

Area M Adaptive Fleet Management Strategy 2022/2023

The Area M Seiners conducted a unique and innovative strategy in 2022 that reduced June chum harvest. Based on this success we see ways to improve the program in 2023 with a quicker fleet response to chum hotspots and better accountability for each boat. The 2023 program will have improved communications between fishermen and with processors by utilizing a web-based portal and App (near completion). Additionally, we are proposing collection of environmental and biological parameters that are expected to aid ADF&G in its understanding of chum salmon movements by area, time, and tides.

June chum harvests have been relatively stable in recent years, except for 2021. This anomaly, was due to a new fleet component that year and has been rectified. That was proven based on the lower catch in 2022.

Necessary conditions that are critical for the program to succeed: Time and area identical or similar to current management plan. If there are severe time and area reductions, the 2023 volunteer program cannot succeed.

Purpose statement: Reduce June chum harvest in the Area M seine fishery using a program of information sharing and voluntary time and area closures in which the entire fleet and all processors participate. The intent is to decrease CWAK chum catch as they pass through Area M fisheries and migrate north.

Improvements and Considerations for 2023:

- a. New portal and phone app for faster communications. ADF&G will have administrative access that will allow managers to track what is occurring on fishing grounds.
- b. Confidentiality waivers by permit holders and processor agreements for infractions
- c. Option for performance review report submitted by Area M Seiners Association to the BOF and ADFG, if desired.
- d. Release of seine caught Chinook salmon
- e. A 'chum pool' concept was utilized by the 3 processors buying salmon in Area M in 2022, thereby disincentivizing fishermen from targeting chum salmon. All chum harvested by the drift and seine fleets are aggregated by day, by weight, and by company, then paid out equally to the permit holders of that company. The chum pool would be used in 2023 season.

Program Overview:

- The purpose of the strategy in 2022 was to use on-the-water, near real-time information across the whole of the fishing area to monitor and reduce chum harvest in June, while still optimizing a sockeye fishery. This will be continued in 2023.
- The fleet will utilize time/area closures that change throughout June in response to chum presence. This will operate under the current ADF&G June Management Plan. This type of adaptive management requires vessels to cooperate, processors to provide daily

reports, and vessels to move or stop fishing when directed to do so by the designated fisherman 'mayor' for a specified area (i.e. south Unimak).

- This program resulted in more than 50% reduction in chum harvest in June 2022 compared to June 2021. We hope to continue this program in 2023 and successive years with a goal of lowering chum harvest where possible while at the same time maximizing sockeye harvest. Adaptive management will allow near real-time implementation.

Program Details:

- A board of 7 active Seine fishermen was formed to make decisions on fishing time and area during the June fishery using daily reports from processors and near real-time information from the fleet as the fishery occurred. This strategy applied to all 64 boats in the fleet during June 2022. The 3 processors and all seine boats registered agreed to participate. Release of fishery harvest confidentially will be waived by the fleet.
- Operated a cooperative test fishery with ADFG to assess chum salmon abundance at 3 locations across the South Peninsula for 2 days prior to and the first day of the June fishery, resulting in the loss of the first day of the June fishery for the seine fleet.
- The test fishery showed decreasing chum abundance and increasing sockeye abundance. The fishermen board then allowed the fleet to fish a partial day on June 11th to gauge harvest with the entire fleet fishing.
- As season progressed, the managing board announced time reductions based on the previous days harvest.
- Also, as the season progressed, individual fleets at many locations stood down separate from the rest of the fleet in other locations, to allow high concentrations of chum to pass through the area. This type of response can only be done with the flexibility of fleet management, cooperation, and responsive reporting. And most critically, time and area.
- Area M June chum harvest was held to slightly under 50% of the 2021 harvest and back in line with historical averages.
- The time and area in the current June management plan allowed the fleet the flexibility to take these actions without feeling that the fishery would be closed at a moment's notice. Processors and the communities reliant on sockeye landings also were able to better plan.
- Genetic information collected by ADFG in 2022 and associated harvest rates will also help in understanding the impacts of chum harvest in the SAP sockeye fishery.