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To: Erin Reinders, Mayor Tutikoff, and Council Members

From: Frank Kelty, Fisheries Consultant

Re: October Fishery Activities, Fishery Articles, and NPFMC Newsletter for October Meeting

Thursday, October 15<sup>th</sup>, I attended a Bering Sea Fisheries Research Foundation (BSFRF) meeting we had a full agenda. We reviewed the non-profits Tax Form 990 for approval which passed and signed by the Chairmen Wells.

The BSFRD board accepted the resignation of Jim McManus from the Board of Directors (BOD) he was a Trident representative he was replaced by Vic Scheibert from Trident.

We then moved on to a long discussion on the Crab Total Allowable Catch (TAC) setting process, that was just completed by Alaska Department Fish and Game (ADFG). Many of us on the BOD had comments that felt that once again the Opilio Tanner (Snow Crab) was set to low the Allowable Biological Catch amount (ABC) was set at 150 million pounds of crab many of us thought we would receive an allocation for the 2021 season at in the 60-70 million pound range ADFG set the TAC at 45 million. The large bio-mass opilio was seen during the 2018 and 2019 2019 survey but with no survey in 2020 they were overly conservative, in my opinion on the TAC setting amount. The BOD also reviewed the TAC setting on Bristol Bay Red King Crab this fishery is in terrible shape with not much recruitment coming into the fishery the TAC for 2020 season was set at 2.6 million pounds a million pound reduction from 2019 fishery, and is getting close to the overfishing limit which would mean a total shut down of the fishery possibly next year.

We then moved on to the Bairdi Tanner Crab fishery review not much concern by the BOD on what ADFG did setting a small TAC in the Western District 2.3 million pounds and left the Eastern District closed. This fishery had a large recruitment class moving into the fishery during the 2019 survey so in a couple of years the Tanner Crab fishery could be back on a strong footing. The last fishery we discussed was the Aleutian Island Golden King Crab fishery which is the most stable of all the crab fisheries the TAC is status quo for the 2020 fishery at 6.6-million-pound TAC amount.

The next item was research needs discussion many on the BOD expressed concern that NOAA would not do crab survey's in 2021 due to continued Covid -19 crew

concerns on these vessels which was the reason that surveys were not done in 2020. Many on the BOD felt that BSFRF should be prepared to do crab surveys for Opilio Tanner in 2021 either with or without NOAA vessels involved. It would be an expensive operation and could take 50-day charter to cover all the Opilio Tanner stations which could cost close to million dollars. We would still need ADFG and NOAA scientist on board and a commitment that both ADFG and NOAA would accept the information. We hope we do not have to jump into this, but we will not know what NOAA game plan is for surveys, until December or January. The BOD will discuss this issue again in November, many on the board want to keep this as an option; we believe going another year without some survey work on Opilio Tanner is unacceptable.

We then had update on using the Sail drones in the spring to track the tag crab that were deployed this summer by chartered crab vessel after this year's Opilio season. The Executive Director for BSFRF is still negotiating with the drone company, but we may be able to get May 2021 start for work on the crab grounds. We finished up the meeting on an update on the upcoming Opilio Tanner Workshop in late November or just after the December North Pacific Council meeting. The BSFRF will meet again on Thursday November 17<sup>th</sup>, 2020.

Tuesday October 20<sup>th</sup> the Alaska Fishing Communities Coalition met in the morning for about an hour. The President of the group Heather McCarty gave an overview of the Halibut ABM issue at the North Pacific Council meeting the previous week the directed Halibut harvesters felt that the motion brought forward by the State of Alaska was a great step forward for the implementation of Abundance Based Management program for Halibut bycatch. The motion will focus on three new Alternatives that will go forward for analysis to be seen at the April 2021 NPFMC meeting.

Looking at the Alternatives, for analysis

Alt 2. reduces the PSC limit to 20% below the current limit.

Alt. 3 has a 4x2 look-up table with PSC limits, that range 15% above current PSC limits to 30% below the current limits. PSC limits would be based on most current surveys.

Alt.4 has a 4x2 look-up table with PSC limits that range from the current PSC limit, to 45% below the current limit. PSC limits would be based on most current surveys.

Also include in the motion are 4 Options that could be used in Alt.2,3, and 4.

We then had a quick update on upcoming Council/NOAA upcoming fishery actions. We had a short update on a few State of Alaska Board of Fishery actions upcoming. We then had a discussion on Halibut bycatch issues that may want to be addressed in the upcoming Pacific Cod CV LAPP Program that will be addressed at the December NPFMC meeting. I just received the 350-page EIS for the BSAI Pacific Cod Trawl CV Cooperative Program. I have attached the Executive Summary of the document 33 pages for your review with this memo. We then had a report from the two members of the 60' < under harvesters on some new west coast fishery issues that are coming up.

Attachments:

1. North Pacific Council October Meeting Newsletter

2. Executive Summary EIS for the Pacific Cod Trawl CV Cooperative Program
3. Fishery News Articles

Regards

Frank Kelty