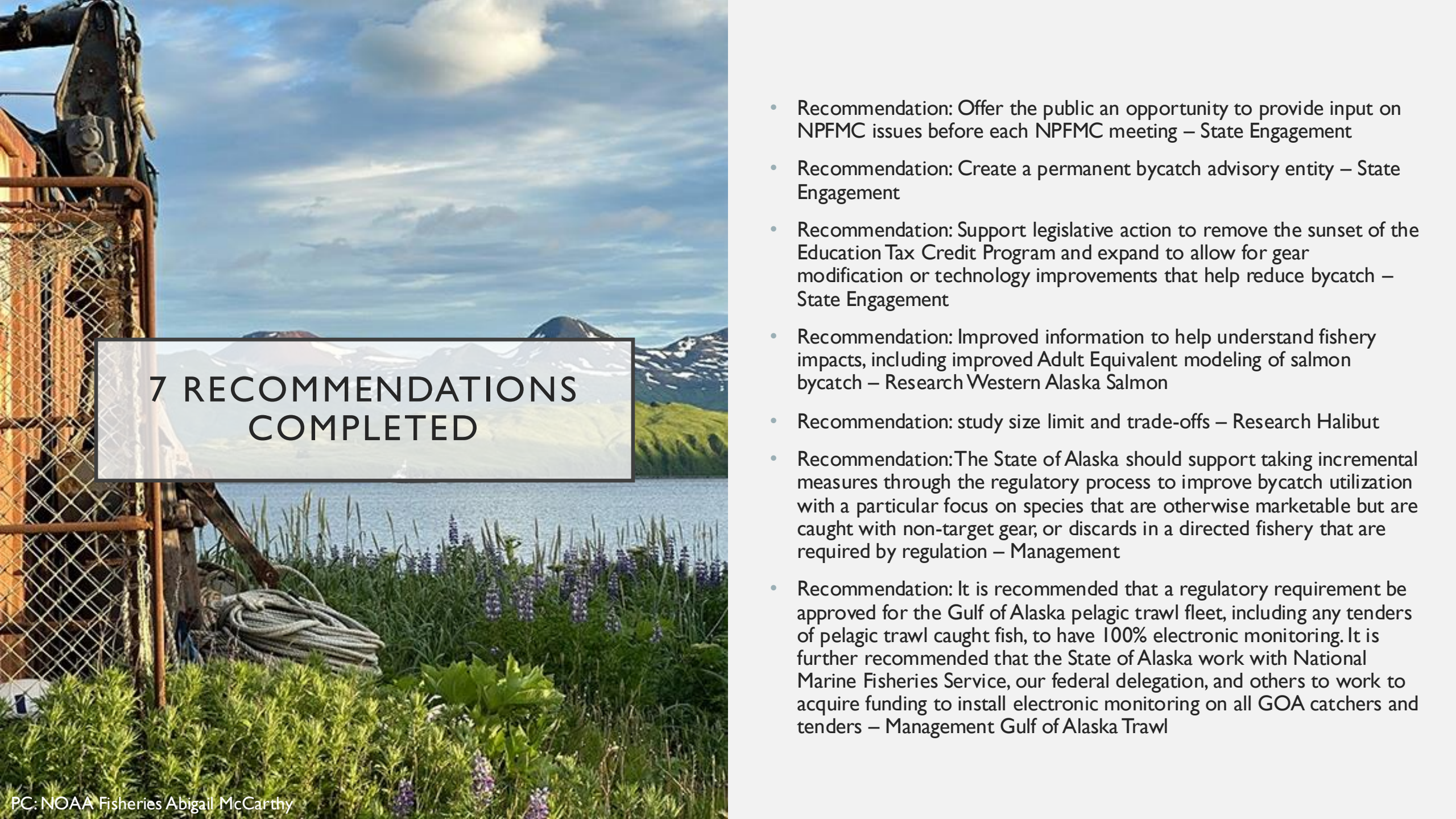


# BYCATCH ADVISORY COUNCIL

## PROGRESS REPORT

## COMMISSIONER'S ORDER I

- Defines bycatch as fish which are harvested in a fishery but are not sold or kept
- Bycatch occurs when fishermen unintentionally catch fish, or other marine species, they do not want, cannot sell, or are not allowed to keep
- Charged with advising ADF&G on ways to implement the recommendations contained in the Final Report of the Alaska Bycatch Review Task Force
- Preparing Annual Report to the Commissioner



## 7 RECOMMENDATIONS COMPLETED

- Recommendation: Offer the public an opportunity to provide input on NPFMC issues before each NPFMC meeting – State Engagement
- Recommendation: Create a permanent bycatch advisory entity – State Engagement
- Recommendation: Support legislative action to remove the sunset of the Education Tax Credit Program and expand to allow for gear modification or technology improvements that help reduce bycatch – State Engagement
- Recommendation: Improved information to help understand fishery impacts, including improved Adult Equivalent modeling of salmon bycatch – Research Western Alaska Salmon
- Recommendation: study size limit and trade-offs – Research Halibut
- Recommendation: The State of Alaska should support taking incremental measures through the regulatory process to improve bycatch utilization with a particular focus on species that are otherwise marketable but are caught with non-target gear, or discards in a directed fishery that are required by regulation – Management
- Recommendation: It is recommended that a regulatory requirement be approved for the Gulf of Alaska pelagic trawl fleet, including any tenders of pelagic trawl caught fish, to have 100% electronic monitoring. It is further recommended that the State of Alaska work with National Marine Fisheries Service, our federal delegation, and others to work to acquire funding to install electronic monitoring on all GOA catchers and tenders – Management Gulf of Alaska Trawl



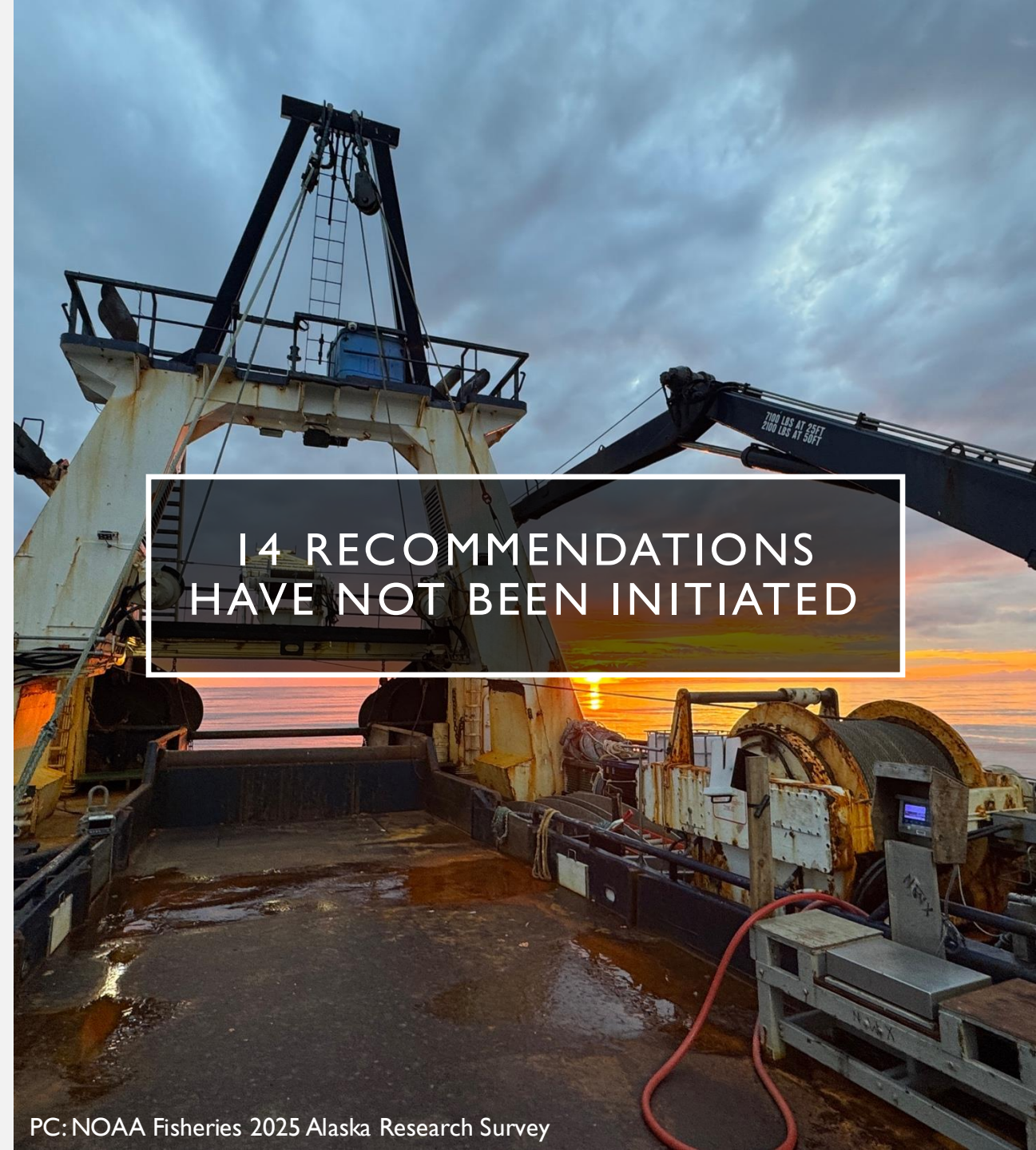
## 24 RECOMMENDATIONS INITIATED

- 3 State Engagement
- 2 General Research
- 2 Research: Salmon
- 1 Research: Western Alaska Salmon
- 2 Research: Gulf of Alaska Chinook
- 1 Research: Crab
- 5 Research: Halibut
- 1 Management: Gulf of Alaska Fixed Gear
- 2 Management: Gulf of Alaska Trawl Gear
- 2 Management: Bering Sea Fixed Gear
- 3 Management: Bering Sea Trawl Gear





- Recommendation: Improved information on marine migration patterns and its relation to fishery locations and timing – Research: Western Alaska Salmon
- Recommendation: improved information on the characteristics of fishery catches, age stock-specific age of Chinook and chum salmon caught in any marine fisheries – Research: Western Alaska Salmon
- Recommendation: Study how ocean/climate conditions impact future runs, specifically sampling immature AYK chum – Research: Western Alaska Salmon
- Recommendation: Study the role of diet, health, and disease on the survival and spawning success of Western Alaska Chinook and chum – Research: Western Alaska Salmon
- Recommendation: Continue research on critical crab habitat to better inform open and closed areas for commercial fishing activity including: tagging studies and other research to determine seasonal crab movement and distribution; work to improve understanding of preferred habitat at various life stages including mating and molting time and areas, examine VMS use in Essential Fish Habitat models and ways to improve this data – Research: Crab
- Recommendation: study impacts of fish gear types on halibut habitat – Research: Halibut
- Recommendation: Address the lack of monitoring in the directed Tanner crab and state pot cod fisheries – Management: Gulf of Alaska Fixed Gear





A photograph of a fishing boat on a sea of ice under a sunset sky. The boat is on the left, and the ice is in the foreground. The sky is orange and yellow. The text '14 RECOMMENDATIONS HAVE NOT BEEN INITIATED' is overlaid on the image.

## 14 RECOMMENDATIONS HAVE NOT BEEN INITIATED

- Recommendation: Address the lack of monitoring in the directed Tanner crab and state pot cod fisheries – Management: Gulf of Alaska Fixed Gear
- Recommendation: It is recommended the State of Alaska propose that the North Pacific Fishery Management Council consider development of an abundance-based management program for halibut bycatch in the Gulf of Alaska as a way to address bycatch during fluctuations of halibut biomass – Management: Gulf of Alaska Trawl Gear
- Recommendation: It is recommended the State of Alaska investigate the value of requiring full retention of Tanner crab in all GOA trawl fisheries for a period of time to adequately assess removals – Management: Gulf of Alaska Trawl Gear
- Recommendation: As a means of reducing and managing bycatch and associated mortality of high value species within the Gulf of Alaska, it is recommended that rationalization-type management tools be considered – Management: Gulf of Alaska Trawl Gear
- Recommendation: Evaluate the observer coverage and monitoring for the directed crab and pot cod fisheries – Management: Bering Sea Fixed Gear
- Recommendation: Examine the impact of retaining all legal crab in the directed crab fishery and counting toward IFQ – Management: Bering Sea Fixed Gear
- Recommendation: A review is recommended for the Bering Sea trawl area prohibited species caps (PSC) in relation to crab to be supported by the State of Alaska. This review would examine the impacts to the resource and trawl sector if trawl crab PSC were to be applied across the entire Bering Sea area, instead of only the current sub-areas – Management: Bering Sea Trawl Gear



FOCUS OF  
THE  
BYCATCH  
ADVISORY  
COUNCIL

- 2023 Reviewed of ABRTF recommendations, developed a progress report, created a bycatch utilization subcommittee
- 2024 Identified priorities for ABRTF management and research recommendations
- 2025 Recommended a way to achieve the three general research and six state engagement recommendations and reaffirmed the past recommendation for an annual virtual meeting focused on research with various presenters
- 2026 ?

## BYCATCH UTILIZATION SUBCOMMITTEE

- ABRT Recommendation: Take incremental measures through the regulatory process to improve bycatch utilization
- The subcommittee met four times and a full report was presented to the BAC at the April 2024 meeting
- Public comment was largely 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
- The report detailed challenges that would need to be addressed, including regulatory, economic, logistical, and political issues



## BYCATCH UTILIZATION SUBCOMMITTEE



Based on the logistical challenges and concerns expressed by the public, ***the BAC made no recommendation that action be taken at this time*** to create regulations requiring retention and utilization of bycatch for the high value species of salmon, halibut, and crab

- 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 as has been adopted for the Bering Sea trawl fisheries
- Rationalization for the Gulf of Alaska trawl fisheries is recommended in order to more fully manage and control bycatch of prohibited species through avoidance and individual accountability



## BAC 2024 MANAGEMENT PRIORITY RECOMMENDATIONS



## BAC 2024 RESEARCH PRIORITY RECOMMENDATIONS

- 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

## BAC 2025 STATE ENGAGEMENT PRIORITIES

- Members agreed that to more fully implement the three general research recommendations and the six state engagement recommendations, it is suggested that a dedicated ADF&G staff member position be created to be the primary contact for bycatch-related information, website development, and outreach to the public
- Reaffirmed the 2024 recommendation for an annual virtual meeting focused on research



## ABRTF RECOMMENDED ACTIONS AT NPFMC

- Chum salmon excluder experimental fisheries permits – 2025
- Chum salmon bycatch cap – Final Action February 2026
- Pelagic trawl gear definition and innovation – Final Action June 2025
- Bering Sea/Aleutian Islands pot cod rationalization – Discussion Paper October 2025
- Maximum Retainable Amount adjustments – Final Action October 2025
- Gulf of Alaska Tanner crab protections – Initial Review December 2025