

C-2 Chum Salmon Bycatch

Council motion

April 8, 2024

The Council revises the alternatives for an initial review analysis as follows. Staff should include SSC recommendations in the next draft as practicable. Additions are in **bold/underline** and deletions are in ~~strikeout~~. Alternatives and options are not mutually exclusive unless otherwise indicated below. The Council supports moving previous Alternative 3 to the “Alternatives Considered but not Moved Forward” section of the Draft EIS given that inseason data are not available to implement this alternative.

Alternative 1: Status Quo

~~All action~~ Alternatives 2- 4 apply to the entire Bering Sea pollock B season, the season in which chum salmon are taken as bycatch (prohibited species catch or PSC).

Alternative 2: Overall bycatch (PSC) limit for chum salmon

~~Option 1:~~ Chum salmon PSC limit based on historical total bycatch numbers: range of **100,000** ~~200,000 (~17,100 35,400~~ Western Alaska chum salmon) to 550,000 (~~~94,050 97,350~~ Western Alaska chum salmon). **All non-Chinook salmon taken as bycatch during the B season would accrue to the limit, regardless of origin.**

PSC limits are apportioned among CDQ, catcher processor, mothership and inshore sectors (using a blended adjusted CDQ bycatch rate as with Amendment 91, with the exception of Option 4) based on:

Option 1: historical total bycatch by sector using the 3-year average (2020 – 2022)

Option 2: historical total bycatch by sector using the 5-year average (2018 – 2022)

Option 3: pro rata 25% AFA pollock allocation and 75% historical total bycatch (2020 – 2022)

Option 4: pro rata based on AFA pollock allocation

The sector limits are further apportioned at the **CDQ group and inshore** cooperative level in proportion to each **CDQ group and inshore** cooperative’s pollock allocation. Chum salmon PSC can be transferred **among** between sectors, **CDQ groups**, and **among vessels within a inshore** cooperatives. Reaching a limit closes the pollock fishery sector to which the limit applies.

Alternative 3: Overall bycatch (PSC) limit for chum salmon triggered by a Western Alaska chum salmon abundance index

Indices based on the prior year’s chum salmon abundance. ~~Sub~~Options below are mutually exclusive.

All non-Chinook salmon taken as bycatch during the B season would accrue to the limit (based on the range specified in Alternative 2), regardless of origin.

~~Suboption~~ **Option 1: Three-area chum salmon index based on Yukon River summer + Yukon River fall run abundance (suboptions: 1,713,300 or 2,781,400 950,000 + 575,000); Kuskokwim River composed of the Bethel test fishery CPUE (suboptions: 2,800 or 5,200); Norton Sound composed of summed escapement for the Snake, Nome, Eldorado, Kwiniuk, and North Rivers and total Norton Sound harvest (suboptions: 57,300 or 91,500-57,000).**

If 3/3 areas are above index threshold, no chum salmon PSC limit the following year.

If 2/3 areas are above index threshold, chum salmon PSC limit the following year is ~~×~~ **(suboptions: 100,000 to 550,000)**.

If 1 or no areas are above index threshold, chum salmon PSC limit the following year is **75% of the above limit.**

~~Suboption~~ **Option 2:** Chum salmon index based on Yukon River summer **(suboptions: 1,268,700 or 1,978,400)** + Yukon River fall run abundance **(suboptions: 444,600 or 803,000)**.

~~Suboption 2a:~~ Yukon River summer chum salmon (950,000)

~~If index is above threshold, chum salmon PSC limit the following year is X.~~

~~If index is below threshold, chum salmon PSC limit the following year is X.~~

~~Suboption 2b:~~ Yukon River summer chum salmon (950,000) and fall chum salmon (575,000)

~~If 2/2 areas are above index threshold, no chum salmon PSC limit the following year.~~

~~If 1 or no areas are above index threshold, chum salmon PSC limit the following year is~~ **×(suboptions: 100,000 to 550,000)**.

Option 3 (must be selected with Option 1 or 2): PSC limits are apportioned among CDQ, catcher processor, mothership and inshore sectors (using a blended adjusted CDQ bycatch rate as with Amendment 91, **with the exception of Option 4**) based on:

Suboption 1: historical total bycatch by sector using the 3-year average (2020 – 2022)

Suboption 2: historical total bycatch by sector using the 5-year average (2018 – 2022)

Suboption 3: pro rata 25% AFA pollock allocation and 75% historical total bycatch (2020 – 2022)

Suboption 4: pro rata based on AFA apportionment **pollock allocation**

Further apportionments and transfer provisions are the same as Alternative 2.

~~The sector limits are further apportioned at the cooperative level in proportion to each cooperative's pollock allocation. Chum salmon PSC can be transferred between sectors and among vessels within a cooperative. Reaching a limit closes the pollock fishery sector to which the limit applies.~~

Alternative 3: Chum salmon PSC limit with an associated Western Alaska chum salmon bycatch annual limit.

~~Establish an annual limit of 40,000 to 53,000 Western Alaska chum salmon PSC based on the 3-year average 2020-2022 range of historical bycatch numbers and an overall chum salmon PSC limit from Alternative 2. Both the overall PSC limit and the Western Alaska chum salmon annual limit will be apportioned according to the options considered under Alternative 2.~~

~~Each sector's portion of an overall chum salmon PSC limit of (option 1: 450,000 and option 2: 550,000) is in effect. If a sector exceeds its western AK chum salmon PSC annual limit in any three of seven consecutive years, the sector's portion of an overall chum salmon PSC limit of (option 1: 200,000 and~~

option 2: 300,000) is in effect until Western Alaska chum salmon PSC does not exceed the sector annual limit for three years.

Alternative 4: Additional regulatory requirements for Incentive Plan Agreements (IPAs) to be managed within the IPAs.

Establish the following IPA provisions in regulation:

Incorporate industry proposed measures developed to further prioritize avoidance of areas and times of highest proportion of Western Alaska and Upper/Middle Yukon chum salmon stocks and analyze chum salmon avoided and operational tradeoffs.

Include in the IPA regulatory language at 50 CFR 679.21(f)(12)(iii)(E) the following additive changes. These requirements would be added to the existing federal regulations for IPAs at 50 CFR 679.21(f)(12), and the annual reporting requirements at § 679.21(f)(13) would still apply.

1. **Require the pollock sectors to describe in their IPA how historical genetic stock composition data are included in chum salmon avoidance measures.**
2. **Require the pollock sectors to describe in their IPAs how they monitor for potential chum salmon avoidance closures more than once per week.**
3. **Require the use of salmon excluders for the duration of A and B season.**
4. **Require the pollock sectors to develop chum salmon vessel outlier provisions and implement within their IPA.**
5. **Require IPAs to provide weekly salmon bycatch reports to Western and Interior Alaska salmon users to allow for more transparency in reporting.**
6. **Require the pollock sector IPAs to prohibit fishing in bycatch avoidance areas for all vessels regardless of performance when ADFG weekly stat area bycatch rates exceed 5 chum per ton of pollock (CP) and 3 times base rate (CV and MS).**

Option 1: Require a chum salmon reduction plan agreement to prioritize avoidance in genetic cluster areas 1 and 2 for a specified amount of time based on two triggers being met: 1) an established chum salmon incidental catch rate and 2) historical genetic composition (proportion) of Western Alaska chum salmon to non Western Alaska chum salmon.

Option 2: Additional regulatory provisions requiring Incentive Plan Agreements to utilize the most refined genetics information available to further prioritize avoidance of areas and times of highest proportion of Western Alaska and Upper/Middle Yukon chum salmon stocks.

Industry should submit a detailed proposal of IPA changes under Alternative 4 for inclusion into the Initial Review analysis prior to the February Council meeting. The proposals should consider a process to include local and traditional knowledge from Western and Interior Alaska salmon users in the development of IPA measures. The following is a list of potential measures that could be developed for incorporation into the IPAs and/or through regulation.

- Option 1 trigger 1 and trigger 2 values
- Adjusted base rates to implement a closure
- Adjusted closure area size
- Adjusted closure duration
- Application of the closures to all vessels not just those above the base rate
- Genetic data

- Genetic cluster thresholds
- Additional vessel level incentives/penalties for chum salmon avoidance

Alternative 5: Inseason Corridor Cap

PSC cap on total chum salmon in corridor area¹ during June 10 to August 31. Cap range of 50,000 total chum salmon (~8,550 Western Alaska chum salmon) to 200,000 total chum salmon (~34,200 Western Alaska chum salmon). All non-Chinook salmon bycatch accrues to area-specific caps, regardless of origin. If the cap is reached during the time period, the area closes to that sector(s) for the rest of the time period. Caps and area closures are set in federal regulations. Additional windows for salmon passage and other avoidance measures should be implemented inseason through the contracted Incentive Plan Agreements using inseason fishery data and best available genetic data.

Corridor Area (Options 1 – 3 are mutually exclusive):

Option 1: Cluster 1

Option 2: Unimak area

Option 3: Cluster 2. If selected, cluster 2 cap is 50,000 or 100,000 total chum salmon. (~8,550 or 17,100 Western Alaska chum salmon)

Apportionment

PSC caps is apportioned among CDQ, catcher processor, mothership and inshore sectors based on:

Suboption 1: historical bycatch in the area by sector using the 3-year average (2020 – 2022)

Suboption 2: historical bycatch in the area by sector using the 5-year average (2018 – 2022)

Suboption 3: pro rata 25% AFA pollock allocation and 75% historical bycatch in the area (2020–2022)

Suboption 4: pro rata based on AFA pollock allocation

Further apportionments and transfer provisions are the same as Alternative 2.

¹ Cluster 1 and 2 refer to the genetic cluster areas reported by the Alaska Fisheries Science Center Auke Bay Lab in the annual genetic reports. Unimak area is ADFG statistical areas 625531, 635501, 635504, 635530, 645434, 645501, 645502, 645530, 655406, 655407, 655408, 655409, 655410, 655430, 655500, 655530, 655335, 655336, 655401, 655403, 655404.