



Halibut-Sablefish Committee Meeting 9/29/2014

A meeting of the Halibut-Sablefish Species Committee was called to order by Bob Barnett, Chairman at 9:00 AM at the Marriott Hotel in Anchorage, Alaska. Nicole Stangeland called the roll.

Present: Chair Bob Barnett, Vice Chair Mark Callahan, Roland Briggs, John Jensen, Joe Childers, Claire Laukitis, Peggy Parker

Absent: Sara Chapman

Guests: Megan Rider (ASMI), Sam Kito (Alaska Legislature), Arne Fuglvog, Will Ludlam (Edelman)

A quorum was established.

Parker moved to approve the agenda, Barnett seconded. Motion passed.

The minutes from the previous committee meeting were reviewed. Parker moved to approve as submitted, Briggs seconded. Motion passed.

Parker suggested that for future, the minutes be distributed to Committee shortly after meeting.

OLD BUSINESS

IPHC Commission: Parker announced that the two empty positions on the US contingent have been filled and Alaska has good representation. Both new Commissioners have been active in reaching out to their constituents, but it is a steep learning curve.

Parker stated that there is talk of reducing the minimum size for halibut (particularly for the young males that are never going to enter the fishery otherwise). Scientists caution that it would take a bigger effort to catch the fish and it would not necessarily protect the large fish. Barnett reminded the group that ASMI doesn't set policy, but we may be able to comment. Does the committee see this as a good thing, a bad thing? Callahan commented that the acceptance of a smaller halibut will be a struggle to foodservice and retailers. Parker said that it would be good to keep informed of the discussion. The change to lower size limit will reduce waste, and the verbiage/rationale is all related to waste involved in the halibut fishery. Briggs suggested that the IPHC study the numbers on the wastage. Parker agreed, the numbers come from the onboard observers. Childers said that we need to worry about the perception issue.

Consensus is that the ASMI Board needs to be made aware of the issue.

Parker: This Committee encourages the Board to send a letter to the IPHC reminding them of the sustainability of the fishery and that they should keep that in mind regarding keeping the breeders in the water, legal size of fish.

Briggs asked about Russian fishing - little regulation so smaller fish. Callahan pointed out that Alaska can only control the 200 mile limit; the Russian fish go primarily into the Canadian market. Discussion about arrowtooth flounder was made. That fishery is estimated to be as big as the Alaska pollock fishery; there's been some discussion of bringing factory trawlers into the bay and making arrowtooth flounder into surimi. The trouble is that bycatch is involved.

NEW BUSINESS

Parker was asked if there was any indication about the quota for next year. She said she has not heard.

Recommendation to the Board: Last year we recommended that the Board institute changes in the spec sheets on the lower sizes of halibut. We continue to support ASMI's efforts in the marketing of halibut.

ASMI staff have made changes to the <20 specifications on the halibut fact sheet and Alaska Seafood U (ASMI's interactive training program).

Recommendation to the Board: Committee suggests that the Board conduct an economic analysis on the fresh and frozen halibut market, by fish size.

Testing Procedures for Mercury Content: Callahan stated that Canada's acceptance of mercury content differs from the US. Last year, the committee asked the technical program to determine the procedures that are being used to measure mercury content.

Action Item: The Halibut-Sablefish Committee requests that the Technical Committee continue to review the testing procedures used by Canada for mercury testing and to encourage a uniform standard between the U.S. and Canada.

Arne Fuglvog pointed out that the NRDC has just filed a suit against the FDA regarding mandatory labeling of seafood with mercury content.

Black cod nomenclature: Arne Fuglvog is under contract for the Golden King Crab group to petition the FDA regarding a nomenclature change for brown king crab. Fuglvog stated that the FDA regulations also do not recognize "black cod" for sablefish. Domestic black cod sales can only be marketed as its common and FDA name of sablefish. He recommended that ASMI look into this issue.

Action item: The Halibut-Sablefish Committee would like to ask the Technical Committee to look into common name for black cod/sablefish. It has come to our attention that black cod is currently not a common name or an acceptable market name. The marketing committees should also be made aware of this issue.

Industry Situation/Update: Barnett stated that there's strong demand for Alaska black cod internationally. Callahan said that black cod is in strong demand everywhere even with the quota being down.

Consensus is that ASMI has done a wonderful job marketing black cod globally.

John Jensen made the committee aware of sperm whale depredation, noting that this fishery will probably move to a pot fishery in the future.

Chairman/Vice Chairman Appointment: Mark Callahan was voted Vice-Chair and Bob Barnett as Chairman. Nominations were closed and the vote was unanimous.

Bob Barnett, Chair, moved to adjourn.