start date

Alaska State Fishery: to be considered for parallel action by the State of Alaska (not part of this

- action)
- Close rookery and important haulouts to fishing for Pacific cod
- Two fishery seasons

Some Halibut/Sablefish IFQ statistics

Table III-o: Vessels Participating in Sablefish Fishery; <i>Catcher Vessels</i>	92	93	94	95	96	97	98	99
<i>All Unique</i>	1,123	915	1,139	517	503	504	449	443

Table III-n: Vessels Participating in Halibut Fishery; <i>All Vessels Landing</i>	92	93	94	95	96	97	98	99
<i>All Unique</i>	3,452	3,393	3,450	2,057	1,962	1,925	1,601	1,613

Quota held by those who did not receive QS/IFQ by initial issuance: 13.4% halibut 7% Sablefish

1999 number of transaction terminals: 12,451; Percent reported by terminals: 97%.

Top 5 Alaska Halibut Ports 1999

Port	1999 Rank	1999 pounds (Net wt.)	Percent Of 1999	1995 Rank	1996 Rank	1997 Rank	1998 Rank
Homer	1	11,563,889	20.5%	2	2	3	1
Kodiak	2	10,065,891	17.8%	1	1	1	2
Seward	3	6,823,915	12.1%	5	3	4	3
Dutch/Unalaska	4	5,197,176	9.2%	4	4	2	4
Juneau	5	2,985,964	5.3%	13	8	8	7

Top 5 Alaska Sablefish Ports 1999

Port	1999 Rank	1999 Pounds (Round wt.)	Percent Of 1999	1995 Rank	1996 Rank	1997 Rank	1998 Rank
Seward	1	6,239,105	24.6%	1	1	1	1
Sitka	2	3,304,885	13.0%	2	2	2	2
Kodiak	3	2,636,574	10.4%	4	3	3	3
Dutch/Unalaska	4	2,549,255	10.0%	3	4	4	4
Homer	5	1,510,581	5.9%	9	8	9	6

Markets

Halibut. Inventories increase to 5,935,000 as of August 1st. This was a 20 percent rise over last year. August was a slow month and prices remained high. Seattle prices were \$2.86 to \$3.035 for under 20's, \$2.89 to \$3.06 for 20-40's, and \$3.10 to \$3.16 for 40 ups. Prices began to weaken in Homer and fell the last day of August to \$2.20 for under 20's, \$2.30 for 20-60's, and \$2.35 for over 60 pounds. Rumors of chalky fish have caused some concern. Retail prices has seen halibut at prices as high as \$12.00/pound for halibut.

Individual Fishing Quota (IFQ) Allocations and Landings						
From 15-MAR-00 through 05-SEP-00						
-----TAC -----						
Area	Species	Vessel Landings	Total Catch Pounds	Allocation Pounds	Remaining Pounds	Percent Landed
2C	halibut	2,660	6,668,604	8,400,000	1,731,396	79
3A	halibut	2,408	13,651,774	18,310,000	4,658,226	75
3B	halibut	740	11,067,041	15,030,000	3,962,959	74
4A	halibut	358	4,026,909	4,970,000	943,091	81
4B	halibut	167	2,840,482	3,928,000	1,087,518	72
4C	halibut	137	634,859	1,015,000	380,141	63
4D	halibut	48	1,144,586	1,421,000	276,414	81
4E	halibut	0	0	0	0	0
Total		6,518	40,034,255	53,074,000	13,039,745	75

Sablefish. The market still seems good. With about 80 percent of the harvest in, prices have been strong all year for fishermen. The price in Alaska has been \$3.40 (under 4's), \$3.60 (4-5's), and \$3.75 (5 up) (from Homer Auction page), and prices for the lower coast were approximately \$3.40-\$3.50 for 7 ups, \$3.35-\$3.40 for 5-7's, \$3.00 for 4-5's, \$2.75-\$2.80 for 3-4's, \$2.30-\$2.40 for 2-3's, and \$1.85-\$2.00 for 1-2's. The approximate average weight (size) delivered was 3-3-1/2 pounds.

Individual Fishing Quota (IFQ) Allocations and Landings						
From 15-MAR-00 through 05-SEP-00						
-----TAC -----						
Area	Species	Vessel Landings	Total Catch Pounds	Allocation Pounds	Remaining Pounds	Percent Landed
AI	sablefish	97	1,333,972	3,215,189	1,881,217	41
BS	sablefish	82	606,281	1,296,305	690,024	47
CG	sablefish	574	8,697,526	10,105,886	1,408,360	86
SE	sablefish	699	6,400,164	7,832,944	1,432,780	82
WG	sablefish	148	2,749,096	3,245,171	496,075	85
WY	sablefish	265	3,710,341	4,230,627	520,286	88
Total		1,865	23,497,380	29,926,122	6,428,742	79

Come join us for the 12th Annual Fishermen's Fall Festival @
 Fishermen's Terminal on Saturday, September 23, 2000
 Come dunk your favorite personality - have fun and raise money for the
 Seattle Fishermen's Memorial at the same time!

Gary Stauffer	NMFS	11:30 - 12:00 pm
Shelly Beery	Port of Seattle	12:00 - 12:30 pm
Bob Scofield	Dorian Metal Fabrication	12:30 - 1:00 pm
Devonn McGrorty	United Catcher Boats (UCB)	1:00 - 1:30 pm
Gary Stewart	Fishermen's Memorial Committee	1:30 - 2:00 pm
Kathleen Bath	Highliner Tavern	2:00 - 2:30 pm
Bob Alverson	Fishing Vessel Owners' Assn. (FVOA)	2:30 - 3:00 pm
CLOSED FOR SURVIVAL SUIT RACES		3:00 - 3:30 pm
John Iani	UniSea	3:30 - 4:00 pm

Come dunk your favorite Fishing Vessel Owners' Association Manager!

Calendar of Events

Sept. 11-15, 2000	Pacific Fishery Management Council Meeting	Red Lion Hotel Sacramento, CA
Sept. 23, 2000	Fishermen's Fall Festival	Fishermen's Terminal Seattle, WA
Oct. 2-6, 2000	North Pacific Fishery Management Council Meeting	Sitka, AK
Oct. 30-Nov. 3, 2000	Pacific Fishery Management Council Meeting	Doubletree - Columbia River Portland, OR
Dec. 4-10, 2000	North Pacific Fishery Management Council Meeting	Anchorage, AK

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Fishermen's Fall Festival!
 September 23, 2000
 11 a.m. - Dusk