TOMMY'S MARINE SERVICE

PO Box 1227
Fort Bragg, CA 95437

Phone 707-964-5423
Fax 707-964-7206
ancona@mcn.org

Enclosed is something I have drawn up in way of a starting point or a "straw man" proposal dealing with Dungeness crab effort limitation schemes. I have been asked many times about things I've mentioned so I thought I would put it all down on paper. Please remember this is **my opinion only** and does not reflect anybody else, group or association.
The important part here is not to get hung up on a particular number. What I'm advocating is arriving at a concept that achieves the desired results that the crab committee will come up with if that is the choice. I believe that it will be a daunting task for that committee to come to some consensus as to how to solve the problems in the industry. This is meant to jump start the conversation that could ultimately go in a completely different direction, but at least moving.

I have also included my comments on many issues that have been mentioned in previous conversations at the ad hoc crab committee.

[[[Bracketed paragraphs address comments I have received while putting this straw man together]]]

I would appreciate your review and look forward to any comments you may have that I could incorporate. Don't worry about offending me, I expect it. Remember it is only my opinion. However I would also like to hear the areas where you find yourself in agreement.

Tommy Ancona

Crab Plan

Tommy Ancona

Goals

Provide biological sustainability with economic viability.

Provide for new entrants.

Provide room for individual expansion.

Analysis Needed

Current state of the fishery.

- How many permits
- How many participating
- Total catches by fleet with individual catches ranked by percentage.

What would be meaningful change?

- Levels of change and impacts.

How to get there

- Trap limits
- Area limits
- Time limits
- Trip limits

My plan Overview

To provide for the majority of the fleet

While maintaining individual relativity to the fleet inasmuch as possible

Basic Concepts

Minimum base number of traps

- All permits would at least qualify for the base number.

Maximum upper number of traps

- Regardless of number of permits or history, etc.

Qualify with catch history over a determined time span. Catch history would equate to a percentage of total fleet catch.

Between base and maximum, divided by units within those numbers

- The more units, the closer to individual percentage.

Allow no more than two permits per vessel, limit total to the number of each endorsement, never to exceed maximum allowed.

Enforcement

Annual pot tags issued.
- Only to those requesting to fish that year.

Up to 10% allowed on annual basis for lost gear without review.
- Catastrophic loss to go before review panel in a timely manner.
- Determine a amount over limit that constitutes a legal offense.

Funding

Increase license fee
- Increased fees would remove some latent effort.
- Ad valorem landing tax.

Other regulation changes

Statewide single opening date
- Goes toward area management without the restrictions
- Removes concentrated effort and pulse fishing.
- No 30 day clause
  - Allows individual to change areas to suit business plan

Set maximum fishing depth
- Could have some conservation benefits

Restrict preset time to 24 hours.
- Additional time no longer needed to set restricted gear limits.

Recreational Changes

- Male crabs only
- Same size limit as commercial
- Maximum number of traps per person with maximum number of traps per vessel
- Same opening date as commercial in the case of charter vessels.
- Declaration of intent, i.e. Charter or commercial

Plan Detail

Be sure to think in concept not necessarily the numbers used for examples.

Every current permit, regardless of catch history would receive a **base** number of **150** traps. If a permit had no catch history, this would be the maximum traps endorsed for that permit. By doing this, we would be creating affordable permits that could allow for new entrants into the fishery in the future while also creating a "pool" of traps made available to other participants looking to expand their operations. The **maximum** number for a trap endorsement to a permit would be **500.** These numbers for example only.

Based on catch history**, relative to the total fleet**, over a **ten** year period or any other time period to be determined, would give each permit a relative percentage of participation and ranking. For example a permit may have been on average, in the **87.5** percentile of the fleet. Another permit may on average, may have been in the **62.5** percentile of the fleet. For the start of this program, every permit would have a percentile number attached to it from "**0**" to "**100**". This would establish a ranking system for all permits. I believe that analysis would show the largest percentage of the fleet to be fairly close together in ranking. Obviously, latent permits would be all together at the bottom while a few highest producers would be the outliers at the top, or better said, would be the boats that produced the top 12.5% of the crab during that time span.

I would divide the range of **150** to **500** by **eight** tiers of **50** traps apiece or in **12.5%** brackets. For example:

150 =12.5 %
200 = 25
250 = 37.5
300 = 50
350 = 62.5
400 = 75
450 = 87.5
500 = 100

The reason for this many tiers would be that you would only be at risk for no more that a **50** trap difference based on your percentile ranking.
The trouble with lesser tiers such as 200, 300, and 500 is that the qualifying is usually based on some historical landing. You could miss an upper tier by 1 pound and lose a 100 or even 200 traps because of this.

No more than **two** permits could be combined on a vessel or into one permit. This would allow for someone who has a 250 endorsement the opportunity to obtain another permit to expand his business; however he would be limited by the total with the addition of the second permit, but never exceeding the maximum total cap of 500.
For example, a vessel has 250 traps and obtains another permit that has only 150 trap endorsement. This would give the vessel a new total of 400 traps. He would be capped at the 400 mark because of a two permit limit. Or, instead, he happens to find another permit with 250 traps that would give him the top total of 500. Either way it would be a business decision to decide which permit and direction to go.

Permits merged could be separated again into their original endorsements thereby giving the fleet the maximum flexibility to move around and adjust.
The reason for the 2 permit cap on the number of permits that can be merged is to prevent over consolidation of the fleet. We don't want to end up with two few boats or the entire fishery in just a few hands with deep pockets. However there have been many comments on the need to reduce the number of permits. While not palatable to many people, a limited amount of permit stacking goes to that goal while not "taking" anything away from people.

This is the basic plan. All the numbers could be changed to better reflect the goals determined by analysis and the amount of desired change. Once entered into a computer program, various scenarios could be examined for outcome. The one good thing about this type of plan would be regardless of the numbers, **most** vessels' ranking within the industry would be the same after restrictive regulations as it presently is today.

Even if people are dissatisfied with their respective outcomes, there would still be opportunity to possibly change it by acquiring an additional permit. If you are of the opinion that you want more than whatever you're historical catch has been to start with, then nothing in way of effort limits will make you happy and you would be better of with status quo. Good luck!

It is important to look at this in concept. The **numbers** could be changed from 200 bottom tiers to 800 top or anything that would arrive at something close to the goals intended. The **time span** could also be adjusted that would give different results in ranking. However, **longer time frames** have the tendency to smooth things out and are closer to true participation. I've changed this into pounds per tier to give people a better feel of how things would come out relative their personal catch history. The following are some examples of the kind of different outcomes based on a goal.

Examples;

All of the following examples are based on the **catch history for the years 2003 to 2007**.
It is based on **531** permits and **170,000** Crab traps currently in California based on the last study. I'm assuming there are approximately 75 to 100 permits with little to no landings.

Example No. 1 Basic plan all Boats 8 tiers.

Landings in pounds	Traps	Boats	Total Traps per Tier
0 - 25K	150	278	41,700
25K+ 44K	200	84	16,800
44K+ 58K	250	51	12,750
58K+ 83K	300	39	11,700
83K+ 107K	350	29	10,150
107K+ 140K	400	22	8,800
140K+ 195K	450	17	7,650
195K+ 361K	500	11	5,500
		531	**115,050**

This equals a **32%** reduction in total number of traps.

Example No. 2 All Boats 8 tiers, and Latent Permits and Higher number of Traps

Landings in Pounds	Traps	Boats	Total trap per Tier
0 landings	150	75	11,250
1+ 24K	200	203	16,800
24K+ 43K	250	84	21,000
43K+ 58K	300	51	15,300
58K+ 82K	350	39	13,650
82K+ 107K	400	29	11,600
107K+ 140K	450	22	9,900
140K+ 195K	500	17	8,500
195K+ 360K	600	11	6,600
		531	**138,400**

This equals an **18%** reduction in total number of traps.

Example No. 3 All Boats, latent permits, 4 Tiers

Landing in Pounds	Traps	Boats	Total traps per Tier
0 Landings	150	100	15,000
1+ 25K	200	178	35,600
25K+ 82K	300	174	52,200
82K+ 140K	400	51	20,400
140K+ 360K	500	28	14,000
		531	**137,200**

This equals a **19%** reduction in total number of traps

Example No. 4 All Boats, 4 Tiers, Higher traps per Tier

Landings in pounds	Traps	Boats	Total Traps per Tier
0 Landings	200	100	20,000
1+ 82K	300	352	105,600
82K+ 140K	400	51	20,400
140K+ 361K	500	28	14,000
		531	**159,400**

This equals a **.06%** reduction in total number of traps.

Example No. 5 All boats 3 Tiers

Landings in Pounds		Traps	Boats	Total traps per Tier
0	43K	200	362	72,400
43K+	82K	300	90	27,000
82K+	361K	500	79	39,500
			531	**138,900**

This equals an **18%** reduction in total number of traps.

As you can see, numbers of vessels could be changed depending on analysis, the time frame could be different and the desired reduction, if any, would determine the final outcome. However, the concept would remain the same.

The amount of gear per tier needed to keep the fishery viable for each individual is something the committee could work out.

The pounds used in the example were the coast wide production 2003 to 2007.

[[[[[[[[Comments received voiced concern over participants catch ranking within an area and the availability of resource. For instance a top producer in the south could end up in the bottom tiers when compared on a coast wide basis. It has been suggested that some consideration should be given for area fished when considering past participation, recognizing the increase in top tier permits. Possibly north and south splits at Point Arena.]]]]]]]]

Other Details

Enforcement is always considered in any proposed regulation. Enforcement has to be realistic in what can reasonably be expected, however it should be stipulated that by and large, most people will adhere to the law. I do not subscribe to the theory that all fishermen are crooks, therefore minimizing the added costs for enforcement.
Annual pot tags would be issued to only those who requested to participate in the fishery. **Penalties should be constructed that would discourage deviation from law**. However some consideration should be given for unintended situations such as "lost" traps being recovered, etc.

A percentage number of trap tags such as **10%** of the permit total would be made available upon application to replace lost gear within a season. Any gear recovered during a season or anytime thereafter that would exceed the total trap endorsement would have the tag immediately returned to the issuing department. You would be in violation if found to exceed **2%** at any time of your trap endorsement.

Funding is another consideration. Often times the costs of a program is such that the smaller producers are forced out solely on inability to pay. This is something that should be avoided where possible while realizing there would be some increases in the cost of doing business. A nominal **annual fee** would be charged for each **pot tag**. In addition, the **annual cost** of a **crab permit** could be raised to a level that would remove some latent capacity if that was the goal. These types of fees would be the same for everyone across the fleet regardless of production.
Another alternative would be a **landing tax** on a per pound basis. The down side of this would be the year to year variances in total landings and the fact that the higher producers are paying for the majority of the program for which I can find no rational since most of them would be reducing the amount of gear to start with.
Both enforcement and funding should be looked at in Oregon and Washington for some insight as to effectiveness and actual costs.

Other regulations

Statewide opening date.
A uniform coast wide opening date of Dec.1 should be considered. Elimination of the "early season" in the San Francisco area would force vessels to decide where they wanted to start the season. This would go towards the idea of "area management" without the associated restrictions from that type of regulation. A single opening date would remove **concentrated effort** and **pulse fishing**. However there would not be any "**30 day clause**" (other than soft shell) that would restrict a vessel from moving in the event that their first choice proved to be unproductive. Restricting a vessel from changing locations due to availability or market conditions could cost a vessel the entire season.
A single opening date would drastically reduce the amount of gear and boats concentrated in the SF area. This alone has been the major complaint from the local fishermen who are clamoring for change. However those fishermen have been reluctant to give up two weeks of fishing even though they have had to compete with the influx of

boats during that time. A pot limit will **not make a substantial change** in the number of boats that take advantage of the earlier season. They will still come, and bring with them the same boatload of gear.
One argument for maintaining the different opening dates comes from those vessels which profit from multiple start dates by going from one opening to the next opening. However the need to "finish up" in one area before going to the next forces vessels to get started regardless of price due to time constraints. This results in lower prices for everyone throughout the season.
Another argument in favor of the early season is based on the **higher price paid for the shell market (where early season crab primarily go)** which helps to set the price for the remainder of the coast during the rest of the season. Lately this has not been the case. The need to "get going" generally has kept the price down due to northern buyers sending northern boats to participate for prices they are usually accustomed to seeing. The slight increase that has been experienced in the early season is still not reflective of the true value of the product. If processors can keep the "northern" price down, then anything beyond that looks good to everyone. "Some crumbs are better than no bread at all".
The last argument comes primarily from **processors** and some district 10 fishermen who maintain the need for "**holiday**" crabs referring in this case to the **Thanksgiving holiday**.
In earlier days before modern transportation, the only fresh crab available would be locally caught. Local boats and local dealers usually did well on the "seasonal" demand created by absence of the product in the balance of the year. Local dealers soon capitalized on this phenomenon by making

product available over a longer period of time. Today crab is available (especially on the SF wharf) on a year round basis. Fresh frozen and the early Washington State Indian crab fishery is on the market before any local fishermen start, and usually at lower prices. The allure of fresh seasonal crab has been diminished. The early start consists basically of the 10 days prior to Thanksgiving. Of those 10 days some are lost due to price disputes and bad weather resulting in very little gain, if any.

[[[[[[Comments received from District 10 fishermen have still expressed the need for the 30 day clause even with a single start date. The fear being that other than a State sanctioned delay in an area, dealers could just "refuse to buy" until boats have returned from the southern area. My comments would be that the refusal to buy wouldn't be based on price since the coast wide price would have to be settled prior to a coast wide opening. That being decided, only the biggest processor would be in a position not to buy, affecting many large producers, however more and more, smaller buyers are stepping up to the plate offering better pricing to get product on the market when those buyers can sell it. This in turn starts the product flow that will ultimately get all processors to buy.

All in all, the problems that could occur in District 10 and a single start date can and has occurred elsewhere along the coast, such as Brookings and Crescent City.
Hopefully something can be worked out that works for all areas of the Coast.]]]]]]

Another issue that has surfaced in recent years is the extended depth at which crab gear is deployed. Increased competition has forced boats to fish deeper as the season progresses and the shallower crab has been caught.
Anecdotal comments have been made as to the catching of "next years" crab or the lack of anywhere to go for crab to be protected so to speak. Some comments have been made as to the survivability of small crab brought up from depths in excess of **50?** fathoms.
There could be some conservation benefits to restricting depths at which gear can be set. However these types of regulations should be based on science supporting the need.

Comments received voiced concerns as to the need and the depth. I would think a biological concern would have to be shown before the added costs and complexity of a depth regulated fishery would be imposed. This issue was only brought up based on comments from fishermen.

Restrict preset time to 24 hours

If substantial changes in the amount of gear deployed can be made, then the time to get gear out there should diminish as well. The need to "stake out" ground would be reduced to a point that larger vessels could conceivably carry all there allotted gear at one time. Smaller vessels could still use "set boats" if need be.
Longer pre-set times (as much as 72 hours) result in untended gear and the associated loses of gear from weather and traffic during that time.

Recreational Changes

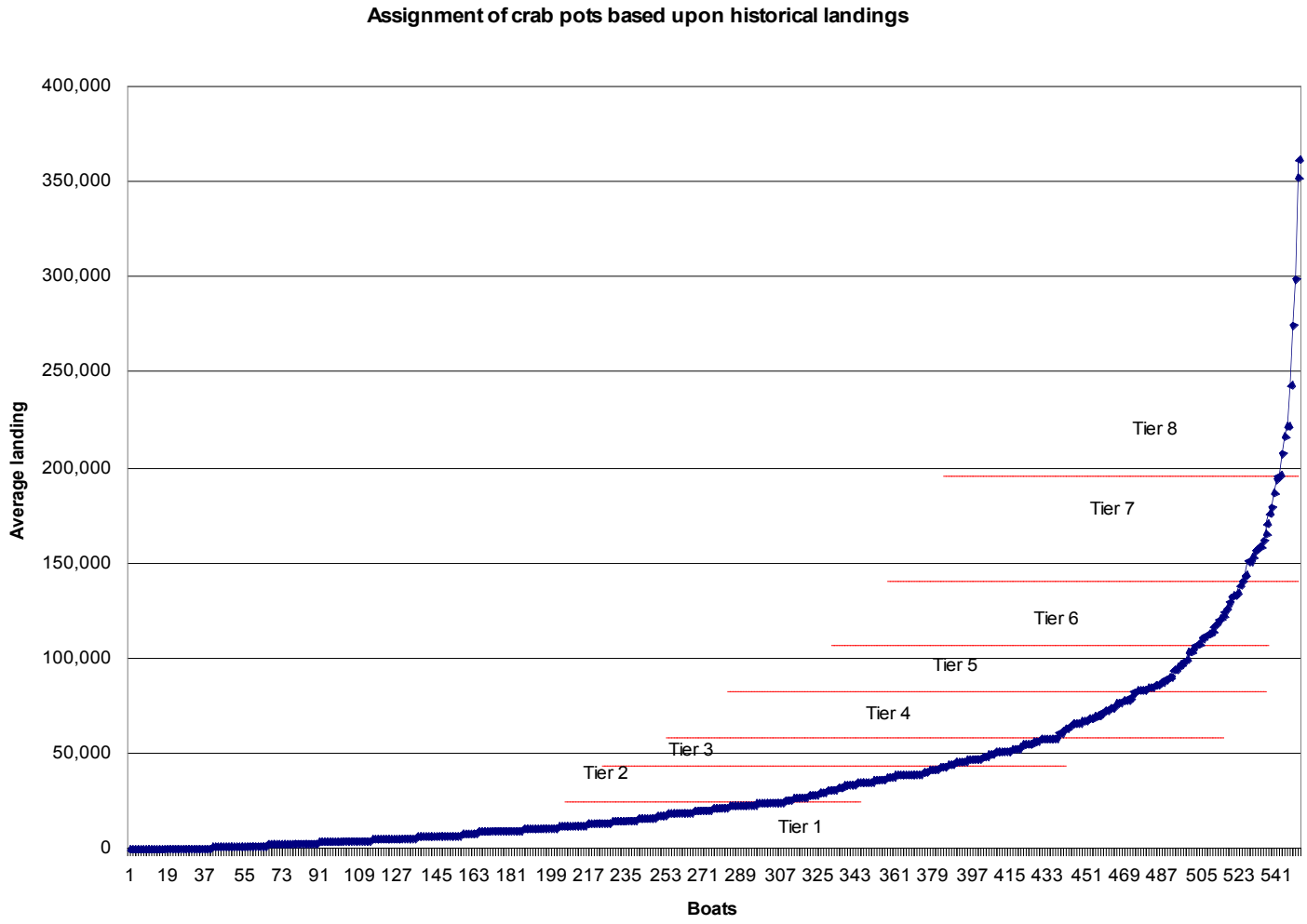
The sport regulations should be changed to the taking of **male crab only** and of **commercial size**. The old saw that sportsman could not tell the difference does not stand up in this day and age. Sport fishers have been taught to differentiate between Chinook and Coho Salmon and between various species of the same color rock fish which both are far more difficult than determining the sex of a crab.

The reason to take sub-legal size crab in the sport fishery would need to be explained. Commercial size affords a better catch much like a larger fish for the given number in a catch limit. As the States' recreational fishery grows, what was before the incidental crab catch by sport fishers has also grown, resulting in a substantial increase in the taking of both female spawners and small crabs.

Most charter vessels have done a good job in both areas in self imposed restrictions on small and female crabs. It is time for the general public to do the same.

The maximum number of traps for recreational fishing should be no more than **10** if it truly is for personal use and not bartering for other goods and services which often times is the result of high daily limits. A maximum number of traps per person with a maximum number of traps per vessel should be analyzed. Some exception could be made for a **registered** charter vessel if warranted. However for this exception, charter vessels would be subject to all the same conditions as commercial vessels including, but not limited to, pre-set times.

It has been suggested that charter boats declare which fishery they intend to participate in, either commercial or recreational, to be able to abide by the rules set for each sector. In practice, some charter vessels that also fish commercially have used the charter preset rules to "get some gear out" while also prospecting prior to the commercial opening.



This graph spans the 2003 to 2007 time period and is used for example only.