



B3: NMFS Briefings – Seabird Bycatch/Status Report

April 2021 Council meeting

Action Memo

Council Staff: Steve MacLean
Other Presenters: Dr. Joe Krieger (AFSC), Elizabeth Labunski (USFWS)
Action Required: 1. Review seabird bycatch and status report

BACKGROUND

At the February Council meeting the SSC requested an informational update on seabird status, beyond what it annually receives in the Ecosystem Status Reports. Communications with SSC members and the SSC co-chair identified a number of questions for the update including:

1. Shifts in seabird nesting or migratory patterns
2. Spatial or temporal shifts in seabird die-offs
3. Evidence of range shifts or changes in diversity
4. Spatial or temporal shifts in reproductive success
5. Changes in the species encountered by fisheries
6. Changes in the encounter rate for protected seabirds and albatrosses
7. Catches of rare albatrosses
8. Differences in the level of bycatch associated with large-scale climate patterns
9. Differences in the level of bycatch in warm and cold years in the GOA and heavy and light ice years in the BSAI

The Alaska Seabird Working Group has been meeting annually since established as part of the 2015 biological opinion on the effects of the GOA and BSAI groundfish fisheries on short-tailed albatross. The seabird working group reviews information for mitigating effects of fisheries on short-tailed albatross and other seabirds. Council staff forwarded this list of questions from the SSC to the seabird working group for them to consider at their annual meeting in March 2021. At this meeting NMFS, USFWS, and Council staff will provide information to answer the questions from the SSC, where possible, and provide information about research underway to address questions for which there is not an immediate answer available.