2026 Board of Fisheries Work Session
North Pacific Fishery Management Council Update
ADF&G Extended Jurisdiction Section
October 28, 2026

This report reflects actions taken by the North Pacific Fishery Management Council (Council) since the 2025 Board of Fisheries Work Session and Council actions currently under development. Information in this report is referenced from Council documents available at: https://www.npfmc.org/

Bering Sea/Aleutian Islands Crab

The Fishery Management Plan for Bering Sea and Aleutian Islands (BSAI) King and Tanner Crabs establishes a cooperative state and federal management regime for the major crab fisheries that delegates most management measures to the State with federal oversight. Most BSAI crab fisheries are managed under the federal Crab Rationalization Program, a catch share program designed to benefit harvesters, processors, and coastal communities through allocations of harvesting and processing privileges and regional delivery requirements.

In 2026, the Council established annual harvest specifications for Bristol Bay red king crab, Bering Sea Tanner crab, Bering Sea snow crab, Aleutian Islands golden king crab, and Norton Sound red king crab as shown in the table below. Biennial specifications were established for St. Matthew Island blue king crab and triennial specifications were established for Western Aleutian Islands red king crab and Pribilof Islands golden king crab. Federal harvest specifications include setting an annual Overfishing Limit (OFL) and an Acceptable Biological Catch (ABC) limit. ADF&G determines whether fisheries can open based on the State harvest strategies and sets an annual Total Allowable Catch (TAC) for open fisheries so that all crab removals remain below the ABC.

	OFL (mlb)	ABC (mlb)	TAC (mlb)
Bristol Bay red king crab	15.73	12.58	3.41
Bering Sea Tanner crab	148.57	118.85	4.9 east / 27.2 west
Bering Sea snow crab	46.78	28.07	5.10
Aleutian Islands golden king crab	7.70	5.78	3.18 east / 1.56 west
Norton Sound red king crab	0.426	0.298	0.268

Bristol Bay red king crab: The estimated mature male and mature female abundances remain near historic lows, though survey estimates have trended positively since 2021. The 2026 legal male, ≥135 mm carapace width (CW), survey abundance estimate increased by 32% from 2025. Survey abundance of mature male (≥120 mm CW) crab increased 30%, and survey abundance of mature female crab decreased 2%. The 2026 estimated mature female abundance and effective spawning biomass are both above the thresholds in the State harvest strategy and the department announced a TAC of 3.41 million pounds for the 2026/27 season, a 27% increase from last season.

Eastern Bering Sea Tanner crab – Tanner crab are managed with separate TACs east and west of 166° W longitude. In the 2026 survey, the abundance of large (≥125 CW) male Tanner crab increased 205% from 2025 in the eastern area and increased 230%, to the highest level observed

in the time series, in the western area. Mature female abundance decreased 23% in the western area and increased 26% in the eastern area. The department announced a TAC of 4.9 million pounds in the eastern area and 27.2 million pounds in the western area for the 2026/27 season. The combined TAC of 32.1 million pounds is an 185% increase from last season.

Bering Sea snow crab: Following the collapse of the snow crab stock in 2020, the National Marine Fisheries Service (NMFS) determined the stock was in an overfished[1] status and implemented the Council's recommended rebuilding plan in August 2023. The fishery was closed for the 2022/23 and 2023/24 seasons and has since reopened at a reduced scale. The stock is estimated to be at 75% of its maximum sustainable yield biomass (B_{MSY}), so it is no longer in an overfished condition, however the stock will remain under a rebuilding plan until the biomass is at or above B_{MSY}. Based on results from the 2026 survey, the estimated spawning biomass is above the thresholds in the State harvest strategy and the department announced a 2026/27 snow crab TAC of 5.1 million pounds, a 45% decrease from last season.

Hybrid Tanner/snow crab – Hybrid Tanner/snow crab continue to be present in high abundance. While most size and sex categories decreased from 2025, industry preferred males (≥101 CW) were observed at a time series high. Most hybrid crab are considered snow crab by regulation, but neither the snow nor Tanner crab stock assessments account for the hybrid population. In the Council motion adopting the recommended harvest specification, the Council encouraged collaboration between researchers, managers, harvesters, and processors to identify opportunities for increased hybrid crab harvest without negative impacts to snow or Tanner crab stocks. As a conservation measure this season, the department has announced that vessels targeting Tanner crab may retain incidentally-caught snow crab IFQ or CDQ up to 100% of the weight of Tanner crab onboard the vessel.

Gulf of Alaska Tanner crab protections

In June 2026, the Council reviewed an analysis that considers potential changes to crab protection areas around Kodiak Island. The analysis evaluated options to establish a new fixed area closure for groundfish fisheries off the east side of Kodiak Island to protect Tanner crab and provided information on potential changes to existing federal crab protection closure areas.

The area of interest for a potential new Tanner crab protection area overlaps the northern portion of the Barnabas Gully, which is an area of high productivity for many groundfish species that has consistently contained a high proportion of the total estimated Tanner crab abundance in the Kodiak District.

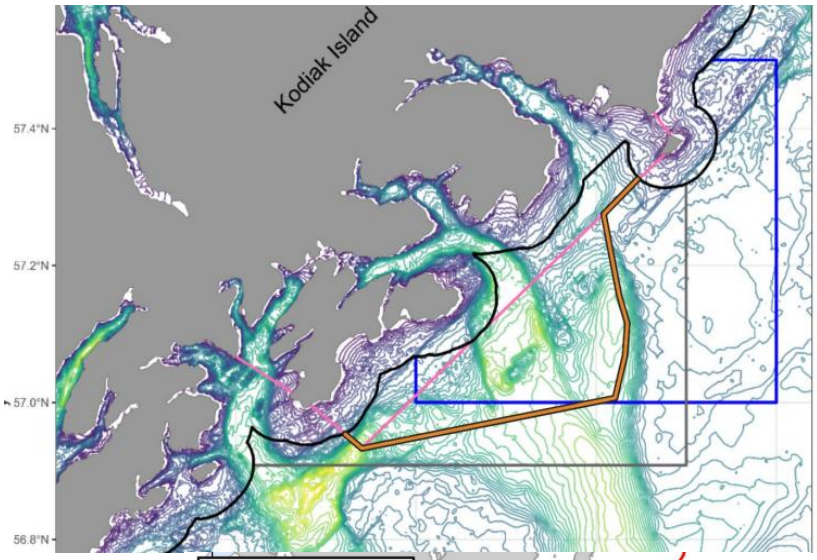
In June, the Council signaled intent to restrict only non-pelagic (bottom) trawl gear from the new closure area based on broad public support and added a third closure area option (orange boundary in map below) that refines the proposed options to an area of high Tanner crab densities and excludes areas important to flatfish fisheries where fewer Tanner crab are found. The Council's motion also includes a framework and timeline for evaluating a new closure area using relevant performance metrics.[2] The Council is also exploring options for the new closure to

[1] A stock is considered 'overfished' when the population size gets too low, jeopardizing its ability to produce maximum sustained yield. 'Overfishing' is when a stock is harvested at a rate higher than would support maximum sustained yield; i.e. total harvest exceeds the OFL.

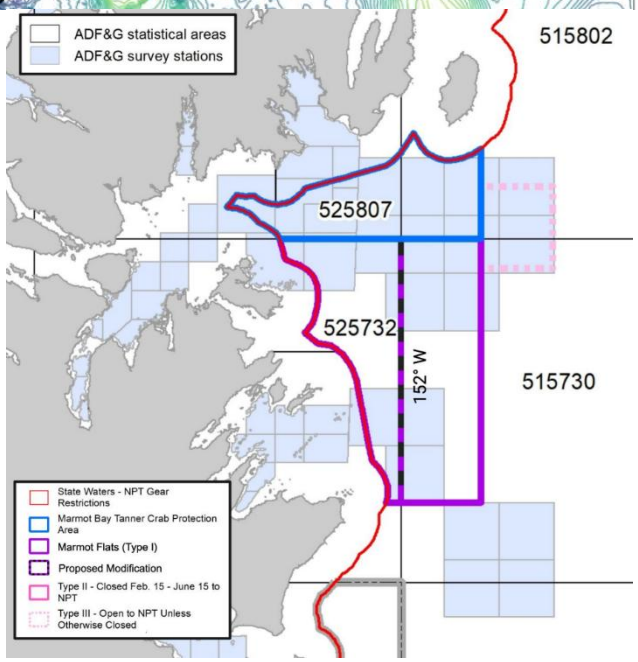
[2] Among others, the performance metrics may include changes in Tanner crab PSC levels and rates in the groundfish fisheries, trends in mature female and mature male Tanner crab survey abundance, directed Tanner crab fishery

be year-round or seasonal when Tanner crab are molting and mating and most vulnerable to interactions with fishing gear.

The Council is also considering changes to the existing crab closure areas around Kodiak Island. In June, the Council added an option to remove the threshold-triggered, Type III, red king crab closure areas near Kodiak Island, as the abundance threshold has never been met and the trigger mechanism relies on information collected in ADF&G pot surveys that are no longer conducted.



Additionally, the Council is considering modifying the Marmot Flats closure area by re-opening the eastern portion to non-pelagic trawl gear (purple boundary in map on right). Survey indicates there are very few Tanner or red king crab found in the Marmot Flats closure area and the portion that would remain closed is adjacent to state waters, which the Council heard are important to maintain crab migration pathways from inshore bays. The Council intends to use similar performance metrics[2] to evaluate changes to the Marmot Flats area.



Finally, the Council is considering aligning gear-on-board regulations in the Marmot Bay Tanner Crab Protection Areas with those that apply within other crab closure areas closed to bottom trawling.

Pelagic trawl gear performance standard

In June 2026, the Council requested a discussion paper to assess viable and enforceable regulatory mechanisms to reduce bottom contact of pelagic trawl gear in areas currently closed to non-pelagic trawl gear in the Bering Sea/Aleutian Islands and Gulf of Alaska. The purpose of this action is to reduce the uncertainty associated with unobserved crab mortality, and to

performance indicators, redistribution of groundfish effort, and changes in halibut PSC by affected groundfish sectors.

continually improve upon existing fishing practices in light of depressed red king crab populations and changing ecosystem conditions.

Information requested in the discussion paper will be used to support potential development of new management measures to reduce bottom contact by pelagic trawl. Options include: whether a maximum bottom contact rate based on the best available information is feasible to regulate at a vessel, sector, or Bering Sea cooperative level; the feasibility of implementing a swept-area cap at a vessel, sector, or Bering Sea cooperative level; and/or verifiable pelagic trawl gear modifications, technologies, or operational standards.

The Council reaffirmed its June 2025 motion that the Fishing Effects model be updated with refined bottom contact estimates. The peer-reviewed Fishing Effects model[3] estimates the impacts of pelagic trawl gear on the sea floor and is used by the Council to assess the effects of fishing on essential fish habitats (EFH) in Alaska. Results from the most recent EFH five-year review concluded that habitat disturbance within core EFH areas for the managed crab and groundfish species is not affecting any stock in ways that are more than minimal or temporary. The cumulative effects of fishing are estimated to impact less than 5% of total EFH in the BSAI and GOA for all gear types. However, uncertainty exists regarding the impacts of unobserved crab mortality due to gear interactions and research on this issue has been limited.

The Council also requested the Bering Sea pollock fleet continue to develop discrete area closures, in areas closed to non-pelagic trawl gear but open to pelagic trawl gear, to protect Bristol Bay red king crab. These voluntary closure areas were first enacted throughout the 2026 pollock A-season. The Council anticipates the pollock fleet will continue to use available survey and fisheries information to identify and avoid fishing in areas where Bristol Bay red crab are likely to occur, while maintaining the highest priority on Chinook salmon avoidance.

Salmon bycatch

The Council has taken several actions to minimize Chinook and chum salmon bycatch in federal groundfish fisheries. Chinook salmon bycatch is limited by hard caps in both the Bering Sea and GOA and reaching a salmon bycatch limit closes the fishery subject to the limit. Additionally, federal regulations require the Bering Sea pollock fishery to operate under avoidance plans for Chinook and chum salmon that provide incentives to avoid salmon at all times to help minimize salmon bycatch. Full retention of all salmon bycatch on pollock vessels is required to ensure bycatch accounting is accurate and to enable genetic sampling.

Genetic samples are taken from Chinook salmon caught as bycatch in the Bering Sea and GOA pollock trawl fisheries to estimate the proportion of bycatch from individual salmon stock groups. Chum salmon samples are primarily taken in the Bering Sea pollock fishery because very little chum salmon bycatch occurs in GOA trawl fisheries. The Council receives annual genetic reports from bycatch samples taken in the groundfish fisheries the previous year. The Council also receives annual reports from the Bering Sea pollock fishery cooperatives on fleet performance under salmon avoidance plans.

When considering the impacts of bycatch on specific salmon stocks, it is important to note that bycatch is one of several factors affecting the number of adults returning to Alaskan river systems. The number of adult salmon that would have returned to Alaska rivers is smaller than

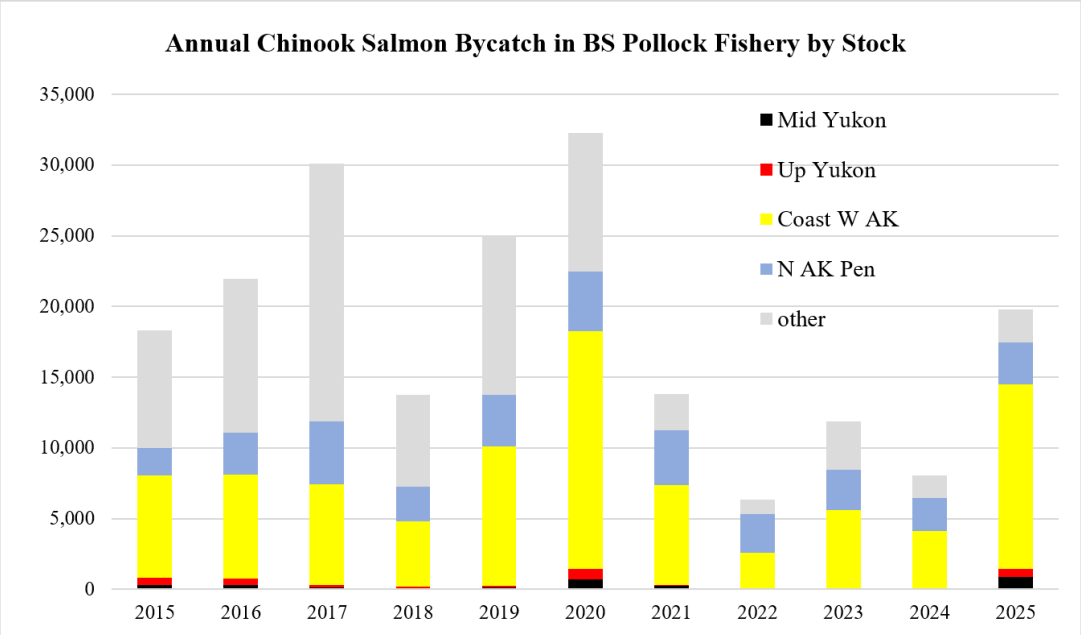
[3] Fishing Effects model infographic https://meetings.npfmc.org/CommentReview/DownloadFile?p=9babbf1d-b8cd-44ba-89cb-70540a2ffab9.pdf&fileName=C3%20DRAFT%20Fishing%20Effects%20Model%20Infographic.pdf

the number of Chinook or chum salmon caught as bycatch because the bycatch is primarily composed of immature fish which are subject to predation and other types of natural mortality before maturing and returning to freshwater systems in future years. Both Chinook and chum salmon from a given brood year mature and return to the rivers at multiple ages. Chinook salmon taken as bycatch are predominantly age 3 or age 4 fish and range in age from 3 to 7 years. Bycaught chum salmon range in age from 2 to 7 years and are predominantly age 3 to 5 years.

Chinook salmon bycatch in the Bering Sea pollock fishery: There are two Chinook salmon bycatch limits for the Bering Sea pollock fishery. A higher limit of 60,000 Chinook salmon with a 'performance standard' limit of 47,591 fish and a lower limit of 45,000 Chinook salmon with a performance standard of 33,318 fish in years following low WAK Chinook salmon abundance. The lower Chinook bycatch and performance standard limits have been in place since 2021 and will be in place again during 2027. The annual performance standard limits are divided among the pollock fishing sectors and are typically further subdivided to the vessel level to promote vessel-level accountability. The Council also recommended the establishment of industry-developed contractual arrangements, referred to as incentive plan agreements (IPAs), that are required in regulation and work in conjunction with the bycatch limit and performance standard limit to minimize bycatch at all levels of Chinook salmon abundance.

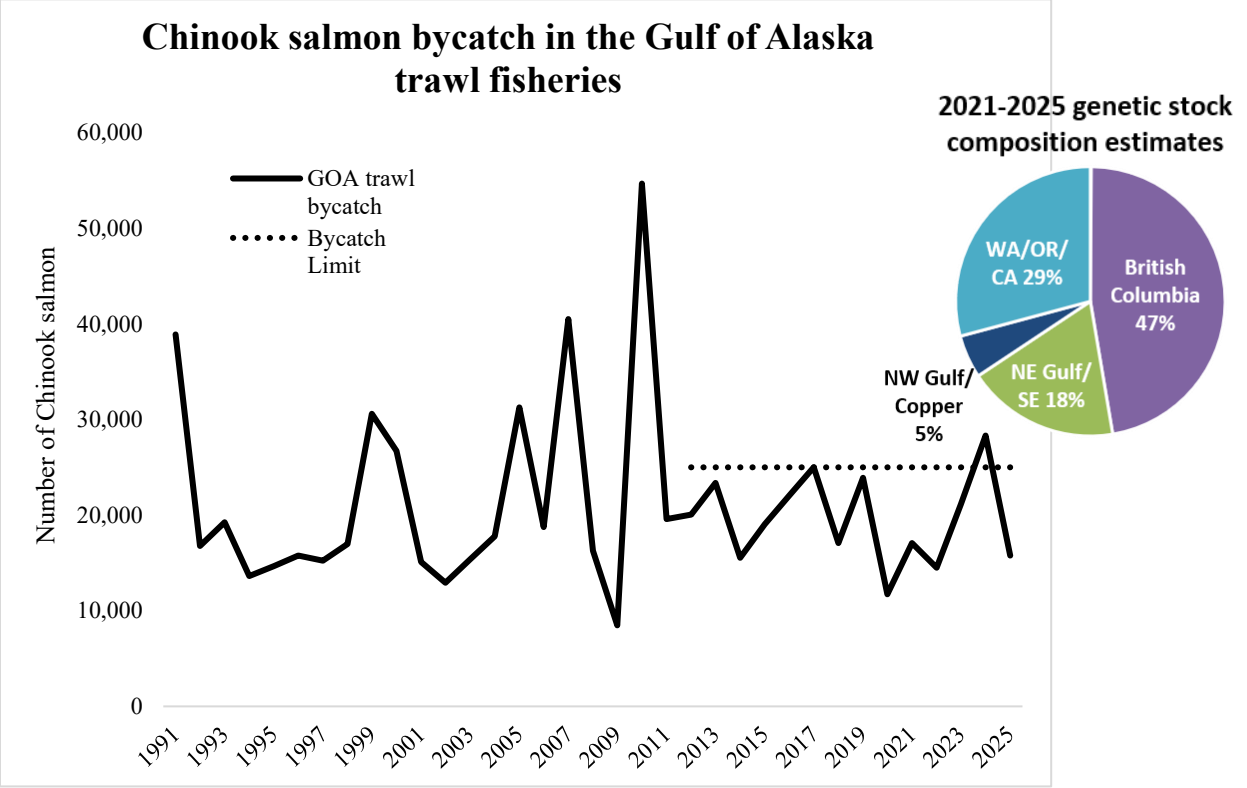
In 2025, a total of 19,797 Chinook salmon were taken as bycatch in the Bering Sea pollock fishery (figure below) and through October 22, 2026, a total of 13,478 Chinook salmon have been taken as bycatch in the Bering Sea pollock fishery.

While stock composition estimates for the 2024 bycatch were initially delayed due to the federal government shutdown, preliminary stock composition estimates of 2024 and 2025 bycatch were presented to the Council in June 2026. In both 2024 and 2025 the stock composition results indicate that, on average, 82.1% of the annual Chinook salmon bycatch originated from Alaska river systems flowing into the Bering Sea with the largest contributions from the Kuskokwim / Bristol Bay region (48.7% in 2024 and 63.7% in 2025) and the North Alaska Peninsula (28.8% in 2024 and 14.9% in 2025). The combined Alaska and Canada Yukon River stocks accounted for 1.1% of the Chinook salmon bycatch in 2024 and 7.3% in 2025.



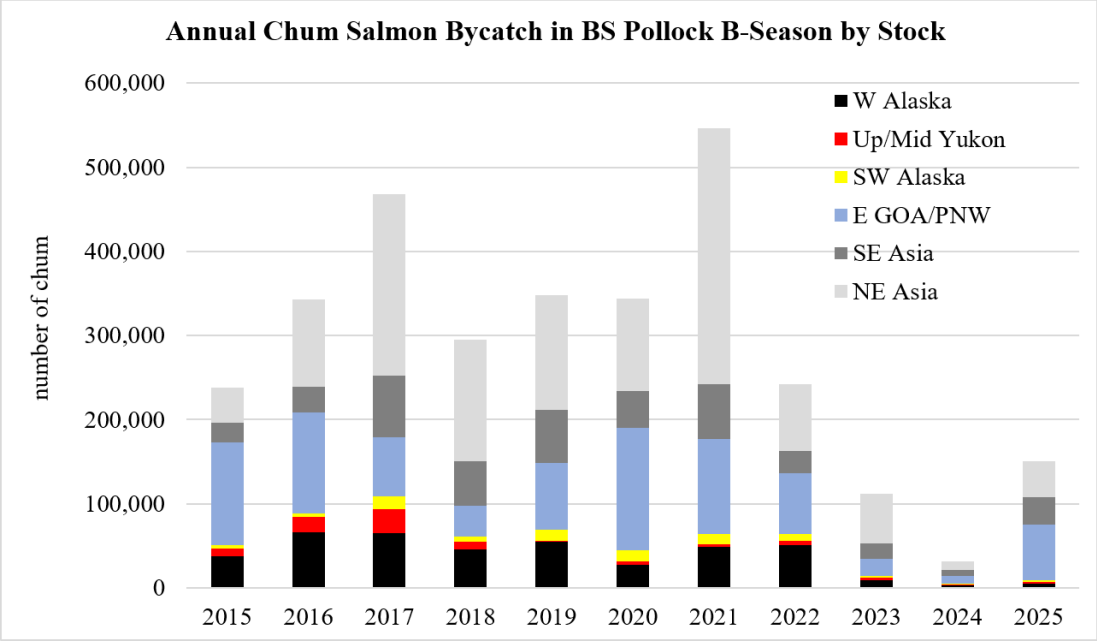
Chinook salmon bycatch in the Gulf of Alaska trawl fisheries*:* In the GOA groundfish trawl fisheries, the majority of Chinook salmon bycatch occurs in the directed pollock fishery. Other trawl fisheries for flatfish, rockfish, and Pacific cod also intercept Chinook salmon. Amendment 93 to the GOA Groundfish Fishery Management Plan established Chinook salmon bycatch limits for the GOA pollock trawl fisheries. The total Chinook salmon bycatch limit of 25,000 fish for the directed pollock fisheries is apportioned between the Western GOA (6,684 fish) and Central GOA (18,316 fish) management areas.

In 2025, total Chinook salmon bycatch in the GOA pollock fisheries was estimated at 13,198 fish (figure below). Stock composition estimates indicate that over the past five years (2021-2025), approximately 47% of the bycatch is comprised of British Columbia stocks followed by the West Coast US (29%), and Northeast GOA/Southeast Alaska (18%) stocks. These stock composition estimates are very similar to the long-term (2011-2025) averages of 45%, 33%, and 16%, respectively.

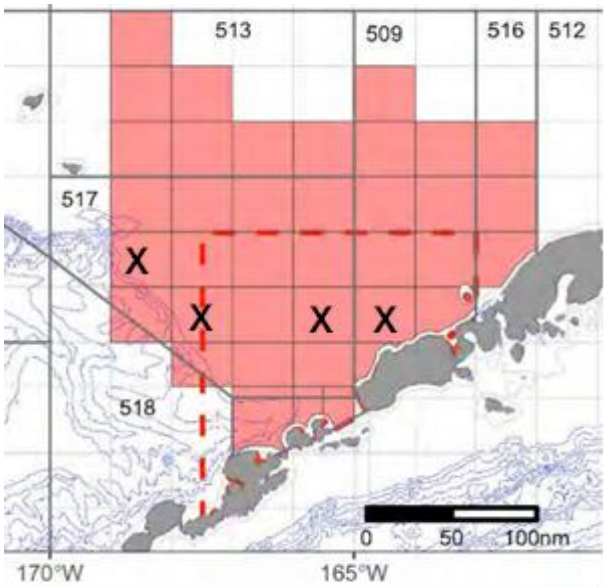


Chum salmon bycatch in the Bering Sea pollock fishery*:* Nearly all chum salmon bycatch occurs during the pollock B-season from June through October. In 2025, an estimated 150,980 chum salmon were caught as bycatch in the Bering Sea pollock fishery (figure below), much lower than the 10-year (2015-2024) average bycatch of 296,871 fish. Based on stock composition estimates 4.5% of the chum salmon bycatch originated from Western Alaska and the Yukon River; 1.5% was from stock groups in Southwest Alaska, 44% was from the Eastern GOA and the Pacific Northwest, and 50% was composed of Asian stocks, primarily from Russia and Japan. Through October 22, 2026, a total of 143,226 chum salmon have been caught in the Bering Sea pollock fishery.

In February 2026, the Council took final action to recommend management measures focused on minimizing Western Alaska chum bycatch while maintaining the priority of current Chinook salmon bycatch avoidance objectives balanced with achieving optimum yield in the Bering Sea pollock fishery. This included recommendations to establish a Western Alaska (WAK)[4] chum salmon bycatch limit and corridor area closure and require additional avoidance measures through the pollock industry's salmon bycatch avoidance IPAs to further minimize bycatch of WAK chum salmon stocks in the Bering Sea pollock fishery.



The Council's preferred alternative recommends a bycatch limit of 45,000 WAK chum salmon within a corridor (figure below) that includes 40 ADF&G statistical areas north of Unimak Pass. Establishing a chum salmon bycatch limit specifically for WAK chum salmon was important because a majority of the chum salmon taken as bycatch are not from Western Alaska. Based on the annual genetic stock composition data, most of the chum salmon bycatch are Russian and Asian hatchery fish. The WAK bycatch limit and corridor were designed in response to information in the analysis and public comment that an overall limit on all chum salmon bycatch may not reduce WAK chum salmon bycatch and risked increasing Chinook salmon bycatch by delaying pollock fishing until later in the B-season when Chinook salmon bycatch rates increase.



The statistical areas included in the corridor encompass the area where the highest proportions and numbers of WAK chum bycatch

[4] WAK refers to the combined coastal western Alaska and Upper/Middle Yukon genetic stock groups.

occur. All WAK chum salmon caught as bycatch in the corridor count towards the bycatch limit during a critical migration period for WAK chum salmon that extends from the beginning of the pollock B-season (June 10) until the end of August. Vessels will use genetic stock composition data from previous seasons and newly available in-season genetic data from Bristol Bay Science and Research Institute to try to avoid reaching the limit. The WAK chum salmon bycatch limit is divided among the four pollock fishing sectors, with 71% of the limit going to catcher vessels delivering to shorebased processors, 9.8% to the Community Development Quota (CDQ) fishery, 9.7% to catcher vessels delivering to motherships, and 9.5% to catcher processors. If a sector reaches its portion of the corridor bycatch limit, it must close 50% of the corridor to pollock fishing for the remainder of the June 10 – August 31 period. The closure must include four statistical areas, marked with an X on the map above, that have consistently had high numbers of WAK chum salmon bycatch. If a sector reaches its portion of the limit but fails to implement the closure area as described above, the entire corridor area would be closed to pollock fishing for that sector the following year for the entire period (June 10 – August 31).

The WAK chum salmon bycatch limit and corridor closure will not be in effect following a year when more than 3,871,000 summer chum salmon and 1,390,300 fall chum salmon return to the Yukon River, based on the preliminary post-season run reconstruction estimates provided by ADF&G. This measure was included by the Council recognizing that the limit and corridor may be constraining for the pollock fishery if WAK chum salmon stocks recover to historically high abundance.

The Council's recommendation also included several changes to the pollock industry's contractual salmon avoidance plans. The changes require the IPAs to incorporate genetic information into the inseason chum salmon avoidance measures, i.e.. the Rolling Hotspot Closures, and increase transparency in reporting and accountability by ensuring that Alaska Native Tribes, Tribally-authorized consortia and fish commissions, and salmon users have access to bycatch reports in an easily usable format.

The Council's recommendation must be implemented by NMFS. Based on current staffing and resources, NMFS anticipates a final rule may be in place prior to the 2028 Bering Sea pollock B-season.

Herring bycatch

Management measures for herring bycatch in the BSAI groundfish trawl fisheries have remained static since first implemented in 1991. The bycatch limit is set at 1% of the mature biomass of Pacific herring in the eastern Bering Sea and attainment of a fishery's herring bycatch apportionment triggers closure of the herring savings areas (HSAs) to that fishery. The HSAs are based on herring migration data from the 1980s and may no longer reflect the current seasonal distribution of herring. In recent years, pollock fishery participants have encountered herring at different rates, times, and locations than historically occurred and these changes have constrained the fleet's ability to meet requirements to minimize salmon bycatch in the pollock fisheries.

In October 2025, the Council initiated an action to consider increasing the herring bycatch limit to provide additional flexibility for the pollock fleet to adapt to changing conditions and ensure that salmon bycatch avoidance efforts are effective. The options to increase the bycatch limit to 2% or 3% of the mature biomass of herring is intended to maintain herring conservation objectives and its contribution to the pelagic forage fish complex while not adversely affecting subsistence and commercial herring fishery opportunities.

In October 2026, the Council heard from NMFS that federal staff are exploring an alternative approach for estimating the biomass of Pacific herring in the eastern Bering Sea to inform the PSC limit. The existing annual estimate of herring biomass relies on surveys by ADF&G, which have become less frequent in recent years. The Council is expecting to receive a progress update on the potential new approach at an upcoming Council meeting.

New Terminology - Biologically-Informed Recommended Distributions (BRDs)
Beginning with the current assessment cycle, the Council has adopted new terminology for subarea apportionments of Acceptable Biological Catch (ABC); these are now referred to as Biologically-Informed Recommended Distributions or (BRDs). Under the Magnuson-Stevens Fishery Conservation and Management Act (MSA), the ABC is a scientific calculation of a fishery's sustainable harvest level that accounts for scientific uncertainty. Established via the 2006 MSA reauthorization and governed by NOAA's National Standard 1 Guidelines, the ABC serves as a strict buffer to prevent overfishing. In contrast to a 'true' ABC, a subarea apportionment, or BRD, is a management tool that adds an extra layer of precaution to account for uncertainty in stock structure and reduce the risk of localized depletion.

To improve consistency, the department may seek a delegation from the Board to make corresponding terminology changes in state regulations.