

Component 6 a Contentious Proposal at Council Meeting

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Mike Mason/KMXT

The North Pacific Fishery Management Council is meeting in Anchorage through Tuesday. The Council started the meeting off with a contentious proposal to put limits on who can fish for Pacific cod in the Central and Western Gulf of Alaska. Mike Mason is covering the meeting and filed this report.

The actual Council meeting began on Wednesday but the Council's various committees started work on Monday. The "Enforcement Committee" took up what looked like a very simple matter. However, upon further investigation it became quite complicated. At issue is a proposal to limit vessels that are commonly referred to as "Super 58's". They are essentially boats under 60-feet in length built with the capacity of a larger vessel. This is, in part, done by making the vessel wider. The 60-foot figure is important because the federal observer requirements kick in at 60-feet. One of the components of the larger proposal to amend the fishery management plan for groundfish in the Gulf of Alaska is component 6. It would establish a policy to use the width of a vessel as a representation of capacity. The width restriction would be 1 foot of width for each 3 feet of length. How to get the exact length of a vessel was one of the issues taken up by the Council's "Enforcement Committee". It sounds simple enough. You just have the owner measure the vessel and submit that to regulators in order to come up with the vessel width. However, the measurement would be self reported and in a very competitive fishery there might be an incentive to fudge the numbers. At least that was the concern raised by Garland Walker. He's the "NOAA" General Counsel for Enforcement.

-- Spot---Enforcement
4---30-seconds----Q: "risk"

Another option discussed is to define width in regulation and require vessel surveys. When that option was brought up it prompted a response from Lieutenant Commander Lisa Ragone. She's was the Coast Guard representative on the committee.

-- Spot---Enforcement 2---23-seconds---Q:
"discussion"

That bit of news caught the committee of career regulators, attorneys, and fish cops by surprise. including Council member Roy Hyder, who chaired the "Enforcement Committee".

-- Spot---Enforcement
3---35-seconds----Q: "it first"

Another member of the

"Enforcement Committee" is Sue Salveson with the National Marine Fisheries Service. She said there are questions about what vessels would fall under the width restriction. She noted that the council appears focused on finding a way to restrict "Super 58" vessels.

-- Spot---Enforcement
1---15-seconds---Q: "clarified"

The National Marine Fisheries Service has put forth a discussion paper in which they claim that the vessel capacity limits being examined by the Council are not practical for the agency to implement or enforce. In their Wednesday afternoon report to the Council the "Enforcement Committee" reiterated that utilizing vessel length, depth, and breath measurements to enforce a capacity limitation program in the Gulf of Alaska Pacific cod fisheries appears feasible but enforcing the limitations would be extremely difficult and complex. Roy Hyder delivered the committee report. He said any vessel capacity standard should be applied uniformly to all vessels.

-- Spot---Enforcement
6---31-seconds---Q: "comply with"

It was noted several times during the staff presentations and committee reports that width measurements to the Coast Guard are self reported and difficult to verify on the water. That prompted a response from Council member Sam Cotton.

-- Spot---Enforcement
7---33-seconds---Q: "sound"

Component 6, which includes the vessel capacity limitations, was totally stricken from the recommendations of the Council's advisory panel. Those recommendations were presented to the council Wednesday afternoon just prior to the start of public testimony. Once public testimony is done the full Council will begin deliberating on the larger proposal to add Pacific Cod endorsements to Western and Central Gulf of Alaska fixed gear LLP licenses.

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