

Alaska Board of Fisheries Pollock Workgroup Meeting
 October 6, 2014
 Agenda Item 4 -- Update on 2014 GOA Pollock Season
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Fishery update on Western and Central GOA pollock fishery

The Central GOA pollock fisheries are likely to be fully harvested in 2014. The Western GOA pollock fishery will not be fully harvested in 2014 consistent with recent harvest patterns (see Table 1). Western GOA fishermen report that recently pollock have not been aggregating in the same patterns, and that the catch is comprised of a higher proportion of small and unmarketable fish. These factors limit the ability for fishermen to target pollock, particularly later during the year when higher catch rates are needed; the pollock value decreases after spring because the pollock have spawned and fish do not contain high value roe. The cause of these shifting aggregation patterns is unclear and could be due to a range of oceanographic factors. In addition, during 2014 some fishermen in the Western GOA reduced pollock harvests in later in the fall to avoid bycatch of Chinook salmon, and increased pollock harvests in the Central GOA Area 620 fishery (adjacent to the Western GOA) because of the higher catch rates and lower Chinook bycatch rates there. These additional factors further reduced pollock harvest in the Western GOA.

Table 1: Recent Quotas and Harvests in the Western and Central GOA Pollock fisheries (amounts in metric tons)

Western GOA – Area 610			
Year	Quota	Harvest	% Harvested
2014	36,070	11,540	32%
2013	24,676	7,711	31%
2012	30,270	27,893	92%
2011	27,031	20,594	76%
Central GOA – Area 620			
Year	Quota	Harvest	% Harvested
2014	81,784	68,550	84%
2013	52,963	53,112	100%
2012	45,808	45,095	98%
2011	37,365	37,223	100%
Central GOA – Area 630			
Year	Quota	Harvest	% Harvested
2014	39,756	26,643	67%
2013	29,248	29,888	102%
2012	26,348	25,987	99%
2011	20,235	19,704	97%

Notes: Data from NMFS Annual Catch Reports. 2014 harvest data are through September 27, 2014. Additional harvest will occur during October. The GOA pollock fishery closes by regulation on November 1, 2014.

Differences Between Western and Central GOA pollock fisheries

Overall management between the Western and Central GOA pollock fisheries is effectively the same. Although harvest rates, harvest patterns, and the specific participants in the fishery may differ, the management measures used by NMFS and the State of Alaska to ensure the fisheries maintain catch within specified limits are the same (see Parallel Pollock Fishery Management Overview for a general description of management). As has been noted earlier, a larger proportion of the pollock harvested in the Western GOA compared to the Central GOA comes from State waters in the parallel fishery (see the updated data from 2009- 2013 for more detail). This does not affect the specific management measures used in the pollock fishery.

One significant improvement in the monitoring of the Western GOA pollock fishery is the implementation of the restructured observer program in 2013. This program expands observer coverage to the trawl fleet in the Western GOA. Prior to 2013, this fleet was largely unobserved because most vessels participating in the Western GOA were less than 60 feet in length and were not required to carry observers under the previous regulations. These smaller trawl vessels are now required to carry observers on a random basis. This information improves our ability to monitor and manage the catch and discard of bycatch species such as salmon and halibut.

Since 2012, NMFS has been managing the pollock fisheries in the Western and Central GOA with an annual Chinook salmon bycatch cap of 25,000 salmon. Overall, the pollock fleets have maintained Chinook salmon bycatch below the cap, averaging approximately 16,000 salmon in 2012 and 2013. Complete Chinook salmon bycatch in the 2014 pollock fishery will not be available until after October, but total Chinook salmon bycatch is likely to be less than the average in 2012 and 2013. Recently completed genetic analysis of the Chinook salmon bycatch in the pollock fishery in 2012 indicates that 96.6% of the Chinook salmon bycatch is from stocks originating in three regions, British Columbia contributed the most (41%), followed by Coastal Southeast Alaska (33%) and the West Coast U.S. (23%). Very small amounts of Chinook salmon bycatch originated from stocks in Southcentral or Western Alaska (for additional information see the following document <https://npsmc.legistar.com/gateway.aspx?M=F&ID=9c19d4cc-05ae-408f-9743-2cacd4f81f71.pdf>).