



Alaska Bycatch Review Task Force (ABRT) GOA Salmon and Halibut Subcommittee August 31 9:00 a.m. (AST) Meeting Minutes

Virtual (Zoom) meeting at:

<https://us06web.zoom.us/j/85925839452?pwd=U1VxbUxyWnNRNmdvU1BuNElGeFMrZz09>

Committee members: Brian Gabriel, Kevin Delaney, Mike Flores, Raymond May, Duncan Fields, Linda Kozak

1. Call to order at 9:00 a.m Alaska Bycatch Review Task Force (ABRT) Gulf of Alaska halibut and salmon committee meeting called to order at 9:00 AM by Chair Brian Gabriel
2. Roll call of committee and ABRT members
 - Committee members present: Brian Gabriel (Chair), Duncan Fields, Mike Flores, Raymond May, Linda Kozak
 - ABRT Members present: Tommy Sheridan, Stephanie Madsen
3. Approve agenda: August 31, 2022, Approved
4. Approve minutes: May 24, 2022, and August 23, 2022, Approved
5. Old business: Research Recommendations
 - Chair Gabriel reviewed the final document of research recommendations final document available on the ABRT site. Chair Gabriel responded to Member Fields that this is meaning trawl effects of Habitat areas. Chair Gabriel noted that this is what is going to the STI committee so might be best reworded there. Chair Gabriel also agrees that more is better and putting forth both committee, industry, public, and department recommendations so that nuances are not missed and can be brought together with other committee recommendations. *Department recommendations will be forwarded as an addendum to the committee research recommendations to the STI committee.*
 - Member Field wanted clarification on the recommendation under Halibut “habitat studies of fish and effects” might be better captured with possible better wording. Wants it to be reworded to continued or enhanced studies regarding fishing gear impacts on species/halibut habitat. Wants to focus on impacts of fishing gear on halibut habitat. *Amendment made and noted on final document to STI committee.* Does not want all Department recommendations to be subsumed as committee recommendations. The reason

the Task Force was formed outside the Department should be respected as it has the ability to provide input that the department is not able to provide. Department Should also better prioritize recommendations Member Fields requests that the department format a bit better instead of providing information along with additional recommendations it should be cleaned up and phrased better. Committee needs to be more assertive in recognizing what is already being done and what needs to continue vs. what would be new research.

- Member Madsen responded to request for wording change to fishing modeling effects is not sure if Halibut is a FMP species for effects on habitat.
- Member Kozak noted that the earlier recommendations in the document were committee recommendations whereas what is being currently discussed are public/industry recommendations not necessarily what this committee is putting forth as its recommendations. Notes that the crab committee had a robust discussion regarding habitat research and if that is related closely enough to bycatch to be considered. Appreciates Member Fields comments but sees items A and B from the Department more informative regarding stock information and C has more of a relation to bycatch research. Thinks Departments recommendations are very important just as industry recommendations considered by the committees are important. There is information in the Departments recommendations that should be considered. Feels this should be sent to STI committee so that the recommendations across species and gear type can be more easily aggregated to prevent overlap. They need to be forwarded so they can become part of the discussion at the Full Task Force meeting. Should be attached but not integrated with committee recommendations.
- ADF&G Staff Bush provided an overview of Department recommendations as an addendum to the committee recommendations.
- ABRT Member Sheridan appreciated Member Fields input and looks forward to future discussions on these issues.
- Senator Micciche would rather reduce the risk of missing something important by forwarding more than is needed so that it can be further discussed. There is nothing in the recommendations that are excessive and are all worthy of being processed by the STI committee and the full task force. It is important to the public that they can see how these recommendations are being organized/prioritized/processed to make the best recommendations possible.

6. New business: Management and State engagement recommendations

- PUBLIC COMMENT ON Preliminary management recommendations
 - Julie Bonney: In looking at the management recommendations there is a whole range of things some of the things are reinventing the wheel and some are very elementary. Thinks some are management based but some are more educational for the public rather than actual management recommendations. Supports trawl rationalization in the GOA as the most likely way to reduce bycatch and encourage its continued reduction. Observer coverage issues are being worked on. Member Kozak thanked Julie Bonney for her comments and wanted to clarify that Bonney's top priority would be to recommend rationalization and asked if there was a second one. Bonney responded no it is only rationalization because when rationalization occurs almost everything on the list could be addressed in the rationalization plan.
- *Gulf of Alaska Chinook Management Recommendations*

1. *Recommendation of consideration of rationalization type management tools as a means of possibly reducing and managing salmon and halibut bycatch.* Approved to move on by the Committee no objections.
 - Chair Gabriel Opened up discussion with notes on how these recommendations will be moved around and addressed in the process. Notes regarding observer that vessel owners' association requested an amendment so observers could be hired directly as a cost saving measure. Agrees with this recommendation when you look at the AO this recommendation makes a lot of sense in a way to reduce bycatch of high value species. The trawl fleet is very high profile and lack of 100% observer coverage in GOA tends to lead to more discourse on what their actual bycatch might be. A rationalization type tool could make this a more transparent issue and allow the fleet to reduce bycatch and work together. Did not like the idea of IFQs but after it having happened did notice how it stabilized the fishery.
 - Member Kozak wants to address the rationalization issue first thinks that some of the issues could better be addressed through rationalization. Crab committee adopted GOA trawl rationalization as a main tool to manage bycatch. Remarked that observer program is funded through assessment it is not paid for by individual vessels other than catcher processors. There is a committee for both observer and partial observer with NPFMC that addresses issues with these programs, and they are currently working to assess these costs and bring them down. Member Kozak asked Member Fields that if they are looking at the rationalization to mitigate bycatch and dead loss that an ABM could allow for some changes following the initial rationalization plan? Not suggesting the committee endorse a particular plan/rationalization program, but simply acknowledge that it has been/can be used to manage bycatch. There is resistance to any bycatch modification with or without rationalization, just wants to acknowledge it is a tool to manage bycatch. Agrees with Member May if you design a rationalization program incorrectly that it does cause economic loss to local communities. Opposed IFQs to sablefish and halibut but since that has happened there have been many benefits to slowing down the fishery and how it has improved quality and reduced bycatch. It can be used as a very effective tool at reducing and managing bycatch if the program is created around those goals.
 - Member Fields responded regarding rationalization you only get one opportunity at the outset to reduce bycatch by rationalization and that is when you create the rationalization plan it does not necessarily reduce bycatch by way of existing. Rationalization however does allow the fleet to more efficiently manage the bycatch that they have. Believes this recommendation is really a way to allow the fleet to manage their bycatch in the most economical way to the fleet. Believes in some ways that monetizing bycatch is of more value. Responded to member Flores that yes you can require observer coverage/EM through regulatory measures funding is another issue 100% observer coverage is prohibitively expensive for the GOA fleet. Unless this cost is addressed there is no way for 100% coverage...maybe rolling coverage would be the answer to this. Does not believe necessarily that the cost of the program in the Bering Sea might not be realized in the GOA. Member Fields made a motion that this committee make a recommendation of consideration of rationalization type management tools as a means of possibly reducing and managing salmon and halibut bycatch. Hopes that

from a bycatch lens we see a rationalization type program that produces a management system to help reduce bycatch.

- Member Flores asked a question of Member Fields is there a way to get to observer coverage and electronic monitoring if we do not rationalize the GOA? Responded that if observer coverage is several thousands of dollars a day that this could be very burdensome to the GOA fleet to impose this requirement.
- Member May agrees with many of the things on the management recommendation list. Things he supports most is observer coverage in GOA vs. camera data (electronic monitoring EM) as enforcement is using the recordings to write tickets multiple years after recording is made. Has addressed this issue with NOAA as it makes people less likely to use cameras to observe. Also really supports slowing down the speed at which trawls are done and notes it is something the fleet has not tried. It will save fuel but make them slightly less efficient at catching target species. Responded to Chair Gabriel regarding thoughts on rationalization: that rationalization will help industry reduce bycatch but it will also cause issues for communities down the road will cause them to shrink and make them harder to keep alive.

2. *Committee recommends a regulatory requirement that the GOA pelagic trawl fleet including any tenders of pelagic trawl caught fish have 100% electronic monitoring. The Committee further recommends SOA work with NMFS, our federal delegation, and others to work to acquire funding to install EM equipment on all GOA catchers and tenders.* Approved to move on by the Committee no objections

- Member Kozak requests that a discussion on Observer coverage should be had next given that many of these recommendations are for both species. Discussed what the crab committee agreed upon regarding observer coverage. Recommendation was 100% coverage with full retention and monitoring during offload. Full retention was sent forth as management/research. It only centered on no-pelagic trawl and only in 2 areas. Member Kozak finds the observer coverage issue difficult the perception of the public is that the partially observed fleet in the GOA is not capturing the full picture of what the bycatch in the GOA is. That perception is so strong that it becomes a belief regardless of data for some people. Hopes that the committee can recommend something to ground truth the picture of what is being taken as bycatch and what the dead loss is. Right now, there is so much belief warranted or not that the Trawlers are behaving differently with observer coverage vs. when unobserved. This is a big issue in Kodiak and around the state. Thinks it is very vital we get factual information on bycatch so that the public can be better informed due to the great amount of public concern. Observer coverage would be a way to dissuade this perceived issue. IPHC asked what information is lacking and bycatch taken unobserved was one of the main things mentioned. Feels that extraordinary effort is needed here to help the public see what is going on and believe the information provided to them. Agrees with member Madsen on how the committee should go about this given it is a final report to the Governor of Alaska. Notes that the partial coverage fleet has been under this cloud for several years and it is not an issue for the 100% observer coverage fleet. This is a very big concern valid or not and a top issue to be addressed under many candidates for elected office. Supports this motion on behalf of the need for the public to know this information. Suggests continuing of Discussion of observer program to Halibut.

- Chair Gabriel Does not have any objection to discussing observer coverage next. Agrees with Member Fields monitoring coverage vs. retention question and requests any member of the public with this knowledge to provide it to the committee. Agrees with member Kozak on public perception of observer coverage and whether it is warranted or not agrees that the public will not be convinced unless there is 100% coverage to provide that hard real data to address this perception.
 - Member Fields Noted there is 100% retention and a fair amount of electronic ow will observers help us relative to current salmon bycatch assessment is there is no longer plant inspection relative to deliveries so there is no longer truth testing on shore relative to the observer program. Asked is the current pollock fleet with 100% retention 100% EM or is there a gap? If there is a Gap in that retention vs. monitoring wants committee to recommend closing that gap to be 100% and 100%. Bonney there are on shore observers and the fleet is operating under an exempted fisheries permit, and that 60% electronic monitoring is what is being used due to lack of funding. In 2024 there would be additional funding to put more cameras on vessels. This is full retention no discards unless some other unforeseen issue such as a shark in the net occurs. There is a sampling of 30% of the offloads in a random selection. Also included is the ability to use electronic monitoring on tenders. There is a chain of custody EM on the catcher, EM on the Tender and EM at the point of offload. Member Fields will work on language but in the context of better salmon bycatch reduction 100% monitoring is a reasonable suggestion to make. Made a motion to the committee recommends a regulatory requirement that the GOA pelagic trawl fleet including any tenders have 100% electronic monitoring. The Committee further recommends SOA and NMFS work to acquire funding to install EM equipment on all GOA catchers and tenders and process data timely.
 - Member Flores agrees with Member Kozak and Chair Gabriel on observer coverage the public is looking for transparency here and 100% coverage may change public opinion on the trawl fleet so that they can see what is going on with bycatch.
 - Member May asked what does 200% observer coverage vs. 100%? Bonney responded that on catcher processors there is the ability to work a 12-hour shift. So, 200% means 1 observer covering first 12 hours and a 2nd observer covering the other 12-hours. For those not using a 24hour shift workday 100% coverage is what is used for a one 12-hour shift.
 - Member Madsen notes these recommendations go to the Governor and not the Federal Government/NPFMC/Agency. Just wants the language to be clear that they are not reaching outside of their original task. Going on perception issue and notes that trawl is pretty low on the list for observer coverage, wants these recommendations in valid already provided information. The annual report covers more than trawl and that should be considered.
3. ****PLACE HOLDER***Recommendation that any rationalization initiative consider methods and means (gear modification/Trawl speeds) as a way to reduce bycatch.....will be further discussed at next meeting.*
- Chair Gabriel Approves of further discussion of Chinook management recommendations vs. moving on to Halibut observer discussion at this time. Does

not think discussion of CI EEZ is germane to this discussion in this GOA discussion. This EEZ was closed by the NPFMC. Feels that speed as well as modification is something that could be considered together. Follows up that when we look at fisheries management in SOA waters, we are looking for more of a reduction in intercept which are not necessarily considered bycatch. Brings it back to addressing list of Chinook bycatch. Asks if there is an inclination to combine speeds and gear types to a general method and means type statement.

- Member Kozak Requests to shift discussion to Halibut observer program discussion. Does not believe salmon intercept is under the purview of this Task Force to make any recommendations in that vein, it is the job of the Task Force to speak to bycatch not intercept. Feels Trawl speed and use of gear modifications would be the most substantial things to recommend. Any of these disparate gear groups could benefit from a look at the regulations regarding gear that could assist in addressing bycatch reduction. Wants to include addressing gear modification/conversions as a recommendation to management. Wants to work shop this a bit to make this a little more inclusive of a suggestion. Wants to put a placeholder on trawl speeds and gear modification for further discussion at next meeting due to how encompassing gear modification can be and should not be limited to the Trawl fishery. Should possibly be looked at as a more all encompassing regardless of gear type kind of statement.
- Member Fields Requests that the focus not be shifted to observer programs in Halibut would like to circle back to have other non-trawl Chinook bycatch discussion. Wants to make Federal waters of Cook Inlet to have appropriate management measures/constraints to protect Chinook Salmon. EEZ should not be closed and due to recent court case will require some form of management to occur there. Relevant consideration to development of FMP was SOA concern over chinook bycatch in this area. This has not been addressed and feels it should not be forgotten. Agrees his is outside the purview of this group. Responded that there are many management plans in place relevant to perceived CI fish caught in Kodiak area. Responded that this is only for salmon directed fisheries not Trawl gear. Would support any rationalization initiative to include gear modification as a bycatch reduction tool.
- Member Flores notes the Kenai is not listed as a river of concern despite for the 3-4 year in a row it is closed to Chinook fishing. Is not sure how this would be tied into bycatch as there are no studies to prove this. Asked if an EFH for Kodiak area would be better to protect those Chinook bound for Kenai that might be intercepted. Asked if restrictions in Kodiak area are just for setnet or seiners or is it for other gear.
- *Gulf of Alaska Halibut Management Recommendations*
 1. *Committee recommends for a period of 3 years 100% observer coverage on non-pelagic trawl fleet for GOA is required.* Approved to move on by the Committee no objections
 - Member Kozak would like to continue observer program discussion on no-pelagic trawl and fixed gear in the GOA and looking at an ABM program regarding halibut before adjournment occurs. When speaking about observer coverage issues, we are talking about fixed gear as well as trawl. Does not want to close trawl fishery is hoping that 3 years of 100% coverage would illuminate what is being taken as bycatch by the GOA trawl fleet. Would entertain a loosening of the caps during this

time so the fleet does not get shut down due to one bad actor. Further clarified need for time limit to Member Flores as this is just to truth test what is already being reported. Is not trying to pick on non-pelagic fleet but just noted that this is an issue with the IPHC and is noted this is where data is lacking. Thinks this will provide the public, IPHC, and managers with assurance that what their being told is accurate.

- Chair Gabriel moves the discussion on to Halibut discussion.
 - Member Flores asked for clarification on time period in recommended motion for observer coverage.
 - Member Fields Wants to focus on what reduces bycatch and supports motion for coverage and how that would provide more information on bycatch. Would like to include other fleets to also have observer coverage during this same time period, for truth testing current estimates of bycatch.
2. **** *Tabled to next meeting***** *Committee recommends the SOA incrementally implement management changes that would require 100% retention of dead bycatch.*
Motion withdrawn and not voted on.

- Member Fields recommends motion for bycatch utilization, responds that Member Kozak and Madsen are correct that the SOA cannot implement the 100% dead bycatch retention. Notes that incrementally is the key here and that this would increase value. There are a lot of regulatory discards and in other context there are discards of otherwise marketable fish and this is an economic issue. Knows this discussion is hard to have but it needs to be had and that this is the kind of big policy decisions the Governor would be looking for from this Task Force.
- Member Kozak requests member Fields further clarify what motion for 100% bycatch retention means. Notes that SOA cannot implement this action unless it is only in SOA waters. Does not fully understand the motion and is not sure how to proceed. Notes regarding retention of dead bycatch is hard to determine as some “dead” halibut actually survive so how would this be determined. Difficult to grasp how this would work in real life and what the benefit would be. Requests the bycatch retention motion be moved to the SOA engagement section. As this could be a better place to have this conversation and maybe a slight modification of the statement could move this into a more State engagement realm.
- Member Flores Wants to table retention recommendation and agrees with Member May that it has merit but warrants further discussion.
- Member Madsen notes as identified by Member Madsen SOA cannot implement regulatory changes in non-state waters. Feels the 100% dead bycatch retention would require a lot of changes to the regulatory process and would be very complex as the State would need to take this to the NPFMC. Wants to know why this would be brought forth by this committee.
- Chair Gabriel Clarifies that a second is needed to further the discussion on the motion. Does feel the 100% dead bycatch retention needs to be tied into bycatch reduction to be a recommendation by this committee. Does understand where Member Fields is going with the retention of dead bycatch but does not think this will reduce bycatch as total removals reduces bycatch.
- Member May wants to further discussion so seconds it despite concerns. Regarding the retention statement wants to table it while it seems morally correct it requires

more thinking by committee members. There might be ways around the rules if they work together.

3. *Recommend SOA to consider support of development of ABM program for Halibut bycatch in the GOA.* Approved to move on by the Committee no objections

- Member Kozak makes motion recognizes priorities of SOA and NPFMC and that is why considering an ABM could be an important tool for management, but this is not the highest priority of this committee. This could also be in conjunction with a rationalization program. Does not recall further recommendations and is not prepared to make any motions on final 2 recommendations.
- Member Fields agrees with motion we have discussed this. Responds to Member May as to why. Responded to this issue that he thought essential habitat and near shore depletion was moved on to STI committee this morning with research recommendations.
- Chair Gabriel Requests committee moves on to discuss ABM for halibut. Requests discussion on other management recommendations such as hard caps and asks for discussion on essential fish habitat and near shore depletion. Struggling with how the final 2 recommendations would have any effect on bycatch and they are management tools that can already be used.
- Member May asks if these are already being utilized for salmon in GOA? Such as hard caps on salmon in other areas. Bonney responds that yes; it is an incentive for saving so if you can save some in one fishery it is moved to another. Asks what is supposed to occur with near shore depletion and essential habitat.

● *State Engagement Recommendations*

1. *Motion to table this discussion to next meeting. Motion passes without objection.*

- Member Fields requests moving this to next meeting and moving on to public comment
- Member May requests to address state engagement now rather than kicking it down the road.
- Member Kozak concurs with Member Fields and that some discussion could be had but state engagement recommendations could be a bit more concurrent across committees. Important to figure out if the State can better engage with the public and other agencies regarding bycatch. A mechanism for state engagement with the public in bycatch information and policy decisions.
- Chair Gabriel concurs to have a motion to table SOA engagement discussion.

7. Public comment: three-minute (3) limit to individual comments

- Chris Woodley: Points out that bycatch reduction under rationalization is not automatic. If you want bycatch reduction as part of rationalization program these incentives and management measures need to be built into the rationalization plan. Recognizes discussion on public perception of observer coverage that even though amendment 80 fleet has 200% coverage there is still perception that data that comes out of this is still suspect from the public's point of view. So, outreach to garner public support for data from observer coverage might be necessary.
- Rebecca Skinner: Agrees with Woodley that a lot of ground has been covered which is good that the timeline seems to be being met. On the other hand, it does make it challenging that when a lot of topics and ideas come this quickly it is hard to take it all in and synthesize it. Commented that Working with Kodiak based trawlers that this

committee just focused on the GOA does not have a GOA trawl perspective represented and this is concerning that the GOA trawlers do not have a voice. On the record wants to remind the committee that the number 1 Task Force directive is to study the impact of bycatch on the fisheries. Notes that the discussion is centered around a presumed impact of bycatch on fisheries and that a lot of energy could be put into something that leads nowhere. There are a lot of public opinions and perspectives put out there and if these are taken as truth than the product of the Task Force could not be as good as it could be. Remember we are looking at the impacts bycatch has on fisheries not what is perceived on social media by the public. The Task Force could serve an important role to ground truth the information needed to debunk or prove these assertions.

8. Committee comments discussion on future meeting information requests

- Member Fields: Thanks Chair Gabriel and members for input at this meeting.
- Member Kozak: Agrees with what Skinner said and that this has been a huge education and appreciates everyone's participation. Appreciates the extra effort Member Fields that went into his attendance.
- Chair Gabriel appreciates everyone's time and attention and responds to Skinner that ground truth and filling data gaps is so important to combating misinformation and perception. Believes decisions should be made on good information and science and not on emotions.

9. Next Meeting Dates: September 7, 2022, at 9:00 am

10. Adjournment by 12:05 pm