

Central Gulf of Alaska Rockfish Program 2023



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Alaska Groundfish Data Bank



Rockfish Program History

- **Pre-2007**: Rockfish fishery operated as a fast-paced 3-week race in July and directly conflicted with Kodiak's pink salmon fishery.
- **2007 – 2011**: The Rockfish Pilot Program (RPP) was a 5-year test program authorized by Congress from 2007-2011. It was successful and supported by industry.
- **2012 – 2021**: The RPP became the Rockfish Program (RP) when the Council reauthorized it for 10 years.
- **2021**: The Council reauthorized the RP again before the 2021 sunset date. There was no sunset date included in the 2021 reauthorized program.



Goals of the Rockfish Program

Economic benefits to Kodiak

- ✓ Provide a stable fishery as another part of the business plan for Kodiak's trawl fleet.
- ✓ Stabilize the processing work force by filling times of year with low processing volumes, particularly May and June. April will be included starting in 2025.
- ✓ Remove the processing timing conflict with salmon.
- ✓ Slow the fishery so more valuable products can be produced.
- ✓ More stability and work for Kodiak's processors and trawl fleet, in turn provides more work to support businesses, and helps the community overall.

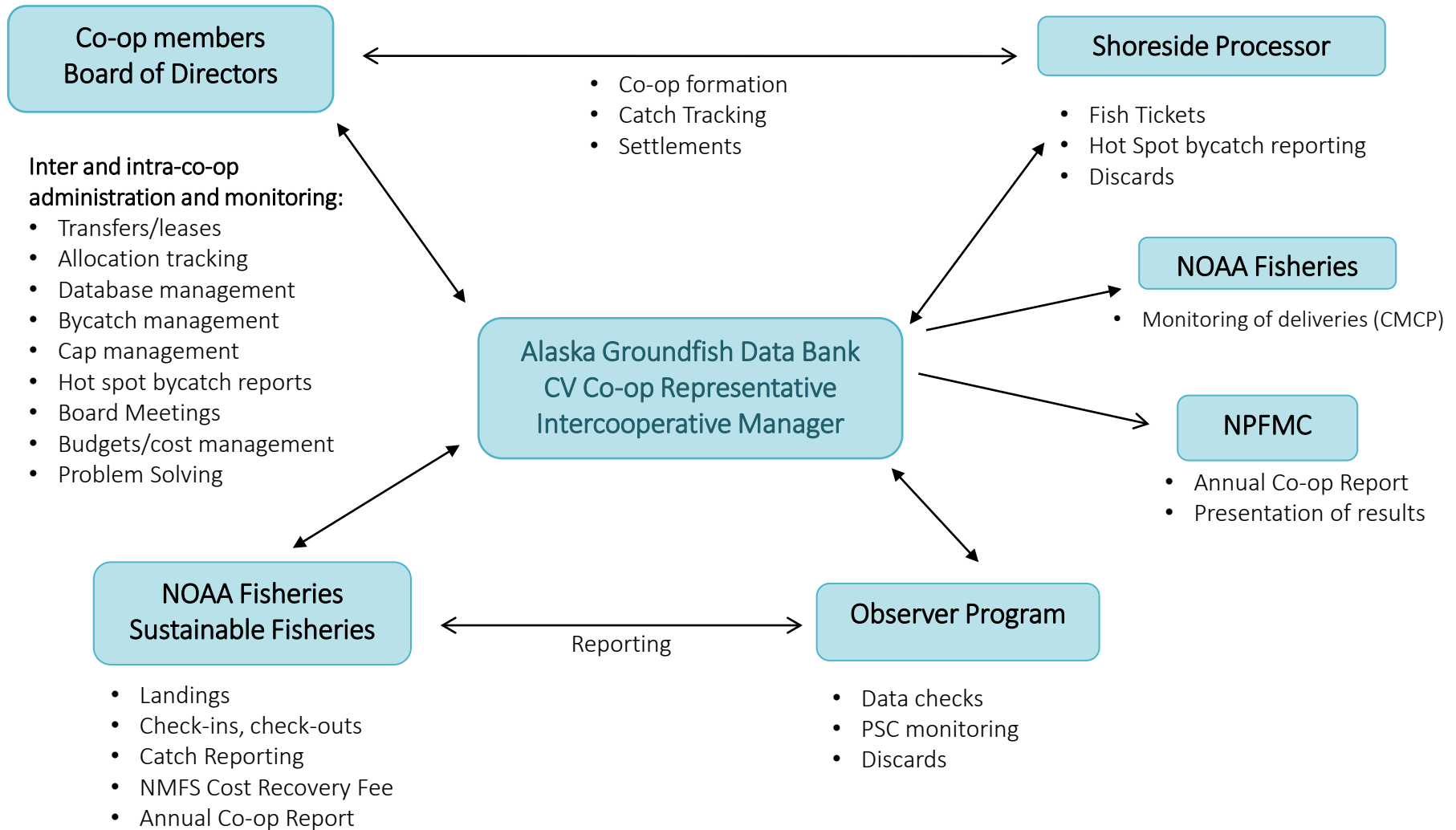




Cooperative Management

- Council sets the Rockfish Program objectives.
- Industry develops the internal rules and agreements to meet those objectives. Industry is responsible for co-op management and staying within allocations.
- NMFS oversees the harvest and Council objectives.
- Annual voluntary co-op reporting to the Council.
- Co-op structure builds cooperation amongst harvesters and processors so the entire industry is working together towards common goals.

Operations and Management of the Five CGOA Shoreside Cooperatives



CV Cooperative Fishery Allocations



Primary Species:

- Pacific Ocean Perch
- Northern Rockfish
- Dusky Rockfish

Secondary Species:

- Sablefish
- Pacific Cod
- Thornyhead Rockfish

Bycatch Cap for Halibut Mortality

Sector Bycatch Cap for Chinook

Monitoring Requirements

- 100% observer coverage for catcher vessels
- Catch Monitor and Control Plan (CMCP) required for shoreside processing plants and a CMCP monitor who monitors offloads
- Vessels must check in and out of the fishery
- Vessels must carry laptop for observer for faster data turnaround



Community & Conservation Measures

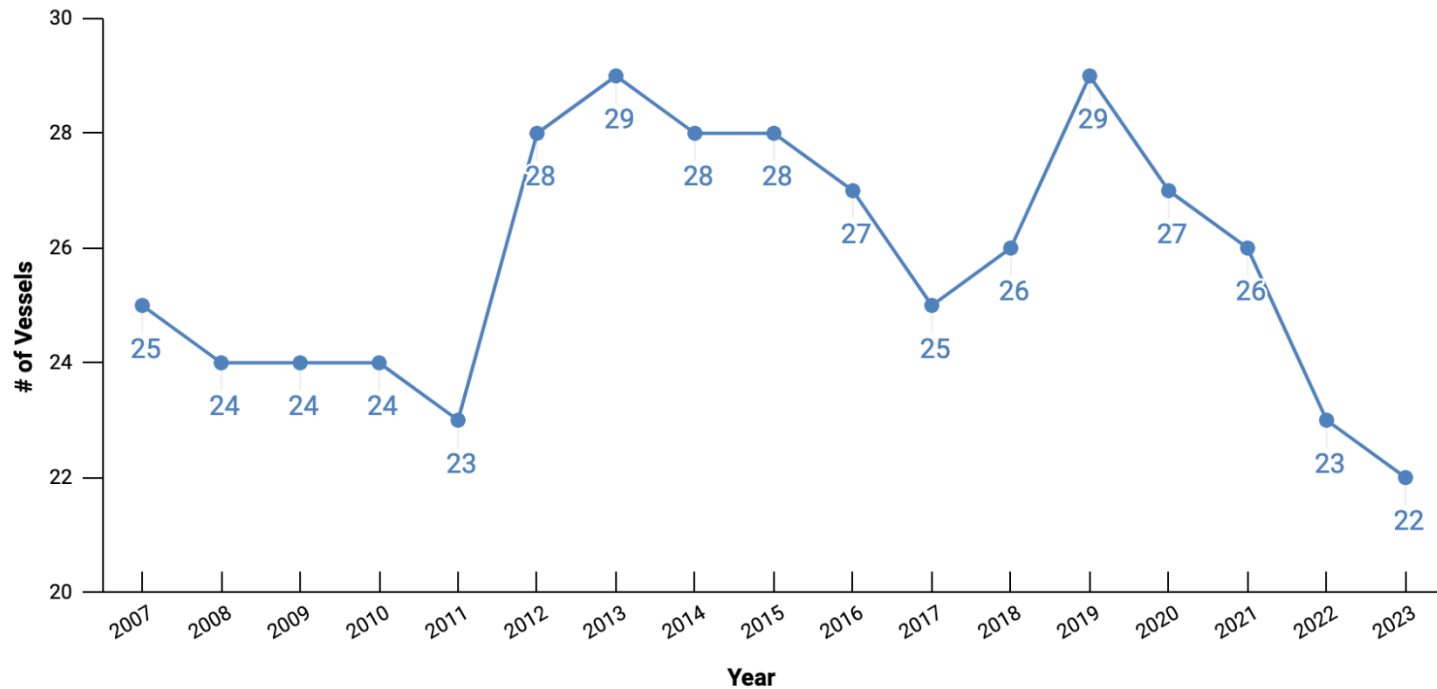
1. Port Landing Requirement: Maintains the historical landing pattern and protects Kodiak.
2. Transfers: No transfers from the CV sector to CP sector but transfers are allowed from CP sector to CV sector.
3. Caps: Ownership cap, Processor cap, & Vessel Use cap. A Cooperative Cap is still in effect, but it will be removed with upcoming regulatory package.
4. Cost Recovery Fee: Maximum 3% of the ex-vessel value. The fee was 3.00% in 2023, up from 2.53% in 2022, and 2.77% in 2021.
5. 100% Retention Requirement:
 - No at-sea discards allowed for coop species
 - All salmon must be retained
 - Halibut must still be discarded at sea

Status Update on Rockfish Program Modifications

- Council took Final Action in June 2022 on 4 requested Rockfish Program amendments:
 - 1.) Change season start date from May 1st to April 1st
 - 2.) Increase the processing cap from 30% to 40%
 - 3.) Modify the harvesting cap to 8% of POP, rather than 8% of primary rockfish
 - 4.) Remove the cooperative holding cap
- March 29th Status of FMP Amendments from NMFS shows that it was sent to HQ for Review on 3/19/24.
- The 30% processing cap continues to constrain the fishery, but the Regulatory Amendment should be in place in time to provide relief for the 2024 fishery.
- The lack of April 1 start date also continues to cause problems for processors and vessels because without a flatfish fishery, there is a large gap between pollock and rockfish.

Vessel Participation

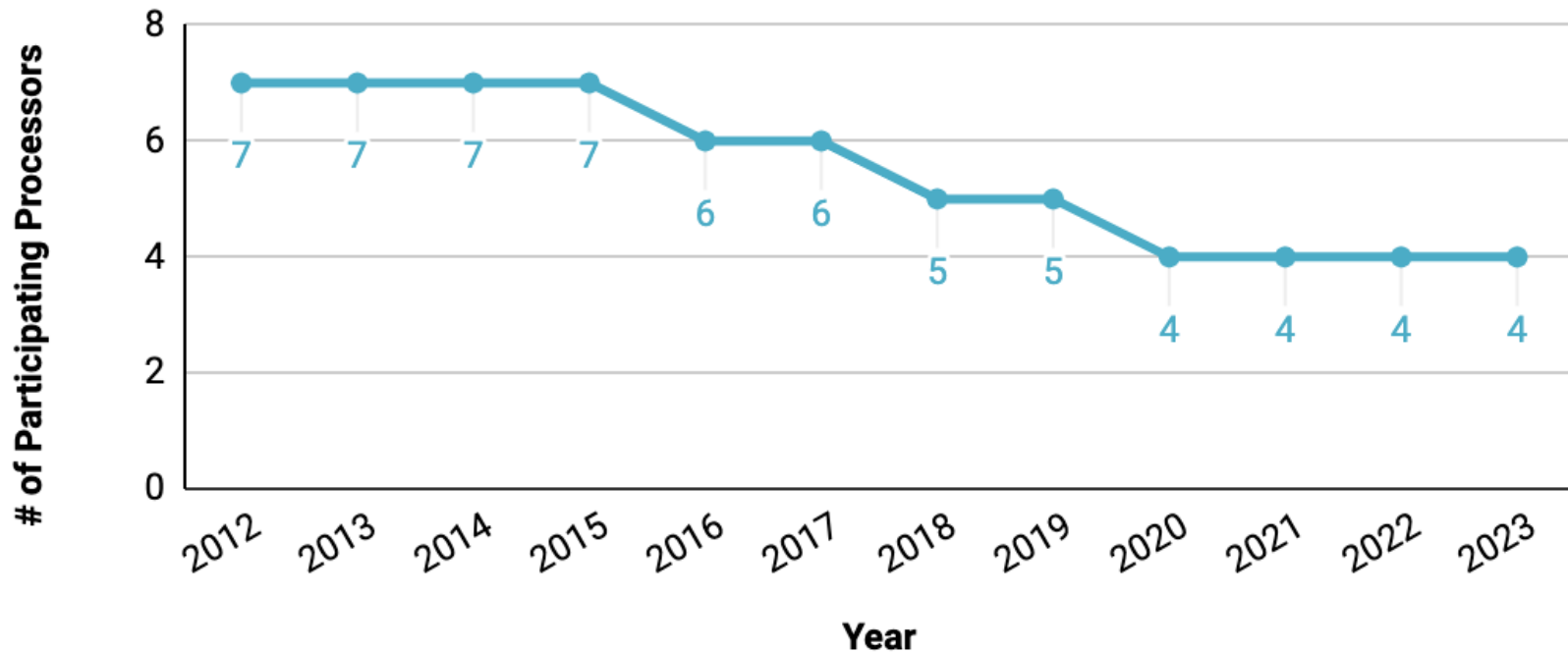
Number of Vessels that completed at least one RP trip, 2007-2023



- There are 46 CV LLP's in the program, and from 2012-2021 an average of 27 vessels participated each year.
- Participation has dropped in the last couple years due to price and market issues.
- Minimal consolidation since 2007. Some LLPs are associated with vessels that don't exist anymore or have a small amount of quota that they lease to other participants.
- 2023 was the lowest participation in the history of the program.
- Lack of participation was due to global markets and processor availability (more on this later).

Processor Consolidation

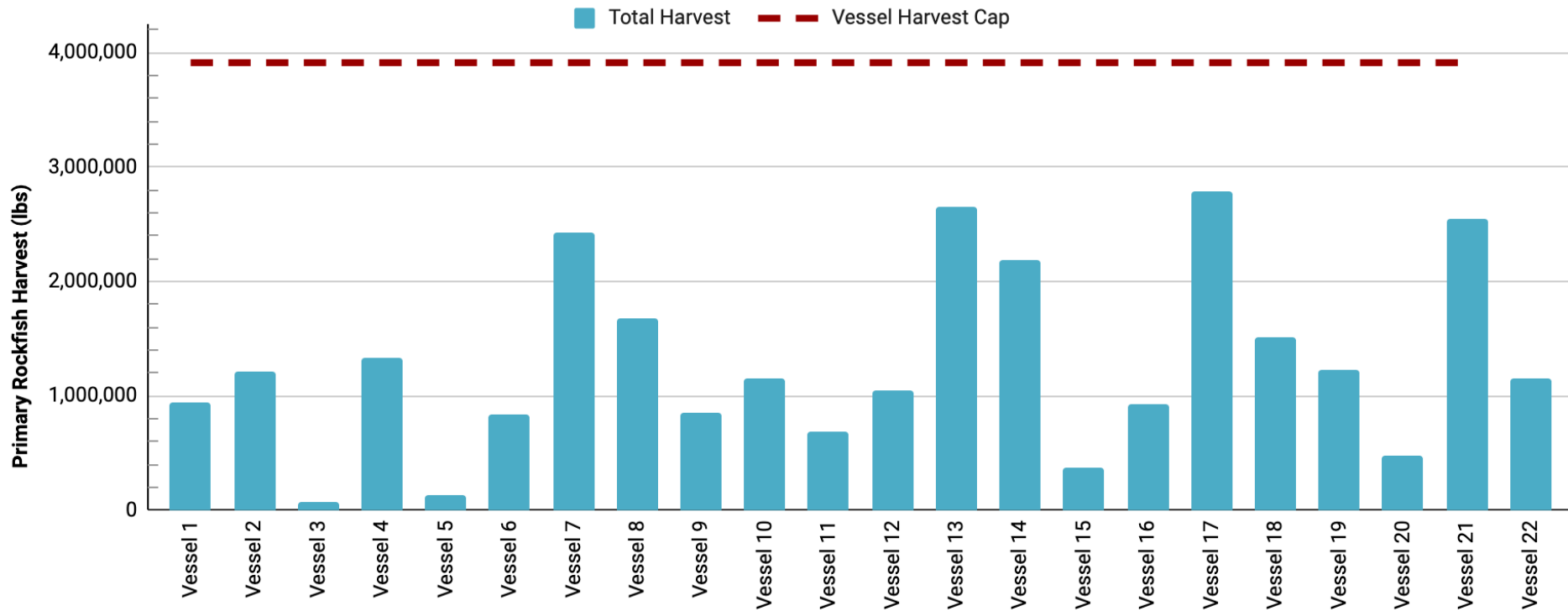
Number of active, qualified rockfish processors 2012-2023



- Four Processors have been active and participated since 2020.
- However, it's important to note that processor participation has been less than four processors in late Fall (after pollock) for last 3 years due to processor maintenance schedules and global market issues.

8% Primary Rockfish Vessel Harvest Cap

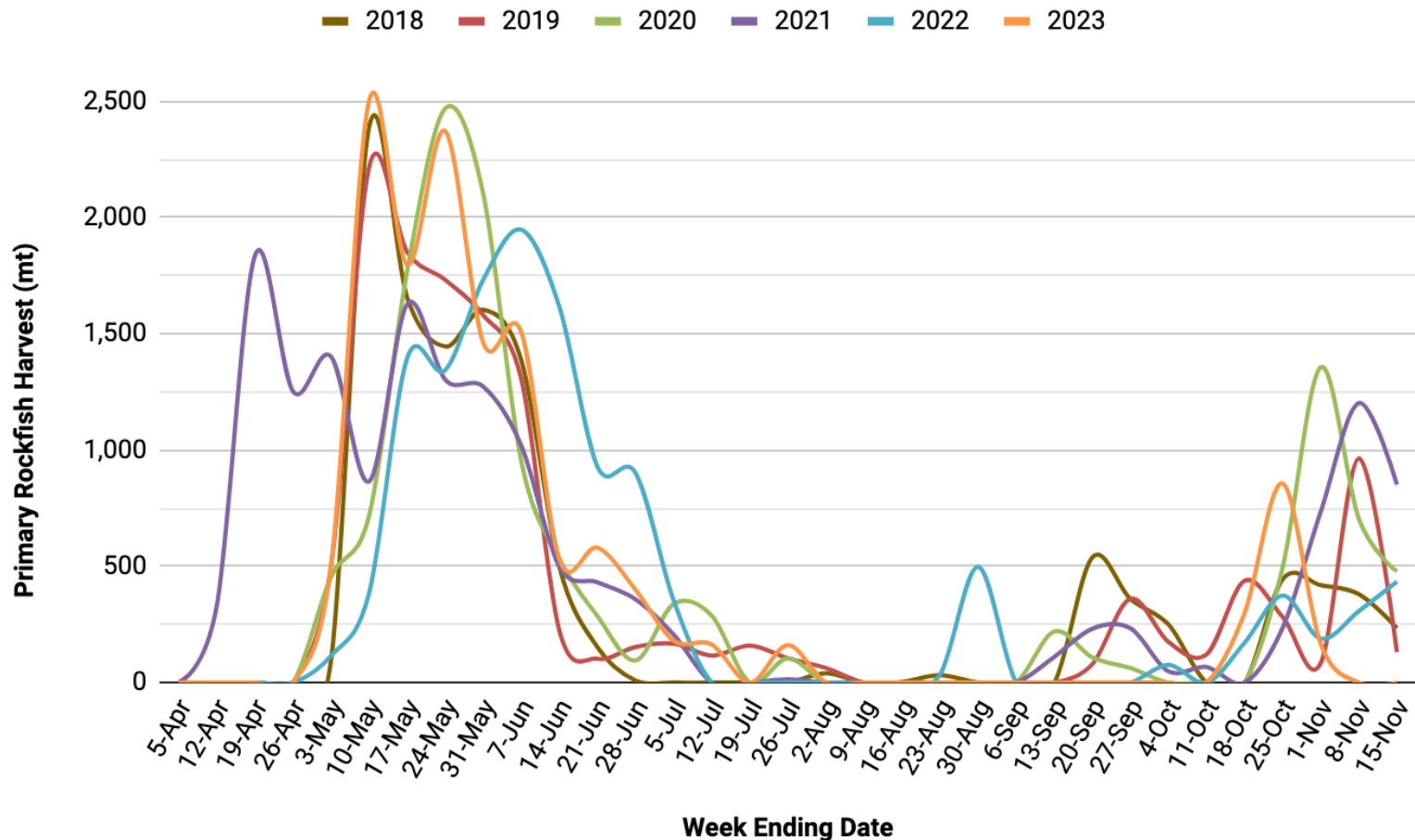
Vessel Primary Rockfish Harvests vs the 3,911,520 lbs Vessel Harvest Cap in 2023



Individual Vessels Active in 2023

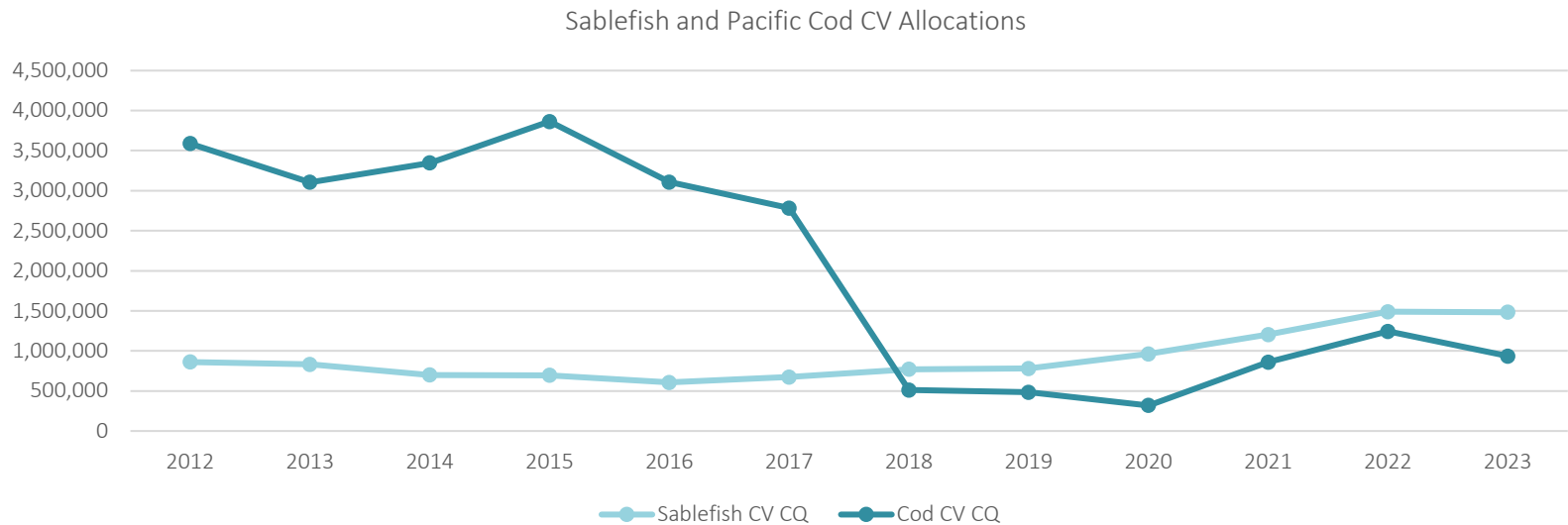
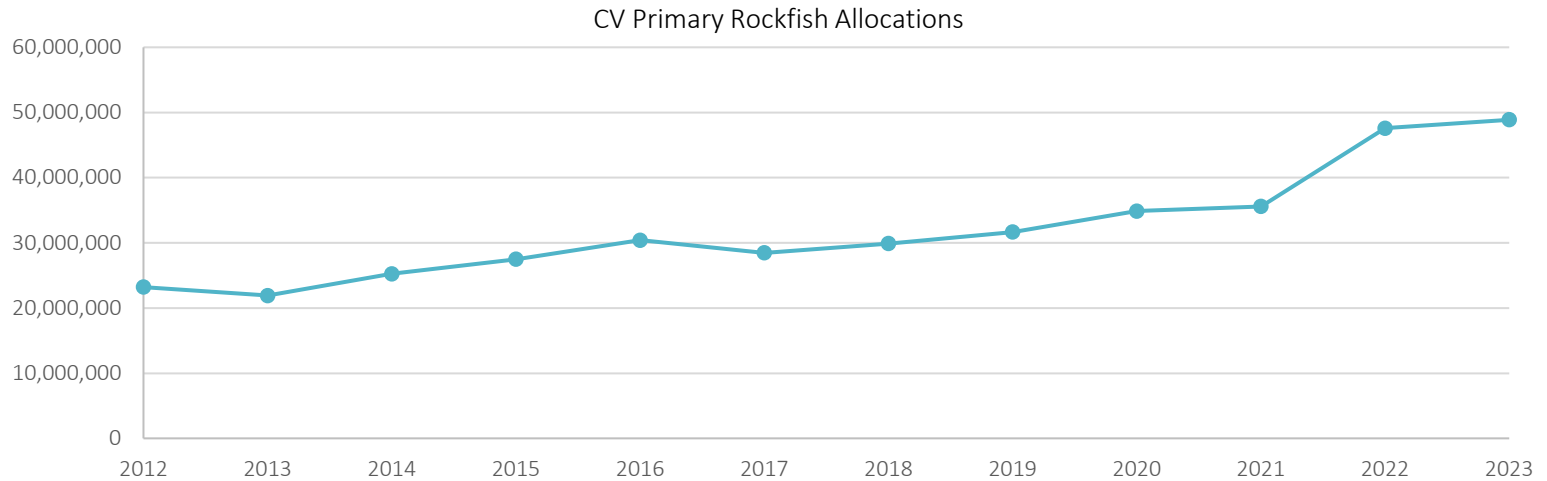
- No vessels constrained by the Vessel Harvest cap in 2023. This is largely due to markets, price, and a lack of Fall fishing.
- All 22 vessels who fished in 2023 targeted at least one trip of primary rockfish. By comparison, in 2022 there were 23 vessels participated, but three of those only caught their secondary species.

Primary Rockfish Landings by week, 2018-2023



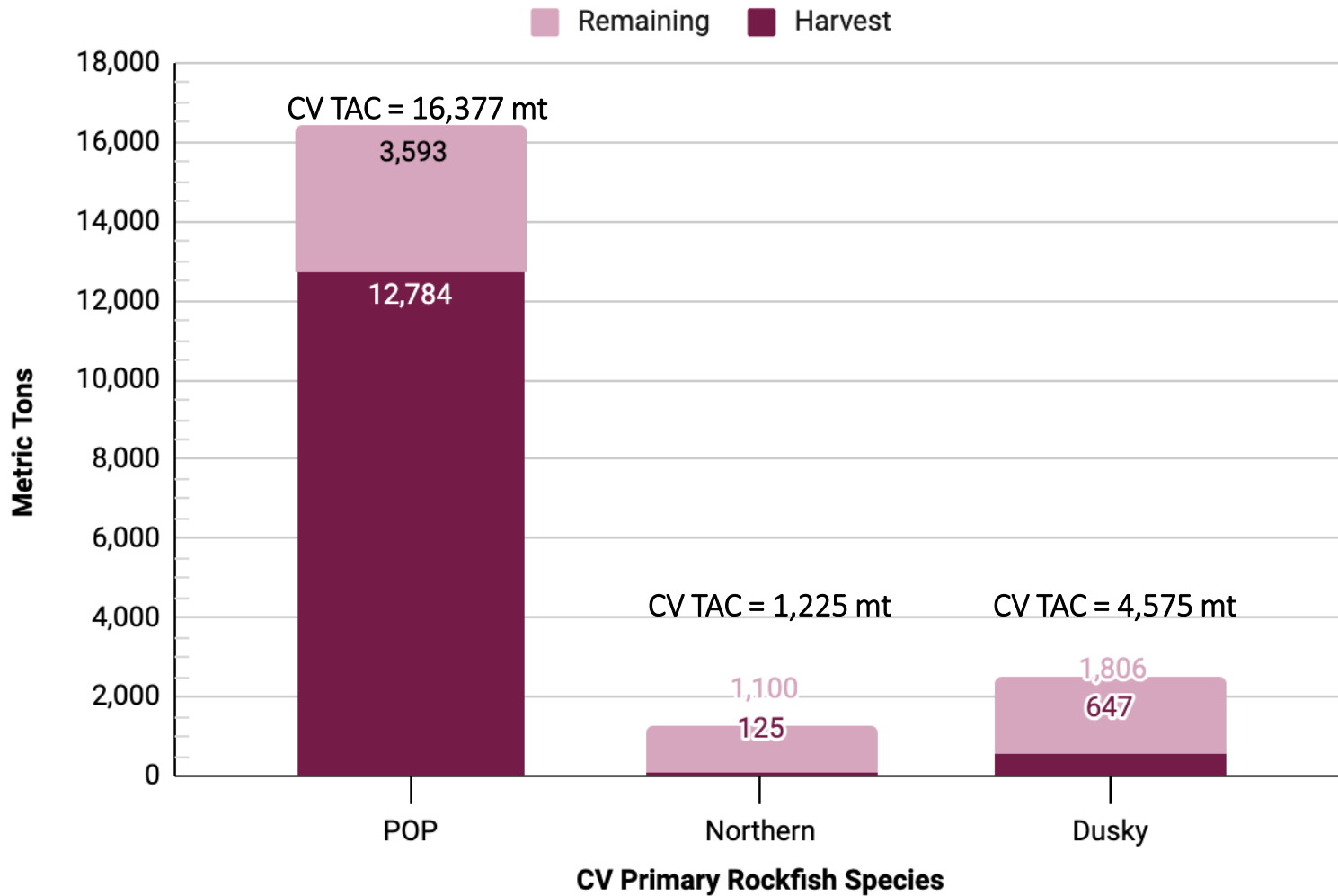
- May harvest was typical in 2023, with decent harvest into June.
- Minimal summer harvest and a bump at the end of Oct with no harvest in Nov. There is typically more harvest in Nov once pollock closes.
- Note: Season started on April 1 in 2021 due to Emergency Rule.

Changing Rockfish Program CV Allocations 2012-2023

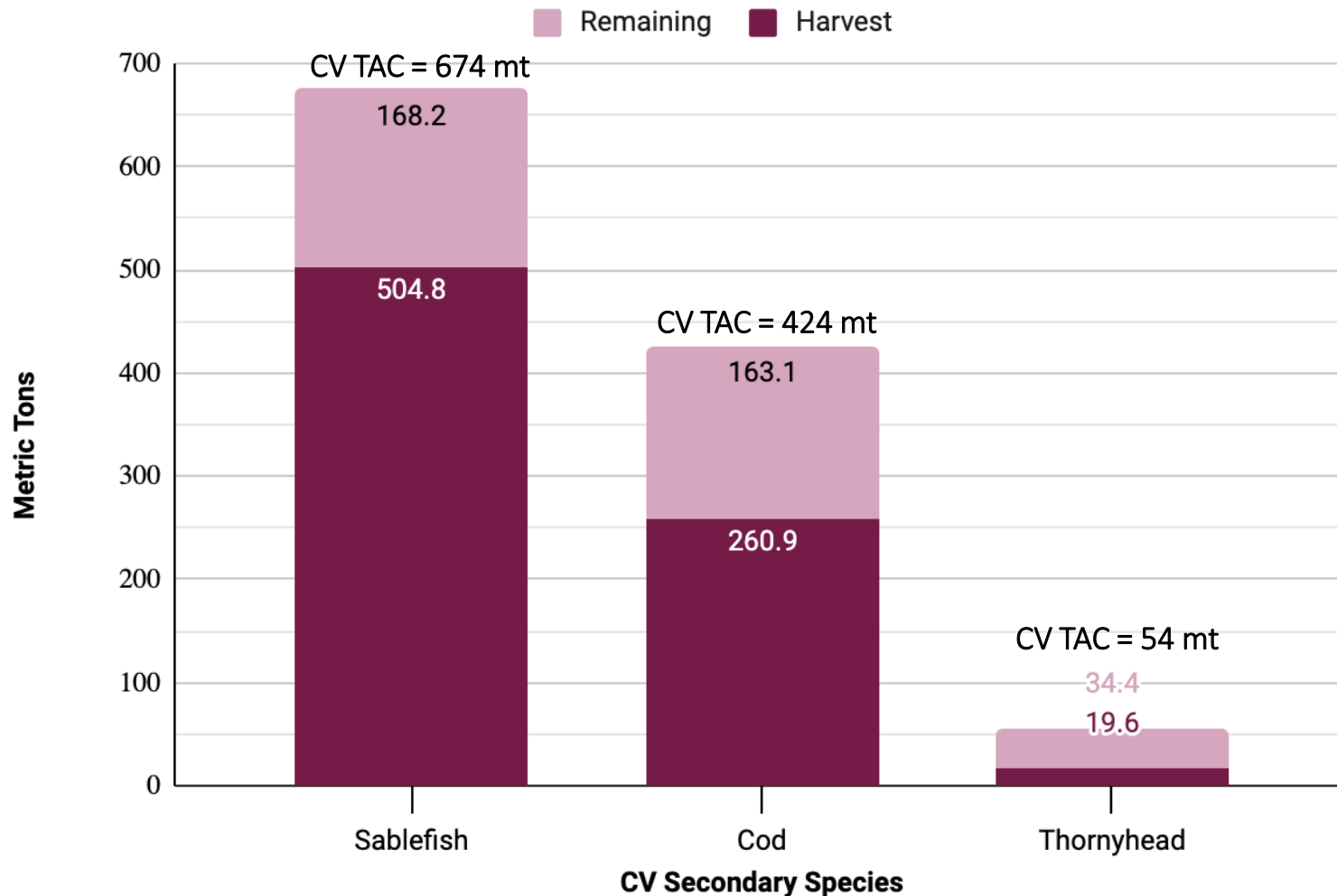


2023 CV Co-Op Primary Rockfish Harvest

(Processors prefer POP and it's easier to harvest, compared to Northern and Dusky RF)



2023 CV Co-Op Secondary Species Harvest



Note: Thorny are not targeted due to low TAC

Factors Affecting RP Harvest

- Collapse of global seafood markets
- Rockfish & Sablefish Prices – RP species take more effort/fuel to harvest so when prices fall it's not economically viable to harvest.
- Processor availability: processing caps are limiting for sablefish and cod, processors are shortening time frame for when they buy RP.
- In 2023, all of Kodiak's buyers stopped buying all species/gear types on Nov 1 (RP open until Nov 15th).
- For 2024, over half the fleet won't have a Rockfish market and other processors aren't sure how much they'll buy.



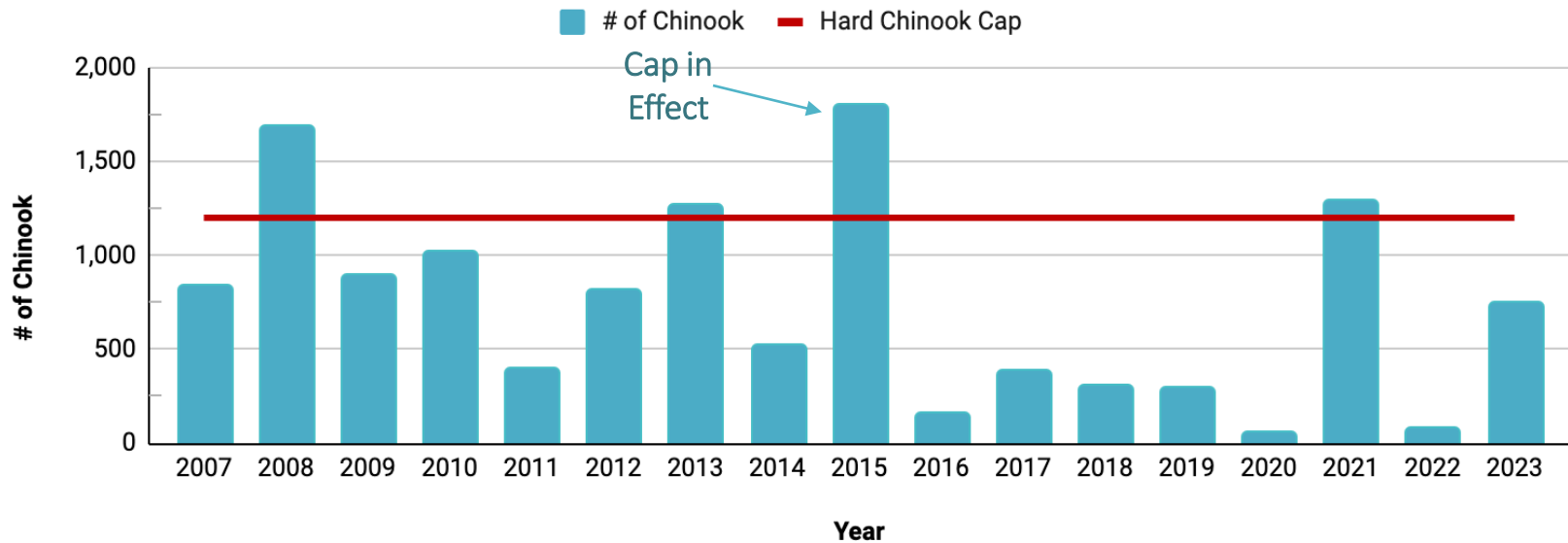
RP Shoreside Chinook Bycatch Management

- Amendment 97 became effective in 2015 and placed a hard cap of 1,200 Chinook on the CV rockfish program sector.
- Chinook counts are based on extrapolated at-sea basket samples, not observer census counts at the plant like the pollock fishery.
- The 1,200 Chinook are allocated at the fleet level, not allocated to the individual vessel level.
- When the 1,200 Chinook cap was put into place, the RP CVs had ~12,400 mt of Primary Rockfish TAC, and now there is ~21,000 mt of Primary Rockfish TAC to harvest while staying under the cap.
- To prevent exceeding the cap, we manage the fishery based on fish ticket counts.

Inter-cooperative Salmon Bycatch Avoidance Agreement

- The Avoidance Agreement is part of the Annual Inter-cooperative Agreement that all five cooperatives sign on to each year.
- The Agreement controls individual vessel behavior to keep the co-ops under the sector's Chinook Cap.
- From 2015 – 2023 the Agreement has contained 3 parts:
 1. **Slow Fishery Start:** 2 Vessels from each Coop start fishing, and more vessels can't enter the fishery until a vessel has received a green light rate.
 2. **Red/Yellow/Green Light Rates:** Vessels are not allowed to leave the dock until they have received their Chinook count and rate (chinook/mt).
 - Vessels are “green”, “yellow-lighted”, or “red-lighted” based on their Chinook bycatch rate and the rate table for that month.
 - Red-lighted Vessels must stand down.
 3. **Salmon Hotspot Alerts:** Hotspot alerts are distributed to the fleet with haul information for deliveries over 15 Chinook (down from 20 Chinook in 2022).

CGOA RP CV Chinook PSC Catch, 2007-2023



Year	Chinook (no.)	Rockfish Harvest (mt)	Rate (Chinook/mt)
2015	1,802	10,768	0.167
2016	159	13,026	0.012
2017	387	9,444	0.041
2018	304	11,936	0.025
2019	297	12,644	0.023
2020	52	13,566	0.004
2021	1,290	16,138	0.080
2022	78	12,804	0.006
2023	743	13,556	0.055
Average	738	10,400	0.071

Chinook Management Looking Forward

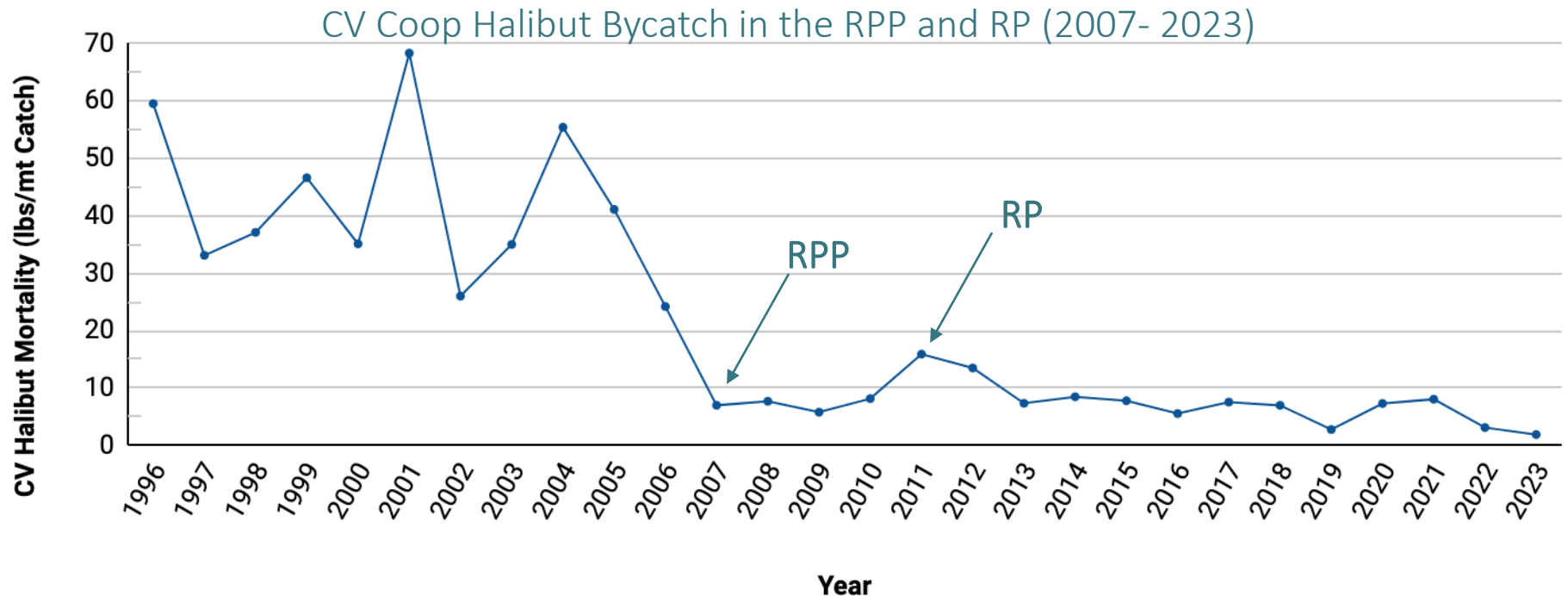
- Prosecuting the fishery is getting more difficult, because there are increasing numbers of salmon on the grounds and more groundfish to catch.
- For 2024, the Inter-cooperative has started working proactively to address Chinook bycatch prior to the fishery opening.
- A special Inter-cooperative meeting was held in March to begin addressing changes to the Agreement for 2024.
- The Inter-cooperative Board voted to require salmon excluders on all Rockfish-target trips with pelagic gear beginning in the 2024 fishery and excluders will be required on non-pelagic Rockfish-target trips beginning in the 2025 fishery.
- We are looking at other changes to the measures in the Agreement for 2024, which will be voted on at the April Inter-coop meeting.

Chinook Management Looking Forward

- Requiring salmon excluders in the CGOA RP is a proactive move for the fishery.
- Most research on salmon excluders has focused on pollock fisheries; excluders are not well-studied in rockfish fisheries.
- Rockfish are very “sticky” in a net and POP can easily clog a salmon excluder. When fishing is good, it’s easy to blow up a codend with a clogged salmon excluder.
- Not all salmon excluder designs work well for rockfish.
- Some members of the co-ops were concerned about the expense and investment, the ability to successfully target rockfish with an excluder, and the risk of POP clogging the net.
- The fleet is planning to work together to build one successful design that is fairly cheap and uses old web to make sure everyone is ready to comply with the Agreement.

Halibut PSC Management

- A conservation goal in forming the Rockfish Program was to reduce halibut bycatch. The Inter-cooperative Halibut Bycatch Management Plan pools halibut allocations at the Cooperative level and sets acceptable Halibut bycatch rates by target fishery.
- Rates strike balance between ensuring RP allocations can be fully harvested while also reducing halibut bycatch.
- Individual accountability: If a vessel exceeds halibut standards, they **must stop fishing** until the vessel's fishing practices can be assessed.



Rockfish Program Halibut Savings CV & CP

- **Initial Allocation:**
 - The halibut allocation to the RP was reduced to 87.5% of the historical usage, which resulted in a savings of 12.5% or 27 mt, not to be used in any fishery.
- **2023 Halibut PSC Use:**
 - RP Halibut PSC cap is 191 mt and 39 mt was taken with 152 mt remaining (CV & CP combined).
- **Total Savings:**
 - In 2023 the Rockfish Program saved a total of 179 mt of halibut.
- **CV Coops Halibut Mortality:**
 - In 2023, the CVs had 25,845 lbs of halibut mortality or 1.8 lbs of halibut per metric ton of RP harvest.

Monitoring Improvements

Testing Electronic Monitoring in the CGOA RP

- **2023 Pilot:** Successfully tested catch handling and data review protocols to ensure salmon retention and quantify and enumerate both halibut PSC discards and regulatory discards on 3 pilot vessels.
- **2024 Pilot:** Continue vessel component, expanding to 5 pilot vessels, continue collecting pilot data with minor tweaks. Begin shoreside Component at Plants:
 - Placing observers as “shoreside samplers” to begin testing shoreside data collection.
 - Will also test using cameras to monitor for salmon compliance in the plants.
- **2025 and Beyond:** Planning for Exempted fishing permit and ultimately moving towards a regulated EM Program.





Questions?