

Salmon Bycatch Update

February 2012

Background & Numbers

Every year, the Bering Sea/Aleutian Islands (BSAI) Pollock Fishery intercepts Chinook and chum salmon bound for Western and Interior Alaska.

In 2011, 25,500 Chinook Salmon and 191,446 chum Salmon were caught as bycatch in the Pollock fishery. After being counted and sampled by observers, this bycatch is either thrown back into the water-dead after hours in the nets, or saved for donation to food banks.

Salmon bycatch in the BSAI Pollock fishery increased dramatically in the mid-2000's and had since declined to historical or below historical levels. Chinook salmon bycatch hit a record high in 2007 of over 120,000.

Chum salmon bycatch peaked in 2007 at more than 700,000. Recent genetic studies of bycatch samples show that on average about 50% of the Chinook salmon bycatch is of the Western Alaskan origin. Scale pattern experiment of bycatch samples from the late 1990's show that of the Western Alaska Chinook Salmon, about 40% are Yukon River Stocks.

These numbers change year to year in 2010 stock was 42% coastal Western Alaska (includes the Lower Yukon); 20% Upper Yukon River and 11% Middle Yukon River. Available Information shows that 9 to 34 percent of Chum Salmon bycatch is also of Western Alaska Origin. As much as 7% of the total bycatch is Chum Salmon.

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