

HJR

52

DATE: 5/18/91

FURTHER:

DATE TURNED INTO OFFICE: _____

Resources Committee considered HOUSE JOINT RESOLUTION NO. 52

Relating to protection of crab, halibut, and salmon in the Bristol Bay area from the trawl fishery.

and recommended:

- replace with _____ CS _____
 - or adopt _____ CS _____
 - attached amendment(s)
 - _____ letter of intent adopted
- same title
 - new title
 - technical title change (HB only)

do pass

do not pass

no recommendation

individual recommendations

further referral to _____

ATTACHES NEW FISCAL NOTE(S):
Dept/Date:

fiscal note(s) _____

zero fiscal note(s) _____

appropriation-no fiscal note

APPROVES PREVIOUS:
Dept/Date:

fiscal note(s) _____

zero fiscal note(s) _____
House Res notes 5/16/91

Governor's bill w/fiscal note

SIGNING DO PASS:

OTHER RECOMMENDATIONS:

Lloyd Jones (Do Pass)
Chair: Signature and Recommendation

STATE OF ALASKA
House of Representatives
District 27

Representative Cliff Davidson
Chairman
House Resources Committee



Box V, Juneau, AK 99811
(907) 465-2487
Box 746, Kodiak, AK 99615
(907) 486-8250

TO: Senator Lloyd Jones, Chair
Senate Resources Committee

FROM: Representative Cliff Davidson *CD*

DATE: 17 May 1991

SUBJECT: HJR 52 - Bristol Bay Fisheries Closure

Bristol Bay has long been known as an aquatic nursery area for numerous species fish and shellfish, particularly halibut, king crab and salmon. Over the years, fisheries managers have recognized the unique nature of this important marine area through various protected zones within the region.

Bycatch, the catching of non-target fish species, has become an increasing problem throughout Alaska, particularly with the recently increased fishing effort by large, powerful, bottom fishing factory trawlers. In a fragile area such as Bristol Bay, bycatch can have a devastating impact.

In order to properly manage this unique area, fishery managers must have adequate information on which to base their decisions. HJR 52 recognizes the current lack of adequate information and requests the North Pacific Fishery Management Council and the Alaska Department of Fish and Game to immediately commence studies and a review of existing data to develop a better management scheme for the area.

Important actions by the North Pacific Fishery Management Council will be taken in the next year that will effect Bristol Bay. For that reason I would appreciate your taking up this resolution as soon as possible for passage this year.



UNITED STATES DEPARTMENT OF COMMERCE
National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration

National Marine Fisheries Service

P.O. Box 1668

Juneau, Alaska 99802

February 20, 1987

Mr. Arni Thompson
Executive Secretary
Alaska Crab Coalition
3901 Leary Way N.W.
Suite #9
Seattle, WA 98107

Dear Mr. Thompson:

I have reviewed the evolution of the eastern Bering Sea pot zone and have found the following series of events. The original zone came into existence in 1965. The boundaries ran from Cape Sarichef to 55-16N 166-10W, northeastward to 55-28N 165-34W, thence eastward along 55-28N to the Alaska Peninsula. That was a provision of the 1965 U.S./Soviet crab agreement and the U.S./Japan crab agreement concluded in late 1964.

The zone expanded in 1968 when the crab agreements with Japan and the Soviet Union were renegotiated. That change became effective in 1969 and the northern boundary changed from 55-28N to 55-54N.

The final change that I have been able to track occurred in 1975 when the U.S./Soviet fisheries agreement expanded the pot zone to its present configuration. The Japanese agreed to the same configuration but implemented it as a domestic regulation through arrangements that had been concluded at INPFC. Several other concessions were gained at that time that closed nearby areas to trawling during winter months. Those final bilateral arrangements were carried forward in the foreign fishing regulations that implemented the Magnuson Act in 1977.

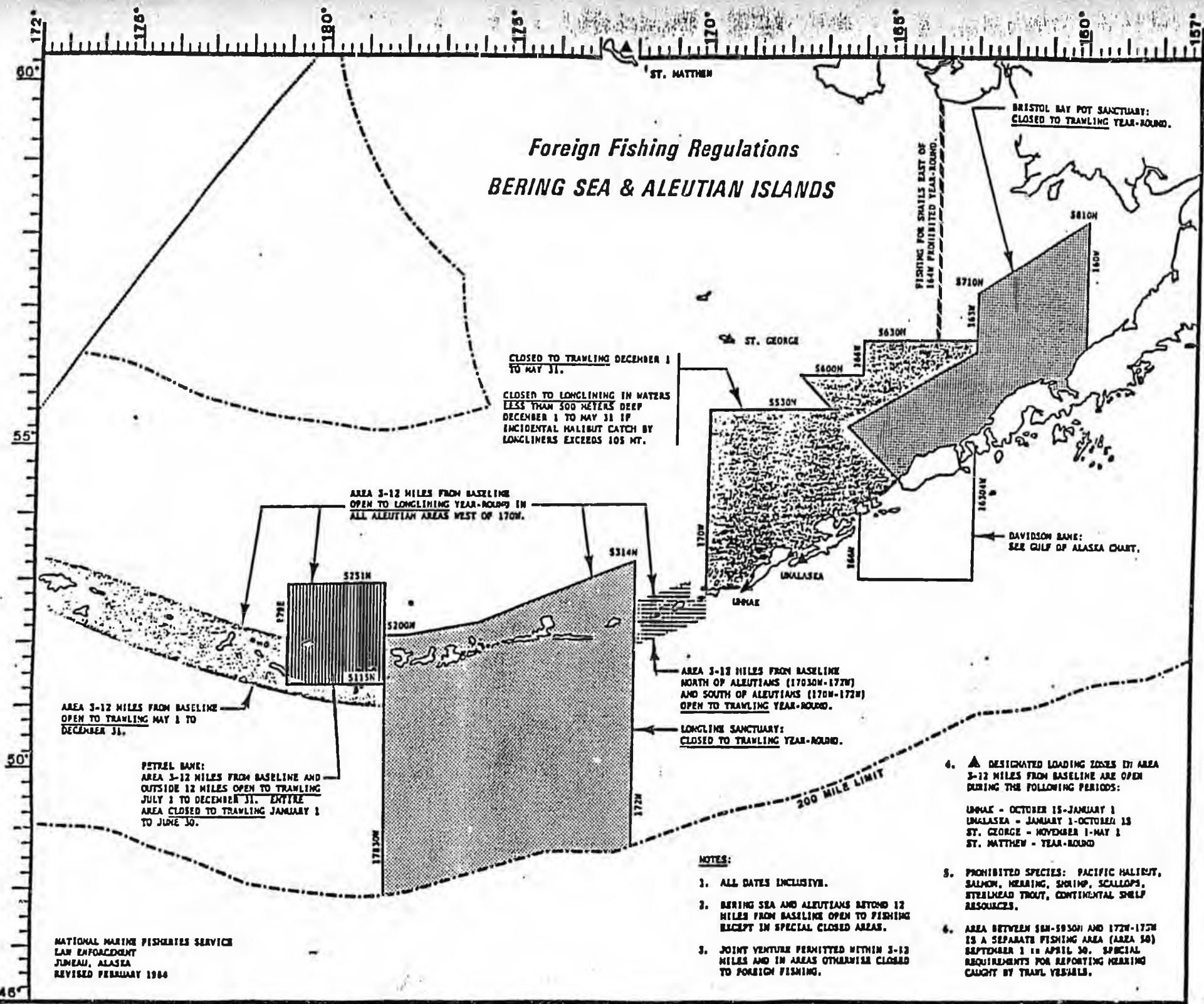
Enclosed are copies of those fishing agreements and chartlets showing the various pot zones.

Sincerely yours,

J. Craig Hammond
Special Agent in Charge



Foreign Fishing Regulations BERING SEA & ALEUTIAN ISLANDS



CLOSED TO TRAWLING DECEMBER 1 TO MAY 31.

CLOSED TO LONGLINING IN WATERS LESS THAN 500 METERS DEEP DECEMBER 1 TO MAY 31 IF INCIDENTAL HALIBUT CATCH BY LONGLINERS EXCEEDS 105 MT.

AREA 3-12 MILES FROM BASELINE OPEN TO LONGLINING YEAR-ROUND IN ALL ALEUTIAN AREAS WEST OF 170W.

AREA 3-12 MILES FROM BASELINE OPEN TO TRAWLING MAY 1 TO DECEMBER 31.

PETREL BANK:
AREA 3-12 MILES FROM BASELINE AND OUTSIDE 12 MILES OPEN TO TRAWLING JULY 1 TO DECEMBER 31. ENTIRE AREA CLOSED TO TRAWLING JANUARY 1 TO JUNE 30.

AREA 3-12 MILES FROM BASELINE NORTH OF ALEUTIANS (17030N-172W) AND SOUTH OF ALEUTIANS (170N-172W) OPEN TO TRAWLING YEAR-ROUND.

LONGLINE SANCTUARY:
CLOSED TO TRAWLING YEAR-ROUND.

BRISTOL BAY POT SANCTUARY:
CLOSED TO TRAWLING YEAR-ROUND.

FISHING FOR SHALFS EAST OF 164W PROHIBITED YEAR-ROUND.

DAVIDSON BANK:
SEE GULF OF ALASKA COURT.

4. ▲ DESIGNATED LOADING ZONES IN AREA 3-12 MILES FROM BASELINE ARE OPEN DURING THE FOLLOWING PERIODS:

UMNAK - OCTOBER 15-JANUARY 1
UNALASKA - JANUARY 1-OCTOBER 15
ST. GEORGE - NOVEMBER 1-MAY 1
ST. MATTHEW - YEAR-ROUND

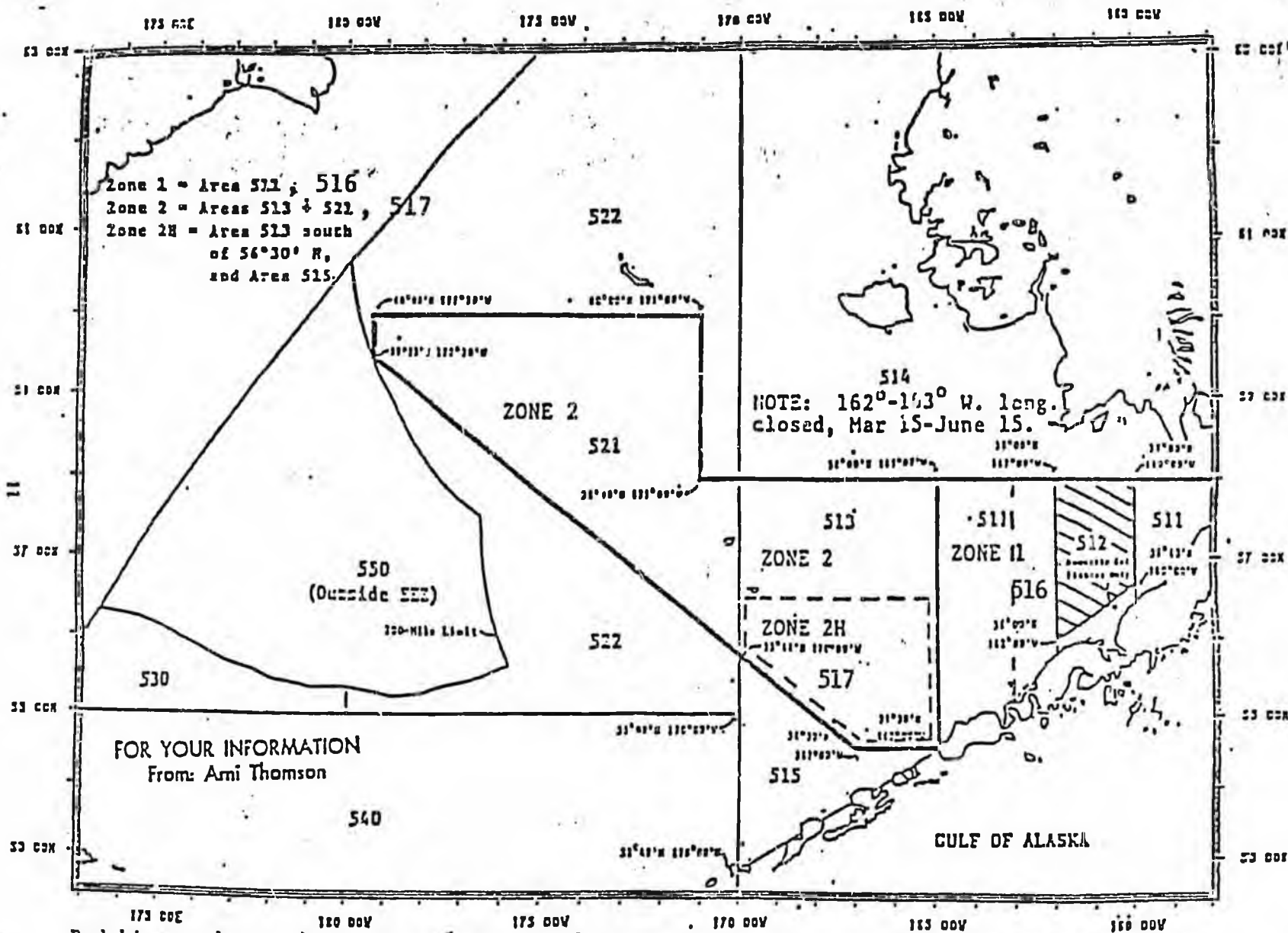
5. PROHIBITED SPECIES: PACIFIC HALIBUT, SALMON, HEARING, SPRING, SCALLOPS, STEELHEAD TROUT, CONTINENTAL SHELL RESOURCES.

6. AREA BETWEEN 58N-5930N AND 172W-172W IS A SEPARATE FISHING AREA (AREA 58) SEPTEMBER 1 TO APRIL 30. SPECIAL REQUIREMENTS FOR REPORTING HEARING CAUGHT BY TRAWL VESSELS.

NOTES:

1. ALL DATES INCLUSIVE.
2. BERING SEA AND ALEUTIANS BEYOND 12 MILES FROM BASELINE OPEN TO FISHING EXCEPT IN SPECIAL CLOSED AREAS.
3. JOINT VENTURE PERMITTED WITHIN 3-12 MILES AND IN AREAS OTHERWISE CLOSED TO FOREIGN FISHING.

NPFMC APPROVED RESTRICTED TRAWL GROUND FISH ZONES AND PROHIBITED SPECIES CAPS
 IN THE EASTERN BERING SEA, AS ESTABLISHED BY AMENDMENTS 10, 12A AND 16 TO THE
 BS/AI FMP, 1986 THROUGH 1991.



Red king crab:	200,000 crabs in Zone 1 to close Zone 1.	(Caps apply to JVP and DAP flatfish and groundfish fisheries)
<u>C. bairdi</u> crab:	1,000,000 crabs in Zone 1 to close Zone 1.	
	3,000,000 crabs in Zone 2 to close Zone 2.	
Pacific halibut:	4,400 mt catch in BS/AI to close Zones 1 and 2H (as modified)	
	5,300 mt catch in BS/AI to close entire BS/AI	

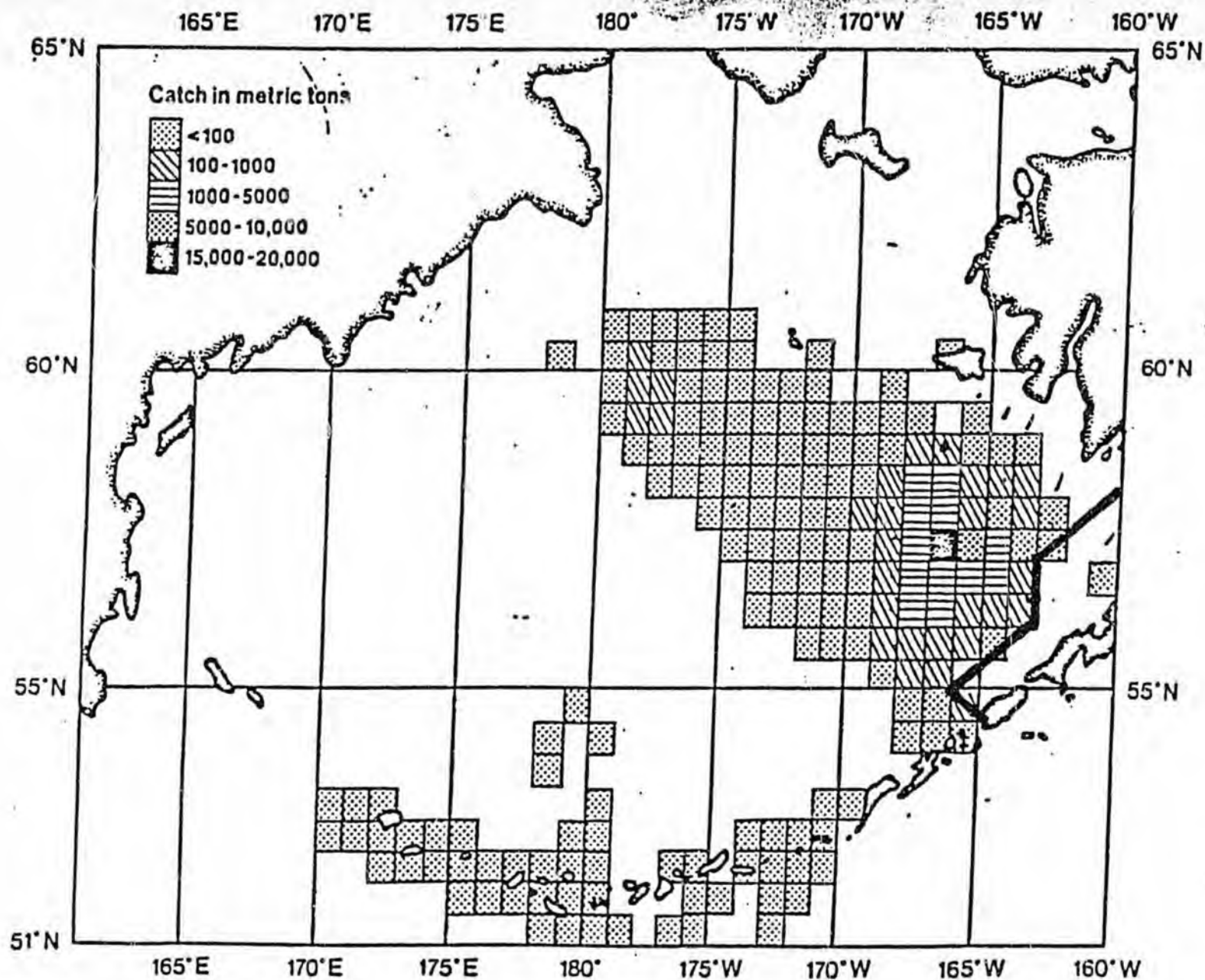


Figure 1. Average annual catches of yellowfin sole by Japan according to blocks of $\frac{1}{2}^{\circ}$ latitude by 1° longitude within the Bering Sea/Aleutian region, 1977-1982.

**KODIAK LONGLINE
VESSEL OWNERS' ASSOCIATION**



326 CENTER AVENUE, P.O. BOX 135
KODIAK, ALASKA 99615
(907) 486-3781 FAX (907) 486-2470

HALIBUT • SABLEFISH • PACIFIC COD • CRAB

May 15, 1991

Representative Cliff Davidson
Box V
Juneau, Alaska 99811

SENT BY FAX: 465-3444

Dear Cliff,

I would like to express the KLVDA support for the House Joint Resolution which relates to the protection of crab, halibut, and salmon in the Bristol Bay area from the trawl fishery.

We firmly believe that the nursery grounds for juvenile halibut stocks which are in the Bering Sea area are in danger of being harmed. The high bycatch of halibut and crab by factory trawl vessels operating in this area should be curtailed. The evaluation and possible expansion of Zone 1 is imperative.

Thank you so much for introducing this resolution. Please don't hesitate to contact the group if you have questions.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in cursive script that reads "Linda Kozak".

Linda Kozak
Executive Director



CALLY OWNED SINCE 1915

FOR MORE INFORMATION

From: Arni Thomson

WASTED HARVEST

As thousands starve around the world, millions of pounds of high-protein fish are being killed in the north Pacific

STORIES BY JOE HUNT

Huge factory trawlers raking the seabeds off Alaska are too deadly efficient. So far this year, they have killed and wasted enough fish to feed each Alaskan a high-protein dinner for more than three months.

Some say this waste — in a world where many go hungry — is a national scandal. Others counter it is just the cost of doing business.

The vessels trail thousand-foot nets to scour the ocean bottom in the Bering Sea and the Gulf of Alaska and haul in tons of pollock, cod and other bottom fish.

About 10 percent of the fisheries' 5 billion-pound quota is thrown overboard. Dead.

The fleet has wasted 150 million pounds of edible fish in the first 11 weeks of this year, says the North Pacific Fisheries Management Council.

Larry Cotter is chairman of the bycatch committee for the fisheries council, which sets the regulations for the trawling industry.

"In my own opinion, we are wasting an enormous amount of fish," Cotter said. "That is unconscionable. If they learned about this Outside, it would become a national scandal, a disgrace."

But discarding fish is an economic reality of the fishery, dictated by world markets and prices, said Bert Larkins, director of the American Factory Trawler Association. If trawlers could avoid catching unwanted species or fish too small to process they would, he said.

"There is not only the social stigma of throwing fish back," Larkins said. "There's also an economic penalty because it takes a lot of manpower to do that."

"Any entrepreneur who is throwing away a percentage of his raw product is desperately looking for a way to utilize his whole catch. There's a real incentive for him to do that."

The trawlers target pollock, cod, sole, flatfish and other bottom fish for sale in Japan.

But their nets are indiscriminate.

A trawler net trails a vessel like sock. Its mouth may be more than 200 feet across, with weighted wheels to roll it along the muddy bottom and floats at the top to keep its mouth open.

Federal law requires that tons of high-value crab, herring, halibut and salmon, inadvertently caught and killed in the nets, be thrown back as bycatch.

But trawlers also toss back fish they are au-



Above, crew members aboard the F/V Silver Sea based in Chignik sort a Pacific cod haul. Vessels must return salmon, halibut and crab bycatch. Right, observers measure the sole, cod and pollock catch in a trawl net on the F/V Suluk.



thorized to take. Industry insiders excuse the waste, saying the fish are the wrong size for processing machinery, that they are damaged in the enormous net loads hauled from the bottom or because no profitable markets exist.

During the Bering Sea bottom fish season, which started Jan. 1, federal observers recorded 111 million pounds of east sole, flounder, flatfish and other species tossed overboard. Another 15 million pounds have been discarded in the Gulf of Alaska.

The public tends to focus on the bycatch, but

See Waste, page A8

WASTED HARVEST

2.

Waste

Continued from page A1

the waste of low-value bottom fish is the bigger moral issue, Cotter said.

He estimates 400 million to 500 million pounds of bottom fish will be tossed overboard by the end of the season.

This is in addition to a cap of 16 million pounds of halibut, 4 million tanner crab, 200,000 king crab and 833 tons of herring the trawl fleet will be allowed to catch and toss back this year.

Assuming one-third of that poundage represents fileted meat, that is roughly enough to provide every Alaskan with 1 pound of filets a day for a year.

"The real rape in the ocean right now is waste," Cotter said. "Prohibited species catch is the sexy part of waste, but finfish discard is absolutely appalling.

"The factory trawler is without question the most efficient harvesting machine on this planet. But when it comes to processing what it catches, it's extremely inefficient."

Trawlers net so many fish, operators can be picky about what they keep, processing only the most profitable grade of fish and tossing back the rest, he said.

Pollock filet machines are set for a certain size of fish. So far this year, the industry has tossed back 69 million pounds that was too small or too large to be efficiently processed, he said.

"It's a crime the amount of fish discarded," said Mandy Merklein, a fisheries observer on contract with the National Marine Fisheries Service. "It doesn't seem right we have to discard that much fish. Even the processors hate it. No one is happy about it."

Merklein is a veteran of 20 trips on foreign and American vessels in the Bering Sea and the Gulf of Alaska.

"I've been on boats where I've thrown more overboard in value than what we kept," Merklein said. "It just seems so stupid. What it really comes down to is bottom-dragging is not very clean."

An observers' primary job is to document the waste, providing weekly reports on bycatch to ensure trawlers do not exceed their quotas. In 1990, the first year observers were required aboard American trawlers in the North Pacific, 513 observers monitored 288 vessels.

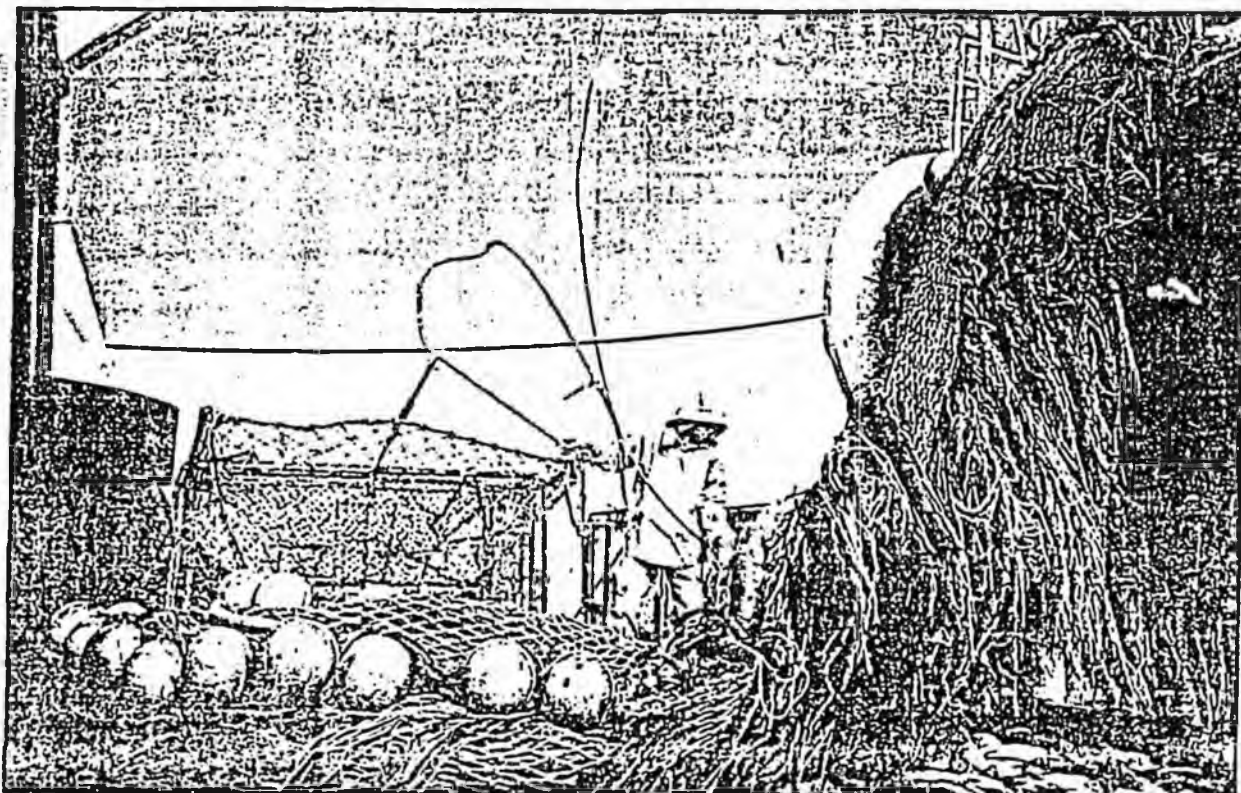


Photo courtesy MANDY MERKLEIN

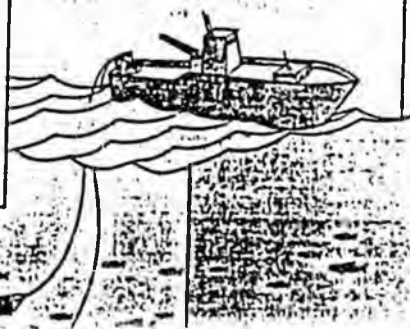
A crew member on the F/V Silver Sea pulls a crab pot from a net. Crab pots caught in the nets reduce the catch.

'The real rape of the ocean right now is waste.'

— Larry Cotter
Chairman, Bycatch
Committee of
North Pacific
Fisheries
Management
Council

- Trawl nets roll on large, weighted wheels over the muddy bottom.
- Doors act like airfoils, pulling out the sides of the net and creating a mud screen that scares fish into the middle.
- Floats hold the mouth of the net open, creating a cone with an opening 200 ft. across.
- After dragging the net for an hour or two, it is hauled on board where fish are sorted and processed.
- Salmon, crab and halibut are tossed back into the sea along with about 10 percent of the bottom fish caught.

Factory trawlers crisscross the Bering Sea and the Gulf of Alaska catching and processing 5 billion pounds of bottom fish.



1982 before closing completely in 1983. Scientists still cannot explain the reasons for the steep decline in the population.

Crabbers turned their efforts to bottom fish and began delivering their catch to a well-established fleet of foreign processors. With the Magnuson Act backing them, the American trawl fleet mushroomed and forced out the foreign fleet.

The Seattle-based trawl industry, with an efficient fleet of 60 factory trawlers and four monstrous factory ships, quickly overwhelmed the fishery.

Industry officials say intense competition prompted some fishermen to cut corners and aggressively fish without regard to bycatch and waste. Conscientious processors move out of an area if they discover a large percentage of a bycatch species in a haul, they say.

...

THE DECLINE of halibut stocks in the North Pacific since 1988 often is blamed on the trawling fishery. The De-

industry in Alaska is still in its infancy, having taken over the fishery from a well-established foreign fleet in the last 10 years. Council members, biologists and fishermen say the industry is learning how to target its preferred catch without killing and wasting unwanted fish.

Officials say they are optimistic many of the problems will be solved during the 1990s. But the process seems unbearably slow, they admit — especially when raging controversies are so widespread.

- Fishermen are edgy about a plummeting halibut population, reducing their harvest year after year. Meanwhile, factory trawlers will take 16 million pounds of halibut this year.

- Interception of king salmon on the high seas has brought the impact of factory trawlers home to the Bristol Bay, Cook Inlet and Southeast Alaska where rivers are prized for world-class sport fishing. During the first 3 months of the Bering Sea fishery this year, 28,000 juvenile king salmon were killed and thrown back. Another 31,000 were killed in the Gulf of Alaska.

- Bering Sea crab fishermen, starting their comeback after the crash of the king crab population in the early 1980s, are angry because trawlers are allowed to kill 200,000 of the highly sought crab and 4 million of the lower-priced tanner crab each year.

- The government's requirement that crab, salmon, herring and halibut be thrown back is viewed as market protection by some and waste by others. Critics say they would rather those species be sold, with the profits used to fund research to reduce waste.

- Onshore processing plants, providing jobs in Alaska's coastal communities, say they are mostly shut out by the Seattle-based factory trawlers. The feud has spawned a proposal that would require a 50-50 split between onshore and offshore processors.

Controversies are popping up faster than solutions can be found. "The tendency over the last few years is things seem to be getting more polarized, worse really," said Larkins of the American Factory Trawler Association.

Virtually nobody condones the waste. If the trawlers do not find a solution, the fisheries council may someday force action.

"I think we need to consider implementing a program that prohibits discards," Cotter said. "We may have to say 'If you catch it, you have to process it.'"

Trawlers could install meal plants to grind up the unsalable fish, creating fertilizer and animal feed, he said.

Discarding fish is more of a social or aesthetic problem than a threat to the



Times Graphic LANCE LEXANDER

dern the waste because there are starving people in the world, but none of those fish would make it to the struggling Third World countries that need them, he said.

"It's not as if those fish, being thrown back are being taken out of somebody's mouth," he said. "They would never have had them in the first place."

Larkins said as long as there is no biological threat to the species, the waste is not a moral issue. It is similar to the waste in the timber industry or in vegetable farming, he said. "Whether or not you catch them and throw them back or leave them in the water in the first place, to me there's not much difference," Larkins said.

Other fishermen also discard fish, Larkins said. Halibut longliners commonly throw back cod and other species, he said. Longliners in Southeast Alaska cannot target king salmon without also snagging and wasting dogfish, he said.

Dr. Jim Brooks, deputy director of the National Marine Fisheries Service in Juneau, said nothing is wasted in the sea. Discarded fish become nutrients, fodder for other species in a complex food chain, he said.

UNTARGETED SPECIES are thrown overboard in fisheries in Alaska waters, the Gulf of Mexico and the North Atlantic. "We could be talking about 3 (billion) or 4 billion pounds a year," said Harry Upton of the Center for Marine Conservation in Washington, D.C.

The Gulf of Mexico shrimp trawl fishery alone accounts for 1.1 billion pounds of unprocessed waste, he said.

"I think in fisheries we're looking at some extreme problems that have been neglected," he said. "It's not something people have taken up the cause for yet."

The combined political muscle of the fishing industry on both coasts has made change come slowly, he said.

The Magnuson Fishery Conservation and Management Act of 1976, which set up the American trawl fleet by putting all waters within 200 miles of the coast under U.S. control, spells out the process for regulating fisheries in federal waters.

The act, enforced by the National Marine Fisheries Service, requires regulators to consider biological, economic and social factors. The economic impact on the industry often overrides social concerns, Upton said.

the benefit of the user groups and the public interest in some cases has been neglected," he said.

The Magnuson Act, after 14 years of practice, essentially "replaced foreign overfishing by domestic overfishing," concluded a report released April 1 by the Center for Marine Conservation. The act set high principles and showed promise for a well-organized U.S. fishery, the study said. But it has exacerbated U.S. fisheries problems, it concluded.

THE NORTH Pacific Fisheries Management Council does not have the necessary staff to handle the many issues it faces, said Armi Thomson, director of the Alaska Crab Coalition. "And if the analysis doesn't get done, then who wins? The factory trawlers," he said.

United Fishermen of Alaska, the largest organization of commercial fishermen in the state, has asked the Department of Fish and Game to assist the council with its scientific analysis to speed up the process. Thomson is chairman of the group's Bycatch Committee.

Cotter said Alaska's bycatch problem is caused by fishermen who do not want their rivals on the high seas to profit by catching prohibited species. Their least-of-two-evils is to allow the valuable fish to be wasted.

"The reason is political," Cotter said. "That's all there is to it." Cotter said.

The millions of pounds of bycatch in Alaska waters is incidental to the 5-billion-pound quota of pollock, cod, sablefish and other bottomfish expected to be harvested this year. But to the crabbers, halibut longliners and salmon fishermen, it is money out of their pockets, Thomson said.

The crab fleet took in \$100 million last year by harvesting 4 million king crab. Trawlers discarded 300,000 king crab, most of them dead, worth about \$7.5 million. That directly reduced the amount of king crab Alaska fishermen could catch, Thomson said.

"We still don't think there is enough protection for king crab," he said. "King crab stocks are still depressed in the Bering Sea."

The Alaska bottomfish industry boomed in the 1980s after the crash of the king crab population. Crabbers harvested 20 million king crab in 1980. But the crab fishery collapsed in following years.

sure.

The trawl fleet is allowed to take and throw back 11.6 million pounds of halibut in the Bering this year as it pursues its legal species. At an average of 3½ pounds each for juvenile halibut, the figure represents more than 3 million fish.

While critics blame trawlers, International Pacific Halibut Commission biologists say they believe the decline is a natural fluctuation. A complex formula compensates for the halibut killed by the trawlers and reduces the annual quota given to longliners.

Trawlers are not to blame for the drop, but their halibut bycatch will hurt the longliners more each year as numbers continue to dwindle, said Bob Crumble, senior biologist with the halibut commission. The available harvest of halibut statewide by 1996 may be below 25 million pounds, a third of the peak in 1968, he said.

"It may be that quantities available over the next four to five years could be fairly painful for people," Crumble said.

"We believe this natural downturn we see now is going to continue for several more years. We don't know how far the decline will continue or when it will begin back up again."

Greg Seider, director of United Fishermen of Alaska, said he is not so sure trawlers are innocent in the halibut decline.

"None of it is going down real well," he said. "It's really easy to say it's the trawlers, but prove it. That's the rub, because we really haven't seen the resources dedicated to really get a handle on it."

CRITICS and defenders of the trawl fishery and the drawn-out regulatory process remain optimistic. Better technology, regulations and fishing methods, along with developing markets for fish now discarded could drastically reduce waste.

"I think we're still kind of new to the game and we're still trying to figure out a way to do it," said Bruce Buis, a spokesman for the American Factory Trawlers Association.

"We're looking for some mechanism to get the dirty fisherman out of the fishery, temporarily if not permanently."

Cotter and Larkins agree on the long-term solution. Both said they want a system that rewards efficient trawlers while penalizing those with a large bycatch.

The current system penalizes the entire fleet. When the bycatch limit for any prohibited species is reached in a given region, the entire fleet must quit fishing.

Continued from page A8

ter and Larkins would force offending vessels to sit out all or part of the season while their competitors continued fishing.

4. "The way I envision it, the dirty vessels will not be able to survive and will go bankrupt," Cotter said. "Eventually, we will have a rational fishery, but I think it will take five years to get there and in the process there will be a lot of bankruptcies."

Larkins said he would like to take what he calls the "penalty box" concept one step further, tying the bottom fishery to the shore-based halibut and crab fishery. Each of those fisheries would be closed to further entries, under one industry-sponsored proposal. Those grandfathered in to the program would receive a certificate giving them a set percentage of each year's allocation.

...
A TRAWLER wanting to fish in halibut waters would have to buy a halibut allocation from longliners. The halibut would be processed and not thrown back, and the trawler would strive to make its halibut allocation last as long as possible by fishing the waters selectively.

"Once you get a certificate, if you want to expand your market, you go out and buy someone else's certificate," Larkins said. "This way the marketplace decides where the best benefit of these fisheries lies. You don't have to make political judgments."

"It's got to come down to where the individual fisherman has some kind of incentive to fish as clearly as possible."

...
THE PROBLEM is worldwide, although other countries have explored op-

tions for solving the problem. For example, New Zealand uses a trade-off program to reduce its high-seas waste problem.

Captains have the option of selling their bycatch to the government or paying to keep it, using a complex trade-off formula which takes into account the value and quotas of the target species, said Dr. Malcolm Haddon.

Haddon is a biologist with the Ministry of Agriculture and Fisheries in Auckland, a port on New Zealand's North Island. Trawler operators sort their catch and use separate freezers for different species, he said.

"The fishermen get a minimal price for bringing it in, but it encourages them to bring it in and not dump it," he said. The low price deters operators from targeting the bycatch species, he said. All transactions must be individually ap-

proved and the program is coordinated by computer.

"People monitor the bycatch trade to be certain that it's honest," he said. "It's not the answer to everybody's prayers, but it does avoid waste."

In New Zealand's peak season, 30 to 40 commercial boats fish offshore. Government observers are assigned to about half the boats to monitor the catch and stop operators from illegally transferring fish to another vessel.

Upton, of the Center for Marine Conservation in Washington, said he sees a hard fight ahead for the industry to find its balance in the Bering Sea fishery.

"In the Northeast, we fished the resource to hell," Upton said. "We haven't done that yet in Alaska, but the danger signals are there. I think we're going to solve these issues in time. Unfortunately, we're learning the hard way."

WASTED HARVEST

Bottom fishing takes toll on state's salmon

By JOE HUNT
TIMES WRITER

Juvenile king salmon, most bound for Alaska's prized sport fishing rivers, have become the latest casualty of a trawler fleet raking the high seas for a billion-dollars' worth of bottom fish.

Trawlers fishing the Bering Sea north of Dutch Harbor have taken more than 28,000 kings in the first 3 months of the fishery this year, tripling the take during the same period last year. Another 31,000 kings have been caught in trawl nets in the Gulf of Alaska.

That could be just the tip of the salmon lost to the trawl fleets both in and outside of U.S. waters.

Another 60,000 to 200,000 salmon are thought to be intercepted in a unmonitored triangle of international waters between Alaska and the Soviet Union, according to federal estimates.

"People should understand clearly we have a very large salmon bycatch problem outside U.S. waters in the doughnut hole," said Larry Cotter, chairman of the Bycatch Committee for the North Pacific Fisheries Management Council.

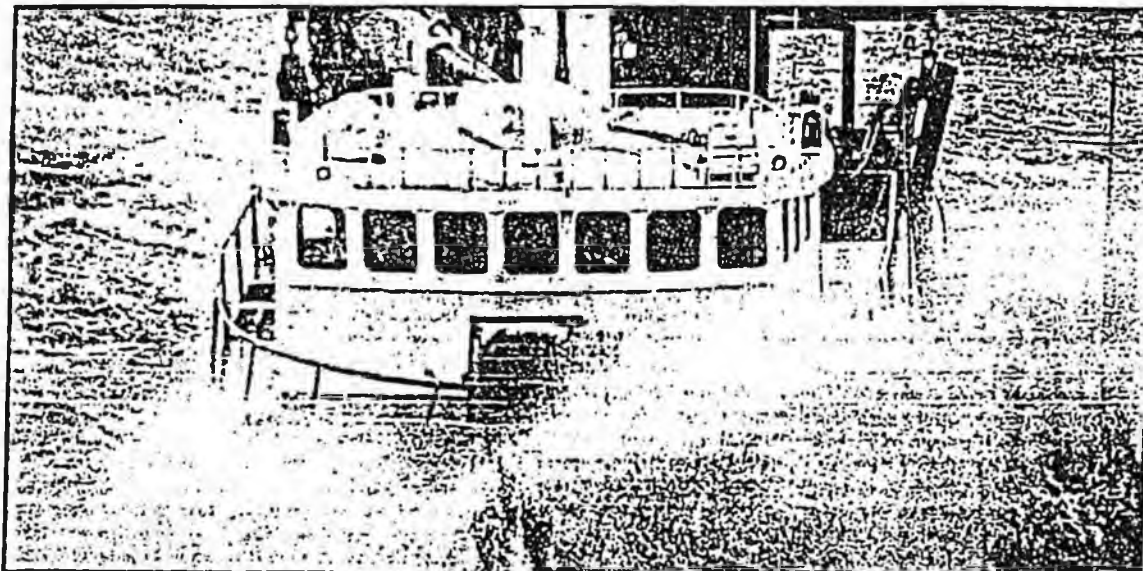


PHOTO COURTESY MANDY MERKLEIN

A small bottom trawler targeting yellow fin sole is pictured in the rough Bering Sea. This fishery is often closed early in the season because of the large bycatch of crab and halibut.



penalizes individual boats for overfishing the bycatch species rather than one that shuts the entire industry down.

"We're looking for something to get the dirty fisherman out of the fishery,

'I think they are nothing but high seas pirates.'

— Tom Ellas
President, Alaska Sportfishing Association

5. have a very large salmon bycatch problem outside U.S. waters in the doughnut hole," said Larry Cotter, chairman of the Bycatch Committee for the North Pacific Fisheries Management Council.

Salmon is one of several species the fleet is prohibited from keeping. The management council allows the unintended catch of millions of pounds of halibut, herring, salmon and crab each year. By law, these are counted and tossed back. Most are killed in the process.

This bycatch is only a small percentage of the 5-billion-pound quota of pollock, cod, sablefish and other bottomfish expected to be harvested this year.

The high salmon kill has brought the impact of factory trawlers home to those Alaskans whose lives are tied to the annual return of world-class king salmon.

"I think they are nothing but high-seas pirates," said Tom Elias, president of the Alaska Sportfishing Association.

He said it makes the current dispute between setnet fishermen and Kenai River guides look insignificant. Shore-based set nets in Cook Inlet intercept thousands of Kenai River kings each year, prompting a feud over the best use of the 20- to 90-pound fish.

Recent returns to the Kenai River have been perilously low. Any further drop in numbers could force the setnet and sport fisheries to shut down to protect the run. But Elias said, "One factory trawler can do more damage in a week than all the setnetters could probably do in a season."

Sportfishermen have been screaming about the annual salmon kill for years, Elias said. It has long been documented that foreign factory ships in U.S. waters caught large numbers of salmon. But the American trawlers which took over the fishery did not face that same accountability until 1990 when observers were placed on U.S. vessels.

Alaska fisheries are proving complex and interwoven.

Getting to the bottomfish is not without a high cost in lost halibut, herring, tanner crab, king crab and salmon. Federal observers, placed on 286 factory trawler and longline vessels in the North Pacific last year, report the bycatch figures.

This is only the second year observers have been counting the salmon take from the domestic fleet in the Bering.

"We don't know if this year was some kind of anomaly or an annual occurrence," said Bruce Buls, spokesman for the American Factory Trawlers Association in Seattle. "We're hoping it was. We don't want to catch that salmon. We can't use them."

King salmon that otherwise would return to rivers in Bristol Bay, Cook Inlet or Southeast Alaska are instead being intercepted as juveniles far into ocean waters. The dead fish, untargeted and unwanted,



studies have shown mature kings caught by sportsmen in the rivers can represent a few hundred dollars to more than \$1,000 each to the tourism industry.

Unlike the other prohibited species, there is no cap on the amount of salmon that can be caught and no incentive for trawlers to avoid catching them. Hitting the 11.6-million-pound halibut limit in the Bering Sea will force the entire fleet to shut down for the season in that region, but trawlers can fish freely among schools of salmon without threat of closure.

That needs to change, Elias said. "They're harvesting the fish by their most efficient means with total disregard for other species," Elias said.

Trawlers need a cap on salmon bycatch, forcing the industry to target bottom fish in a more calculated though less efficient way, he said.

Poor returns of king salmon have forced fishing closures in several Alaska rivers during the last few years, including the Kenai, Nushagak and Naknek rivers.

The declining runs, coupled with this year's high reported bycatch, has the state watching the trawl fleet closely, said David Carlile, the biologist who serves as Alaska's technical liaison to the North Pacific Fisheries Management Council. The council regulates the seasons, fishing methods and limits in the bottomfish industry. State biologists have only an advisory role in the federal fishery.

The salmon bycatch created such a stir that the Alaska Board of Fisheries asked the council to place an immediate ban in the region north of Unalaska where most of the salmon were caught. The move was mostly symbolic, Carlile said.

By the time the fisheries board made its request, trawlers had already moved on to fish in other areas, he said. It did, however, add emphasis to the state's concern. Placing a cap on the salmon bycatch will undoubtedly be one of many suggestions forwarded by the state to the council, he said.

Another answer would be to...

in the first two weeks of the season which began Jan. 1. Salmon are most vulnerable in the deep sea fishery during the winter months, he said.

"If you roll the start of the fishing season to February, that may well reduce the catch of chinook (kings)," Carlile said.

In the Gulf of Alaska, the king catch remained low throughout the winter and skyrocketed from 5,000 to 31,000 in March.

Buls said the industry may support a later start to the season, but does not like the idea of another bycatch quota. The cap system promotes reckless fishing practices, Buls said.

The trawling association would like to see the system replaced with one that

shuts the entire industry down.

"We're looking for something to get the dirty fisherman out of the fishery, temporarily if not permanently," he said.

"Everyone's desperate to get in as much fishing as they can before the bycatch shuts the fishery down. So screw it, they fish all they can," he said. The dirty fisherman "thinks 'I'm going to make hay while the sun shines.' That's the problem," he said.

The trawl fleet may be just one of many factors in the reduced king salmon returns, Carlile said. This year's high salmon bycatch may also be nothing more than an indicator of a large return to come.

A large salmon bycatch in past years was followed two years later with high salmon returns to some Alaska rivers, he said. He admitted, however, that the evidence is sketchy at best.

Scientists are studying the scale patterns of the salmon and doing genetic analysis to determine which rivers the kings were from. Scale patterns from salmon caught by the foreign fishing fleet in the late 1970s showed 60 percent of Bering Sea kings were from western Alaska, 17 percent from Southcentral rivers and 9 percent from the Southeast.

Tagged salmon were retrieved from ships in the Gulf of Alaska throughout the 1980s. The majority came from Southeast Alaska rivers, while several came from Cook Inlet.

Total catch of bottom fish discarded

Listed by species as of March 17, 1991; only the Bering Sea

SPECIES	TOTAL RETAINED	TOTAL DISCARDED
Arrowtooth Flounder	110,000	5,284,000
Alaska Mackerel	24,549,800	1,786,400
Greenland Turbot	52,800	539,000
Other Flatfish	1,716,000	13,875,400
Other Red Rockfish	46,200	6,600
Other Rockfish	114,4000	495,000
Pacific Cod	563,200	7,037,800
Pacific Ocean Perch	116,72,000	5,207,400
Other species	930,6000	926,200
Pollock	1,150,296,400	68,637,800
Rock Sole	30,665,800	30,742,800
Sablefish	1,108,800	11,000
Squid	30,800	109,200
Yellowfin Sole	81,400	7,436,000

BYCATCH CAPS FOR TRAWL FISHERIES

	Halibut	Herring	Red King Crab	Tanner crab
Bering Sea	11.6 million lbs.	1.8 million lbs.	200,000	4 million lbs.
GOA	4.4 million lbs.	1778	9334	2118

STATE OF ALASKA
1991 LEGISLATIVE SESSION

to. 1
Bill Version: HJR 52
(H) Publish Date: 5/16/91

Revision Date: _____ Department Affected: _____
 Title: Relating to protection of crab, halibut and salmon in the Bristol Bay area from the trawl fishery
 Sponsor: Rep. Davidson
 Requestor: House Resources Component: _____
 COMPONENT SERIAL NO.

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Expenditures/Revenues: (Thousands of Dollars)

OPERATING	FY 92	FY 93	FY 94	FY 95	FY 96	FY 97
PERSONAL SERVICES						
TRAVEL						
CONTRACTUAL						
SUPPLIES						
EQUIPMENT						
LAND & STRUCTURES						
GRANTS, CLAIMS						
MISCELLANEOUS						
TOTAL OPERATING	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0

CAPITAL						
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REVENUE						
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FUNDING: (Thousands of Dollars)

GENERAL FUND						
FEDERAL FUNDS						
OTHER						
TOTAL	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0

POSITIONS:

FULL-TIME	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0
PART-TIME						
TEMPORARY						

Estimate of current year impact: 0

ANALYSIS: (Attach a separate page if necessary.)

Prepared By: Rep. Cliff Davidson, Chairman Phone: 465-2487
 Division: House Resources Date: May 16, 1991
 Approved by Commissioner: Rep. Cliff Davidson, Chairman
 Agency: _____ Date: May 16, 1991

Distribution (by preparer): Legislative Finance, Legislative Sponsor, Requestor, OMB, & Impacted Agency(ies).