



# Western Alaska Salmon Subcommittee

Alaska Bycatch Review Task Force

October 12<sup>th</sup>, 2022

# Membership

George Guy Co-Chair

Stephanie Madsen Co-Chair

Representative Bryce Edgemon

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- ♦ *The committee wants to first acknowledge the dire crisis of salmon returns in Western Alaska and the devastating impacts that has on residents of the Kuskokwim and Yukon rivers.*

# MEETING INFORMATION

The committee met ten times and public participation ranged from 20-30 individuals, with public comment provided at each meeting.

April 14 Organizational Meeting and ADF&G presentation on Western Alaska Chinook and Chum Salmon Stock Status

April 29 NOAA Fisheries Alaska Region Presentation on Regulatory Structure Overview of Salmon Bycatch measures for the Bering Sea Pollock Fishery

May 12 Incentive Plan Agreements (IPA) presentation by Catcher/Processor fleet, Inshore and Mothership Catcher Vessels

May 26 Presentation on Salmon excluder research by Alaska Fisheries Science Center (AFSC) and the North Pacific Fisheries Research Foundation

*June Committee did not meet in June due to subsistence fishing activities and the North Pacific Fishery Management Council June meeting covering salmon bycatch.*

July 8 Presentation by the North Pacific Fishery Management Council staff which covered all salmon reports received and NPFMC action.

July 29 Presentation by ADF&G Salmon and Ocean Ecology Program (SOEP) and AFSC on Western Alaska salmon research being conducted and future plans.

August 12 Discussion of draft research recommendations

August 26 Revised and finalized research recommendations

September 16 Discussion of draft State engagement and management recommendations

September 19 Revised and finalized State engagement and management recommendations

# Additional Presentations

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Bycatch Management in North Pacific  
Fisheries- NPFMC and Alaska Region NMFS

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Genetic Stock ID of Salmon Bycatch in  
Alaska Groundfish Fisheries

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Bycatch in Hunger Relief Efforts

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Bycatch Avoidance Programs in Alaskan  
Fisheries

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Observer Program/Monitoring

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# State Engagement Recommendations

All recommendations were achieved by  
consensus

- ♦ State of Alaska should establish a method to communicate bycatch information (numbers and fisheries) in both State and Federal fisheries for easy access to the public. This could be a page on the ADF&G website with links to NMFS Alaska Region and NPFMC or other communication tools.
- ♦ • State should provide the public assistance in understanding the BOF and NPFMC process with flyers or training so public can effectively participate. It was noted that the NPFMC has held training and has materials that could be modeled.
- ♦ • State of Alaska Federal Fisheries staff should continue to offer the public an opportunity to provide input on NPFMC issues before each NPFMC meeting. Consideration should be given to additional methods to seek input from stakeholders, tribal entities and communities on bycatch issues. Suggestions from committee include: Advisory Councils or Federal Regional Advisory Councils. •

# State Engagement Recommendations

- ♦ State should support legislative action to remove sunset of the Education Tax Credit Program and consider expanding program to specifically allow gear modification or technology improvements that would help reduce bycatch. •
- ♦ State 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 (specifically, the number of salmon caught in their groundfish and salmon fisheries, and the genetic origin of these salmon).
- ♦ • State should establish a permanent bycatch advisory body using the ABRTF as a template.

# Management Recommendations

The State should work to achieve real time genetic reporting that provides the composition of Western Alaska salmon in the bycatch. This can then be used in management of the pollock fishery to avoid areas and times when Western Alaska salmon are on the grounds in the Bering Sea.

The State should work to establish a scientific-based chum salmon cap to reduce bycatch of Western Alaska salmon in the pollock fishery in the Bering Sea.



# Management Recommendations

- The committee received a thorough report on the presentations and action the North Pacific Fishery Management Council took in June. The NPFMC is the regulatory body responsible for managing the groundfish fisheries. It is our understanding that the Council has requested and will be reviewing the chum data to determine if a chum cap could be a tool that would provide incentives to reduce chum bycatch. Additionally, they continue to monitor the genetics of the Western Alaska salmon composition in the bycatch that would indicate the need for further requirements in the Incentive Plan Agreements required by the pollock fishery.
- The Council's call for the formation of a Salmon Bycatch Committee will provide the public additional opportunities to directly address their work. The committee did not develop additional management measures since work is underway that includes most of the comments received from the public comment.
- It is important to note that Western Alaska and communities along the Yukon River believe that if there is no fishing on the Yukon or Kuskokwim Rivers there should be no pollock fishing in the Bering Sea...one public member called for a moratorium on trawling for an unspecified time. The committee did not forward these recommendations due to the lack of analysis identifying impacts of the suggested measures but encourage the State to retain focus on salmon bycatch in the pollock fishery and make it the number one priority to monitor to determine when action is necessary.