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September 3, 2002

TO: Dr. Hans Radtke, PFMC Council Chair
Dr. Donald O. McIsaac, PFMC Executive Director

FROM: Ginny Goblirsch, Oregon Sea Grant
Heather Munro, Oregon Sea Grant (on contract)

Ginny Goblirsch
Heather Munro

SUBJECT: Summary of Public Comments from Oregon Community Meetings

Thank you for this opportunity to present information gathered at four Community Leader Meetings held in Newport, Astoria, Brookings and North Bend over a two-week period in August. The goal of these meetings was to inform community leaders, business owners and the public about groundfish issues and challenges and to answer questions and solicit comments regarding expected socio-economic impacts resulting from the proposed groundfish management decisions for 2003.

Information gathered at these meetings is directly related to National Standard 8 - the requirement that management measures shall, consistent with the conservation requirements of the Magnuson Act, "take into account the importance of fishery resources to fishing communities in order to (A) provide for the sustained participation of such communities, and (B) to the extent practicable, minimize adverse economic impacts on such communities." Several comments also relate to National Standard 10 (Safety).

These meetings were organized by Oregon Sea Grant in association with the Oregon Department of Fish and Wildlife (ODFW) (Attachment B). We especially appreciated all the help we received from Patty Burke and her staff from ODFW.

Following these community meetings, ODFW conducted meetings specifically for members of the fishing industry. They are reporting separately on those meetings.

We met with a variety of community leaders, business owners, family members, agency representatives and the public. These included: Chamber of Commerce Board Members and Directors; County Commissioners; Port Managers and Commissioners; Community Service Agency Personnel; Coastal Legislators, Congressional Aides; Mayors, Gear Suppliers, Net Maker, Insurance Agent, Radio Station Owner, University and Community College Administrators; Oregon Groundfish Disaster Outreach Program



Agriculture, Home Economics, 4-H Youth, Forestry, Community Development, Energy, and Extension Sea Grant Programs, Oregon State University, United States Department of Agriculture, and Lincoln county cooperating. The Extension Service offers its programs and materials equally to all people.

(GDOP) Peers and Coordinator; Trucker; Chamber, County and State Economic Development Personnel; Local Media; Fishing Family Members; Fishery Agencies; Oregon State Police; Sport Fishermen; Charter Boat Owners; RV Park Manager; ODFW Personnel; PFMC Staff; Oregon Sea Grant Marine Agents; Processor Representative; Marine Insurer; Local Residents; City Manager; Crab, Albacore, Trawl Commodity Commission Managers; U.S. Coast Guard.

Some important issues and recommendations were clearly identified by meeting participants:

- 1) **Many community leaders were unaware of the important role they have in the management process.**
They were surprised to learn that they did have a role in the management process. We discussed the opportunity to comment on management proposals and the need to document or foresee socio-economic impacts. They were unaware of any effort to gather socio-economic information as no one had visited with them requesting this kind of information. They did not know what kind of information was being sought, how it would be gathered, and how it would be used.
- 2) **Significant socio-economic impacts are already occurring.**
Community fisheries infrastructure is eroding and all fisheries are being impacted by the reductions in groundfish. Trickle down effects should be considered and are already occurring. The Council should assess the impacts to secondary and tertiary businesses.
- 3) **Groundfish management cannot be considered in isolation.**
For the same reasons as #2 above.
- 4) **Landings and value should not be the only data considered in any socio-economic impact analysis.**
This will not give you an accurate picture of what is happening at the ground level in coastal communities as a result of management decisions. Landings and value data alone do not reflect the negative impacts occurring to individuals and businesses.

The attached listing of comments (Attachment A) is anecdotal but serves to illustrate community concerns and some of the impacts already being felt. It is clear that a wide range of information should be included in any socio-economic impact analysis. We would be happy to work with the Council and NMFS on these important recommendations.

As stated earlier, many attendees were unaware that socio-economic data was being sought under National Standard 8. We know that some communities and businesses have taken the opportunity to respond to you directly as a result of these meetings.

Some other observations surfaced at the meetings that you should know about.

Many fishermen fervently feel that fisheries management agencies have an agenda to close down the industry. Many no longer go to meetings because they feel it makes no difference, they won't be listened to anyway and decisions have been made ahead of time. The few active fishermen at Council and other industry meetings are the exception rather than the rule. They are very frustrated with the management process. Most fishermen and their families cannot afford the travel time and expense away from home. That's unfortunate since so much is at stake. Don't take non-participation by fishermen in meetings as a sign they don't care. They feel betrayed by the system.

The Council is considering moving to a multi-year system. This is critical for business planning. It is now impossible to make good business decisions based on the current system. People need information so they can make adjustments to their business strategies now rather than after all their resources are used up trying to hang on. Many of the public comments touched on this important point. The statement from the gear store owner makes this point very clear. He needs at least a year lead-time.

These meetings were more than just informative. They were a disturbing look at the reality of what is already occurring in coastal communities as well as a glimpse of the future if significant changes are not made in our fisheries management system.

ATTACHMENT A

Summary of Public Comments

The statements that follow are not verbatim. They are examples of the kinds of comments we heard directly and indirectly.

Comments From Community Leaders, Businesses and Ports

I haven't sold a vehicle to a fisherman in 2 years. salesman, auto dealer

We are losing family wage jobs on the coast and we can't afford to do that. Consider the trickle down effect that is now occurring. Advertising is down at my radio station due to the shrinking base of family wage jobs – fishing is critical to our communities. radio station owner

How will the full range of economic impacts be considered? We've had a fire disaster in our region this summer and we're already hurting badly from that. county commissioner

Coastal communities have don't have many opportunities for family wage jobs like we see in the valley. Fishing is critical to us here. mayor

The Council and NMFS should try harder to do a better job of releasing information to the media. People think that because there are recreational closures in California, that Brookings is closed also – not true. If the south coast is the most restricted by salmon regulations, then make groundfish less restrictive. R/V park manager

We need to fight to save coastal family wage jobs. mayor

More vessels are now operating without insurance. That could easily ruin the family business. Ports and communities will have to respond and pay for things like clean up. Plus, there are significant costs associated with Coast Guard search and rescue. When maintenance is put off, more accidents happen and taxpayers will have to cover the costs. port manager

The local jewelry store laid off 4 workers. They don't have the business they need anymore from fishermen and their families. port commissioner

The industry isn't collapsing but we need help right now with readjustment initiatives. We are a community of survivors. Rural communities need to remain independent. Don't take that away. port manager

*There are limited jobs you can retrain for in our community which will support a family. port manager
A buyback program will help some fishermen but won't help other businesses. radio station owner*

Shipyards business is way down. Many fishermen are going on a 3-year haul out schedule instead of a 1-year schedule. We are concerned about safety. insurance agent

Comments From Fishing Families and Businesses

The local fuel dock is ready to shut down. fishing family member

Consider the time and goods and services involved in getting ready for fishing seasons that don't happen. This is significant lost revenue for my store. gear store manager

I couldn't get ice this summer so even though we had a good salmon fishery, we couldn't get the ice to hold the fish. My fish plant closed. salmon troller

My firm is cutting back and may go out of business. I can hardly afford to keep working because of the reduced demand for trucking. There's now only a few months of work. trucker for firm that transports product from fish plants

Our fish plant closed and we couldn't get a market with another plant. So we've moved our fishing business out of state. fisherman's wife

I quit buying groundfish because I couldn't get the mix I needed for my market. I laid off 15 workers. fish buyer

The local grocery store used to carry lots of boat accounts – those are way down now and there are more and more accounts in arrears. fishing family member

In fact, lots of associated businesses are being hit – marine electronics included. Business is down and what business they have, its hard to get folks to keep their accounts current. fishing family member

It isn't reasonable for NMFS to seek to enact regulations that will eradicate family businesses without a specific economic plan in place to assist those businesses and replace those jobs. And I'm not talking about 10 dollar an hour jobs- I'm talking about jobs for crewmen who earn between \$35,000-40,000 per year. fisherman's wife

Families are so frustrated – we feel we never know what's next. No one can plan a successful fishing business with so many unknowns. Who will be in, who will be out. If you are out then what – nothing. Nothing is clear-cut. We won't even know next year's restrictions until just before the season actually starts – and that's if we are "lucky". Our financial reserves are gone – what can we do? fisherman's wife

Two of my friends are now getting divorces. The financial stress was too much – that and husbands always being angry, moody, and withdrawn. After 4 years of that, they (the wives) couldn't take it anymore. fisherman's wife

I'm very concerned about the crumbling infrastructure – its worse in some ports than others but all are experiencing it. Processors, fuel docks, gear suppliers – they are shutting down. Once that happens, I fear we won't be able to go back and rebuild. There may well be no infrastructure left to support the industry of the future. gear store owner

I have \$90,000 worth of netting on order – I had to place the order 6 to 8 months ago in order for it to be here for the 2003 season (needs 1 year lead time). The order has been shipped - it's on a ship in a container. I fear once it gets here it will be illegal and I won't be able to sell it. I can't send it back – it's happened to me before. I need to be able to plan my business better than the current management system allows. Seems like I could at least get a tax credit for merchandise I can no longer sell. I have to assume full liability. gear store owner

Economic data mainly focuses on commercial sector not recreational. We need more recreational data. charter boat owner

Oregon's economy is a mess and the coastal economy is even worse. If you'd just let us work, we have a lot to contribute. fisherman

Other fisheries are already being negatively impacted by the groundfish crisis – more pressure in albacore tuna specialty markets for example – only so much room on the shelf and existing businesses are being pushed aside. fisherman

Groundfish issues are of great concern to crabbers. There already have been impacts. There's now more pressure on the resource and there may be gear and habitat conflicts when we start implementing area closures. We're losing processing capacity. commodity commission manager

What are the community impacts of fish businesses using less water and power? This translates to less income for city/county. processor representative

Fishermen are treated as criminals by NMFS for even small overages. And this on top of everything else! Decriminalize the system and us! fisherman

The Magnuson Act should be the Sustainable Fishing Community Act. fisherman's wife

Comments from Agencies and Education:

I'm very concerned about our crumbling infrastructure – once existing support facilities, like fueling stations and fish processing plants, are gone, environmental rules will make it hard for new ones to come in, even when fishing improves. Sea Grant marine agent

We are also concerned about the distances fishermen (sport and commercial) might have to travel to get to the grounds. Increased distance = increased potential for accidents. Coast Guard

The local women's shelter is full – families are breaking up – this thing has gone on so long and there are so many uncertainties that it's tearing some families apart. You can imagine how it gets at home when money is tight. GDOP peer

Remember we are dealing with people here. Consider the full range of consequences when decisions are made. GDOP peer

How will NMFS gather community impact data such as business impacts? GDOP peer

You'd think that all the news about sardines is helping the local fleet (Astoria) – no – no local fishermen have the gear or permits to benefit from the fishery. Much of the benefit from that fishery is going out of state. GDOP peer

ATTACHMENT B

Agenda

Community Fisheries Crisis Meeting

North Bend Library

August 15, 2002

North Bend, Oregon

- 10:00 **Welcome** *Heather Munro, Oregon Sea Grant*
Introductions: Council Members, Speakers, Audience
Purpose of Meeting
Inform/Gather Community Feedback/ Suggestions
Partnership Building/Getting Involved
Groundfish Basics
- 10:15 **Overview** *Ginny Goblirsch, Oregon Sea Grant*
Some Community/Industry Fishery-Related Impacts and Perspectives
- 10:30 **What Got Us Here?** *Steve Copps*
National Marine Fisheries Service
The Magnuson Act
Legal, Biological and Socio-Economic Mandates
General Rebuilding Parameters
Management Trends/Challenges
- 10:45 **Where Are We Headed?** *Mark Saelens, Oregon*
Department of Fish and Wildlife
Pacific Fishery Management Council
Proposed 2003 Management Options
Potential Impacts – all fisheries
- 11:00 **Question and Answer Period** *Ginny Goblirsch*
Heather Munro
- 11:15 **What Do You See Happening in Your Community?**
Audience Observations/Concerns
Brainstorm/Collecting Socio-Economic Information
- 11:45 **Where Do We Go From Here?**
Participation in Management Process
Ongoing Initiatives – Fleet Reduction, Magnuson Act Reauthorization,
Groundfish Disaster Outreach Program, Oregon Ports Initiative
New Initiatives: e-mail list
- 12:00 **Adjourn**

