

North Pacific Fishery Management Council

Eric A. Olson, Chairman
Chris Oliver, Executive Director



605 W. 4th Avenue, Suite 306
Anchorage, AK 99501-2252

Telephone (907) 271-2809

Fax (907) 271-2817

Visit our website: <http://www.alaskafisheries.noaa.gov/npfmc>

February 12, 2012

Dear Interested Party,

I am writing today to discuss an issue that is of importance to the North Pacific Fishery Management Council (Council), Alaska Native tribes, and rural communities. The issue concerns the proposed measures under consideration for limiting non-Chinook (primarily chum) salmon bycatch in the Bering Sea pollock fishery. We wish to inform you of the Council's current list of possible alternatives for consideration, the schedule for action, and opportunities for you to provide comments and feedback as this effort progresses.

In the past two years, the Council has undertaken two reviews of an analysis for this action and made revisions to the alternatives. The proposed measures are summarized on the attached flyer, and are available on the Council website at: <http://www.alaskafisheries.noaa.gov/npfmc/bycatch-controls/BSChumBycatch.html>.

The Council is scheduled to review the revised analysis of alternatives at its March 2012 meeting in Anchorage. The Council will take final action on this issue at a later meeting, likely in October of this year. This schedule provides ample time for the public to provide input on the proposed alternatives and analysis.

Enclosed with this letter is a flyer that summarizes the measures being considered to limit chum salmon bycatch in the Bering Sea pollock fishery and the schedule for Council action. Council members and staff participated in several regional meetings in rural communities in early 2011, and that information has been incorporated into the analysis and presented to the Council.

Council analysts have also scheduled a teleconference for the public on February 24, 2012, from 9 am – 11 am (Alaska Standard Time). The number to call is: (877) 214-2906, code: 1214. The primary purpose of the teleconference is an orientation for the public, prior to the March Council meeting, so that interested stakeholders understand the impacts of the alternatives proposed and ways to provide formal input to the Council prior to a final decision. Analysts will provide a short presentation on the proposed action and Council process, with most of the time allocated to questions and clarifications on the proposed set of alternatives from the public. The teleconference will be recorded, and a summary of the call will be provided to the Council at its March meeting. Details of the teleconference are provided in the attached flyer.

Please be assured that the Council will continue to seek input from Alaska Native and rural communities in the continued development of salmon bycatch limitation measures. To provide

formal input to the Council, you may send a letter by email to npfmc.comments@noaa.gov, mail or fax to: NPFMC, 605 W. 4th Avenue, Suite 306, Anchorage AK, 99501, Fax: (907) 271-2817, at least a week prior to a Council meeting. To provide written testimony on the chum salmon bycatch issue for the March Council meeting, letters must be received by March 20. You may also testify in person at a Council meeting when the Council discusses this action. If you have questions, please contact Diana Stram at (907) 271-2809, or diana.stram@noaa.gov.

Sincerely,



Chris Oliver

Executive Director

North Pacific Fishery Management Council

The North Pacific Fishery Management Council is Evaluating Measures to Limit Chum Salmon Bycatch in the Bering Sea Pollock Fishery

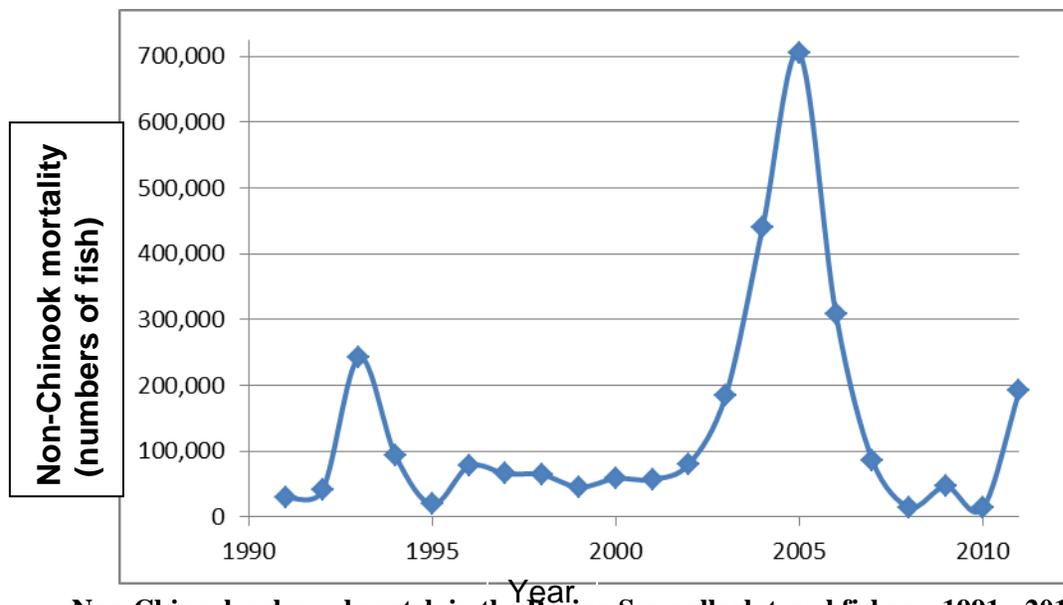


Salmon and pollock are both important fisheries for Alaska. Salmon support large and critically important subsistence, commercial, and recreational fisheries throughout Alaska and elsewhere, and are the basis of a cultural tradition in many parts of the state. At the same time, the commercial pollock fishery produces significant revenue for participants in the fishery, the State of Alaska, and other states. In addition, participation in the fishery (through royalties and employment) is important for the western Alaska Community Development Quota communities.

Salmon are caught unintentionally in the Bering Sea pollock trawl fishery, and may not be kept by regulation. Despite bycatch control measures implemented in the pollock fishery since the mid-1990s, chum (non-Chinook) salmon bycatch reached a historic high of 704,590 in 2005 (see figure below). Levels in the Bering Sea pollock fishery since that time have been lower, most recently 13,300 in 2010 and 191,400 in 2011. Current fishery regulations attempt to control bycatch through fixed area closures, triggered by a cap of 42,000 chum salmon. These are areas with historically high chum salmon bycatch. However, current regulations include an exemption to these fixed area closures for vessels that participate in a program that requires more frequently adjusted closures for vessels with high bycatch rates. The North Pacific Fishery Management Council (Council) is required by the Magnuson-Stevens Fishery Conservation and Management Act to balance minimizing salmon bycatch, to the extent practicable, with allowing full harvest of the pollock total allowable catch.

Current trends in non-Chinook (chum) salmon bycatch

Salmon bycatch in the groundfish fisheries is grouped as Chinook bycatch and non-Chinook bycatch (comprised of chum, sockeye, pink, and silver salmon species). Over 99% of non-Chinook bycatch is comprised of chum salmon. Chum bycatch in the Bering Sea pollock fishery from 1991 - 2011 is shown below. Chum bycatch is taken almost entirely in the summer/fall ('B') pollock fishery.



Non-Chinook salmon bycatch in the Bering Sea pollock trawl fishery, 1991 - 2011

Note: 1991 - 1993 values do not include CDQ fisheries.

NOTICE: *Chum Salmon Bycatch in the Bering Sea Pollock Fishery*

The Council is considering whether new measures are needed to limit chum salmon bycatch

The Council is in the process of considering modifying management measures to limit chum salmon bycatch in the Bering Sea pollock trawl fishery. The current range of alternatives is on the Council website: <http://www.alaskafisheries.noaa.gov/npfmc/bycatch-controls/BSChumBycatch.html>.

Measures currently under consideration include:

- Status quo. (Fixed area closures, triggered by a cap of 42,000 chum salmon. Vessels that participate in a fleet-managed program of real-time bycatch area closures are exempt from the closures.)
- Caps on the amount of chum salmon bycatch allowed in the pollock fisheries, that when reached, would prevent further harvest of pollock.
 - limits under consideration range from annual caps of 50,000 to 353,000 chum salmon (overall for the pollock fishery or divided by processing sector with options for transferable bycatch allocations among sectors or components of sectors).
- Participation in a fleet-managed program which imposes real-time bycatch area closures that are continually adjusted. Consideration of additional large triggered closures for participants. Vessels not participating would be subject to large area closure triggered by annual fleet wide bycatch levels.

Outreach meetings

The Council identified this action as an important action for outreach efforts to rural communities. An outreach plan, developed in part through the Council's Rural Community Outreach Committee, is available here: <http://www.fakr.noaa.gov/npfmc/PDFdocuments/bycatch/ChumOutreach1210.pdf>. The outreach report, which details the results and implementation of the plan thus far, is available here: <http://www.fakr.noaa.gov/npfmc/PDFdocuments/bycatch/ChumOutreach511.pdf>.

An important component of the outreach plan was to conduct outreach on the issue in several villages that depend heavily on salmon for subsistence. Transportation and access to Council meetings by residents of communities in western and interior Alaska is costly and difficult. The Council scheduled outreach in various villages, regional hubs and otherwise, in order to promote two-way communication between Council members, staff, and subsistence, recreational, and commercial salmon users. The outreach was intended to help the Council understand the concerns and needs of these communities, facilitate revision of the analysis in accordance with new information, and provide information to residents on the proposed action and Council process such that they may comment and participate in a meaningful way. The majority of these meetings occurred in early 2011. Please see the outreach report noted above for details.

Council analysts have also scheduled a teleconference for the public on February 24, 2012, from 9 am – 11 am (Alaska Standard Time). Please see the attached flyer on the last page.

Next steps & schedule for action

The Council reviewed an analysis of the alternatives in February and June 2011, after which the Council modified the suite of alternatives and requested further analysis. The Council's next review of a comprehensive impact analysis is scheduled for its March 2012 meeting in Anchorage. At that meeting, the Council could choose to request further information and analysis, revise the alternatives, and could select a preliminary preferred alternative management action. Final action on this issue will occur at a later meeting, depending upon the results of the Council's review in March.

NOTICE: *Chum Salmon Bycatch in the Bering Sea Pollock Fishery*

<i>May 4, 2010</i>	<i>Statewide teleconference, prior to Council final review of alternatives.</i>
<i>June 7 – 15, 2010</i>	<i>Council meeting, Sitka. Council review and opportunity to revise alternatives prior to preliminary analysis; review of expanded discussion paper on area closure options; report on community teleconference.</i>
<i>December 2010</i>	<i>Presentation to Yukon River Panel (Anchorage)</i>
<i>June – Dec 2010</i>	<i>Preparation of preliminary analysis.</i>
<i>Mid-Jan 2011</i>	<i>Preliminary draft analysis available.</i>
<i>February 2011</i>	<i>Council meeting, Seattle. Council review of progress and preliminary analysis.</i>
<i>Feb – Mar 2011</i>	<i>Rural community outreach meetings on Council preliminary review draft.</i>
<i>Feb - April 2011</i>	<i>Preparation of revised analysis for formal initial review.</i>
<i>May 2011</i>	<i>Initial review draft analysis available to the public.</i>
<i>June 2011</i>	<i>Council meeting, Nome. Council initial review of analysis; review of outreach report.</i>
<i>Feb 24, 2012</i>	<i>Statewide teleconference, prior to review of revised analysis.</i>
<i>Mid-March 2012</i>	<i>Revised initial review draft available to the public</i>
<i>March 26-April 3 2012</i>	<i>Council meeting, Anchorage. Council review of revised analysis.</i>
<i>Mid- or late 2012</i>	<i>Final Council decision (recommendation to the Secretary of Commerce).</i>

TELECONFERENCE NOTICE

The North Pacific Fishery Management Council is evaluating new measures to limit chum salmon bycatch in the Bering Sea pollock fishery

Learn about the alternatives being considered, the Council process, and voice your questions and concerns

February 24, 2012, from 9 am - 11 am AKST

Please call: (877)214-2906, code: 1214

This process is open to the public. Council analysts will be on the line to share information and answer questions. The call will be recorded and moderated.

If you plan to ask a question, please RSVP via email (Steve.MacLean@noaa.gov) or call the Council (907-271-2809) with your name, location, and question. Due to the potential for a large number of participants, the RSVP list will have first priority for questions. We ask each participant to limit their question to 2 minutes.

A short presentation will be given at the beginning of the call. If you wish to follow the presentation, it is posted here after February 17:

<http://www.alaskafisheries.noaa.gov/npfmc/bycatch-controls/BSchumBycatch.html>

Hosted by the North Pacific Fishery Management Council and EventBuilder.com.