

Earl,

The following is a synopsis of octopus fishing in BSAI:

- \* Directed fishing in state waters is by commissioner's permit only. Within the last several years only a small number of people have requested this permit annually. The individuals that have obtained the permit have either landed very little or no octopus. The most recent permits were issued in 2006. Permits terms are crafted to structure fishing in way that allows for the collection of relative abundance and biological data.
- \* Bycatch of octopus is allowed in other directed fisheries within state waters (this would include parallel fisheries) up to 20%. Bycatch does not require any special registration and is landed on the card for the directed fishery, not an octopus card. This type of fishing does occur.
- \* Octopus are part of the federal "other species" assemblage. The TAC for this assemblage is set at an arbitrary percentage of all other TACs. These levels are generally set to allow bycatch without restricting fisheries.
- \* In federal waters octopus are considered "open". While no one targets octopus, substantial landings do occur simultaneous to the Pacific cod fishery. Typically this harvest is on the order of 300,000 pounds or less per year, but over 700,000 pounds were taken in 2004. 2004 was the peak year for industry interest in octopus harvest in the BSAI. Since 2004 interest has waned. Anecdotal evidence suggests that BSAI octopus abundance was at a peak in 2004.

#### Concerns

- \* One basic concern is the difference in management between state and federal waters. Inconsistencies lead to misreporting and unintentional-violations.
- \* The generic life history of octopus is conducive for a viable directed fishery because they are short-lived, have fast growth, and fecund. However, little is known about the species assemblage in the BSAI.
- \* Cephalopods identification is difficult and it is likely that there are several species that are harvested. Biomass is unknown, migrations are unknown, and discard mortality is unknown.
- \* Biomass estimates of octopus from the NMFS trawl survey have been produced but considered highly unreliable.
- \* The amount of octopus retained as unreported bait in Pacific cod fisheries is unknown.
- \* The majority of harvested octopus are assumed to be the Giant Pacific octopus.

Forrest

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In retrospect, there is not a lot to discuss in regard to octopus management in RII. As described below, directed fishing is closed by area regulation and all octopus currently harvested comes as bycatch to the Pacific cod pot fisheries. The CI state waters GHLL of 35,000 lb has been achieved several years, resulting in closure to retention of octopus. We have sampled octopus bycatch and can provide information on size/sex composition of the harvest. Thus far, all sampled CI harvest has been Octopus dofleini.

In PWS, the very low levels of Pacific cod pot fishing have resulted in very little octopus bycatch. An individual could obtain a commissioner's permit to target octopus in PWS. Permit stipulations would include "no bait in pot" as this unnecessarily results in bycatch. Typically, directed octopus fishing involves use of an "alternative lair" type of pot.

I don't see the benefit to the state in taking over octopus mgmt in the EEZ. Regardless, the disconnect between state and federal regulations in their respective considerations of octopus as shellfish or groundfish is the first problem that we would need to address. Let me know if you need additional information.

Charlie T

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