



Fish News

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Highlights from the NPFMC Meeting in Seattle

By Ernie Weiss, AEB Natural Resources Director



The North Pacific Fishery Management council (NPFMC or Council) is moving swiftly through the agenda items during the meeting in Seattle this week, while taking a full 8 hours on the halibut prohibited species catch agenda item. The Council motion on this agenda item is to move the document forward and to release the (environmental assessment/regulatory impact review/initial regulatory flexibility analysis (EA/RIR/IRFA) for public review while incorporating some suggestions from the Scientific and Statistical Committee.

Halibut bycatch is a contentious issue. The Council avoided taking sides on differing recommendations from the Advisory Panel (AP), which was split on this issue. The AP motion, passing 11-8, recommended not releasing the EA/RIR/IRFA for public review while adding other options. The AP minority of 8 motion, to move the document forward with the addition of

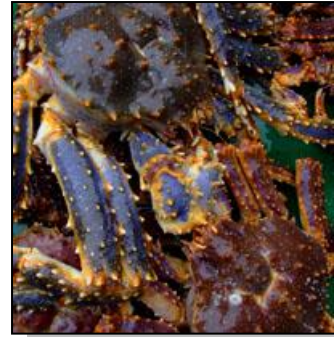
an option of 20% to the list of 5%, 10% and 15%, failed and the Council did not add a 20% option.



The Council avoided taking sides on the differing recommendations from the Advisory Panel, which was split on the issue of halibut bycatch.

Discussions at the AP about bycatch and other subjects spurred comments by the industry on the need to move ahead with catch share plans and GOA groundfish rationalization. AP member Ernie Weiss voiced an objection to the continued assertions, claiming many AEB fishermen he has spoken to, are generally opposed to gulf rationalization.

On Friday, the Council began work on crab issues, beginning with the Pribilof Island blue king crab rebuilding plan. The council motion adopts Option 2B as the preferred preliminary alternative (PPA). 2B would expand the Pribilof Island Habitat Conservation Zone closure to trawl and (Pacific cod) pcod pot fishing in the area. The motion also adopts most of the AP suggested additions. Council member Benson tried to strike the adoption of Option 2B as a PPA with a failed amendment. The Council also heard a report Friday morning on the (Bering Sea Aleutian Islands) BSAI Tanner Crab Rebuilding Plan, but took no action. Friday afternoon the Council began considering final action on the BSAI crab economic data reports revisions.



The Council motion adopts Option 2B as the preferred preliminary alternative for the Pribilof Island blue king crab rebuilding plan.

Stakeholders listening to the meeting live via webcast noticed difficulties with the service. The Council's regular web meeting software needs updating and was not working in Seattle. Council staff quickly linked to the UStream free service, which occasionally interrupts the streaming audio with commercials. The Council is considering ways to improve electronic communication under staff tasking later in the meeting.

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