NPFMC Advisory Panel Turns Attention To Crab

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Casey Kelly/KMXT

The North Pacific Fishery Management Council’s Advisory Panel, meeting in Kodiak Tuesday, took up the issue of Bering Sea crab. Panel members received a report from the council’s crab committee, which is looking at making changes to the Bering Sea Aleutian Islands Crab Rationalization program. KMXT’s Casey Kelly has more.

Kodiak was hurt by Crab Rationalization in multiple ways, but two of the biggest were the loss of crewmember jobs due to the consolidation of the crab fleet and the loss of processing revenue as a result of the program’s processor quota provision, which ties 90 percent of the total allowable catch each season to specific processors.

Kodiak City Councilman Terry Haines, a former Bering Sea crabber, told the Advisory Panel that Crab Rationalization created a class of haves and a class of have-nots.

(Haines 1 :14s “…is gone now.”)

Haines is part of a loose collective of fishermen that will bring a reallocation proposal to the North Pacific Council, which begins its meeting in Kodiak today. The proposal would put a portion of the crab quota each season into a pool owned by a crewmembers’ co-op. The fishermen say that would level the playing field, which was skewed with the implementation of the program. Although many of the crewmembers spoke to the Advisory Panel Tuesday, they all said they were taking their proposal directly to the council, which irked some on the AP. But Haines defends their action.

(Haines 2 :29s “…fixing this program.”)

But there were also those at the meeting who urged the Advisory Panel to tell the council not to make changes to the program. Simeon Swetzof is the mayor of St. Paul in

the Pribilof Islands, a community that benefits from Crab Rationalization’s processor quota provision.

(Swetzof 1 :26s “…rationalization program.”)

Swetzof says he has nothing against crewmembers. His son fished on a crab boat for many years, he says. But he thinks whatever comes out the crab committee’s final report, and whatever action the council may or may not take to change the program, St. Paul needs to be recognized for its historical contribution to the fishery.

(Swetzof 2 :35s “…quota been then, see?”)

Haines says the crewmembers’ problem with processor quotas is not that they are linked to specific communities, but rather that they are linked to specific companies.
And while he doesn’t expect to see eye-to-eye with Swetzof on every issue, he hopes the dialog will help.

(Haines 3 :24s “…in a lot of respects.”)

The North Pacific Fishery Management Council is scheduled to take up Bering Sea crab issues Thursday afternoon and Friday morning. Meanwhile, the Advisory Panel continues moving through its agenda through Saturday.

I’m Casey Kelly.

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