# Assembly and Council Gearing Up for NPFMC Meeting

Monday, 10 September 2012

{audio}/images/stories/mp3/120910.boro_city_npfmc.mp3{/audio}

Brianna Gibbs/KMXT

Come October Kodiak Island Borough Assembly and Kodiak City Council representatives will depart for Anchorage to attend the North Pacific Fishery Management Council meeting.

During a joint work session between the borough assembly and city council last Tuesday, Denby Lloyd addressed a few topics on the agenda for the October meeting. Lloyd is a Kodiak fishery advisor and a former member of the North Pacific Fishery Management Council.

-- (NPFMC Meeting 1 :45 “The council is going to have a report of their revamped, or potentially revamped, observer program for the various gulf ground fish fisheries. And this is going to be of some interest to you and I’ll be paying attention and bringing back a report to you. But this observer program brings back basic biological data, including bycatch data from performance of the fleet. And it’s been in some ways an inadequate level of coverage, but it’s been that way for 20 years and now the council has recently been engaged in revamping that program, and potentially stepping up the amount of observer coverage and therefore the amount of data. And hopefully the voracity of the data that come off the vessels can report on directed catch, bycatch and other aspects of the fishery.”)

Advancements in bycatch data will be important to have during the meeting because the fishery management council will dive into the issue of bycatch in the Gulf of Alaska trawl fishery.

Trawlers pursuing Pacific Cod and polluck often catch a significant amount of bycatch, some of which is made up of declining halibut and king salmon species. The fishery council is attempting to find a solution to this problem, and one method on the table is holding individual boats accountable by putting a cap on bycatch.

At the joint work session, borough assembly and city council members agreed to pass a joint resolution and send Borough Mayor Jerome Selby and City Mayor Pat Branson to present it to the fishery council during the October meeting. The mayors will ask that Kodiak landings are protected, even if accountability methods are implemented for the trawler fleet. City Councilman John Whiddon said sending Kodiak delegates to the meeting should have an impact, because it’s been a long time since Kodiak has dabbled into fish politics.

-- (NPFMC Meeting 2 : 30
“But I think what’s really really important is we go to the council the first week of October, and this is why we’re advocating for the mayors to go, or mayor and mayors to go, and present this to the council. This will be the first time in a long time that Kodiak has weighed in on a fisheries issue. And I think it’s very important for us to make the statement that the community is involved, it’s engaged and will stay engaged. And I think if no other message gets through, I think that will be the most critical message we can get. And anything after that I think we can just build on the momentum that we’ll create.”)

Despite sending a message at the meeting, the mayors will be still be tip-toeing through the minefield that is fish politics. As representatives from a community boasting multiple gear types, assembly and council members said they will not make recommendations on specific bycatch numbers.

The North Pacific Fishery Management Council meeting will be held the first week of October. The full agenda for the meeting was released last Tuesday.