City, Borough Gear Up For NPFMC Meetings

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Brianna Gibbs/KMXT

Last night the Kodiak Borough Assembly and City Council met for a joint work session to discuss, among other things, fish. Specifically, bycatch in the Gulf of Alaska groundfish trawl fishery. The two governing bodies were gearing up for the matter being a topic during the upcoming North Pacific Fishery Management Council’s meeting at the end of the month.

The management council will be reviewing eight proposals for management of bycatch in the groundfish trawl industry, five of which deal with areas of interest for Kodiak. Assemblywoman Chris Lynch said the local fisheries work group heard presentations about those proposals earlier this summer and decided that more analysis and consideration needs to be given to all five that are specific to Kodiak.

Former member of the management council and current Kodiak fishery advisor, Denby Lloyd, presented a letter that the fisheries work group drafted for the city council and borough assembly to send to the management council. The letter details the need for further analysis on all five proposals.

“The group Monday decided that at this point it would be of value for the community express to the North Pacific Council that all of the pertinent proposals in front of the North Pacific Council on this issue ought to be further developed and analyzed.”

Lloyd said one of the main proposals calls for a program that is fairly similar to previous programs that the management council has pursued.

“And very similar to the recent rockfish program that has been implemented here in the Gulf of Alaska. And as some public testimony has provided this evening there are proposals that basically add on to that industry approach, calling for a potential issuance of harvesting catch shares to not just harvesters but also potentially to processors or also to communities.”

Lloyd said another concept looks at issuing catch shares to harvesters, processors and communities as a form of compensation for any infrastructure that might become surplus after any program is put into effect.

“Because according to his theory and his presentation there would be inevitable consolidation of fishing activity that would occur after rationalization so people with capital up until that point would deserve some compensation for that.”

Another proposal called for the creation of community fishing associations, or CFAs.

“Which in essence would have all of fishing quota share issued to it and then annually that CFA would apportion out harvesting opportunity according to a formula approved by the north pacific council.”

Lloyd said it’s uncertain what action the management council may take during its meetings. But he said it’s way too early for them to choose one or two options to pursue. He said because of that, the draft letter is appropriate in that it asks for further evaluation of all options currently on the table.

The North Pacific Fishery Management Council will hold nine days of meetings starting on September 30. Both the city council and borough assembly said they would take a look at the letter and hopefully come to a finalized version that can be sent to management council members before the end of the month.