

# The Wheel Watch

a newsletter of the  
Fishing Vessel Owners' Association

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Dear Longliner:

This newsletter will bring you up-to-date with regards to action at the Pacific Council, the North Pacific Council, and market information.

## **\*\*FVOA Website\*\***

Please look at our website at [www.fvoa.org](http://www.fvoa.org) for updated IFQ landing reports, cold storage reports, recipes, newsletters, and /or direct links to your favorite fishery agency.

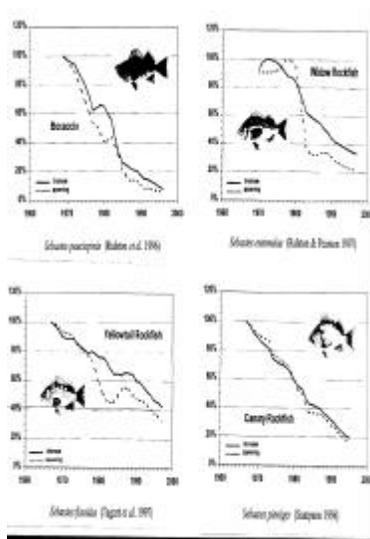
## **\*\*Pacific Council\*\***

**Observer Program.** The Pacific Council voted at its spring meeting to establish an observer program. The President's budget identified \$2 million for a West Coast observer program. Senators Slade Gorton and Patty Murray were instrumental in getting the Senate Appropriations Committee to support the \$2 million for an observer program. Additionally, Senator Gorton has proposed legislation that would provide the Pacific Council to be able to fund an observer program similar to the provisions provided to the North Pacific Council. These actions have the usual suspects nervous.

The Council set up an observer design committee and an interesting debate has developed. The \$2 million can provide between 15 to 20 full-time observers. Hence, any program must be focused on where the Council sees their biggest conservation issue. However, there is a group supported by arguments from Oregon that the limited observers should be spread out over the charter fleet, the open access, and all other harvesting interests. The net effect of such a broad program is that little information will be gathered to manage from. The charter and open access fleets land between 5 to 7 percent of the total quotas. The Washington members seem to support a more focused observer program, targeted at where the greatest poundage is harvested, mainly the rockfish fishery, which is harvested by the bottom trawl fleet and fixed-gear fisheries.

Oregon additionally announced that the data from their 1996-1997 pilot observer program is still not available. The much awaited June unveiling of this data went poof! Preliminary information showed 33 to over 40 percent discards. Oregon representatives indicated September may be when they get the information available. It almost seems to appear that Oregon is playing hide the ball with critical management information and their position on an unfocused observer program gives the appearance that they do not want to know what is happening. The Oregon spokesman at the Council suggested, because of Oregon's pilot observer program, the bottom trawl fleet need not be examined closely. Of course, the Oregon pilot program still has not released their information. The crunch bird still cometh! (The whiting fleet is already observed and would not be part of this observer requirement.)

The Pacific Coast rockfish management is a national disgrace. We have cut harvest levels in most rockfish species by 30-to-60 percent over the last two years. We received the following charts on critical rockfish species for off Oregon, Washington, and California. Currently, Pacific Ocean Perch, Ling Cod and Bocaccio rockfish are determined to be overfished. Additionally, Widow rockfish, Cow Cod, and Canary rockfish may be added to the overfished list. Mandatory rebuilding programs will have to be implemented. Currently, the rockfish and Dover sole fisheries are producing one-third to one-fourth the harvest levels than



when management began.

The primary reason for this has been improper aging assumptions in the population dynamics models. Instead of 15 to 20 year life span, they are being reassessed at 30 to 120 year life spans for different species. Unaccounted discards at sea, which have been increasing due to the inefficient trip limit regime, has had an impact. Below are several graphics prepared by NMFS. When a biomass is reduced to 25 percent of its original biomass, it is automatically determined to be overfished.

There were rumors that Mr. Rod Moore, Manager of the West Coast Seafood Processors Association, who represents the shore-based coastal processors, was opposed to the \$2 million observer allocation. He clarified that position before the Council with the following statement.

“My comment to several people that I talk to quite frequently in Washington, D.C., was that given what I see coming out and given the fact there is only \$2 million available, in my opinion, we would be better off taking the \$2 million and putting it into groundfish research and management rather than trying to set up a program that was doomed to failure for this year and in the hopes that we could get a larger amount later on”.

If the West Coast Seafood Processors Association cannot have the full \$4 million for an observer program, they apparently do not want the residual \$2 million dedicated for observers. Now if you had invested in an expensive shore-side processor,

wouldn't you demand from management to have total accountability of harvest in order to protect the long-term interests of your investment? As my 16-year old daughter would say, "duh, Dad!"

**Sablefish Season.** This season will open on August 16, 1999 and close nine days later on August 25, 1999 at noon. Those vessels delivering into Puget Sound processors will have 30 hours to get to a dock; otherwise, it is an at-sea closure. The projected tier limits are as follows, though they could change a little depending on the monthly trip limit deliveries between now and August 16. I expect a final tier number by mid-July. Remember, the lower coast has no overage tolerance on their harvest trip limits.

Tier 1	Tier 2	Tier 3
84,806	38,326	22,017 Round
53,427	24,145	13,870 Dressed

We have two tier 2 permit holders who would like to lease their permits to someone. If you are interested, please phone the Association for more information.

**Stacking Permits.** FVOA sponsored a stacking and IFQ meeting for sablefish on June 1-2, 1999 in Portland, Oregon. We received a report from Dr. Hastie with NMFS. His report indicated if stacking was permitted in 1999, the season would likely have to be shortened by a day and the tier levels reduced 5 to 7 percent. On the other end, if all the tiers were allowed 100 percent harvest opportunities under a 6-month IFQ option, all tiers would be lowered by 20 percent. There would be some positive offset due to incorporation of the mop-up fishery.

Some of the main attributes of a stacking provision that were agreed for analysis were no more than 3 permits per vessel, the permits could be unstackable, as well as stackable. The IFQ option was discussed and there was agreement to roll the tiers into fixed IFQ blocks, require a second generation on-board provision, allow for leasing to first and second generation opportunities, and to have a maximum ownership provision. The stacking option has slipped as a priority item for the Council due to the rebuilding programs mandated for the overfished species. I would not expect a stacking option functional until the 2001 season. The IFQ option will largely depend on what Congress does about the IFQ moratorium that expires October 2000. Congress may have hearings on this in July.

Jack Crowley, John Crowley, and Charlie Noggle testified on FVOA issues at the Portland meeting.

## **\*\*North Pacific Council\*\***

The Council had a marathon session in Kodiak in June—it went 8 days. Sea Lions and sideboards on American Fisheries Act harvest vessels were the principle issues of action. It was a biff, bam, slam type of meeting for the trawl and crab fleets.

**Pacific Cod.** The Council will be taking action to allocate the fixed gear cod harvest in the Bering Sea between pot, freezer vessels and ice-type catcher vessels. The freezer longline vessels could get 79.2% or 85.4% of the fixed gear TAC, with hook and line catcher vessels receiving between .1% and .3% and pot vessels accruing between 14.5 and 20.7% of the spoils.

Can you guess who slipped in an option that would give under 60 foot vessels that are catcher vessels 2% of the Bering Sea Pacific Cod fixed gear TAC? The historical catch by catcher vessels has been minimal. The limitation on length of vessels for Bering Sea fishing is ridiculous but typical of southeast Alaska politics.

**Washington, D.C.** rumor control signals that Congress could have some hearings in July on Magnuson related issues. The Senate passed its Commerce Department budget, which includes funding for NMFS. Found deep in the abyss of the report are two line item funding amounts—one for the Bering Sea Fishermen's Association in the amount of \$300,000 and the Alaska Coastal Community Coalition for \$250,000. The BSFA is known for successfully securing CDQ opportunities for Western Alaska. Of course, these opportunities were taken away from fishermen who invested their own money and caught the fish that were ultimately given to CDQs. The ACCC was the group that recently wanted the increase in halibut quota for themselves. One has to notice that groups that represent fishermen who have earned fishing permits by the sweat of their brow, such as the members of the Petersburg Vessel Owners, Alaska Longline Fishermen's Association, Kodiak Vessel Owners; Association, and North Pacific Vessel Owners in Homer, got no subsidy for their operations. FVOA will be submitting a budget request for the year 2001. We invite all fishing organization to do the same. Let's all get in on the trillion dollar gravy train.

**Birds.** FVOA vessels, the F/V Seymour, F/V Judi B, and F/V Quest, took bird

observers this spring, helping the U.W. on bird hooking experiments. All went well. A report will be out this fall. Good news – The NMFS announced that we got our four new short-tailed albatross for purposes of fleet takings renewed for 1999-2000.

**Halibut Charter issues.** The NPFMC approved the initial analysis of a range of management measures to keep the halibut charter industry under the GHL's (Guideline Harvest Level) in IPHC Areas 2-C and 3-A. Unfortunately, the Council also chose to include proposals from ADF&G Sportfish Division. The option was proposed by Dave Benton from ADF&G. These proposals, in the worst case scenario, would give the charter fleet up to 70% of the quota in 2-C and 40% in 3-A in years of low halibut abundance, such as in 1974.

The Council will have a report at its December meeting and final action at its February meeting on this issue. Both meetings are in Anchorage. We will need to have a war contingent available to attend these meetings. The charter industry is currently having all their members send in a prepared postcard, which claims the commercial fishing position is unfair and horrible. The Council's original position was to cap the charter industry at 125% of their 1995 Guideline Harvest level, which they never have exceeded. ADF&G has suggested 150 percent and the amount would not decrease when harvest declines. The Alaska Governor's office and ADF&G have truly revealed their level of respect for the two longline representatives on the Council from Alaska with the above options. In days of old, would Oscar Dyson, Gordon Jensen or Henry Mitchell been given the same lack of respect by the State of Alaska?

## **\*\*Market Reports\*\***

**Halibut.** FVOA vessel prices in the Dutch Harbor area have been \$1.45 to \$1.80; in Seward and Homer, \$2.00, and in Seattle, \$2.22, \$2.35, \$2.45 for under 20's, 20-40's, and 40 ups.

The first three months of the season, compiled on June 15, 1999, saw 44 percent of the quota harvested with five months to go. In addition to this, the cold storage reports through May 31, only show an increase of less than a million pounds. Cold storage through May 31 shows 3,374,000 pounds, 43 percent less than the year before. At this time, the market seems to be good and be strong through the summer and fall.

There was a report in the Anchorage Daily news in late June that a Nova Scotia

group and an Icelandic company (Fisker) will put up \$10 million to begin a halibut farming operation in eastern Canada. In a recent report on halibut farms, it was anticipated that farmed production could reach 6,000,000 pounds by 2001.

The landings through July 1, 1999 are below

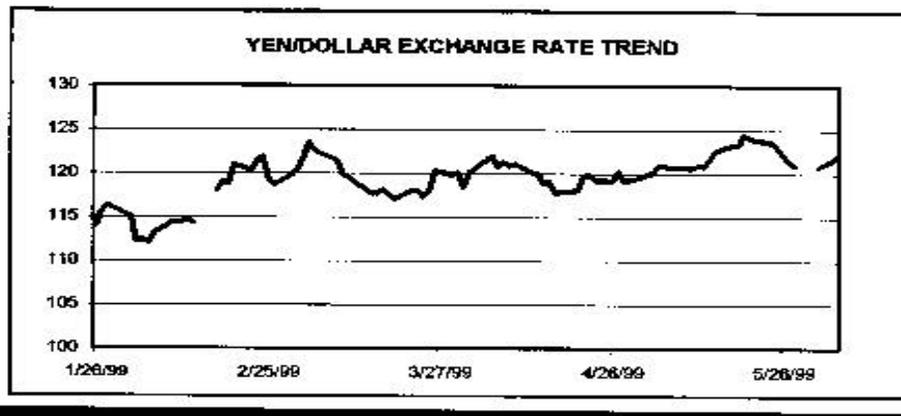
		Individual Fishing Quota (IFQ) Allocations and Landings From 01-MAR-1999 through 28-JUN-1999						<----- Tac ----->	
Area	Species	Vessel	Landings	Total Catch Pounds	Allocation Pounds	Remaining Pounds	Landed	Percent	
2C	halibut		1,647	6,311,439	10,490,000	4,178,561	60		
3A	halibut		1,618	14,944,508	24,670,000	9,725,492	61		
3B	halibut		323	6,143,902	13,370,000	7,226,098	46		
4A	halibut		54	918,543	4,240,000	3,321,457	22		
4B	halibut		26	511,230	3,184,000	2,672,770	16		
4C	halibut		5	52,262	1,015,000	962,738	5		
4D	halibut		8	229,758	1,421,000	1,191,242	16		
4E	halibut		0	0		0		0	0
Total			3,681	29,111,642	58,390,000	29,278,358	50		
SE	sablefish	429		4,111,106	7,054,720	2,943,614	58		
WY	sablefish	175		2,670,296	4,023,395	1,353,099	66		
CG	sablefish	403		6,455,475	9,858,971	3,403,496	65		
WG	sablefish	65		1,591,235	3,209,898	1,618,663	50		
AI	sablefish	19		300,871	1,825,409	1,524,538	16		
BS	sablefish	31		252,397	1,181,666	929,269	21		
Total			1,122	15,381,380	27,154,059	11,772,679	57		

Total number of vessel offloads containing only halibut IFQ: 3194

Total number of vessel offloads containing only sablefish IFQ: 637

Total number of vessel offloads containing both IFQ species: 478

FVOA boats have reported recent prices in Seward of \$2.84 and \$3.10 with a 4-pound break. Some Seattle prices for small amounts of sablefish have been \$3.10 and \$3.25 with a 4-pound break. The prices seem to be firming.



**Pacific Cod.** The summer harvest is over. The fall prices could reach another high. Prices ended in the \$1.20 to \$1.30 range for frozen H&G product. International harvest of cod has been significantly reduced.

**NMFS Reward.** The NMFS has tagged a limited number of sablefish with a depth sensor, which was surgically placed inside the fish. There is a \$500 reward for the recovery of these tags. If you recover one of them, contact Mike Sigler at (907) 789-6037.

**\*\*Calendar of Events\*\***

**August 16-25, 1999**

**Coast Opening for Blackcod  
Coast of WA, OR & CA**

**September 11, 1999**

**Fishermen's Fall Festival  
Fishermen's Terminal  
Seattle, WA**

**September 13-17, 1999**

**PFMC Meeting  
Doubletree - Columbia River  
Portland, OR**

**October 4-8, 1999**

**NPFMC Meeting  
Seattle, WA**

Fishing Vessel Owners' Association  
4005 - 20<sup>th</sup> Ave. West, Room 232  
Seattle, WA 98199-1290