

evidence that harbor seals have a finer scale stock structure than the current SAR indicates. These counts indicate stable or increasing harbor seal numbers in Southeast Alaska, except for Glacier Bay which shows a declining trend; several distinct trends in the central Gulf of Alaska; and possibly a declining trend in the Bering Sea.

Southeast Alaska: Trend-sites for the Southeast Alaska stock were established in Ketchikan (1983), in Sitka (1984), and in Glacier Bay (1992). Current trend data for the Ketchikan trend-sites show an increasing trend among harbor seals of 7.4 percent per year (1983-1998). The Sitka area exhibits a relatively stable trend of 1.1 percent per year (1984-1999). Glacier Bay experienced a decreasing trend of -7.5 percent per year between 1992-98. These trend data indicate that Southeast Alaska is likely occupied by more than one discrete harbor seal group.

Gulf of Alaska: The Kodiak Archipelago and Prince William Sound represent the principal trend-site areas for the current Gulf of Alaska stock of harbor seals. Tugidak Island, in the Kodiak Archipelago, is the main long-term trend index site. The Tugidak Island trend-site has demonstrated an historical decline of approximately 90 percent from the mid-1970s to the 1990s. However, counts at the Tugidak Island site have indicated a 6.7 percent per year increase from 1994-1999 during the pupping period, and 4.9 percent increase per year during the molting period. Recent trend data from the greater Kodiak area (1993-1999) suggest an increasing trend of 5.6 percent per year. Overall, however, seal abundance in this area remains substantially below abundance levels in the 1970s. In Prince William Sound, counts from surveys conducted during the harbor seal molt period have declined by 58 percent since the first trend count surveys were conducted in the early 1980s. Thus, the population trend data support genetic evidence that the Gulf of Alaska is likely to contain more than one stock of harbor seals.

Bering Sea: A trend route was recently established in the eastern Bering Sea area along the north side of the Alaska Peninsula in Bristol Bay. The Bristol Bay trend route (1998-2001) indicates a declining trend of -1.3 percent per year. Total counts of harbor seals in the Bering Sea were also obtained in the 1970s and are considerably higher than the more recent counts on the Bristol Bay trend-site route. Recent population trends (1990-2000) for the land-based trend-site at Nanvak Bay indicate an increasing rate of 9.2 percent per year during the pupping period and 2.1

percent per year during the molting period. Counts in the Bering Sea are complicated by the sympatric ranges of harbor seals and spotted seals (*P. largha*); the two species are indistinguishable from aerial surveys.

Request for Comments

The purposes of this notice are: (1) to inform interested constituents that several lines of evidence indicate that harbor seals have a finer-scale stock structure in Alaska than current Stock Assessment Reports indicate; (2) to advise the public that NMFS and ANHSC are evaluating harbor seal stock structure through a co-management process; and (3) to solicit additional information and viewpoints that the public would like NMFS and ANHSC to consider throughout the evaluation of harbor seal stock structure.

Dated: August 19, 2002.

David Cottingham,

Deputy Director, Office of Protected Resources, National Marine Fisheries Service.
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DEPARTMENT OF COMMERCE

National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration

[I.D. 082102B]

North Pacific Fishery Management Council; Notice of Committee Meeting

AGENCY: National Marine Fisheries Service (NMFS), National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration (NOAA), Commerce.

ACTION: Committee meeting.

SUMMARY: The North Pacific Fishery Management Council's (Council) Pacific Northwest Crab Industry Advisory Committee (PNCIAC) to meet.

DATES: September 13, 2002.

ADDRESSES: NMFS/Alaska Fisheries Science Center, 7600 Sand Point Way NE, Building 9, Room A & B Seattle, WA 98115.

Council address: North Pacific Fishery Management Council, 605 W. 4th Ave., Suite 306, Anchorage, AK 99501-2252.

FOR FURTHER INFORMATION CONTACT: Council staff: 907-271-2809.

SUPPLEMENTARY INFORMATION: On Friday, September 13, 2002, the Committee will meet between 9 a.m.-3 p.m. in Seattle at the Alaska Fisheries Science Center. The Committee will review a report on newshell and skip-molt components of the Bering Sea opilio fishery, review status of stocks and guideline harvest

levels, and receive a presentation on catchability of crabs in the surveys. The Committee may develop recommendations on these and other issues relating to crab fishery management.

Although non-emergency issues not contained in this agenda may come before the Committee for discussion, those issues may not be the subject of formal action during this meeting. Action will be restricted to those issues specifically listed in this notice and any issues arising after publication of this notice that require emergency action under section 305 (c) of the Magnuson-Stevens Act, provided the public has been notified of the Council's intent to take final action to address the emergency.

Special Accommodations

This meeting is physically accessible to people with disabilities. Requests for sign language interpretation or other auxiliary aids should be directed to Gail Bendixen, 907-271-2809, at least 5 working days prior to the meeting date.

Dated: August 21, 2002.

Richard W. Surdi,

Acting Director, Office of Sustainable Fisheries, National Marine Fisheries Service.
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DEPARTMENT OF COMMERCE

National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration

[I.D. 082102A]

South Atlantic Fishery Management Council; Public Meetings

AGENCY: National Marine Fisheries Service (NMFS), National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration (NOAA), Commerce.

ACTION: Notice of public meetings.

SUMMARY: The South Atlantic Fishery Management Council (Council) will hold meetings of its SOPPS (Statement of Organization Practices and Procedures) Committee, Information and Education Committee, Protected Resources Committee, NEPA (National Environmental Policy Act) Committee, Advisory Panel Selection Committee, Shrimp Committee, Spiny Lobster Committee, Snapper Grouper Committee, Highly Migratory Species Committee, Dolphin Wahoo Committee. A public hearing on the revised Atlantic Dolphin Wahoo Fishery Management Plan (FMP) will be held and a public comment period will be held to address