

ALASKA BOARD OF FISHERIES
Chignik & Lower Cook Inlet Finfish
Index of Groundfish Proposals 43-45 Comments

This index of advisory committee and public comments pertaining to Groundfish Proposals 43-45 discussed at Chignik and Lower Cook Inlet Board of Fisheries meetings, shows either SUPPORT or OPPOSITION for the individual proposals at this meeting. The center column indicates a comment was made but without a clear indication of support or opposition. The reference number (ACxx or PCxx) refers to the Advisory Committee comment number or Public Comment number. The full comment as submitted can be found in the Advisory Committee tab or Public Comment tab of the board book (Record Copy 1). The notation of "S/A" indicates support as amended.

		SUPPORT	GENERAL COMMENT	OPPOSITION
Chignik Area Groundfish (3 proposals)				
43	Create state-waters groundfish management plans for trawl vessels less than 58 feet in the Cook Inlet, Kodiak and Chignik management areas. (This proposal will be considered at the Chignik, Lower Cook Inlet, and Kodiak Finfish meetings.)			<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Sand Point AC 1 - Chignik BOF ● Chignik AC 2 - Chignik BOF ● Alaska Whitefish Trawlers Association - Chignik BOF PC 2 ● Alaska Groundfish Data Bank - Chignik BOF PC 5 ● Alaska Whitefish Trawlers Association - Chignik BOF RC 8

		SUPPORT	GENERAL COMMENT	OPPOSITION
44	Create state-waters walleye pollock management plans for Cook Inlet, Kodiak and Chignik management areas. (This proposal will be considered at the Chignik, Lower Cook Inlet, and Kodiak Finfish meetings.)			<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Sand Point AC 1 - Chignik BOF ● Chignik AC 2 - Chignik BOF ● Alaska Whitefish Trawlers Association - Chignik BOF PC 2 ● Alaska Groundfish Data Bank - Chignik BOF PC 5 ● Alaska Whitefish Trawlers Association - Chignik BOF RC 10
45	Require 100 percent observer coverage on groundfish trawl vessels in state waters of the Cook Inlet, Kodiak and Chignik management areas. (This proposal will be considered at the Chignik, Lower Cook Inlet, and Kodiak Finfish meetings.)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Chignik AC 2 S/A - Chignik BOF ● Paul Olson - Chignik BOF PC 4 ● Alaska Marine Conservation Council - Chignik BOF RC 16 		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Alaska Whitefish Trawlers Association - Chignik BOF PC 2 ● Alaska Groundfish Data Bank - Chignik BOF PC 5 ● Alaska Whitefish Trawlers Association - Chignik BOF RC 9

* EXCERPT *

SAND POINT FISH & GAME ADVISORY COM
SEPT. 27, 2013

SIGN IN

- ① JOHN FOSTER
- ② William Dushkin Sr.
- ③ Art Holmberg
- ④ Charles Gundersen
- ⑤ ~~Jim~~
- ⑥ ~~John~~
- ⑦ ~~John~~
- ⑧ J. Fata Jr.
- ⑨ Jack Foster Jr.
- ⑩ Ben M. Beck Jr.
- ⑪ DRAIN A. FOSTER JR.
- ⑫
- ⑬
- ⑭
- ⑮



SAND POINT FISH & GAME ADVISORY Board
MEETING MINUTES
SEPT. 27, 2013

CALL TO ORDER: 4:00 PM

MEMBERS PRESENT: JOHN FOSTER, CHARLES GUNDER
TAYLOR LUNDGREN, BRUCE FOSTER JR, KYLEY THOMY

MEMBERS ABSENT: DAVID OSTERBACK, MELVIN LARSEN
ROBIN LARSEN, JIM SMITH, PATRICK BROWN.

BOARD OF FISH PROPOSALS:

#3: PROPOSAL FAILED VOTE: YES-0 NO-5

#4: PROPOSAL FAILED VOTE: YES-0 NO-5

#5: PROPOSAL FAILED VOTE: YES-0 NO-5

#8: PROPOSAL FAILED VOTE: YES-0 NO-5

COMMENTS: COULD BRING MORE EFFORT INTO THE
S. PENINSULA STATEWATER COD FISHERY.

#9: PROPOSAL FAILED VOTE: YES-0 NO-5

COMMENTS: UNENFORCEABLE. COULD ALSO MOVE MORE
EFFORT INTO S. PEN. STATEWATER COD FISHERY.

#10: PROPOSAL FAILED VOTE: YES-0 NO-5

COMMENTS: COULD IMPACT THE AREA M STATEWATER
COD FISHERY.

#11: PROPOSAL FAILED: VOTE: YES-0 NO-5



④

#38: PROPOSAL FAILED

VOTE: YES-0 NO-5

#39: PROPOSAL PASSED

VOTE: YES-5 NO-0

COMMENTS: When the SEDM has PINK SALMON ESCAPEMENT PROBLEMS IN RECENT YEARS the SEDM has BEEN CLOSED UNTIL FULL ESCAPEMENT HAS BEEN REACHED WHILE the WESTERN DISTRICT OF CHIGNIK HAS BEEN ALLOWED TO STAY OPEN. With this management style of the ADFG, the SETNET FLEET HAS NOT BEEN ALLOWED TO FISH IN AUGUST, EVEN THOUGH ESCAPEMENT ^{LEVELS} ARE GOING BUT NOT COMPLETE UNTIL LATE AUGUST. The DEPARTMENT SAYS they CANNOT OPEN ANY AREA FOR ONE GEAR GROUP EVEN IF this GEAR GROUP DOES NOT OVERLY IMPACT ESCAPEMENT.

#40: NO ACTION

COMMENTS: CONFUSING. DON'T KNOW ENOUGH ABOUT THIS PROPOSAL TO KNOW IF IT HELPS OR NOT.

#41: PROPOSAL FAILS:

VOTE: YES-0 NO-5

COMMENTS: IN ALL OTHER AREAS A PURSE SEINE IS CONSIDERED STOPPED FISHING WHEN THE RINGS ARE OUT OF THE WATER.

#42: PROPOSAL FAILS

VOTE - YES-0 NO-5

#43: PROPOSAL FAILS

VOTE - YES-0 NO-5

#44: PROPOSAL FAILS

VOTE - YES-0 NO-5



⑤

#340: PROPOSAL PASSES

VOTE: Yes-5 No-0

#341: NO ACTION

#342: PROPOSAL FAILED

VOTE: Yes-0 No-5

COMMENTS: THIS PROPOSAL MAY BRING MORE BOATS INTO THE TANNER CRAB FISHERY. RIGHT NOW THIS IS A TWO WEEK STAND DOWN PERIOD ON USING POTS BECAUSE OF A TANNER OPENING. IF THE DATE IS CHANGED IT COULD BRING THE CDQ BOATS INTO THE TANNER FISHERY INSTEAD OF THE FED. POT FISHERY.

#343: NO ACTION

MEETING ADJOURNED: 9:00 PM



Chignik Fish and Game Advisory Committee

EXCERPT of Draft Meeting Minutes

November 14, 2013

Location: Chignik Lagoon Subsistence Building

Minutes

I. Call to Order at 1:45 pm

II. Roll Call:

Committee Members Present

Don Bumpus, Chignik Lagoon, Vice Chair
 Rodney Anderson, Chignik Lagoon, Alt.
 Gary Anderson, Chignik Lagoon
 Jacob Shangin, Ivanof Bay, Chair
 Stephan Shangin, Ivanof Bay
 Patrick Kosbruk, Perryville
 Boris Kobruk Jr., Perryville

Absent

Noah Shanign, Ivanof Bay
 Ben Allen, Chignik Bay
 Don Lind, Chignik Lake
 Harry Kalmakoff, Chignik Lake
 Alvin Boskofsky, Chignik Lake
 Marvin Yagie, Perryville
 Alfredo Abeuid, Chignik Lagoon

Seven of thirteen members are present, quorum is established.

Others in Attendance:

Susie Jenkins- Brito, ADFG
 Charlie Russell, ADF&G
 Mark Stichert, ADF&G
 James Jackson, ADF&G
 Gayla Woods, BBNA
 Frank Woods, BBNA
 Courtney Gomez, BBNA
 Chuck McCallum, Lake and Pen. Borough
 George Anderson, Chignik Lagoon
 Aaron Anderson, Chignik Lagoon
 Alvin Pedersen, Chignik Lagoon
 Ernie Carlson

Excerpt of Meeting Minutes Regarding BOF Proposals 43-45

PROPOSAL 43 -

Action Taken: Oppose 0-7

DESCRIPTION: Create state-waters groundfish management plans for trawl vessels less than 58 feet in the Cook Inlet, Kodiak and Chignik management areas. (This proposal will be considered at the Chignik, Lower Cook Inlet, and Kodiak Finfish meetings.)

Motion to adopt: Rodney Anderson; **Second:** Don Bumpus

DISCUSSION:

Several members expressed concern against any kind of drag fishery citing how fragile our Tanner crab are and are completely opposed to dragging inside three miles.

A major problem with the idea of having 100% observers is that the State doesn't have an observer program and it would be a major hurdle to implement one.

QUESTION CALLED: Patrick Kosbruk

ACTION: Motion Failed 0 - 7

PROPOSAL 44 -

Action Taken: Oppose 0-7

DESCRIPTION: Create state-waters walleye pollock management plans for Cook Inlet, Kodiak and Chignik management areas. (This proposal will be considered at the Chignik, Lower Cook Inlet, and Kodiak Finfish meetings.)

Motion to adopt: Don Bumpus; **Second:** Rodney Anderson

DISCUSSION:

QUESTION CALLED: Gary Anderson

ACTION: Motion Failed 0 - 7

PROPOSAL 45 -

Action Taken: Support with Amendment 7-0

DESCRIPTION: Require 100 percent observer coverage on groundfish trawl vessels in state waters of the Cook Inlet, Kodiak and Chignik management areas. (This proposal will be considered at the Chignik, Lower Cook Inlet, and Kodiak Finfish meetings.)

Motion to adopt: Don; **Second:** Gary

AMENDMENT: Close all Chignik Area State-waters (within 3 miles) to all pelagic and non-pelagic trawl.

DISCUSSION:

It's not clear who would be responsible for observers, the State or the Feds.

Can the State tell feds to have 100% observer coverage inside 3 miles?

If the Feds say no then the State needs to develop its own program and that would be difficult.

The State can keep boats from fishing inside three if they don't have 100% observers.

If they were fishing mid-water then fine but we don't know they are and we don't know the impact on kings and the hitting bottom.

Cod are mid-water also and flatfish can be mid water sometimes and we just don't know the impact.

The eastern District is very shallow inside 3 and your net is going to hit bottom.

By definition Pelagic trawling is mid-water, Aaron A. commented at the meeting, that just because they are considered mid-water doesn't mean that they stay mid-water. The bigger fish are close to the bottom during certain times of the day. The draggers then target them. What they won't tell you though is that they end up scraping the bottom on a regular basis doing so. Because they do this, they try to stay on mud bottom otherwise they tear up their nets. Our crab are on mud bottom.

Crab move tremendous distances, why aren't the crab coming back the way they should? And what is happening to our halibut fishery?

AMENDMENT: Motion: Rodney Anderson; Second: Don Bumpus

Amendment made to close all Chignik Area State waters (within 3 miles) to all pelagic trawl.

QUESTION CALLED: Gary

ACTION: Motion Passes as Amended 7 - 0

*Meeting Minutes formatted by
Susie Jenkins- Brito, ADF&G Boards Support
At the Request of the Advisory Committee*



Alaska Whitefish Trawlers Association

PO Box 991

Kodiak, AK 99615

Proposal 43 Oppose

Proposal 44 Oppose

Proposal 45 Oppose

The Alaska Whitefish Trawlers Association (AWTA) is located in Kodiak and represents the majority of independently owned trawl vessels that harvest groundfish in the Central Gulf of Alaska (CGOA). Our member vessels also harvest groundfish in the Western Gulf of Alaska (WGOA) and Bering Sea (BS).

Proposals 43 & 44

We oppose these proposals that would create a new state waters non-pelagic (bottom) trawl fishery for all species of groundfish (Proposal 43) or for Pollock (Proposal 44) in the Central and Western Gulf of Alaska.

- There is no mechanism for the management of Prohibited Species Caps (PSC) inside state waters. Halibut, Tanner Crab and Chinook salmon resources would be compromised by this new increased effort inside state waters. A large and complex system for the monitoring, assessing, reporting and management of PSC inside state waters would have to be developed. The development of this program would demand a significant amount of time, work by ADFG personnel and money.
- There is no observer program for fisheries inside state waters. This proposal calls for 100% observer coverage inside state waters with the cost being paid by the vessels. While the cost for the onboard observers could be paid for by the vessels, the entire state-run management structure required to manage a new observer program would have to be funded by the state at significant cost
- The movement of 25% of the massive stocks of Pollock, Rockfish, shallow-water flatfish and deep-water flatfish from Federal to State waters and designating it for harvest only by vessels under 58' in length is a direct re-allocation from one user group to another.
- There are only two (2) under 58' vessels that are home-ported in Kodiak and fish primarily in Central Gulf of Alaska. These proposals would take access to 25% of all groundfish (proposal 43) or Pollock (Proposal 44) in the Central Gulf away from the 35+ trawl vessels and grant access to these two vessels.
- It is impossible for two under 58' vessels to harvest the TAC's of all groundfish in the Central Gulf of Alaska. It is likely that enormous amounts of groundfish would not be harvested every year with the resulting lack of revenues for historic trawl vessels, their processors and the community infrastructure that supports these fisheries.
- There is a large group of less than 58' trawl vessels that fish in the Western Gulf of Alaska and a many of these vessels have Central Gulf of Alaska endorsements. Since it is impossible for 2 vessels to harvest the TAC's in the CGOA, it is likely that these WGOA vessels would move into the CGOA and target groundfish. Again, this is a direct reallocation from one user group to another, this time from the historic Kodiak fleet to the under 58' Sand Point and King Cove fleets
- CGOA trawl vessels and their associated processors have worked together to develop business plans for the harvest and processing of groundfish. Any reallocation to other user groups will disrupt these long-established relationships.
- CGOA trawl vessels have built relationships with support business and vendors and any reallocation will have a significant impact on these other businesses...
- The city and borough of Kodiak have invested heavily in infrastructure (harbors, shipyard, etc.) and they depend on the revenues that flow from the trawl fleet. Any reduction of groundfish to the trawl fleet will have a significant impact on Kodiak.
- All federal participants have made substantial investments in gear and technology to harvest groundfish while minimizing bycatch. Any reallocation that limits access to the resource will lead to excessive stranded capital for these fleets.
- Temporal and Spatial measures have been taken to protect Stellar Sea Lions. All groundfish harvests are split into different seasons with specific PSC caps established for each season within each fishery. Areas around rookeries and haul-outs have been closed. Having more harvest come out of the sensitive near-shore state waters will likely result in a Section 7 consultation of the SSL protection measures.
- The North Pacific Fisheries Management Council is moving forward with the development of a new management structure for trawl fisheries in the Gulf of Alaska. The interaction between federal and state-waters is an important component of the management structure. Any changes in the federal/state-water relationship need to be conducted within that process.
- ***This proposal was submitted by an under 58' vessel that is a new entrant into Gulf of Alaska trawl fisheries with very little history. This proposal is aimed at dis-enfranchising vessels with long-term histories of participation in, and dependence***



Proposal 45

We oppose this propose that would require 100% observer coverage for trawl vessels targeting groundfish inside state waters.

- The North Pacific Groundfish and Halibut Observer program has been in place since the beginning of 2013. It has extended observer coverage to not only the trawl fleet but also to other sectors that impact our important fisheries resources. This is a very complex program developed over a number of years and it is unrealistic to create a new state designed, implemented and managed observer program inside state waters within any reasonable time frame.
- The North Pacific Fisheries Management Council has already begun the process of developing a new trawl management program in the Gulf of Alaska. One of the requirements in this new program will be 100% observer coverage.
- The GOA trawl industry has been the subject of numerous Prohibited Species Cap (PSC) reductions over the past few years. There has been a reduction in the Halibut PSC cap as well as the establishment of reduced caps for Chinook salmon in both our Pollock and non-Pollock fisheries trawl fisheries. There has also been action taken to require new modified trawl sweeps for all vessels targeting flatfish as well as an area closure in the Marmot Bay area.

The established trawl industry in the Gulf of Alaska is comprised of harvesting vessels, processors, vendors and communities that support this industry. Working together, the trawl industry delivers large volumes of groundfish that provide fish for the processors, employment opportunities of processor workers, and economic benefits to local vendors as well as our coastal communities. The trawl industry is a major economic engine which provides tremendous economic and social benefit to the State of Alaska and those who live here.

AWTA asks that the Board reject proposals 43, 44, and 45. We also ask that the Board work alongside the North Pacific Fisheries Management Council and the GOA trawl industry as the new fishery management structure is developed.

Best Regards,

Robert L. Krueger, President

Alaska Whitefish Trawlers Association

Robert.Krueger@alaskawhitefishtrawlers.org



I. ISSUE

The Board of Fisheries can require an on-board observer program upon finding, among other things, that the program is the only practical data-gathering mechanism.² The following comments pertain primarily to the Board's findings regarding the data-gathering mechanism; TBC submits that increased monitoring through on-board observers is the only method available to address the significant uncertainties regarding the amount of halibut and Chinook bycatch in the Gulf of Alaska and the impacts of that bycatch on important state commercial, recreational and subsistence fisheries.

Observer programs are "widely recognized as the best way to obtain reliable information about bycatch" and "in the majority of instances, [are] the most effective way to monitor bycatch."³ High coverage levels are most important when low levels of mortality may jeopardize the recovery of at-risk species, when fisheries management requires statistically reliable and timely bycatch data, and when the bycatch is an important species targeted by other fishermen.⁴ All of these factors are relevant to the bycatch of halibut and Chinook in Gulf of Alaska trawl fisheries.

In general, north Pacific trawl fisheries require 100% observer coverage - International Pacific Halibut Commission (IPHC) regulatory areas 2A (Washington, Oregon and California coasts), 2B (British Columbia) and 4 (Bering Sea/Aleutian Islands) all implement 100 percent observer coverage for trawl fisheries.⁵ The primary exception is the federal groundfish fishery in the Gulf of Alaska, which currently implements between 13 - 15% observer coverage rates for trawl fisheries. The amount of bycatch in state waters is estimated based on data gathered from the federal fishery.⁶ The low level of observer coverage in the Gulf of Alaska reduces the availability of statistically reliable data needed for the sustainable management of important commercial, sport and subsistence fishery resources such as halibut and Chinook salmon. The North Pacific Fishery Management Council seems to recognize that 100% observer coverage for Gulf of Alaska trawl fisheries is a key component of a comprehensive bycatch management program.⁷ But NMFS does not have any regulatory proposals pending to implement this industry standard in the near future, heightening the importance of a state observer program.

² See AS § 16.05.251(13).

³ See, e.g. Magnuson Stevens Act Provisions, Subpart H, General Provisions for Domestic Fishing. 68 Fed. Reg. 11501, 11504 (March 1, 2003); Babock, E. & E. Plkitch. 2003. How Much Observer Coverage is Enough to Adequately Assess Bycatch? Oceana, Washington D.C. at 18.

⁴ Babock, E. & E. Plkitch. 2003 at 4-5, 12.

⁵ Raab, J. & S. Stern. 2013. NPFMC/IPHC Workshop on Halibut Bycatch Estimation, Halibut Growth and Migration & Effects on Harvest Strategy: Meeting Summary at 277. In: Int. Pac. Halibut Commission Report of Assessment and Research Activities 2012: pp. 267 - 314. Available at http://www.iphc.int/publications/rara/2012/rara2012267_bycatchworkshop.pdf

⁶ *Id.* at 291.

⁷ See North Pacific Fishery Management Council, 2013. Motion on C-6(a) Gulf of Alaska Trawl Bycatch Management at 1 (October 5, 2013). Available at <http://alaskafisheries.nmfs.gov/npfmc/PDFdocuments/bycatch/GOAtrawlDesignMotion1013.pdf>



Historically, the majority of vessels participating in Gulf of Alaska federal groundfish fisheries had either 30 percent observer coverage or did not carry observers at all.⁸ Thus, historical bycatch estimates reflect data extrapolated from the 30 percent coverage fleet which altered fishing practices when observers were onboard, causing significant uncertainty about the accuracy of bycatch estimates.⁹ This problem is known as the "observer effect" and reflects studies showing that the presence of onboard observers results in different fishing behaviors on observed vessels in terms of where to fish, what to target, how to deploy gear and how crew members handle bycatch species.¹⁰ Researchers have identified significant differences in particular from groundfish trawl fisheries showing that observed data is not representative of the fleet as a whole.¹¹ This means that bycatch rates estimated from observed trips may not accurately reflect actual bycatch by unobserved vessels, resulting in unreliable estimates.¹²

According to scientists from the International Pacific Halibut Commission (IPHC) other groundfish trawl monitoring programs "have not contemplated the form of incomplete coverage seen historically for the [Gulf of Alaska] groundfish fisheries."¹³ IPHC scientists have explained that "estimates for these fisheries can be considered to be only a minimum estimate of total halibut mortality."¹⁴ Similarly, for Chinook salmon, a 2009 ADF & G study noted that an independent review of reported Chinook bycatch estimates in the pollock trawl fishery were consistently and considerably underestimated.¹⁵ A significant concern regarding declines in these fishery resources is uncertainty about bycatch estimates and a need for better data to inform the development of measures that avoid and minimize bycatch in the trawl fisheries.

II. WHAT WILL HAPPEN IF NOTHING IS DONE?

The proposal explains that if observer coverage is not increased to 100%, fishery managers will lack accurate estimates of bycatch amounts, and management decisions will not be informed by reliable data and will continue to have an incomplete understanding of the levels of mortality and impacts of bycatch on Chinook, halibut and other important state fishery resources. Over the past decade, estimated Gulf of Alaska trawl chinook bycatch has been as high as 54,000 fish and halibut bycatch mortality in the trawl fisheries from 2002 - 2011 exceeded 22 million net pounds.¹⁶

⁸ NMFS, 2011. Secretarial Review Draft; Proposed Amendment 86 to the Fishery Management Plan for the Bering Sea Aleutian Islands and Proposed Amendment 76 to the Fishery Management Plan for the Gulf of Alaska, Alaska Region Office, Juneau, AK at 10.

⁹ Raab, J. & S. Stern. 2013 at 277.

¹⁰ *Id.* at 276-277.

¹¹ Sampson, 2002. Final Report to the Oregon Trawl Commission on Analysis of Data from the At-Sea Data Collection Report. Oregon State University, Newport, Oregon.

¹² Babcock, E. & E. Pikitch. 2003 at 7.

¹³ Raab, J. & S. Stern. 2013 at 277.

¹⁴ Williams, G. 2011. Incidental Catch and Mortality of Pacific Halibut 1962 - 2011. In: Int. Pac. Halibut Commission Report of Assessment and Research Activities 2011: pp. 381 - 389.

¹⁵ Pella, J.J., and H.J. Geiger. 2009. Sampling considerations for estimating geographic origins of Chinook salmon bycatch in the Bering Sea Pollock fishery. Alaska Department of Fish and Game, Special Publication No. 09-08, Anchorage.

¹⁶ See <http://alaskafisheries.noaa.gov/sustainablefisheries/inseason/goasalmonmort.pdf>; Williams, G. 2011 at 384, 388 (adding that limited observer coverage in the Gulf of Alaska renders the estimates unreliable).



The absence of statistically reliable bycatch data will thus further impede efforts to ensure the recovery of Gulf of Alaska halibut and Chinook populations.

The recent decline in Chinook salmon abundance has led to social and economic hardships in Alaska communities as Alaska has had to implement increasingly restrictive management measures to address the downward trend.¹⁷ 2007 – 2011 average subsistence harvests declined 12% relative to 1994 – 2006 average harvest levels and commercial and sport harvests experienced even larger reductions.¹⁸ The majority of salmon taken in Gulf of Alaska groundfish fisheries are primarily taken in the trawl pollock fishery and estimated trawl bycatch of Chinook in the Gulf of Alaska increased by nearly a third even as directed fishery harvests declined.¹⁹

Better data about Chinook stock composition and bycatch levels in the trawl fishery is thus necessary to evaluate whether trawl fishery bycatch may be impacting salmon returns or contributing to local population depletions. Statistically reliable estimates require higher levels of observer coverage for species with highly variable catch rates such as Chinook.²⁰ During the 1990s, Alaska Fishery Science Center and contracted scientists evaluated the precision of bycatch estimates at different levels of observer coverage in numerous Bering Sea and Aleutian Islands groundfish fisheries.²¹ Estimates of salmon bycatch in the Pollock fisheries required 90 – 100% observer coverage to be reasonably precise.²² A subsequent study also concluded salmon bycatch estimates for management purposes can be generated from heavily observed fleets when a high percentage of hauls (60 – 70%) are sampled.²³

Because high coverage levels are needed, a 2009 review of salmon bycatch estimation in the trawl fisheries recommended a census approach to estimating bycatch numbers because it is “simple, easy to explain, and has the advantage that it is free of sampling error.”²⁴ Amendment 91 for the Bering Sea Chinook bycatch program mandated 100 percent observer coverage and required a census of Chinook salmon in every haul or fishing trip so that every salmon caught in the Pollock fishery is counted.²⁵ NMFS recognized that this measure “ensure[s] that the appropriate conservation and management measures are adequately applied to Chinook salmon

¹⁷ Alaska Department of Fish and Game, 2013, Chinook Salmon Stock Assessment and Research Plan, 2013 at 1, 7. Alaska Department of Fish and Game Division of Sport Fish, Chinook Salmon Research Team Special Publication No. 13-01. Anchorage, AK; January 2013.

¹⁸ *Id.* at 7.

¹⁹ *Id.*

²⁰ Babcock, E. & E. Pikitch, 2003 at 5.

²¹ NMFS, 2011 at 173.

²² *Id.* at 173 – 174.

²³ Witherell, D., D. Ackely & C. Coon. 2002. An Overview of Salmon Bycatch in Alaska Groundfish Fisheries. Reprinted from the Alaska Fishery Research Bulletin, Vol. 9, No. 1, Summer 2002 at 55 (citing Karp, W.A. & H. McElderry. 1999 Catch Monitoring by Fisheries Observers in the United States and Canada. Nolan, C.P., ed. Proceedings of the International Conference on Integrated Fisheries Monitoring. Sydney, Aus. February 1999. Pp. 261 – 284.

²⁴ Pella, J.J., and H.J. Geiger, 2009 at 35.

²⁵ Fisheries of the Exclusive Economic Zone Off Alaska; Chinook Salmon Bycatch Management in the Bering Sea Pollock Fishery, Final Rule, 75 Fed. Reg. 53026, 53030 (August 30, 2012).



bycatch.²⁶ Proposal 45 would help to reduce the significant disparity between the low level of chinook bycatch monitoring in the Gulf of Alaska and the Bering Sea trawl fisheries.

There are also significant concerns about the long term health of the halibut resource and how trawl bycatch - particularly of juvenile halibut - affects the ability of the resource to recover from the current and steep decline in the exploitable biomass. 100% observer coverage for trawl fisheries with halibut bycatch issues is consistent with the recommendations of expert scientists from the IPHC and other trawl fishery observer programs. Analyses done by Alaska Fisheries Science Center staff in the early 1990s to assess halibut bycatch showed that "essentially 100% observer coverage is needed" to estimate and manage halibut bycatch.²⁷ The level of precision needed to measure halibut bycatch is quite high because of resource uncertainties, the volume of halibut taken as bycatch and the variability of bycatch rates.²⁸

The IPHC has stated that improved estimation of halibut bycatch mortality is important in the Gulf of Alaska because the ratio of halibut mortality to groundfish catch is more than twice as high as the ratio in the Bering Sea fisheries.²⁹ Two of the critical problems with the existing estimates are the observer effect on bias (changes in fishing behavior) and incomplete observer coverage.³⁰ It is extremely difficult to fully account for the magnitude of statistical bias caused by incomplete coverage and observer effect.³¹ Consequently, IPHC experts question whether statistically reliable estimates can be obtained from partial observer coverage programs and recommend 100% observer coverage to address statistical bias and to improve the accuracy of bycatch estimates.³²

III. WHO IS LIKELY TO BENEFIT: FISHERY AND ECONOMIC BENEFITS

Proposal 45 proponents indicates that a primary benefit of the 100% observer coverage requirement will be that the state will benefit from having better data and chinook, halibut and crab user groups will benefit from better information about bycatch levels. TBC adds that there is another likely and direct benefit to Alaska's fishery resources because 100 percent observer coverage also minimizes both bycatch and bycatch mortality - positive environmental benefits that would result from the effect of observers on fishing practices and more careful handling of bycatch species. Fishery managers who implement 100 percent coverage programs cited the 100% observer coverage level as a specific tool to minimize bycatch in trawl fisheries in British Columbia, the Pacific Northwest and Bering Sea.³³ For example, a group of Bering Sea trawlers reduced their halibut bycatch by 40% during implementation of

²⁶ *Id.*

²⁷ Dorn, M.W. 1992. Analysis of Levels of Observer Coverage. Internal Memorandum, Alaska Fisheries Science Center. Seattle, WA (on file with TBC).

²⁸ Babcock et al, at 12 (citing Karp and McElderry 1999).

²⁹ IPHC, 2011. Effect of reducing bycatch limits in the Gulf of Alaska on the halibut exploitable biomass and spawning potential, including downstream effects from halibut migration at 2-3.

³⁰ Raab, J. & S. Stern. 2013 at 276-277.

³¹ *Id.* at 278.

³² *Id.*

³³ *Id.* at 283-284.



the 200 percent observer coverage program by changing fishing practices such as using exploratory tows and shorter tow lengths.⁸⁴ Canadian fishery managers also cited more careful handling practices that resulted in a discard mortality rate that is significantly lower than in Alaska.⁸⁵ In sum, 100 percent observer coverage for trawl fisheries will benefit state halibut and chinook fisheries not only by improving fishery management, but also by actually decreasing bycatch and bycatch mortality.

IV. CONCLUSION

Thank you for considering these comments and TBC urges you to move forward with implementing Proposal 45.

Sincerely,

Paul Olson

⁸⁴ *Id.* (200 percent observer coverage means there are two on-board observers so that there is ongoing coverage of vessel activities and more complete haul sampling).

⁸⁵ *Id.*



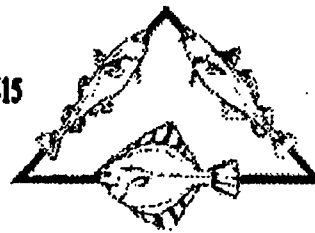
Groundfish Data Bank

Alaska

PH: 907-486-3033 FAX: 907-486-3461 P.O. BOX 788 - KODIAK, AK. 99615

Julie Bonney, Executive Director jbonney@gei.net

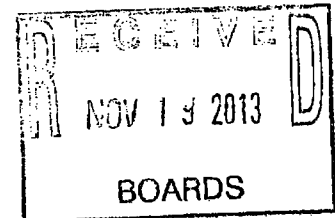
Katy McGauley, Fisheries Biologist agdb@gei.net



Alaska Board of Fisheries
Alaska Department of Fish and Game
P.O. Box 115526
Juneau, AK 99811-5526

Re: Proposals 43-44-45

November 19, 2013



Dear Chairman Johnstone and Board Members,

Alaska Groundfish Data Bank (AGDB) is a member organization that includes the majority of both the shorebased processors located in Kodiak and catcher vessels home ported in Kodiak that participate in the Central Gulf of Alaska (CGOA) groundfish trawl fisheries.

This letter expresses our opposition to proposals 43 -45. We ask that the Alaska Board of Fish (BOF) reject these proposals and instead work with the North Pacific Fishery Management Council (Council) and the GOA trawl industry stakeholders to develop a Gulf of Alaska trawl bycatch management program. Any program developed within the Council process will require input from and coordination with the BOF to address the interrelationships between state-waters, parallel and federal fishery zones. We are asking that you join us in developing a vision for a new fishery management structure that will allow our industry to effectively manage and reduce bycatch while meeting optimum yield for groundfish harvests - a management plan that holds each individual vessel accountable for their fishing behavior. We are asking that you allow this process to play out and not disrupt our industry in the short term by adopting any of these proposals.

Attached for your information is the Council purpose and need statement/Goals and Objectives (appendix A) for the new program and the Council initial program design motion (appendix B) which will be used to focus public input for development of program alternatives and options. Both these documents demonstrate the vision under construction for our industry. Also attached for your information is the Council's Bycatch Reduction Flyer underscoring the industry's need for additional tools.

Specific comments for each proposal:

Proposal 43 - this proposal would create state-water management plans for all groundfish species in the Cook Inlet, Kodiak and Chignik management areas for non-pelagic trawl vessels 58 foot and less.



- The Pacific cod resource, both federal and state, are fully allocated and subscribed. A separate state-water Pacific cod non-pelagic trawl fishery would increase the total amount of Pacific cod ABC allocated to state-water fisheries. The BOF at their recent Oct 18 – 22 meeting addressed the allocations for state cod fisheries. Revisiting the cod allocations between state and federal fisheries now is completely out of cycle with the prior decision making process and should be rejected.
- It is impossible to harvest 25% of all groundfish ABC's within three miles. Based on table 43-1 (staff comments) harvest in the CGOA for groundfish taken with non-pelagic gear inside three miles is less than 8 million pounds over the time period 2000-2012 (averaging about 615,000 lbs per year). This compares to a potential annual State waters allocation of 133 million pounds based on 25% of the current, respective groundfish ABCs.
- It is unclear whether the proposal would open additional areas inside three miles to allow for additional harvesting opportunities for groundfish with non-pelagic trawl gear. While the trawl industry in general is supportive of additional access to these fishing grounds, a thoughtful, research driven approach via a commissioner's permit is the appropriate vehicle - not this proposal.
- The Department of Fish and Game is opposed to this proposal.

Proposal 44 – this proposal would create state-waters management plans for Pollock in the Cook Inlet, Kodiak, and Chignik management areas for vessels 58 feet or less.

- Increasing Pollock catch within Stellar Sea Lion critical habitat (zero to three miles) will most likely require a reconsultation under the Endangered Species Act (ESA). If a jeopardy determination is found, additional restrictions for federal fishing activity may result. During the 2010 reconsultation, the CGOA regulatory area barely escaped increased fishing restrictions similar to what occurred in the Aleutian Islands.
- This proposal redistributes access to the Pollock resource across users. The CGOA Pollock fleet consists of approximately 40 vessels, typically 4 of which are <58 feet in length. Note that these four <58' vessels all currently participate fully in the Federal GOA pollock fisheries. Allocating pollock between federal and state participants, large and small vessels, will not only impact individual harvesting vessel businesses but also their business partners -- processing companies, secondary fishery businesses and coastal communities. Reallocations of this type (potentially every 3 years at the BOF finfish meeting) would breed instability and uncertainty in GOA trawl fisheries, reducing investment for efficiency improvements and gear modifications. .
- It is difficult to understand how state quotas would be created. The proposal suggests 25% of the CGOA quota would be set aside for a new state Pollock fishery. Would there be some portion set aside for Cook Inlet, Chignik and Kodiak management areas? If so how would the Board decide? In the federal fishery, pollock is allocated seasonally across four quarters to mitigate impacts to Stellar Sea Lions. Would some type of seasonal structure be needed for the state fishery? Dividing the pollock quota between federal and state fisheries, then again by federal management areas and state management areas and finally into seasonal allocations for both jurisdictional fisheries could result in both federal and state fishery allocations too small to



manage. The potential is to go from the present eight allocation boxes in the CGOA federal fishery system to a possible 20 allocation boxes in a combined CGOA federal and state system.

- If the BOF develops new state water pollock fisheries it will fragment the pollock industry and frustrate our ability to meet bycatch management objectives. Some examples of the challenges include:
 - a. Fish do not understand the 3 mile line. This is exhibited in the tables in the staff document where inside and outside Pollock catch has ranged from a low of 5% to a high of 49% annually. When pollock catch per unit effort (CPUE) is high, bycatch is typically low. The fleet needs the ability to target areas of high pollock abundance with the associated low Chinook salmon bycatch to control and reduce bycatch.
 - b. The Bering Sea Pollock industry uses rolling seasonal hotspot closures to reduce salmon bycatch. The GOA industry hopes to develop a similar plan once a new cooperative fishery management structure is in place as in the Bering Sea fishery. The key for a rolling hotspot program is removing the race for both target and bycatch allocations along with the ability to move the fleet fluidly across the fishing grounds, 0 to 200 miles.
 - c. Cooperative management programs allow industry to develop contractual mechanisms to police the individual cooperative members. These co-op contracts are structured to benefit the entire group of co-op members as a whole versus individual members. State fisheries participants would be outside this self-policing mechanism.
 - d. Co-op contracts could address gear development and excluder use, fleet bycatch performance standards, incentives / penalties that address individual vessel fishing behaviors, and strategic fishing strategies.

- There would be significant costs incurred to the state of Alaska if this proposal is approved. The 100% observer coverage requirement would require the establishment of a state groundfish observer program. This would be duplicative to the federal groundfish observer program for the trans-boundary pollock stock. As the staff comments notes, this would require a substantial investment in time and resources for the state of Alaska. Maintaining a compatible state-water observer program would be necessary to provide the essential information needed for both catch accounting and stock assessments. Additionally, the federal program collects genetic tissue samples from Chinook salmon bycatch taken within the federal trawl Pollock fisheries. A companion genetic collection program would be necessary to understand stock of origin for bycaught Chinook if state pollock fisheries are created. Presently, the NMFS observer program is collecting all samples within the federal Pollock fisheries and NMFS Auke Bay laboratory is doing the genetic workup of these samples. The final cost element is the necessary personnel to manage these new state Pollock fisheries.

Proposal 45—this proposal would require 100% observer coverage for trawl vessels targeting groundfish inside state waters of the Cook Inlet, Kodiak and Chignik management areas.

The partial coverage portion of the newly restructured North Pacific Groundfish and Halibut observer program estimates total removals for the commercial fishing industry where the observed vessel data is extrapolated to the unobserved portion of the fleets. Estimates are stratified by target fishery, gear type and federal regulatory area. This new restructured program replaced the old Observer Program in 2012, improving the catch estimates and reducing the bias by requiring random trip or vessel selection.



Previously, for the partial observed vessels (the majority of the Kodiak trawl fleet), the operator chose when to take an observer on a trip.

It is unclear whether the proposal would create a state water observer program or whether the BOF would require federal observers to be on board vessel while fishing inside three miles. If a state system is created it would be a substantial financial investment by the State. It is unclear whether the State data would be incorporated within federal catch accounting system for bycatch and catch estimation processes or whether a separate state system would be necessary. This new data would over sample catch within three miles affecting the random data collection processes that are in place within the new federal program designed to estimate catch and bycatch for trawl fisheries in general. If the BOF requires vessels to carry federal observers within three miles then additional costs will be incurred not only by those vessels fishing inside three miles but also by NMFS. Cost estimates per fishing day for the vessels are underestimated in the staff analysis. Typical costs are \$500 to \$600 per fishing day and can be as high as \$1,000 per fishing day. Observer daily costs can also include travel costs, excessive baggage costs and cost for observer stand-down days due to weather, price negotiations, etc. The agency incurs costs due to observer training, briefing and debriefing, management of observer data and staff in general to support the overall observer program.

Additional observer coverage inside state waters will only affect the Chinook salmon bycatch data within the federal program since the vast majority of non-pelagic trawl harvests occurs outside three miles. Mid-water pelagic gear catches de minimis amounts of both crab and halibut so requiring 100% observer coverage will not affect the estimates for these PSC species in the overall federal catch accounting system. The vast majority of trawl harvests inside three miles consist of pollock taken with pelagic trawl gear. Thus additional coverage would only affect Chinook salmon PSC estimates. 100% coverage within 3 miles in the pollock target would remove the random nature of the present system, introducing a large bias into the estimates. Also, with the current race structure of the Federal pollock fisheries in the CGOA and large number of participants, the fisheries typically last only 3-10 days per season – with the operators racing for catch before the fishery closes, there is no time or incentive to game the observer system so observed trips are representative of actual catches.

The Council vision for a new GOA Trawl Management Program, includes a mandatory 100% federal observer coverage requirement, as it does in all other North Pacific trawl catch share programs. The 100% observer coverage requirement is necessary because each individual vessel will be held accountable for its bycatch performance versus the present system which holds the entire fleet to a fleet wide bycatch limit and where the behavior of one vessel operator can potentially shut down the entire fishery.

The Council has passed a series of actions to reduce bycatch in the GOA trawl fisheries. (See appendix C). Recent actions include a Tanner crab closure area near Marmot Bay, requiring modified sweeps for flatfish harvests, Halibut Prohibited Species Catch (PSC) reductions, and new Chinook salmon PSC caps for both the pollock and non-pollock fisheries. Industry believes that a new fishery management structure that creates additional tools is necessary to successfully address these bycatch reduction actions.

GOA Trawl Industry is making bycatch improvements:

The trawl industry continues to be proactive to understand the impact of our bycatch, mitigate the impact of our bycatch and develop tools to reduce bycatch.



The fleet is presently modifying their gear to add elevation devices to their sweeps in anticipation of a new regulation that requires the use of sweep modifications for flatfish harvests. These sweep modifications are intended to reduce gear impacts on bottom habitat and reduce crab bycatch mortalities.

All the Gulf of Alaska trawl groundfish processors and fishing vessels joined the Sea Share program in 2011. This year (2013) Sea Share has donated more than 34,000 pounds of finished product, both halibut and salmon bycatch, to food banks across Alaska from GOA trawl bycatch.

The Council and NMFS are collecting genetic information from the Chinook salmon bycatch in the pollock fishery to understand stock of origin and impacts to Alaska salmon runs. Industry has expanded genetic data collection to the CGOA shoreside catcher vessel rockfish fishery. Sample collections from the Rockfish Program landings include:

1. Tissue samples from all landed Chinook salmon for DNA and stock of origin analysis.
2. Biological data (weight, length, sex) from all landed salmon.
3. Scan all landed Chinook salmon for the presence or absence of adipose fin clips and Coded Wire Tags (CWT). This will allow for an estimation of Chinook bycatch that originate from hatcheries.
4. Collect CWT's (snouts) from all salmon with positive CWT signal.

Cooperative research partners for this initiative include NMFS groundfish observer program, NMFS Auke Bay Genetics laboratory, and the inshore CV rockfish cooperatives, all located in Kodiak.

The North Pacific Fisheries Research Foundation was awarded an Exempted Fisheries Permit to test Chinook salmon excluder devices for mid-water Pollock nets on "typical" Central Gulf of Alaska pollock trawlers. Two trials occurred in 2013 with two additional trials scheduled in 2014.

AGDB members respectfully request that the Board reject proposals 43, 44, and 45 and instead join with the NPFMC and the GOA trawl industry in developing a new vision for a new fishery management structure for our industry. We appreciate the opportunity to comment and look forward to engaging with the Board at the upcoming Chignik, Lower Cook Inlet and Kodiak finfish meetings.

Sincerely,

Julie Bonney
Executive Director
Alaska Groundfish Data Bank



Appendix A: North Pacific Fishery Management Council purpose and need statement/Goals and Objectives: GOA Trawl Bycatch Management

Purpose and Need Statement:

Management of Central Gulf of Alaska (GOA) groundfish trawl fisheries has grown increasingly complicated in recent years due to the implementation of measures to protect Steller Sea lions and reduced Pacific halibut and Chinook salmon Prohibited Species Catch (PSC) limits under variable annual total allowable catch (TAC's) limits for target groundfish species. These changes complicate effective management of target and non-target resources, and can have significant adverse social and economic impacts on harvesters, processors, and fishery-dependent GOA coastal communities.

The current management tools in the GOA Groundfish Fishery Management Plan (FMP) do not provide the Central GOA trawl fleet with the ability to effectively address these challenges, especially with regard to the fleet's ability to best reduce and utilize PSC. As such, the Council had determined that consideration of a new management regime for the Central GOA trawl fisheries is warranted.

The purpose of the proposed action is to create a new management structure which allocates allowable harvest to individuals, cooperatives, or other entities, which will eliminate the derby-style race for fish. It is expected to improve stock conservation by creating vessel-level and/or cooperative-level incentives to eliminate wasteful fishing practices, provide mechanisms to control and reduce bycatch, and create accountability measures when utilizing PSC, target, and secondary species. It will also have the added benefit of reducing the incentive to fish during unsafe conditions and improving operational efficiencies.

The Council recognizes that Central GOA harvesters, processors, and communities all have a stake in the groundfish trawl fisheries. The new program shall be designed to provide tools for the effective management and reduction of PSC and bycatch, and promote increased utilization of both target and secondary species harvested in the GOA. The program is also expected to increase the flexibility and economic efficiency of the Central GOA groundfish trawl fisheries and support the continued direct and indirect participation of the coastal communities that are dependent upon those fisheries. These management measures shall apply to those species, or groups of species, harvested by trawl gear in the Central GOA, as well as to PSC. This program will not modify the overall management of other sectors in the GOA, or the Central GOA rockfish program, which already operates under a catch share program.

Goals and Objectives:

1. Balance the requirements of the National Standards in the Magnuson Stevens Act
2. Increase the ability of the groundfish trawl sector to avoid PSC species and utilize available amounts of PSC more efficiently by allowing groundfish trawl vessel to fish more slowly, strategically, and cooperatively, both amongst the vessels themselves and with shore-based processors
3. Reduce bycatch and regulatory discards by groundfish trawl vessels
4. Authorize fair and equitable access privileges that take into consideration the value of assets and investments in the fishery and dependency on the fishery for harvesters, processors, and communities
5. Balance interests of all sectors and provide equitable distributions of benefits and similar opportunities for increased value
6. Promote community stability and minimize adverse economic impacts by limiting consolidation, providing employment and entry opportunities, and increasing the economic viability of the groundfish harvesters, processors, and support industries



7. Improve the ability of the groundfish trawl sector to achieve Optimum Yield, including increased product retention, utilization, landings, and value by allowing vessels to choose the time and location of fishing to optimize returns and generate higher yields
8. Increase stability relative to the volume and timing of groundfish trawl landings, allowing processors to better plan operational needs as well as identify and exploit new projects and markets
9. Increase safety by allowing trawl vessels to prosecute groundfish fisheries at slower speeds and in better conditions
10. Include measures for improved monitoring and reporting
11. Include the trawl sector's ability to adapt to applicable Federal law (i.e., Endangered Species Act)
12. Include methods to measure the success and impacts of all program elements
13. Minimize adverse impacts on sectors and areas not included in the program.
14. Promote active participation by owners of harvest vessels and fishing privileges



Appendix B: North Pacific Fishery Management Council GOA Trawl Bycatch Management Program

C-5(a) GOA Trawl Bycatch Management Council Motion 10/5/13

The Council requests that the staff provide a discussion paper reviewing the program structure described below using the decision framework provided in the June 2013 'roadmap' document and the Council's purpose and need statement. The paper should evaluate whether and how the elements of this design address the objectives in the Council's purpose and need statement. The intent is to receive feedback characterizing: 1) how the fishery would operate under the new design; 2) how well it may meet the Council's stated objectives; and 3) which second-tier decisions are necessary to transform the program structure into alternative(s) for analysis. The paper should also include information on bycatch reduction results from other trawl catch share programs in the North Pacific and other regions.

GOA Trawl Bycatch Management Program

1. Bycatch Management

The primary objective of this action is to improve incentives for PSC reduction and PSC management, achieved in several ways through this program design.

a. **Reduced PSC:** The Council intends to adopt a program to: (1) minimize Chinook salmon bycatch, and (2) achieve more efficient use of halibut PSC, allowing some efficiency gains to provide additional target fishery opportunity while leaving some halibut PSC savings in the water for conservation and contribution to exploitable biomass.

b. **Duration of shares:** A portion of target species share allocations (maximum 25%) will be evaluated for retention based on achievement of performance targets relative to bycatch and other Council objectives after a set period of time (3-10 years). The time period and the criteria used to evaluate performance will be established in regulation.

c. **Cooperative management:** A system of cooperative management is best suited to managing and reducing bycatch (such as, hotspot program, gear modifications, excluder use, incentive plan agreements) while maximizing the value of available target species. Cooperatives are intended to facilitate a flexible, responsive, and coordinated effort among vessels and processors to avoid bycatch through information sharing and formal participation in a bycatch avoidance program.

d. **Gear modification. Option:** gear modifications for crab protection.

2. Observer Coverage

All trawl catcher vessels in the GOA will be in the 100% observer coverage category.

3. Areas

Western Gulf, Central Gulf, West Yakutat

4. Sector allocation of target species and PSC



Allocations for the trawl CP and CV sectors for WG and CG Pacific cod (Am 83), CGOA rockfish program (Am 88), and GOA pollock (Am 23) are maintained. Am 80 target sideboards and GOA flatfish eligibility are maintained. Allocate halibut and Chinook salmon PSC caps between CP and CV sectors.

5. Allocated species.

Target species are pollock and Pacific cod. PSC species include halibut and Chinook salmon.

6. Program structure for trawl catcher vessel fishery

Voluntary cooperative structure

- a. Allocate target species (pollock, Pacific cod) at the cooperative level, based on aggregate catch histories associated with member vessels' LLPs.
- b. Apportion halibut PSC and Chinook salmon PSC limits to each cooperative on a pro rata basis relative to target fisheries of GOA trawl vessels in the cooperative [such as, pollock Chinook salmon PSC cap divided based on pollock landings; non-pollock Chinook salmon cap divided based on non-pollock landings (excluding rockfish); halibut PSC apportioned in proportion to the cooperative's allocation of target species.]
- c. Participants can choose to either join a cooperative or operate in a limited access pool [sector-level, non-transferable target allocations and PSC]. Harvesters would need to be in a cooperative with a processor by a specified date prior to the season to access a transferable allocation of target species and PSC.
- d. Initial (2 years) cooperative formation would be based on the majority of a license holders' historical landings (aggregate trawl groundfish deliveries, excluding Central GOA rockfish harvested under a rockfish cooperative quota allocation) to a processor.
- e. Each cooperative would be required to have a private cooperative contract. The contract would require signatures of all harvesters in the cooperative and the processor (option: and community in which the processor is located). The contract would include clear provisions for how the parties may dissolve their contract after the first two years. If a harvester wants to leave that cooperative and join another cooperative, they could do so if they meet the requirements of the contract.
- f. Additional contract elements (such as bycatch management, active participation, mechanisms to facilitate entry, community provisions) may be required to ensure the program is consistent with Council objectives.

Option: Each processor controls a portion of PSC within the cooperative and negotiates terms of access through private agreement. The processor would activate the incremental PSC through NMFS, making it accessible to the cooperative. PSC made available by these agreements cannot be used by processor-owned vessels.

7. Fishery dependent community stability

- a. Consolidation limits
 - Vessel caps and limits on the percentage of the total allocation that a person can hold (accessible only through a cooperative).
 - Processor caps in each area (WG and CG).



- b. Target species quota would be regionalized (WG or WY/CG designation) based on historical delivery patterns.

Option: Target species CG quota that has historically been landed in Kodiak would have a port of landing requirement to be delivered to Kodiak; CG quota not historically landed in Kodiak would be regionalized (WG or WY/CG).

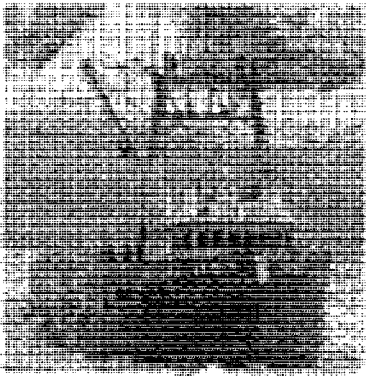
- c. Require individuals or entities to meet fishery participation criteria in order to be eligible to purchase an eligible license with associated history.

8. Transferability

- a. (Annually) Full transferability for annual use within the cooperative. Cooperatives can engage in inter-cooperative agreements on an annual basis.
- b. (Long-term) The LLP is transferable, with the associated history of the target species (which, when entered into a cooperative, brings with it a pro rata share of PSC). Target species history is severable and transferable to another eligible license.

9. Gear conversions

Upon further development, the Council could include gear conversion provisions that allow Pacific cod trawl allocations to be fished with fixed gear, although any harvest would continue to be deducted from the vessels' annual trawl quota account and would not affect the fixed gear Pacific cod sector allocations.



Reducing Bycatch in Alaska

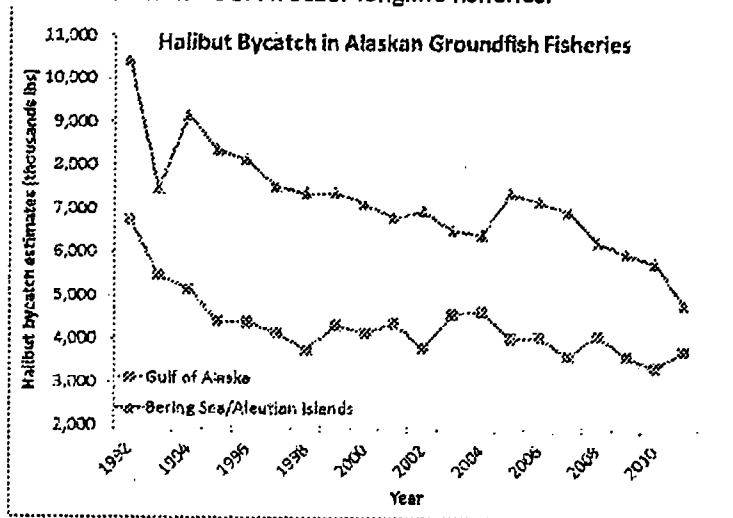
The Magnuson-Stevens Act requires the North Pacific Fishery Management Council to minimize bycatch while also allowing for optimum yield in the fisheries. The Council has implemented new measures or refined existing measures to reduce bycatch of prohibited species, such as Chinook and chum salmon, Pacific halibut, and crab in the Federal fisheries. These species are integral to the health of Alaskan marine ecosystems and to State and Federal economies. This paper shares highlights of recently implemented restrictions.

Pacific halibut bycatch reduction

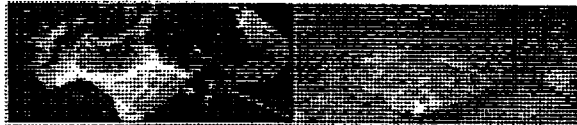
Numerous subsistence users, charter vessels and commercial halibut fishermen rely on Pacific halibut. Halibut bycatch reduction is a priority for the Council and State of Alaska. Halibut size at age has decreased over the last decade and the entire Pacific halibut biomass is in decline along the Pacific coastal corridor.

Bycatch limits

- In June 2012, the Council took action to reduce halibut bycatch limits by 15% in the Gulf of Alaska (GOA) trawl fisheries and longline catcher vessel fisheries and 7% in the GOA freezer longline fisheries.
- In 2012, the Council established a halibut bycatch limit in the central GOA Rockfish Program that is 12.5% less than the historical average, and required that 45% of any unused bycatch must be left in the water and not used in other trawl fisheries that year.
- In 2008, the Council established cooperative management in the BSAI non-pollock trawl catcher processor sector and reduced halibut bycatch by about 8% over four years.



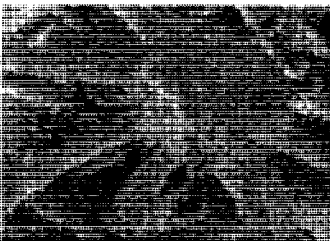
Source: IPHC 2011 (net weight).



King, tanner and snow crab bycatch reduction

Gear modifications

- In 2011, new regulations required all BS flatfish fisheries to elevate their trawl sweeps off the seafloor to reduce habitat damage and crab mortality. In 2013, this requirement was extended to all central GOA flatfish fisheries.
- Pot fishing gear is required to have biodegradable panels to prevent lost pots from 'ghost fishing' and tunnel openings or escape panels to reduce crab bycatch.

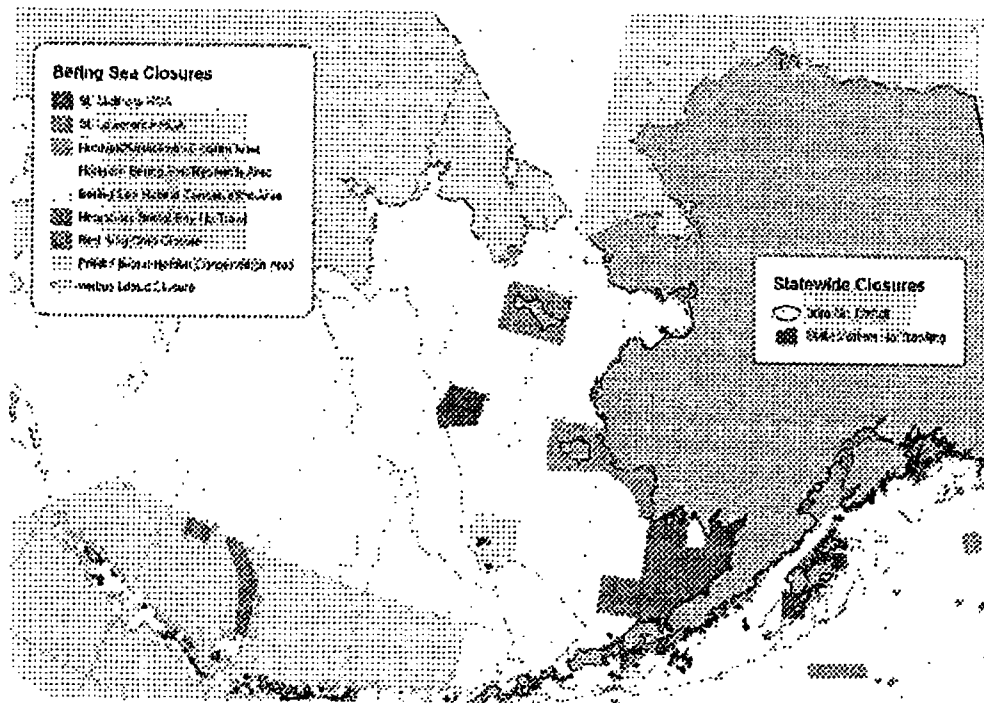


Bycatch limits

Bycatch limits are established for some red king, Tanner, and snow crab stocks by the Council in the BS groundfish fisheries and by the State in the statewide scallop fisheries. Bycatch limits are area specific to reduce impacts on local populations and fluctuate based on annual estimates of crab abundance.

Area closures

Several closures were applied in the Bering Sea in the mid-1990s to conserve red and blue king crab stocks, such as the Red King Crab Savings Area, the Nearshore Bristol Bay Closure, and the Pribilof Islands Habitat Conservation Area. In 2010, the Council adopted a bottom trawl closure in Marmot Bay to reduce bycatch of Tanner crabs, enhancing existing trawl closure areas designed to protect red king crabs.



Chinook salmon bycatch reduction

Chinook salmon are an integral part of subsistence, sport, and commercial harvests in Alaska. The Council has implemented numerous management measures to reduce Chinook salmon bycatch over the years.

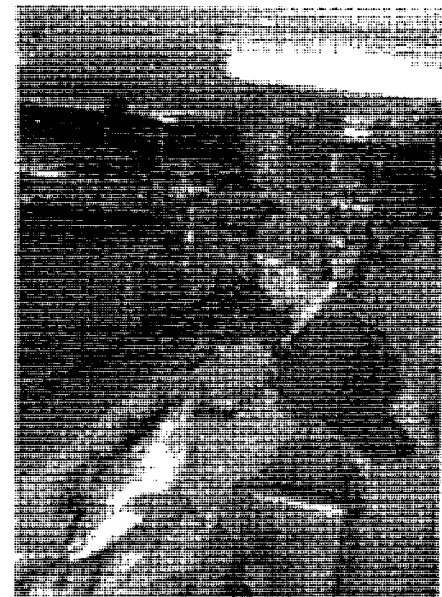
Bering Sea

In 2011, the Council implemented a new Chinook salmon bycatch avoidance program for the Bering Sea pollock fishery, which includes:

- A hard cap on the number of Chinook salmon that can be taken in the Bering Sea pollock fishery. This maximum limit requires immediate closure to all further pollock fishing for the remaining season.
- Incentive plan agreements to keep bycatch lower than the cap level. These agreements include explicit incentives and penalties for the pollock fleet to avoid Chinook salmon in all conditions.
- An industry program to close areas of the pollock fishing grounds when Chinook salmon bycatch rates are high in those areas.
- Requirements for every pollock vessel to have at least one observer onboard at all times. It requires a full count of all salmon caught, with genetic sampling to determine stock of origin.

Gulf of Alaska

- In 2012, a bycatch cap of 25,000 Chinook salmon was established for the western and central GOA pollock trawl fisheries.
- In 2013, the Council approved a hard cap (7,500 salmon) on Chinook bycatch in all remaining GOA trawl fisheries.
- Full retention of Chinook salmon is also required in all trawl fisheries. Retention of salmon supports research to identify the stock of origin of Chinook salmon bycatch in the GOA.



For more information: (907)271-2809 or www.alaskafisheries.noaa.gov/npfmc



Alaska Whitefish Trawlers Association

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Alaska Board of Fisheries
Chignik Finfish meeting
December 5-6

Proposal 43 - Oppose

The Alaska Whitefish Trawlers Association (AWTA) is located in Kodiak and represents the majority of independently owned trawl vessels that harvest groundfish in the Central Gulf of Alaska (CGOA). Our vessels also harvest groundfish in the Western Gulf of Alaska and Bering Sea.

AWTA opposes proposal 43 which seeks to establish a new state-waters trawl fishery for twenty-five percent (25%) of all species of groundfish in the Gulf of Alaska. This proposal would not move 25% of the federal groundfish TAC inside of 3 miles because fish have tails and go where they want. This proposal would grant, to a limited number of less than 58' vessels, access to those fish but it would be impossible to catch because they don't exist inside state waters. For example, this proposal would result in moving access to 41,336,250 lbs. of Arrowtooth Flounder into state waters. There is not that much Arrowtooth inside three miles.

This proposal does not specifically name the type of gear that would be used but flatfish can only be harvested with non-pelagic (bottom) trawl. To access the deep-water and shallow-water flatfish, Arrowtooth flounder, skates and other species, the state would either have to allow non-pelagic (bottom) trawling in all of the bays and other state waters or deny access to these fish. The economic impact of denying access to 25% of these different species would be huge, with harvesters, processors, processor workers, vendors, and coastal communities bearing the burden, all so that a small number of under 58' vessel could have their own private fishery.

Table 1 displays very clearly that this proposal is completely unworkable. This proposal states that there would be a 150,000 trip limit with a vessel being able to deliver only once every 72 hours (3 days). Moving access to 25% of the Central Gulf of Alaska TAC inside three mile would result in 144,587,589 pounds of groundfish. It would take 964 trips (150,000 lbs. each) and would take 2,892 days (1 deliver/3days). There are currently 4 under 58' vessels that could be considered to be active in the CGOA. This means that each vessel would have to start fishing on January 1, make a delivery every 3 days throughout the year (never stopping for fuel, groceries, or other fisheries) and it would take 723 days (1.98 years) for these 4 vessels to catch the fish!

This proposal calls for PSC management and 100% observer coverage in all of these new fisheries inside of state waters. The process of designing, developing the regulatory structure, implementing and managing these new PSC management and observer requirements would be incredibly complex, expensive and impossible to do in any reasonable time frame. While you


AK BOF
Chignik Finfish meeting
Proposal 43
AWTA Comments
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could expect the vessels to pay for on-going observer coverage, the state would have to pay for all of the costs necessary to develop and implement this program.

This proposal is very poorly thought out with no consideration of the impacts on critical habitat and the implications regarding the measures that have been taken to protect Stellar Sea Lions. To create a program designed to permit the harvest of over 144,000,000 pounds of groundfish in the sensitive near-share areas is a very bad idea. The potential economic harm done to the Gulf of Alaska fishing industry and the people who depend on the groundfish fisheries for their livelihood must be recognized.

This proposal should be eliminated!

Sincerely,



Robert L. Krueger, President
Alaska Whitefish Trawlers Association
Robert.Krueger@alaskawhitefishtrawlers.org

Alaska Whitefishers Association
 Alaska Board of Fisheries
 Chignik Finfish Meeting
 December 5-6

Proposal # 43

Table 1 - State-waters all species trawl groundfish fishery

Species	2013 TAC		Lbs inside 3		# of 150,000		# of days		# of years		Number of		days per		years per	
	Metric Tons	Pounds	25%	trips	3 day/trip	58' boats	58'boat	58' boat	58' boats	58'boat	58' boat	58' boat	58' boat	58' boat	58' boat	58' boat
Pollock (620 630 WYAK)	78,815	173,755,549	43,438,887	290	869	4	217	2.38	4	217	0.60					
Pacific Cod (CGOA)	36,966	81,495,244	20,373,811	136	407	4	102	1.12	4	102	0.28					
Sablefish (CGOA)	5,540	12,213,484	3,053,371	20	61	4	15	0.17	4	15	0.04					
Shallow flats (CGOA)	18,000	39,682,800	9,920,700	66	198	4	50	0.54	4	50	0.14					
Deep flats (CGOA)	2,308	5,088,217	1,272,054	8	25	4	6	0.07	4	6	0.02					
Rex Sole (CGOA)	6,376	14,056,530	3,514,132	23	70	4	18	0.19	4	18	0.05					
Arrowtooth (CGOA)	75,000	165,345,000	41,336,250	276	827	4	207	2.27	4	207	0.57					
Flathead Sole (CGOA)	15,400	33,950,840	8,487,710	57	170	4	42	0.47	4	42	0.12					
POP (CGOA)	10,926	24,087,460	6,021,865	40	120	4	30	0.33	4	30	0.08					
Nrht Rockfish (CGOA)	3,122	6,882,761	1,720,690	11	34	4	9	0.09	4	9	0.02					
Shortraker (CGOA)	452	996,479	249,120	2	5	4	1	0.01	4	1	0.00					
Dusky Rockfish (CGOA)	3,533	7,788,852	1,947,213	13	39	4	10	0.11	4	10	0.03					
Rougheye (CGOA)	856	1,887,138	471,784	3	9	4	2	0.03	4	2	0.01					
Thornyhead (CGOA)	766	1,688,724	422,181	3	8	4	2	0.02	4	2	0.01					
Other Rockfish (CGOA)	606	1,335,988	333,997	2	7	4	2	0.02	4	2	0.00					
Big Skate (CGOA)	1,793	3,952,848	988,212	7	20	4	5	0.05	4	5	0.01					
Longnose Skate (CGOA)	1,879	4,142,443	1,035,611	7	21	4	5	0.06	4	5	0.01					
Totals	262,338	578,350,355	144,587,589	964	2,892	4	723	7.92	4	723	1.98					



Alaska Whitefish Trawlers Association

RC 009

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Alaska Board of Fisheries
Chignik Finfish meeting
December 5-6

Proposal 45 - Oppose

The Alaska Whitefish Trawlers Association (AWTA) is located in Kodiak and represents the majority of independently owned trawl vessels that harvest groundfish in the Central Gulf of Alaska (CGOA). Our vessels also harvest groundfish in the Western Gulf of Alaska and Bering Sea.

AWTA opposes proposal 45 which would require 100% observer coverage for trawl vessels targeting groundfish inside state waters.

The trawl fleet in the Gulf of Alaska has been required to carry observers for many years under the original observer program, was required to carry an observer 30% of the time and it was the responsibility of the vessel to make sure that they had enough observed trips. On January 1, 2013 a new Restructured Observer program became effective. Under this new program trawl vessels are a part of the trip selection pool which means that for every trip, a vessel has to register with the observer program and find out if they are required to carry an observer. It is no longer the responsibility of the vessel to determine whether they will carry an observer. It is believed that shifting the decision to carry an observer from the vessel to NMFS results in better data.

This program was developed over several years and is a complex and sophisticated program designed to meet data collection goals and objectives. Information regarding the volume, size, sex and stomach contents for target species and the amount and type of bycatch is recorded. Genetic data is also being collected from bycaught Chinook salmon to determine their river of origin. Once this data is collected it is used to give regulators better insight into the removals of both target and non-target species by the trawl fleet.

It is unclear what would be done with any data that would be collected by the state observer program and how it could be used for scientific insight and management decisions. Discussion between the federal observer program and the state would need to be undertaken so the assimilation of state-derived data could somehow be incorporated into the larger data base and provide useful output. One thing that is very clear is that the collection of data just for the sake of collecting data is a futile undertaking and it would be very important to understand how any additional data could be used

The requirement for 100% observer coverage inside state waters would entail the development of a similar complex program which will be an expensive and time consuming process.

The cost of developing, implementing and managing a new observer program will be very high and will be a substantial investment of state money and personnel. The cost of the program will also be high for the trawl fleet with observer costs approaching \$600-\$800/day. The vessels will not only incur the daily costs but they are also responsible for many additional costs for debriefing days and transporting of observers.

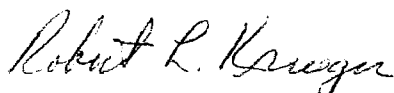
The trawl fleet continues to race for fish in the Gulf of Alaska. The fast paced derby-style fisheries compromise the ability to effectively manage bycatch and the North Pacific Fisheries Management Council has recognized the need to make changes in the way trawl fisheries are managed. The NPFMC has already begun the process of developing a new management structure and one of the components of the new program will be 100% observer coverage.

The interaction between trawl activity that occurs in federal waters and state waters is an integral part of the new management program and will require collaboration between the NMFS and State to insure that common goals and objectives are developed.

AWTA asks that the Board of Fish focus their attention on the development of the new management structure for trawl fisheries in the GOA and not spend their time, energy, staff and money to develop a separate observer program. The joint protocol process should be used to discuss the common goals and objectives of both NMFS and the state before any new observer program is considered.

AWTA requests the Board reject Proposal 45.

Sincerely,



Robert L. Krueger, President
Alaska Whitefish Trawlers Association
Robert.Krueger@alaskawhitefishtrawlers.org



Alaska Whitefish
Trawlers Association

RC 010

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Alaska Board of Fisheries
Chignik Finfish meeting
December 5-6

Proposal 44 - Oppose

The Alaska Whitefish Trawlers Association (AWTA) is located in Kodiak and represents the majority of independently owned trawl vessels that harvest groundfish in the Central Gulf of Alaska (CGOA). Our vessels also harvest groundfish in the Western Gulf of Alaska and Bering Sea.

AWTA opposes proposal 44 which seeks to establish a new Central Gulf of Alaska state-waters trawl fishery for twenty-five percent (25%) of all Pollock from areas 62, 630, and 640. It would also establish a new Western Gulf of Alaska state-waters trawl fishery for twenty-five percent (25%) of all Pollock from area 610.

This proposal is very poorly thought out with no consideration of the impacts on critical habitat and the implications regarding the measures that have been taken to protect Stellar Sea Lions. The federal Pollock fisheries were a central part of the dialogue regarding the protection of Stellar Sea Lions. There was concern that the removal of Pollock as a food source may cause nutritional stress on the sea lion population. To minimize the potential for negative impacts, the federal Pollock fishery is divided into multiple seasons (A, B, C, and D) in multiple areas (610, 620, 630, and 640) with only a portion of the available TAC made available to each season and area. Areas adjacent to rookeries and haul-outs were closed. **The creation of a state-waters Pollock fishery designed to permit the harvest of over 43,438,887 pounds of Pollock (based on 2013 TAC) in these sensitive near-shore areas is a very bad idea.** It will trigger a full Section 7 consultation of the Stellar Sea lion regulations and additional closures will likely be mandated.

The management of Pollock in the Gulf of Alaska is a complex task and the idea that you can take a significant portion of the Pollock resource and just move it into the hands of state managers without the appropriate amount of time it will take to design and implement a management structure for this new fishery is very short sighted. The Pollock resource is a large and important part of the Gulf of Alaska groundfish fisheries. It must be managed carefully and not at the whim of some individual making this proposal.

The historic pollock harvesters have developed long-term business and harvesting plans in conjunction with processors, their workers and the vendors and service industries that support the Pollock fishery. Removing access of 25% of the Pollock resource from these historic harvesters will have a significant economic ripple effect on all those who depend on this fishery.

This proposal calls for the use of non-pelagic (bottom) trawl gear as well as pelagic trawl, seine and jig gear. State waters are currently closed to bottom trawling.

This proposal is couched as providing opportunities for little guys but Pollock fishing is a high overhead, very narrow margin fishery. It costs several million dollars to procure the necessary permits and build a vessel capable of participating in this fishery. The new Super 58' vessels being built are far from being little boats with 800-1000 horsepower, the ability to pack up to 250,000 pounds of Pollock and costing \$2.5 - \$3 Million Dollars.

This proposal calls for 100% observer coverage in all of these new fisheries inside of state waters. This would require the state to duplicate the federal observer program and somehow interface it with that program. The process of designing, developing the regulatory structure, implementing and managing this new observer requirement would be incredibly complex, expensive and impossible to do in any reasonable time frame. While you could expect the vessels to pay for on-going observer coverage, the state would have to pay for all of the costs necessary to develop, implement and manage this program.

This proposal would not move 25% of the federal Pollock TAC inside of 3 miles because fish have tails and go where they want. This proposal would grant, to a limited number of less than 58' vessels, access to those fish that might be available inside 3 miles but it would remove access to the 35+ vessels that have historically prosecuted the Pollock fisheries. This is a direct reallocation of a fully subscribed Pollock fishery.

This proposal was submitted by an under 58' vessel with minimal history in the Gulf of Alaska and it is aimed at taking away fishing opportunities of historic participants for their own advantage.

This proposal should be eliminated!

Sincerely,



Robert L. Krueger, President
Alaska Whitefish Trawlers Association
Robert.Krueger@alaskawhitefishtrawlers.org



December 5, 2013

Alaska Board of Fisheries
 Alaska Department of Fish and Game
 P.O. Box 115526
 Juneau, AK 99811-5526

Re: Comments in Support of Proposal 45, Board of Fish 2013-14 Proposals

Dear Chairman Johnstone and Alaska Board of Fisheries Members:

The Alaska Marine Conservation Council (AMCC) is a non-profit dedicated to protecting Alaska's marine ecosystems and promoting healthy, ocean dependent communities. Our members are fishermen, subsistence harvesters, marine scientists, small business owners and families. AMCC, along with Cape Barnabus, Inc. and Ouzinkie Community Holding, Inc., submitted proposal 45 to require 100% observer coverage on groundfish trawl vessels in State waters in the Cook Inlet, Kodiak and Chignik management areas (Central Gulf of Alaska or CGOA) to provide desperately needed information on bycatch of Chinook salmon, Tanner crab and halibut in the trawl fisheries. **AMCC supports proposal 45 for the reasons outlined below.**

- I. Observer coverage which provides accurate data about bycatch in the GOA trawl fisheries is desperately needed.

Observer coverage which provides accurate information about bycatch in the trawl fisheries is long overdue. In the context of the current declines in Chinook salmon, Tanner crab and halibut in the Gulf of Alaska, this need has become more urgent than ever. The Board is well aware of the dramatic declines in Chinook salmon throughout the State. As Chinook salmon decline to levels at which escapement goals aren't even being met in some river systems, allocation battles between user groups are heating up. Accurate data on bycatch in the trawl fisheries is critical in this climate – both to understand the biological impacts and the allocative issues. Board-managed Tanner crab stocks in the Gulf of Alaska are also greatly reduced, and the Kodiak area commercial fishery is closed for the year. In addition to these State-managed species, Pacific halibut are also experiencing dramatic declines, with commensurate reductions on directed commercial and sport fisheries. At the same time, Chinook salmon, Tanner crab and halibut are caught as bycatch in the pelagic¹ and non-pelagic trawl fisheries. In this climate of low abundance for Chinook salmon, Tanner crab and halibut—all of which are foundational species for Alaska's fishing

¹ Note that while "pelagic" trawling refers to mid-water trawling, pelagic trawls also have significant contact with the seafloor. NMFS estimates that pelagic trawl contact the seafloor across some substrates for 44% of the duration of a tow. National Marine Fisheries Service, *Final Environmental Impact Statement for Essential Fish Habitat Identification and Conservation in Alaska*, Appendix B, Table B.2-4 (Apr. 2005).

communities—accurate information on the number of these species caught as bycatch in the trawl fisheries is critical in the Gulf of Alaska. The current levels of observer coverage do not ensure that bycatch is accurately estimated.

II. Observer coverage under the federal observer program is insufficient to provide accurate data.

Observer coverage in the CGOA trawl fisheries is currently provided through the federal observer program managed by the National Marine Fisheries Service (NMFS) under the advice of the North Pacific Fishery Management Council (the Council). This observer program was recently restructured, and the new program went into place in 2013. Accurate bycatch accounting in the Gulf of Alaska trawl fisheries was a driving force behind the need for a restructured observer program. In practice, however, coverage on the over 57.5 foot trawl fleet (the majority of the CGOA trawl fleet is over 57.5 feet) was 17-18% in the first part of 2013 (slightly higher than the goal of 14-15%).² These results are severely disappointing, as the promise of the restructured federal observer program was that the low bycatch coverage on the trawl fleet would be addressed. While the new program has spread observer coverage to other previously unobserved vessels and fleets, and eliminated some source of bias by removing the decision about when to carry observers from the individual vessel, in terms of observer coverage on the trawl fleet the coverage is still problematically low.

While the restructured program will eliminate the bias associated with picking when to carry an observer, the low coverage rate still allows for a significant ability to fish differently with an observer on board. Logically, the higher the observer coverage rate, the less ability to create non-representative samples by fishing differently with an observer on board, because proportionally more of the catch will be harvested when an observer is present. In other fisheries in which Chinook salmon bycatch is a concern, such as the Bering Sea pollock fishery, NMFS and the Council determined that a minimum of 100% observer coverage was required. Ironically, this point is further enforced by another fishery in the Bering Sea: the trawl catcher vessel cod fleet in the Bering Sea, which under the restructured program is in the partial coverage category, had a special contractual agreement with NMFS in 2013 which allowed that fleet to carry 100% observer coverage voluntarily. This is because the data generated under the partial coverage category is not accurate enough for their co-op management, which requires accurate accounting of bycatch at the individual vessel level.

² National Marine Fisheries Service, Letter to North Pacific Fishery Management Council, Table B-1 (Sept. 27, 2013), available at http://alaskafisheries.noaa.gov/npfmc/PDFdocuments/conservation_issues/Observer/NMFSletter913.pdf. See also National Marine Fisheries Service, Letter to North Pacific Fishery Management Council (Nov. 30, 2013), available at http://alaskafisheries.noaa.gov/npfmc/PDFdocuments/conservation_issues/Observer/ADPletter1212.pdf.

Observer coverage under the federal observer program at the present rate is not sufficient to provide a full and accurate assessment of the amount or impacts of bycatch of critical species. As the Board deals with addressing chronically low Chinook salmon returns throughout the State, a full and accurate accounting of bycatch is critical to the Board's responsibility for sustainable management of Alaska's fisheries.

III. The Board of Fish has the authority and the ability to get accurate data on bycatch by requiring 100% observer coverage in State waters.

While change within the federal observer program to increase observer coverage is unlikely at this time, the Alaska Board of Fisheries has the ability to require 100% coverage in State waters now. A significant portion of the pollock harvest occurs in State waters. On average, 2003-2012, 33% of the allowable biological catch (ABC) was caught in the parallel fisheries in area 630 and 19% in area 620. While the percentages are highly variable, in some years, almost half of the pollock harvest took place in the parallel fisheries in area 630: in 2005, 49%, in 2006, 47% and in 2009, 46% of the pollock harvest occurred in the parallel fisheries.³

With a significant portion of the harvest occurring in State waters in some years, requiring 100% observer coverage in State waters could dramatically increase the amount of coverage, and the amount of data available. While having better observer data on a portion of the harvest would be an improvement, additional coverage in State waters is particularly relevant. Since State waters represent the nearshore environment, improved data on bycatch, particularly of Chinook salmon, is critical. With better observer coverage in State waters, communities dependent upon healthy Chinook stocks for commercial and subsistence such as Old Harbor, Ouzinkie and Kodiak will have a more comprehensive understanding of the levels and impacts of Chinook salmon bycatch occurring literally outside their front doors.

Requiring 100% observer coverage in State waters would provide the greatest benefit in terms of estimates of Chinook salmon bycatch, since the vast majority of trawl harvests inside three miles consists of pollock. This would provide much better information about the level of Chinook salmon bycatch occurring in State waters. In this current climate of Chinook salmon declines, the Board of Fish needs accurate information about removals and impacts from bycatch on Alaska's Chinook salmon stocks. While additional information is needed from other Gulf of Alaska trawl fisheries as well, improved coverage in State waters would be an important starting point. While the Board can only recommend changes to observer coverage in federal waters, the Board has the authority to require observer coverage in State waters. It's critical that the Board use this authority to allow the State to lead in setting the bar for what level of observer coverage is required by mandating 100% coverage in State waters.

³ Alaska Department of Fish and Game, *Staff Comments on Chignik Finfish Regulatory Proposals, Alaska Board of Fisheries Meeting, Anchorage Alaska, Dec. 5-6, Regional Information Report 4K13-12, at 23.*

IV. Action to require 100% observer coverage in State waters should not wait for the development of a catch share/comprehensive trawl bycatch management program.

The Council is currently in the process of developing a comprehensive trawl bycatch management program for the GOA trawl fleet. Progress thus far indicates that the program is likely to take the form of a catch share or rationalization program. One hundred percent observer coverage has been included in the initial design of the new program.⁴ While this program may ultimately be the vehicle for requiring 100% observer coverage in all GOA trawl fisheries, the timeline or ultimate success of the program is uncertain.

Attempts to develop this type of program have been ongoing for the past decade and the last attempt, called "Gulf Rationalization" was put on hold in 2006 in response to strong community outrage to giving away a public resource and concerns about specific design features of the program. Given this experience, and the combined experience of Alaska communities impacted negatively by past catch share programs, a catch share program for the GOA could take a while. While there is a higher degree of support for examining a catch share program this time around, that support is highly contingent on program design. AMCC supports development of a new management program which provides the trawl fleet with additional tools to reduce bycatch. However, a catch share program which repeats the mistakes of past programs by privatizing the resource and impacts communities negatively will be met by AMCC and others with strong opposition.

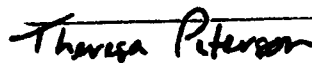
We do encourage the Board of Fish to work cooperatively with the Council and other stakeholders in the development of the new management program. However, to fulfill the Board's immediate management needs for better data on Chinook salmon bycatch, the 100% observer coverage requirement should not be pursued only through a catch share program. We urge the Board to move forward expeditiously to require 100% observer coverage in trawl fisheries in State waters in the Cook Inlet, Kodiak and Chignik management areas by adopting proposal 45.

Thank you for your consideration of our comments and your continued dedication to managing Alaska's bountiful fisheries.

Sincerely,



Becca Robbins Gisclair
Sr. Fisheries Policy Advisor



Theresa Peterson
Kodiak Outreach Coordinator

⁴ North Pacific Fishery Management Council, Motion C-5(a) GOA Trawl Bycatch Management (Oct. 5, 2013), available at: <http://alaskafisheries.noaa.gov/npfmc/PDFdocuments/bycatch/GOAtrawlDesignMotion1013.pdf>.