

## **AC Comments**

Sitka AC1

SITKA FISH AND GAME ADVISORY COMMITTEE 9/25/2009

Not enough members were in attendance to make quorum, hence this is a record of discussion amongst those who were present, rather than official meeting minutes.

Committee members in attendance:

Tad Fujioka - Trapping- chair & note taker

Dick Curran - Longline

Joel Hanson - Guiding

Floyd Tomkins - Conservation

Pete Roddy- Shellfish

ADF&G staff in attendance:

Troy Tydenco -Sport Fisheries Biologist

Public Participation:

Linda Benken- ALFA

Heather Mueret-Woody- Sitka Tribe of Alaska

Discussion began with ACR4- Abundance-based management for Sport blackcod

- Linda (proposal co-sponsor) gave a brief history of the commercial and sport blackcod fisheries in Chatham Strait and an overview of the recent BOF actions with regard to the sport fishery. The ACR was put forth due to the 29% decline in commercial quota since the most recent sport bag limit adjustment. The sponsors felt that a similar reduction in sport bag limits was warranted in light of the decline in the stock.
- Upon question by Tad, Linda indicated that not only should sport bag limits go down when stocks goes down, but also go up when stocks are abundant.
- Joel gave his opinion that the language of the proposal was quite offensive to charter operators such as himself and was an example of the attitude of many of the proposals sponsored by commercial fishing interests that were rejected by the Board of Fish at the Southeast meeting last February. He felt that the proposal was extremist and unwarranted. Unfortunately, he expressed this in a manner offensive enough that Pete left the room.
- Additionally, Joel suggested that F&G ComFish was to blame for the 70% decline in the quota in Chatham Strait over the past several years.
- Joel reported that Jim Clark of Whaler's Cove Lodge (large operation on Chatham Strait) said that Whaler's Cove had "possibly caught half a dozen blackcod" during the 2009 season and that they don't target them. Joel felt that this proposal was symbolic and meaningless since none of the charter operators that he was aware approached the current bag limits (or even 70% of the limit).
- Linda indicated that certain lodges do target blackcod routinely and that their website advertisements indicated that some individual lodges might catch as many as 100 on a productive day. She also explained that the distrust of charter logbook data that offended Joel was rooted in the charter sector's unwillingness to use such logbook data as the basis for halibut allocation.

- Troy said that his interviews with charter operators in the Sitka area did not find any operators that routinely targeted blackcod.
- Dick gave his opinion that abundance-based management made sense to him. Fish stocks go up and down. The decline in the Chatham stock isn't necessarily anybody's fault. Some years there is good recruitment, some years there isn't.
- Joel repeated his opinion that the decline in the Chatham stock is the result of mismanagement.
- Linda pointed out that blackcod stocks in other places are declining too, hence the problem probably wasn't Fish & Game mismanaging the Chatham fishery.
- Dick thought that sport fisheries for other species were managed on abundance, so this would be nothing new.
- Troy confirmed that the king salmon and lingcod sport fisheries were managed on abundance.

End of discussion;

#### ACR6-Change brown and tanner crab seasons to align with Olympics

- Joel thought that this was a good idea provided that the Dept would confirm the proposer's claim that there was not a biological concern with the change.
- Floyd wondered (trying to get at potential biological reason for the fishery's current dates) about the history of the fishery and reason for the current season.
- Historical background was provided that the fishery was prosecuted between New Year's / Christmas holidays and the first herring fisheries as many of the crab boats also worked the (presumably CA/OR/WA or BC) herring fisheries.
- Tad reported that Jerry Barber and John Murray (both AC members) were unavailable tonight but had told him that they supported the proposal.
- Tad also added that Kathy Hansen (SEAFA) had indicated that while Alaska Glacier Seafoods (proposal sponsor) sold much of their crab to the Vancouver market, other processors had different markets and these markets might be disrupted by a one-time change in the season.
- Jon Hickman (Sitka Sound Seafoods) had indicated as much in a previous email to the rest of the AC, but did not follow up with any specifics or estimate of the likelihood of this problem.
- Dick suggested that the decision be left up to the fishermen and processors directly involved.

End of discussion;

Heather gave a brief presentation on her proposal to the Office of Subsistence Management to establish a Herring Research Priorities Planning Group to bring herring stakeholders together and solicit grant money to fund herring research that all stakeholders agree is needed for better management.

- This was likened to the Tongass Futures Roundtable; It was pointed out that the Roundtable was a good way to get opposing stakeholders talking to one another, but even when they agreed on something, the Forest Service wasn't necessarily responsive-despite having representatives at the Roundtable. Would ADF&G turn a similarly deaf ear to even a unified voice from herring stakeholders?
- The AC members present tentatively expressed that this might be a good idea, but were uncertain how to show that support in time for the Oct 6 RAC meeting given the lack of a quorum and the inadvisability of calling single-topic meetings.

