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To: Erin, Mayor, and Council Members

From: Frank Kelty, City of Unalaska Fisheries Consultant

Re: May Fishery Activities

I have recently attended two meetings, this week May 17-20 I listened in on the North Pacific Fishery Management Council (NPFMC) Crab Plan Team meeting via Adobe Connect which last for three days. I will hit on some of the highlights, of this week's meeting which adjourned on Thursday morning.

- Aleutian Island Golden King Crab (ALGKC): this week the Crab Plan team set recommends for the NPFMC Science and Statistical Committee (SSC) for the Overfishing Limits (OFL) and Allowable Biological Catch (ABC) amounts that will have to be approved at the NPFMC at the June meeting since the fishery opens on August 1st, 2021. Overall, this fishery is in good shape and the harvest amounts have been very steady in the Eastern District with a slight decrease in the Western District harvest this past year possibly due to a reduction in fishing effort in that area. They also comment on a slight decrease in size of crab in both areas they thought that could be due to the harvesters always working the same areas so many of the large crab in those areas have been taken. The recommend OFL with a 25% buffer added in for AIGKC was 10.6 million pounds the ABC was set at 7.9 million pounds. The State of Alaska sets the Total Allowable Catch (TAC) at the end of June last year it was set at 6.5 million pounds I believe that the State will lower the TAC due to the Western District allocation not being harvest about 228,000 lbs. was left unharvested. I believe we could see a 10-15% reduction by the State on the TAC amount could come in at 6.0 million pounds of ALGKC for 21/22 fishing season.
- Pribilof Island Blue King Crab (PIBKC) the crab plan team went through the same drill as they did on AIGKC. They discussed the most current survey and the model used to develop the OFL and ABC amounts. This fishery is in overfishing mode and has been for over 15 years and is seeing no improve even with no fishing zones in place for many years. The Crab Plan set the OFL with a 25% buffer 2,291 lbs. ABC 1,943lbs. the state will keep the fishery closed for 2021-2022 fishing year.
- The Bering Sea Fishery Research Foundation gave and update on the second Opilio Tanner Crab Workshop that was delayed from May to October of 2021. They also discuss the successful Opilio Workshop held in the fall of 2020.

- Bristol Bay Red King Crab Experimental Fishing Permit the plan team received a report from the Amendment 80 group on the results of the work done on their vessels in 2019. They had a small sample size about 100 crab taken in trawl they had damage and high mortality rates to many of the crab. The report stated more worked to be done and they will be asking for another EFP to do more studies that could lead gear modification, timing of fishing in areas that are important to King Crab habitat. They also mention that crab mortality rates in the directed crab fishery also needs further studies.
- Snow Crab model's discussion this took up allot of time they review many different models this is something they always do this in May meeting they make their final recommends on OFL and ABC at their September meeting so the SSC panel will have their recommendations to the Council at the October Council meeting so they can get the information to ADFG so they can set The TAC for 21/22 Crab seasons which start on October 15th. The Crab Plan team will be looking at 4 models to review they added a new model 3.5 to review and the older model as well that they have had for years. The Plan team will make their final recommendations on OFL and ABC at the September meeting. The important part of this analysis is we will have the data from the summer crab survey this year which will help all the models that they will analyze.
- Tanner Crab Model discussions the Plan team has recommended 3models to review in September models 20.07, 21.22 and model 22.22 with a fixed growth assessment outside of the model. The fishery continues to be in poor shape in both the Eastern District which has been closed for 2 years and the Western District which was open this year with a TAC of only 2.3 million pounds and only 1.2 million pounds harvested fishing was terribly slow. We have a summer survey so that will give us some insight on the situation with this crab stock.
- The Crab Plan Team also took up a few other issues they review the Research Priority list that the NPFMC adopted at their April meeting. The plan team reviewed the GMACS program that has not been approved by SSC panel for use on crab modeling method and the Plan team also reviewed the 5-year Essential Fish Habitat document.

I also attended the Alaska Fishing Community Sub-Committee Bycatch Meeting on May 14, 2021 Some of the issues discussed are listed below.

- Halibut ABM: final action on this issue has been delayed until the NPFMC December meeting when the NOAA Halibut Environmental Impact Statement (EIS) is also going to discussed at the Council that meeting. The AFC members working this issue will continue to lobby state officials and council members to support Alt 4 as the preferred alternative to be adopted.
- Crab Bycatch: we received and update by the Alaska Bering Sea Crabbers on their efforts to work with the Amendment 80 trawl vessels, Pot Cod vessels a state and federal agency to come up with measures to reduce crab bycatch.
- We also had a discussion on area management, habitat protections and other issues that can be worked on to reduces bycatch in all fisheries including Sablefish, Herring, and salmon species.

Regards

Frank Kelty

Attachments

1. NPFMC Actions
2. NOAA 2021 Survey Information
3. BSFRF Opilio Snow Crab Workshop Information
4. NPFMC Research Priorities

