



MP Strategies

MEMORANDUM

To: Phil Zavadil, City Manager

Cc: Jacob Mercurief, Mayor

From: Mateo Paz-Soldan, MPStrategies LLC

Date: April 17, 2024

Re: Results of April 2024 NPFMC Meeting

The following is a summary of the fishery issues of interest to Saint Paul that took place at the April 2024 meeting of the North Pacific Fishery Management Council (NPFMC or Council) in Seattle. Saint Paul representatives physically present at the meetings included Heather McCarty, Jeff Kauffman, and Ray Melovidov for CBSFA, Lauren Divine and Connie Melovidov for the St. Paul Tribe and myself for the City of Saint Paul (the Team).

The link to the NPFMC newsletter regarding the meeting is included:

<https://www.npfmc.org/april-2024-newsletter/>

The April meeting was dominated by the action to reduce chum salmon PSC. There were over 323 comments and it took more time than allotted to get through public comments. There was also an unprecedentedly large participation from chum dependent tribes and communities in Interior Alaska in testimony both before the AP and the NPFMC.

As a result, several agenda items, including the Area 4 Halibut vessel caps action, which is important to CBSFA/Saint Paul, got postponed until the June 2024 meeting in Kodiak.

Therefore, in addition to the previously scheduled Crab Rationalization Program Review, the Area 4 Vessel Caps will be on the agenda for June.

<https://www.npfmc.org/three-meeting-outlook/>

1. Chum Salmon PSC:

Leaving aside the important subsistence/cultural parallels between halibut and salmon dependence, the chum PSC action is not an economic priority for the City or CBSFA, except to the extent that efforts to reduce PSC may affect PSC usage in CDQ program pollock allocations including CBSFA's. It is worth noting that many of chum PSC action's components parallel many of those that were important in the halibut ABM and BBRKC actions. The struggle

MPStrategies LLC

411 Windsor Lane
Winchester, VA, 22602

in this case is one between the pollock trawl sector which uses salmon PSC to capture pollock, versus chum salmon users in villages along the Yukon-Kuskwokim river basins, whose commercial and subsistence use of salmon has been severely curtailed, impeded, in recent years. As with ABM, MSA National Standards 1, 4, 8, and 9 are heavily at play in this action.

The pollock sector notes that genetic studies indicate that most of the chum salmon being bycaught is hatchery salmon from Asia, and that further curtailing its PSC usage, would cause harmful economic impacts to one of Alaska's primary commercial fisheries, while doing little to actually restore the native chum salmon stocks that tribal communities depend on.

The tribal communities for their part point to the devastating impacts of the collapse of the chum stocks on salmon-dependent communities and surrounding ecosystems. These impacts are magnified by the fact that these communities have few other resources they can depend on and many have cultural/subsistence uses that are critical to their Native identities. They argue that even if the benefits of further PSC cuts are small, both sectors should manage the burdens of chum salmon PSC equitably.

The AP and the Council grappled with this issue. At the AP, both sectors were able to develop a consensus framework to send over to the Council. The maker of the motion, Eva Burke, is one of the new AP tribal seats and was very effective at bringing both sides together.

After the AP passed its thoughtfully debated motion, the public stood up and clapped. This was historic and is a testament of the positive impacts that the recent increase of Native and tribal representation, pushed in part by Saint Paul's efforts, has had on NPFMC bodies.

From the AP, the action went over to the Council, where additional changes were approved to the proposed management measures as reflected in the attached motion:

<https://meetings.npfmc.org/CommentReview/DownloadFile?p=51652c12-1852-4f1d-baec-bb983368467f.pdf&fileName=C2%20Motion.pdf>

The Council will be reviewing the next iteration of the analysis in late 2024 or early 2025.

2. Crab Rationalization Program Review:

As reported in February, the Council has scheduled a review of the Crab Rationalization Program for the June 2024 meeting in Kodiak, Alaska. It is possible that during the June meeting amendments or updates to the program may be proposed. Chief among these may be the Binding Arbitration Formula between harvesters and processors, as well as the program's regionalization components.

City and CBSFA representatives met with Trident's leadership during the meeting. Concerning the first topic, Trident expressed interest in Saint Paul's support for adjusting the factors to be considered in the formula to include rising labor costs. This will allow Trident to more cost-effectively run its crab processing operations and increase the odds it may operate on Saint Paul.

Regarding regionalization, Trident expressed its interest in "more flexible" regionalization requirements especially during low crab TAC years. On this matter, Saint Paul will have to

MPStrategies LLC

411 Windsor Lane
Winchester, VA, 22602

weigh the current economic realities of crab processing, versus its interest in maintaining rigid regional delivery requirements that may not be economically viable.

Of foremost interest to the Saint Paul Team was to gauge Trident's continued interest in the Saint Paul plant. Trident noted that despite plant closures in other parts of Alaska, it remained interested in its presence on Saint Paul. It asked to work with the local entities in a realistic way, in order to keep the costs of its plant on Saint Paul as low as possible, thereby increasing the potential for the plant to be used if and when crab stocks return to significant levels.

3. Area 4 Halibut Vessel Caps:

As noted above, due to the extended discussions over the Chum PSC action, the Council was forced to postpone deliberation on the action for a long-term fix to the Area 4 vessel caps which is of importance to CBSFA and local Saint Paul fishermen. As you will recall, the Council took action at the February 2023 meeting to extend interim measures waiving the caps for 5 years, that is until the end of 2027. This action, which is a follow-up to the 5 year extension of the waiver, would put in place a permanent fix that removes the waiver and replaces it with higher vessel caps in the Bering Sea. This would allow fishermen in the Bering Sea (areas 4A, 4B, and 4CDE) who are currently unable to fish due to the lack of processing capacity, to "stack" their IFQ quota on larger vessels or tenders, for transport to other processing locations. This would also prevent halibut from being stranded at a critical economic time for Saint Paul.

However, there has been opposition both to a long-term extension of a blanket use cap waiver from halibut IFQ fishermen in other parts of Alaska, as well as an increase in the existing vessel caps. These fishermen are concerned about consolidation of harvesting capacity and the corresponding loss of associated economic activity in dependent communities. These concerns coincide with CBSFA's own goals and Saint Paul's longterm interest to protect and encourage the growth of the local halibut vessel fishing fleet.

Despite the compressed schedule, the AP was able to discuss this matter and developed a motion reflecting the broad concerns of the halibut IFQ program participants. One of the thorniest issues was how to account for participants that operated in both the Bering Sea, where the caps would be higher, and in the rest of Alaska where the caps are lower. Language was therefore intensely negotiated by the halibut stakeholders including Saint Paul and added to the AP Motion, under Alternative 2, Suboption 4, stating that: "**vessels may harvest up to the area specific cap in 2C and coast wide cap in 3 and/or 4. Any further harvest over the coastwide cap must be harvested in area 4,**" see AP Motion:

<https://meetings.npfmc.org/CommentReview/DownloadFile?p=bb707336-31aa-4015-a9f4-43eb710edaad.pdf&fileName=C3%20AP%20Report%20%20.pdf>

The City provided testimony before the AP on this matter which addressed the community's investment in halibut related infrastructure and stated its interest in restoring the vitality and growth of the local halibut fleet, see **Vessel Cap Testimony** attached.

4. Climate Change Scenarios Workshop:

At the April meeting, the Council received a presentation on the scope of the Climate Change Scenarios Workshop that will be held at the Kodiak meeting. The purpose of the workshop is to

MPStrategies LLC

411 Windsor Lane
Winchester, VA, 22602

generate short- and long-term ideas for fisheries management approaches to improve climate resiliency.

The ideas and actions coming out of this workshop could be important in helping to guide fisheries management policies that are relevant to Saint Paul. Clearly, the declining stocks of fishery, crab, and marine mammal resources that Saint Paul is dependent on are connected to climate change. Working with the Council to implement policies that are “friendlier” and provide greater resiliency to Saint Paul’s participation in the Bering Sea’s fisheries, is of interest to Saint Paul in the near and distant future.

5. **Fur Seal Conservation:**

During B reports, representatives for NMFS and the Saint Paul Tribe provided a joint presentation on the status of fur seal research, the identification and prioritization of threats to the fur seal population, and future research needs including the goal of submitting an application to the North Pacific Research Boar. The presentation also noted that the existing Fur Seal Conservation Plan was being reviewed and updated, and that public comment would be sought via publication of a notification in the Federal Register sometime in the midyear. The Saint Paul Tribe furthermore invited the Council to participate and provide input.

The presentation was positively well-received by the Council and lays the groundwork for further action to protect fur seals through the Council process, see:

<https://meetings.npfmc.org/CommentReview/DownloadFile?p=103ec5de-b592-4244-bcaa-b8d706613a2c.pdf&fileName=PPT%20B2%20Northern%20Fur%20Seal%20Conservation%20Plan%20Update.pdf>

All for now.