Alaska Bycatch Advisory Council March 3, 2025

#### Summary of Commissioner's Order Establishing the Alaska Bycatch Advisory Council

Bycatch is defined as fish which are harvested in a fishery but are not sold or kept. Simply put, bycatch occurs when fishermen unintentionally catch fish, or other marine species they do not want, cannot sell, or are not allowed to keep.

The Bycatch Advisory Council will advise ADF&G on ways to implement the recommendations contained in the final report of the Alaska Bycatch Review Task Force.

# Alaska Bycatch Review Task Force Recommendations

MISS SA

Management - Research – State Engagement

https://www.adfg.alaska.gov/static/fishing/PDFs/bycatchtaskforce/abrt\_final\_report.pdf

# Activities of Bycatch Advisory Council

- > Five virtual meetings held in 2023, including organizational activity.
- ➤ Three virtual meetings held in 2024.
- Town hall meetings with ADF&G Commissioner were held in Kodiak and Homer, along with numerous other meetings with organizations.
- > Bycatch utilization subcommittee formed and report completed.
- Progress reports on ABRT recommendations issued annually.

https://www.adfg.alaska.gov/index.cfm?adfg=bycatchtaskforce.meetinginfo

# Focus of Bycatch Advisory Council

#### 2023 Review of ABRT recommendations and developed progress reports

- 2024 Identified priorities for management and research recommendations
- 2025 State engagement recommendations

## **Bycatch Advisory Council** Management Priority Recommendations

- Continue work at the NPFMC toward finding solutions for Gulf of Alaska Tanner crab protections.
- Electronic Monitoring is an important tool for state-managed fisheries. The BAC supports efforts to create and pass legislation providing for EM authority.
- Consider development of Abundance Based Management for halibut in the Gulf of Alaska. This action would assist in making bycatch regulations between the Bering Sea and Gulf of Alaska more consistent.
- Rationalization for the Gulf of Alaska trawl fisheries is recommended in order to more fully manage and control bycatch of prohibited species.

### **Bycatch Advisory Council** Bycatch Utilization Subcommittee

<u>ABRT Management Recommendation</u>: *Take incremental measures through the regulatory process to improve bycatch utilization.* 

The Bycatch Utilization Subcommittee was formed to address the challenges facing increased bycatch utilization. The subcommittee met virtually four times and public testimony was taken at each meeting. Attendance ranged from 15-50 individuals.

Presentations were given by Jim Harmon with SeaShare, Deputy Commissioner Rachel Baker and Chelsae Radell with Alaska Groundfish Data Bank.

https://www.adfg.alaska.gov/static/fishing/PDFs/bycatchtaskforce/041624\_abac\_report.pdf

## **Bycatch Advisory Council** Bycatch Utilization Subcommittee

#### <u>Challenges identified for bycatch utilization</u> <u>of salmon, halibut and crab</u>

Public comment was predominately opposed to bycatch utilization.

- Minimize bycatch before moving forward with utilization.
- Need to develop infrastructure and create individual accounting.
- Processor capacity poses challenges.
- Concerns about incentivizing bycatch.

Report detailed challenges that would need to be addressed, including regulatory, economic, logistical, and political issues.

https://www.adfg.alaska.gov/static/fishing/PDFs/bycatchtaskforce/041624\_abac\_report.pdf

#### Alaska Bycatch Review Task Force General Research Recommendations

- Develop state bycatch research priorities, utilizing input from communities, Alaska Native tribes, industry, and the public, to share with funding entities that would help identify and acquire research funds.
- Implement strategies to encourage and facilitate industry/agency cooperative research to reduce bycatch and associated mortality.
- Create methods for collaboration with Alaska Native tribes, organizations and other research entities to better track proposed or funded bycatch research, along with developing opportunities for cooperative projects and combined reporting of findings.

## Bycatch Advisory Council Research Ideas

- Continue the emphasis and focus on salmon genetics and work toward real-time reporting of salmon origins for the Bering Sea pollock fishery.
- Track bycatch research by various organizations and provide information to the public.
- Find ways to use cultural/historical knowledge to inform bycatch discussions and regulatory action.
- An annual virtual meeting focused on research with various presenters could help provide information to the public and other organizations.





# Bycatch Advisory Council Focus for 2025

### **State Engagement**

- Review recommendations from the Alaska Bycatch Review Task Force.
- Recommend priorities and ways to achieve goals.

# Alaska Bycatch Review Task Force State Engagement Recommendations

- 1. The State of Alaska should establish a process for providing bycatch-related information and resources for Alaskans in a format that is understandable and easily accessible.
- 2. State of Alaska federal fisheries staff should continue to offer the public an opportunity to provide input on NPFMC issues before each NPFMC meeting.
- 3. State should support legislative action to remove sunset of the Education Tax Credit Program.

# Alaska Bycatch Review Task Force State Engagement Recommendations

- 4. State of Alaska should work with other entities, including the State Department, to request that the State Department, through bilateral and multilateral diplomatic channels with Russia, request information on the bycatch of Chinook salmon and chum salmon taken in Russian domestic fisheries.
- 5. Using the Alaska Bycatch Review Task Force as a template, the state should establish a permanent bycatch advisory entity.
- 6. It is recommended that the State of Alaska work with the Alaska Board of Fisheries, stakeholders and a bycatch advisory entity to develop a State of Alaska Bycatch Policy.

### **Alaska Bycatch Review Task Force Summary of state engagement recommendations**

#### Three general research recommendations involve state engagement:

- 1. Collaborate to develop state bycatch research priorities.
- 2. Encourage and facilitate industry/agency cooperative research to reduce bycatch and associated mortality.
- 3. Create methods to better track proposed or funded bycatch research.

#### Six state engagement recommendations:

- 1. Provide bycatch-related information to the public (in progress).
- 2. State of Alaska pre-Council (NPFMC) meetings with public (occurring).
- 3. Education tax credit legislation (completed).
- 4. Creation of Bycatch Advisory Council (completed).
- 5. Development of a State of Alaska bycatch policy (not in progress).
- 6. Work to obtain information on bycatch in Russian waters (in progress).