

From: <jmkoeppe@comcast.net>
Date: Wed, Oct 4, 2017 at 9:40 AM
Subject: Salmon Public Hearings
To: pmmc.comments@noaa.gov

Please consider the attached memo submitted to the SAS when discussing public hearing venues for the 2018 and future salmon seasons.

Regards,

John Koeppen
F/V Lulu

To: Robin EhIke
From: John Koeppen
Date: July 19, 2017
RE: Locations for California Public Comment

After we spoke in April and with Dave Bitts' encouragement, I contacted all California's SAS representatives and some council representatives. We explored expanding the opportunity for public comment on three options when considering the upcoming salmon seasons. We agreed there is a need to reach a broader audience in these difficult times.

Your guidance in April was to gather facts and offer suggestion(s). We discussed the topic and our findings and thoughts are as follows:

1. It is impossible to define geographically the composition of California's commercial troll fleet. Neither fish landings nor boat registrations (either Coast Guard Certification or CA Motor Vehicles) are reliable. Neither data set accounts for vessels in or out of their main port of operation. For example, my landings in 2016 were in five separate ports although my home port was Bodega Bay. Some commercial fishermen with trailer vessels will transport their vessels via the highway to ports with the best potential production. Landing receipts do not identify the vessel's home port.

Home port information from Coast Guard or CA Motor Vehicles is guarded as private information. Even if it were available, many vessel owners use their city of residence as their home port such as Fresno or Sacramento, neither of which is a "port." It is inaccurate to use home port information to reflect port representation for the California commercial troll fleet.

Similar issues arise with the recreational fishers due to participant's willingness to travel long distances; for example to Fort Bragg or Moss Landing from the Bay Area or Central Valley cities.

Conclusion: It would be inaccurate to assume highest participation for public comment based on home port data.

2. Commercial participation in the public comment meetings is highly dependent on weather and location. There was a significant representation by the Ft. Bragg commercial troll fleet in 2017. The reason was the seas were high and the boats couldn't fish crab. In past years, there have been opportunities for public hearings in central California, such as the Santa Rosa area. Again good weather permitting, crab fishermen who also fish salmon will opt to generate revenue by fishing crab rather than attending a public comment meeting. In addition, recreational interests consider a two to three hour drive reasonable assuming good driving weather. No one can predict the weather, good or bad, far enough in advance to assure an acceptable turn out.
3. Opportunity to offer public comment on the upcoming salmon season's sculping at the annual F&W's Salmon Meeting is not reasonable. This meeting offers the first view of the escapement predictions and health of the runs. There is no time to digest the data, weigh the options, and gather opinions from thought leaders much less a representative sample of the user groups.

We firmly believe the central and southerly portions of our California salmon troll fleet and recreational fishers have not had a reasonable opportunity to voice publicly their opinions on the options for their upcoming salmon season. We offer three suggestions for Council consideration.

1. Move the California public hearing meeting venue to a denser populated location such as Santa Rosa or Santa Cruz. Our rationale is there are more willing participants within a two hour drive than a five hour plus drive to Ft. Bragg. People will participate if they do not incur the additional cost of a hotel room and can share the transportation expense.

2. Move the location on a 3 year rotating schedule such as Ft. Bragg, Santa Rosa, and Santa Cruz as an example.

3. Add an additional California public hearing in Morro Bay, Monterey, or Santa Cruz to accommodate the salmon fishers in the southern range.

We feel a venue easily accessible by a major freeway and within a 2-3 hour drive of the greater Bay Area will attract a greater public response.

Granted, our request may create an additional burden on those who represent the Council and support the public comment effort. With that acknowledgement, it becomes more difficult for those charged with deciding the salmon season without a broader base of consideration in these difficult times. As the access to the salmon fishery remains constrained due to California's low returns, it is imperative we know what the majority wants, i.e. maximum time in low productive areas or minimum time in highly productive areas. This scenario will not change in the foreseeable future. Those charged with sculpting and deciding the California salmon season need as much public input as possible. The above suggestions and/or a combination will help achieve this end.

I appreciate your considerations and thoughts.

Thank you,

John Koeppen

F/V Lulu
