

Northern Norton Sound AC
12/17/13
Nome, Kawerak

I. Call to Order: Time by Roy Ashenfelter

II. Roll Call:

Members Present: Roy Ashenfelter (Chairman), Charlie Lean (Vice Chairman), Adem Boeckman (At Large), Paul Kosto (Nome), Dan Stang (Nome), Nate Perkins (Nome), Tom Gray (Nome), Kevin Knowlton (Nome), Charlie Saccheus (Elim), Clifford Seetook (Wales), Jack Fagerstrom (Golovin), and Peter Buck (White Mountain).

Members Absent: 3 Stanley Tocktoo (Shismaref), Vernon Rock (Brevig Mission), Teller Representative

Number Needed for Quorum on AC: 8

List of User Groups Present:

Kawerak, Sitnasuak, NSEDC, BLM, ADF&G staff

III. Approval of Agenda: Agenda Approved

IV. Approval of Previous Meeting Minutes: From meeting date 9/16/13

**Make changes for Charlie Leans requests.

Needs to be page numbers

V. Fish and Game Staff Present: Tony Gorn, Letty Hughes, Scott Kent, Carmen Daggett, Jim Menard

VI. Guests Present:

Tom Sparks (BLM), Brandon Ahmasuk (Kawerak), Kevin Keith (NSEDC),

VII. New Business:

Elections:

All those in favor of having Paul Kosto, Adem Boeckman, and Charlie Lean to re-seating the listed individuals the At Large seat is vacant and was filled by Roy Ashenfelter for the duration of this meeting)

Paul Kosto: Has confidence that Charlie Lean can wear more than one at the next Statewide Crab Meeting.

Public Comments: none

BOG or BOF	Proposal Number	Proposal Description	
Supports or Opposes?	Number Support	Number Oppose	Comments/Discussion (list Pros and Cons)/Amendments to Proposal
BOF	344		Make spiny crab a commercially legal species.
Support	11	1	The proposal asks the question are spiny king crab a fisheries opportunity or an undesirable invader. NSEDC, the proposer, sees the

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			<p>colonizing crab as an opportunity and would like to manage it as other king crab are managed.</p> <p>F&G Staff confirmed the current status of the crab as a Miscellaneous Shellfish. They support the proposal.</p> <p>Discussion focused on the fact the crab is a wide-spread species in Asia and apparently a valuable food species. Likewise it is a food species on both St. Lawrence and Diomed Islands. The majority supported the proposal for those reasons.</p> <p>Opposition focused on the fact that this would enable a commercial winter fishery.</p>
BOF	345		<p>The proposal seeks to allow hand lining as a commercial fishing. It would allow people from St. Lawrence Island and Diomed to hand line crab catch.</p>
Support	9	3	<p>This proposal was intended to benefit communities where shore fast ice is unstable particularly St. Lawrence and Diomed Islands. Discussion brought up the illegal sales Customary Trade of winter caught crab from those communities in Nome. CFEC permits are now available on line and winter buying stations have been set up in other regional communities.</p> <p>This may result in commercial hand lining in other areas where subsistence hand lining is common. There was concern that subsistence opportunity would be adversely affected due to a limited area of suitable ice and equipment to open holes. The communities utilizing the area near Rocky Point had concern.</p> <p>The F&G staff reminded the AC that no Amount Necessary for Subsistence had been established for crab in Norton Sound. The fact that three species of crab which have separate geographic ranges was mentioned and the discussion went no further.</p> <p>Two members spoke in favor of providing a legal means of selling crab where the practice is currently illegal.</p> <p>Three members spoke against creating further subsistence – commercial user group conflicts.</p> <p>The idea of creating exclusive subsistence fishing zones was considered but discarded due to the unpredictability of crab movement.</p>
BOF No Action	346		<p>Norton Sound King Crab Harvest strategy.</p> <p>The proposal was submitted as a contingency to address harvest strategy changes that would be the result of adjustments to the population model and its implementation. It was purposefully vague due to the review of the model still being underway. Both F&G staff and NSEDC biologists have cooperated in the development of the new</p>

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			<p>crab model and the policy of exploitation rates based on abundance thresholds. The controversy in management that was discussed is the response to slow catch rates in the summer commercial fishery when the crab do not migrate offshore as is usual. This situation has occurred in 2009 and 2013, recently as well as several times in the past. When this occurs, the Guideline harvest may not be met by the season closure date of noon September 3. Regulation provides for "relaxing the near shore closure line by small increments to make the fishery more efficient". F&G Staff has chosen to extend the fishery well into September in both 2009 and 2013 in preference to the strategy in regulation. This results in the harvest of some molting male crab. The molt is well documented in September and is the reason the season closure date was set at September 3 in 1979.</p> <p>A wide ranging discussion of 45 minutes followed the opening statements of historical perspective. The proponents of a commercial fishery pointed out the 2013 summer commercial harvest fell far short of the guideline harvest despite the season extension and line relaxation. The fishery harvest realized approximately 80% of its predicted harvest and revenue over a time period that was roughly twice as long as the typical season. The prolonged season affected the resident fishermen and processing work force adversely, primarily by doubling costs such as those for fuel and bait. The exploitation rate has been reduced to less than one half of what the fishery once supported. The winter season of 2012/2013, the same molt year as the summer fishery, harvested nearly twice the previous record winter harvest which would indicate a more than adequate opportunity for the winter fisheries.</p> <p>The proponents of the subsistence fisheries made the point that crab movement is not always predictable and a reasonable person must anticipate there will be poor fishing years. They interpreted the subsistence priority to be a strong argument to not relax the closure line since it had been originally been put in place to ensure winter opportunity and to keep the much larger summer commercial fishery impacts to a minimum. They also reminded the AC that the line serves to protect the juvenile and female sublegal crab from handling mortality. Reductions in winter subsistence harvests have been particularly felt in the area near Rocky Point where the communities of Golovin and White Mountain fish for crab each winter. The shift in the commercial fishery to that area in the late 1990s was noted. Subsistence opportunity varies from place to place within the District. F&G Staff discussed the line relaxation of 3 miles which occurred in</p>

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			<p>mid-August. Catch rates in the newly opened area were roughly equivalent to those in the normally open waters. A post season pot survey found a greater than expected number of legal crab inside the closure area. This being a one-time survey, they were not able to comment on comparisons to other years. When questioned on their confidence in the population health staff admitted to some uncertainty and said they considered environmental factors and trends in their management.</p> <p>Several AC members acknowledged the unpredictability of crab movement. The importance of maintaining large males for the health of the population's reproduction was stated and the temporary loss of that component was recalled. On the other hand, recent improvements in escape mechanisms to reduce handling of small crab was noted.</p> <p>F&G staff pointed out that they had consulted with HQ and felt they had legal authority to extend the season beyond the regulatory closure. Several AC members stated regardless of that authority fishing during the molt was a poor decision in their minds.</p> <p>In the end, There seemed to be three camps on the management of the season: Those that believed the line should not be relaxed, those that thought the line should have been relaxed more and sooner, and those that would not "sign a blank check". No one spoke to doing away with near shore closure line completely or even relaxing it permanently. Only staff, spoke in favor of fishing during the molt.</p>

Old Business:
Adjournment: 2:40 pm

Minutes Recorded By: ___Carmen Daggett

Minutes Approved By: 

Date: 2/20/2014 