



UNITED STATES DEPARTMENT OF COMMERCE
National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration
National Marine Fisheries Service
P.O. Box 21668
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April 5, 2021

Agenda B-3: NMFS Management Report

Status of Actions Report Online

Updated daily at: <https://www.fisheries.noaa.gov/sites/default/files/akro/amendments.pdf>

Progress on Rulemaking

Highlights on progress since the February 2021 meeting include:

- 2021 and 2022 Final GOA Groundfish Harvest Specifications published on February 19, 2021. Effective date: **February 19, 2021**.
- 2021 and 2022 Final BSAI Groundfish Harvest Specifications published on February 25, 2021. Effective date: **February 25, 2021**.
- Final Rule to implement Amendment 111 (GOA) to Reauthorize the Central GOA Rockfish Program published on March 1, 2020. Effective **March 31, 2021**.
- 2021 Annual Halibut Management Measures published on March 19, 2021. Effective date: **March 6, 2021**.
- Central GOA Rockfish Program – On March 19, 2021, NMFS issued an emergency rule to modify the fishing season start date for fishing vessels participating in a rockfish cooperative as part of the Central Gulf of Alaska Rockfish Program (Rockfish Program) for the 2021 fishing year. This emergency rule is intended to provide flexibility to Rockfish Program participants by moving the fishing season start date from May 1, 2021 to April 1, 2021. Effective **March 19, 2021**.
- IFQ Temporary Transfers in 2021 – On March 30, 2021, NMFS issued an emergency rule to modify the temporary transfer provision of the Individual Fishing Quota (IFQ) Program for the fixed-gear commercial Pacific halibut and sablefish fisheries for the 2021 IFQ fishing year. Effective on **March 30, 2021** and applications may now be submitted.
- Halibut Vessel use caps in Area 4A, 4B, 4C, and 4D – On March 26, 2021, NMFS AKR transmitted a proposed rule to NMFS HQ for further review and publication in the Federal Register.
- Additional updates on the emergency and expedited rule requests from February 2021 are available at: <https://www.fisheries.noaa.gov/alaska/commercial-fishing/north-pacific-fishery-management-council-requests-emergency-actions>.
- Proposed rule to remove the processing restriction on incidentally caught squids and sculpins in the GOA and the BSAI – comment period ended on **March 29, 2021**.
- **Attachment 1** provides additional detail.



Aquaculture Opportunity Area Identification Process

The Executive Order (EO) on *Promoting American Seafood Competitiveness and Economic Growth* came out in May 2020. Section 7 of the EO laid out a schedule for NOAA Fisheries to identify Aquaculture Opportunity Areas (AOAs): 1) within one year identify at least two geographic areas suitable for commercial aquaculture, 2) within two years complete a Programmatic Environmental Impact Statement (PEIS) for each area to assess impacts of siting aquaculture facilities, and 3) each of the following four years repeat the process, identify two more geographic areas and complete two more PEISs, for a total of 10 AOAs over the next seven years. NOAA will coordinate with Regional Fishery Management Councils and appropriate State and tribal governments throughout the AOA identification process.

NOAA Fisheries started this process in August, identifying federal waters off southern California and the Gulf of Mexico as the first two regions for focused evaluation to find AOAs based on existing spatial data and industry interest.

In October 2020, NOAA Fisheries published a [Request for Information](#) asking the public and stakeholders for specific areas to consider for the first two AOAs within southern California and Gulf of Mexico; and other areas NOAA should consider nationally for future AOAs. Alaska received the most letters of support for future AOA consideration. These support letters ranged from individuals, industry, Alaskan native tribes, state agencies, and state legislature.

[AOA](#) identification is a planning process designed to identify a small, defined geographic area that has been evaluated to determine its potential suitability for commercial aquaculture. NOAA will use a combination of scientific analysis and public engagement to identify areas that are environmentally, socially, and economically appropriate for commercial aquaculture. Stakeholder input is essential in the design and location of AOAs and NOAA expects these areas will be shaped through a public process that allows constituents to share their community and stewardship goals, as well as critical insights.

AOAs may be identified in federal and/or state waters. However, NOAA will only consider identifying areas within state waters at the invitation of the state. Alaska state agencies and legislature provided support for AOA identification within state waters. The majority of the letters NOAA received for Alaska AOA development indicated interest in AOAs within state waters only. Finfish farming in Alaska is prohibited under Alaska Statute 16.40.210, and thus would not be considered for AOA identification in aquaculture activities in Alaska. There was broad support for shellfish and seaweed farming, and leveraging Alaska's seafood infrastructure and expertise to further promote economic development and seafood security.

The identification of AOAs would not prohibit other legal activities from occurring. Information received throughout the process of identifying areas and completing a PEIS for each AOA will help maximize compatibility of AOAs with other ocean uses.

NOAA's Office of Aquaculture is currently reviewing public input received from the Request for Information, and analyzing challenges and opportunities for AOA identification in the new regions. They anticipate making a determination on the next areas for AOA development this summer. Additional information can be found here:

- [AOA Frequently Asked Questions](#) & [Public Input Opportunities for AOAs](#)

Attachment 1 -- Status of Regulatory Actions

Changes since December 2020 are noted in **Bold Red** EOC = End of Comment Period

Action Status	Lead Council, SF, and GCAK Staff	Date of Council Final Action	Start Regional Review	Received by GCAK	Transmittal Date of Action to NMFS HQ for Review	Notice of Availability (FMP) Published in <i>Federal Register</i>	Proposed Rule Published in <i>Federal Register</i>	Final Rule or Notice of Approval Published in <i>Federal Register</i>
FMP Amendments								
Amendment 14 (Salmon) Cook Inlet	Armstrong Duncan	December 2020	PR: 3/05/21	PR: 3/05/21				
Amendment 111 (GOA) Rockfish Program Reauthorization Approved: October 22, 2020	McCracken Warpinski	January 2020	PR: 06/07/20 FR: 11/18/20	PR: 06/12/20 FR: 11/25/20	PR: 07/22/20 FR: 1/6/21	Jul 27, 2020 85 FR 45367 EOC: 09/28/20	Sep 4, 2020 85 FR 55243 EOC: 10/05/20	Mar 1, 2021 86 FR 11895 Effective: 03/31/21

Regulatory Amendments								
2021 and 2022 BSAI Groundfish Harvest Specifications	MacLean Whitney	December 2020	PR: 10/16/20 FR: 12/21/20	PR: 10/19/20 FR: 12/28/20	PR: 11/12/20 FR: 2/2/20	N/A	Dec 3, 2020 85 FR 78096 EOC: 1/4/21	Feb 25, 2021 86 FR 11449 Effective: 02/25/21
Gulf of Alaska; 2021 and 2022 Harvest Specifications for Groundfish	Cleaver Davis	December 2020	PR: 10/14/20 FR: 01/07/21	PR: 10/15/20 FR: 01/12/21	PR: 11/12/20 FR: 2/2/20	N/A	Dec 3, 2020 85 FR 78076 EOC: 1/4/21	Feb 19, 2021 86 FR 10184 Effective: 02/19/21
Squid and Sculpin Product Types	MacLean Mackey	October 2020	PR: 11/16/20 FR: 04/01/21	PR: 11/24/20 FR: 04/05/21	PR: 12/22/20	N/A	Feb 26, 2021 86 FR 11716 EOC: 03/29/21	
2021 Annual Halibut Management Measures	Iverson	December 2020	FR: 02/07/21	FR: 02/08/21	FR: 02/25/21	N/A	N/A	Mar 9, 2021 86 FR 13475 Effective: 03/06/21
Emergency Rule; CGOA Rockfish Program Season Start Date	Watson	February 2021	FR: 03/01/21	FR: 03/02/21	FR: 03/08/21	N/A	N/A	Mar 19, 2021 86 FR 14851 Effective: 03/19/21
Emergency Rule; Allow temporary transfers of IFQ in 2021	Jahn	February 2021	FR: 03/05/21	FR: 03/09/21	FR: 03/15/21	N/A	N/A	Mar 30, 2021 86 FR 16542 Effective: 3/30/21
Modify the 2021 Halibut Individual Fishing Quota (IFQ) Vessel Harvest Limitations in IFQ Regulatory Areas 4A, 4B, 4C and 4D	Jahn	February 2021	PR: 03/21/21	PR: 03/22/21	PR: 3/26/21	N/A		

Attachment 2 -- Inseason Management Report

Catch during 2021 is through March 27, 2021 and is compared to catch during 2020 through March 28, 2020. All catch amounts are in metric tons. Additional information is available from [daily catch reports and information bulletins](#).

Bering Sea and Aleutian Islands

Bering Sea Pollock

The 2021 Bering Sea pollock TAC is 1,375,000 mt compared to 1,425,000 mt in 2020. For 2021, NMFS reallocated 1,900 mt of CDQ pollock TAC and 12,600 mt of Aleut Corporation TAC from the Aleutian Islands to respective CDQ and non-CDQ pollock TACs in the Bering Sea. These reallocation are apportioned 45% to the A season and 55% to the B season.

March 27, 2021 is the 3rd week that AFA/CDQ catch is higher than the comparable week in 2021, however the total catch is lower in 2021 relative to 2020 by 115,563 mt. Most of the decrease is from the inshore sector at 76,339 mt, then the CP/CDQ sectors combined at 29,336 mt, and then the mothership sector at 9,887 mt. However, the 2021 Bering Sea pollock TAC is about 50,000 mt less than the 2020 Bering Sea pollock TAC.

In 2020, the CP/CDQ and motherships sectors stopped fishing by April 11, and the inshore sector stopped fishing about May 16, 2020. At the current rates the CP/CDQ and mothership sectors are projected to finish their A season allocations in mid-April 2021. The inshore sector is expected to fish into May as in 2020. The A season is open until June 10 at noon, and the B season begins at noon, June 10.

Bering Sea	2021 A season allocation ¹	2021 A season catch	Percent taken
Inshore	270,135	147,998	55%
CP	216,108	190,109	88%
Mothership	54,027	44,172	82%
CDQ ¹	62,730	62,596	100%
Incidental catch	49,500	15,755	32%
Total	652,500	460,630	71%

¹Includes reallocations described above.

Salmon in the Bering Sea Pollock Fisheries

The 2021 Chinook salmon PSC limit is 45,000 Chinook salmon, and further allocated to each sector as specified in 50 CFR 679.21(f)(3)(iii)(A). In 2021 relative to 2020, total Chinook salmon PSC and rates are lower, and total non-Chinook salmon PSC and rates are lower.

Species	Chinook				Non-Chinook			
	2021		2020		2021		2020	
Year	#	Rate ¹	#	Rate ¹	#	Rate ¹	#	Rate ¹
CDQ	848	0.013	1,674	0.0258	80	0.001	39	0.001
AFA	6,676	0.017	14,549	0.0289	14	0.000	352	0.001
Total	7,524	0.017	16,223	0.0285	94	0.000	391	0.001

¹Rate is number of salmon per metric tons of groundfish.

Herring in the Bering Sea Pollock Fisheries

In 2021, herring PSC in the Bering Sea pollock fishery 317 mt relative to 2020 at 2,243 mt.

BSAI Pacific cod by Sector

The 2021 Pacific cod TAC is 111,830 mt in the Bering Sea and 13,796 mt in the Aleutian Islands compared to the 2020 Bering Sea TAC of 141,799 mt and Aleutian Islands TAC of 13,796 mt. In 2021, there has been some increased effort to catch non-CDQ Pacific cod in the Aleutian Islands to balance the catch between the Bering Sea and the Aleutian Islands. In 2021, 11% of the Aleutian Islands non-CDQ TAC has been reported relative to 5% in 2020. The catch may be viewed [here](#).

In 2021, NMFS closed Pacific cod directed fishing for the AFA CP sector. Pacific cod incidental catch rates increased in March, and currently the AFA CP sector has exceeded the sector's Pacific cod annual allocation (2,571 mt) by 1,837 mt. NMFS prohibited retention of Pacific cod for the AFA CP sector on March 15, 2021. Also, the AFA CPs moved to areas with lower Pacific cod incidental catch. NMFS projects the AFA CP incidental catch of Pacific cod in the 2021 B season to be similar to 2020 at around 800 mt. NMFS will take the sector's overage into consideration before Pacific cod reallocations to other sectors.

BSAI Sector	2021				2020			
	A season allocation ¹	Catch Mar 27	A season closed	# of vessels Mar 27	A season allocation ¹	Catch Mar 28	A season closed	# of vessels Mar 28
CDQ ²	8,037	3,007	n/a	23	9,989	7,409	n/a	29
Hook-and-line CP	27,600	18,042	n/a	13	34,347	26,416	n/a	16
Pot CP	850	792	Jan 16	3	1,058	950	Jan 12	5
Pot CV >= 60 ft	4,761	4,376	Jan 21	21	5,924	5,272	Jan 15	38
Hook-and-line CV >= 60 ft	113	0	n/a	0	141	0	n/a	0
Hook-and-line/Pot CVs < 60 ft	3,122	3,292	Jan 26	26	3,433	3,508	Jan 19	40
Jig	39	0	n/a	0	500	0	n/a	0
Trawl CV	18,281	16,469	n/a	85	22,723	25,713	n/a	92
AFA CP	1,928	4,408	Jan 20	15	2,397	3,068	n/a	15
Amendment 80 CP	11,234	4,628	n/a	18	13,964	6,398	n/a	19
Total	75,965	55,014		204	94,476	78,733		256

¹In 2021, NMFS reallocated 900 mt, and in 2020 NMFS reallocated 667 mt of the A season jig allocation to the hook-and-line or pot gear less than 60 ft length annual allocation.

²Vessels fishing the CDQ sector are also in other sectors.

Pacific cod directed fishing - trawl CVs

The trawl CV sector voluntarily stood down until February 12, 2021 from directed fishing for Pacific cod. The stand down helped decrease halibut PSC relative to 2020 (-97 mt). Also for the A season, the trawl CV sector operated in a catch share agreement which decreased the A season Pacific cod catch rates relative to 2020. The B season opened April 1, 2021, and the B season trawl CV sector also will fish in a catch share agreement.

BSAI Flatfish (includes CDQ)

In 2021 relative to 2020, overall BSAI flatfish catch is lower. Most of the decrease in catch is for yellowfin sole, rock sole, and Alaska plaice. Most of the yellowfin sole decrease in catch is from the BSAI trawl limited access yellowfin sole fishery with 8 vessels reporting 5,759 mt relative to 10 vessels reporting 12,087 mt in 2020. The rock sole decrease in catch is mostly from the Amendment 80 sector, and the Alaska plaice decrease is mostly from less incidental catch in the Amendment 80 sector yellowfin sole fishery.

Species	2021			2020		
	Catch	TAC	% Taken	Catch	TAC	% Taken
Alaska plaice	7,384	24,500	30%	11,996	17,000	71%
Arrowtooth flounder	200	15,000	1%	161	10,000	2%
Flathead sole	1,772	25,000	7%	2,674	19,500	14%
Greenland turbot	3	6,025	0%	11	5,300	0%
Kamchatka flounder	20	8,982	0%	22	6,800	0%
Other flatfish	452	6,500	7%	1,018	4,000	25%
Rock sole	5,309	54,500	10%	11,273	47,100	24%
Yellowfin sole	37,368	200,000	19%	47,712	150,700	32%
Total	52,508	340,507	15%	74,867	260,400	29%

Note: Directed fishing for Arrowtooth flounder, Kamchatka flounder, and Greenland turbot opens at noon, May 1.

BSAI Atka mackerel and Pacific ocean perch (includes CDQ)

The non-CDQ trawl sablefish fishery is closed for directed fishing. Some incidental catch was recently reported, and action was taken to avoid the area.

Species	2021			2020		
	Catch	TAC	% Taken	Catch	TAC	% Taken
Atka mackerel	10,536	62,257	17%	10,426	59,305	18%
Pacific ocean perch	760	35,899	2%	486	42,875	1%
Non-CDQ Sablefish - Trawl	43	2,660	2%	8	1,332	1%

Blackspotted and Rougheye Rockfish

For 2021, the maximum species specific catch recommended in the Western Aleutian Islands is 31 mt. All sectors are requested to avoid blackspotted/rougheye rockfish. A [weekly report](#) is available to monitor total catch of blackspotted/rougheye rockfish in the Western Aleutian Islands.

Gulf of Alaska**Pacific cod**

In 2021, NMFS closed directed fishing for the A season for some sectors with Pacific cod allocations that are necessary to support incidental catch in other fisheries.

Western GOA – Hook-and-line CV, Trawl CP

Central GOA – Trawl CV, Trawl CP

In 2020, Pacific cod directed fishing in the GOA was closed for all sectors because the spawning biomass in the GOA was below 20 percent of the projected unfished spawning biomass.

Pacific cod - Western GOA

Sector	2021				2020			
	A season TAC	Catch Mar 27	A season closed	# of vessels Mar 27	A season TAC	Catch Mar 28	A season closed	# of vessels Mar 28
Hook-and-line CP	588	590	Mar 3	<3	218	0	Jan 1	0
Hook-and-line CV	38	0	Jan 1	0	14	0	Jan 1	0
Jig	117	26	n/a	<3	44	0	Jan 1	0
Pot CV/CP	1,068	1,027	Feb 3	13	397	0	Jan 1	0
Trawl CV	1,701	1,614	Mar 26	18	555	14	Jan 20	5
Trawl CP	49	0	Jan 20	0	18	0	Jan 20	0
Total	3,561	3,257		31	1,246	14		5

Pacific cod - Central GOA

Sector	2021				2020			
	A season TAC	Catch Mar 27	A season closed	# of vessels Mar 27	A season TAC	Catch Mar 28	A season closed	# of vessels Mar 28
Hook-and-line CP	416	283	n/a	<3	155	0	Jan 1	0
Hook-and-line CV <50 ft	945	960	Feb 5	33	351	1	Jan 1	3
Hook-and-line CV ≥50 ft	569	503	Mar 9	8	211	1	Jan 1	3
Jig	61	26	n/a	11	23	0	Jan 1	0
Pot CV/CP	1,808	1,579	Jan 22	15	672	0	Jan 1	0
Trawl CV	2,175	1,986	Jan 20	38	347	53	Jan 20	38
Trawl CP	203	0	Jan 20	0	75	37	Jan 20	<3
Total	6,117	5,336		105	1,834	92		44

Pollock

For Area 610, NMFS closed directed fishing for the A season on January 20, 2021 because the TAC does not support directed fishing.

The pollock fleet voluntarily stood down in Area 620 from January 20 to February 3 and for Area 630 from January 20 to about February 6, 2021. In Areas 620 and 630 the fleet developed a catch share agreement for the A season directed fishing allowances, and the fishing for the A season is almost done. Area 640 closed on March 9, 2021, and a small amount of the directed fishing allowance remained. The fishery opened April 1, 2021, and is expected to close soon.

2021 A season	610	620	630	640
A season allocation	799	41,737	6,297	5,412 (annual)
A season catch	212	38,808	5,031	4,752
A season closure	January 20	n/a	n/a	March 9 Reopened April 1

Chinook Salmon PSC Limits in the GOA

Total 2021 Chinook salmon PSC and rate is lower for the Central GOA pollock fisheries relative to 2020. The 2021 non-pollock trawl CV Chinook salmon PSC rate is high and exceeded the 2021 Chinook salmon PSC limit. Directed fishing for all non-pollock, non Rockfish Program trawl CVs closed March 26, 2021.

Chinook Salmon	2021 Limit	2021 PSC (Rate ¹)	2020 PSC (Rate ¹)
Total	n/a	7,392 (0.15)	8,974 (0.17)
Western GOA pollock	6,684	0	827 (1.43)
Central GOA pollock	18,316	4,057 (0.08)	8,146 (0.17)
Western/Central trawl CV ²	3,060	3,398 (1.74)	1 (0.0)
Central Rockfish Program CV	1,200	0	0
Western/Central trawl C/P ²	4,080	0	0

¹Rate is number of salmon per metric tons of groundfish.

²Includes incentive buffer for 2021 Western/Central trawl C/P limit (480 Chinook) and Western/Central trawl CV (360 Chinook).

Non-Chinook Salmon PSC in the GOA

Non-Chinook Salmon	2021 PSC (Rate)	2020 PSC (Rate)
Total All Sectors	48 (0.00)	104 (0.00)

Halibut Mortality Data

In the BSAI, the halibut mortality is lower relative to 2020, and the rate is a slightly higher. The decrease in 2021 halibut mortality is mostly from trawl CV Pacific cod target (-97 mt) because of the delayed start date to February 12, 2021 and slower pace of the fishery. Also there's been a halibut PSC decrease in the CP rock sole target (-45 mt) and CV yellowfin sole target (-51 mt) from less effort. There has been some increase in the CP pollock halibut PSC (48 mt). In the GOA, most of the decrease in 2021 is from no flatfish fishing in the GOA. There are some increases from 2021 with in the Pacific cod fisheries that were closed in 2020.

Area, Gear, and Sector	2021			2020		
	Halibut mortality	Groundfish	Rate	Halibut mortality	Groundfish	Rate
BSAI Total	520	577,202	0.09%	628	745,216	0.08%
Amendment 80	296	69,474	0.43%	308	83,984	0.37%
BSAI trawl limited access	191	416,280	0.05%	290	551,580	0.05%
Non-trawl Pacific cod	12	23,219	0.05%	14	33,514	0.04%
Non-trawl Other	0	0	0	0	0	0
CDQ	21	68,229	0.03%	16	76,138	0.02%
GOA Total	103	60,249	0.17%	175	62,200	0.28%
Trawl, Deep-water	0	0	0	158	3,698	0.41%
Trawl, Shallow-water	68	54,916	0.12%	15	56,421	0.28%
Hook-and-line	35	5,333	0.66%	2	2,082	0.12%