

MEMORANDUM

TO: Council, SSC and AP Members

FROM: Chris Oliver *DO for*  
Executive Director

DATE: November 27, 2012

SUBJECT: Salmon PSC – GOA Chinook bycatch for non-pollock trawl fisheries

ESTIMATED TIME  
24 HOURS  
(all C-2 items)

ACTION REQUIRED

(c) Initial review on GOA Chinook bycatch for non-pollock trawl fisheries

BACKGROUND

This analysis evaluates management measures to address Chinook salmon bycatch or prohibited species catch (PSC) in the GOA non-pollock trawl fisheries. An initial review draft of the proposed amendment was mailed to the Council in mid-November 2012, and the Executive Summary is attached as Item C-2(c)(1).

The alternatives included in the initial review document are specific to the GOA non-pollock trawl fisheries occurring in the Western and Central GOA, and include setting Chinook salmon PSC limits for these fisheries, and requiring full retention of all salmon species. The document analyzes four potential PSC limits, ranging from a maximum of 5,000 to 12,500 Chinook salmon per year. The Council may choose to apply a Chinook salmon PSC limit to the Western and Central GOA as a whole, or to apportion the selected PSC limit either by regulatory area, by operational type (catcher vessels and catcher/processor), or by operational type within each regulatory area. Attaining the PSC limit would result in a groundfish fishery closure for the remainder of the year, for that portion of the GOA non-pollock trawl fishery to which the limit applies.

Staff has also provided supplementary material for the Regulatory Impact Review (RIR; Section 4.7.1 of the initial review document). These additional tables further illustrate the range of potential direct effects that are associated with the implementation of a Chinook salmon PSC limit. Tables S-1 to S-8, attached as Item C-2(c)(2), estimate the maximum impact of a PSC limit on gross first wholesale revenues from GOA non-pollock trawl harvest.



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## Executive Summary

This document analyzes proposed management measures that would apply to all trawl fisheries in the Central and Western Gulf of Alaska (GOA), except the directed pollock fishery. The measures under consideration include: setting prohibited species catch (PSC) limits in the Central and Western GOA for Chinook salmon (*Oncorhynchus tshawytscha*), which would close fisheries in those regulatory areas once attained, and full retention of salmon species. Implementation of the management measures evaluated in this analysis would require an amendment to the Fishery Management Plan for Groundfish of the Gulf of Alaska (GOA Groundfish FMP), as well as amendments to implementing regulations.

## Problem Statement

The Council adopted the following problem statement in February 2012.

*Magnuson-Stevens Act National Standards require balancing achieving optimum yield with minimizing bycatch, while minimizing adverse impacts on fishing dependent communities. Chinook salmon prohibited species catch (PSC) taken incidentally in GOA trawl fisheries is a concern, and incidental take is limited in the Biological Opinion for ESA-listed Chinook salmon stocks. The Council recently adopted a PSC limit of 25,000 Chinook salmon for the Western and Central GOA pollock trawl fisheries, while also indicating an intent to evaluate Chinook salmon bycatch in the non-pollock GOA trawl fisheries, which currently do not have a Chinook salmon bycatch control measure.*

## Description of the Alternatives

The alternatives that are analyzed in this amendment package were approved by the Council in February 2012; they are listed below and detailed in the sections that follow. These alternatives propose management measures that would apply exclusively to the directed non-pollock trawl fisheries in the Western and Central Gulf of Alaska.

Alternative 1: Status quo.

Alternative 2: 5,000, 7,500, 10,000, or 12,500 Chinook salmon PSC limit (hard cap).

Option 1: Apportion limit between Central and Western GOA.

Option 2: Apportion limit by operational type (CV vs. CP).

Applies to both options: Apportion proportional to historic average bycatch of Chinook salmon (5- or 10-year average).

Alternative 3: Full retention of salmon.

Vessels will retain all salmon bycatch until the number of salmon has been determined by the vessel or plant observer and the observer's collection of any scientific data or biological samples from the salmon has been completed.

Note, both Alternative 2 and Alternative 3 could be selected by the Council in their preferred alternative. Likewise, under Alternative 2, both Option 1 and Option 2 could be selected by the Council.

Table ES-1 provides the proposed PSC limits for the non-pollock trawl fisheries under Alternative 2, and each option to Alternative 2.

**Table ES-1 Proposed PSC limits for non-pollock trawl fisheries, under Alternative 2 and Options 1 and 2**

			5-Year Average (2007 to 2011)				10-year Average (2002-2011)					
			%	12,500	10,000	7,500	5,000	%	12,500	10,000	7,500	5,000
Alt. 2	All GOA (W&C)		100%	12,500	10,000	7,500	5,000	100%	12,500	10,000	7,500	5,000
Option 1	WGOA		8%	997	797	598	399	18%	2,210	1,768	1,326	884
	CGOA		92%	11,503	9,202	6,902	4,601	82%	10,291	8,232	6,174	4,116
Option 2	All GOA (W&C)	Catcher Vessels	52%	6,460	5,168	3,876	2,584	49%	6,104	4,883	3,662	2,442
		Catcher Processors	48%	6,039	4,831	3,623	2,416	51%	6,397	5,118	3,838	2,559
Options 1 & 2	WGOA	Catcher Vessels	1%	86	69	52	35	5%	606	485	363	242
		Catcher Processors	7%	910	728	546	364	13%	1,604	1,284	963	642
	CGOA	Catcher Vessels	51%	6,374	5,099	3,824	2,549	44%	5,498	4,399	3,299	2,199
		Catcher Processors	41%	5,129	4,103	3,077	2,052	38%	4,792	3,834	2,875	1,917

**Environmental Assessment**

Groundfish

Under the status quo, groundfish stocks are not overfished nor approaching an overfished condition. A lower hard cap may result in the fishery closing before the TACs are reached, while a higher hard cap would allow for groundfish fishing at current levels, and impacts would likely be similar to the status quo fishery. If the groundfish TACs are not fully harvested, fishing will have less impact on the stocks, and there will be no adverse impact on the groundfish stocks from the fishery. Any changes in fishing patterns that may result from the alternatives, however, would be monitored and updated in future stock assessments.

Chinook salmon

The non-pollock trawl fisheries have an adverse impact on Chinook salmon through direct mortality due to PSC. Under the status quo, there are no additional management measures to reduce PSC of Chinook salmon in the GOA non-pollock trawl fisheries, however, Chinook salmon are a prohibited species, and it is incumbent upon fishermen, under the regulations, to avoid catching Chinook salmon. The average PSC for the non-pollock trawl fisheries is 6,176 Chinook salmon over the last ten years. 2003 and 2010 were the years of highest Chinook salmon PSC over this time period, with catches of 10,877 and 9,694 Chinook salmon, respectively.

Since 2007, there have been poor or below average Chinook salmon runs in Western Alaska. In 2012, all monitored Chinook salmon runs in the GOA were below average. The Chinook salmon stock composition of the GOA non-pollock trawl fishery PSC is not available, however the GOA groundfish fisheries have been documented to catch Chinook salmon both from Southeast Alaska and Cook Inlet, in the GOA. It is not possible to draw any correlation between patterns of PSC and the status of salmon stocks, especially given the uncertainty associated with estimates of PSC in the groundfish fisheries, and the lack of data on river of origin of Chinook salmon PSC. This results in the inability to discern and accurately describe small scale impacts on particular individual stocks; nonetheless, we understand that setting PSC limits will likely reduce the potential to impact salmon stocks in the aggregate, and therefore are more likely to be beneficial to Chinook salmon stocks as a whole compared to status quo. There is also no evidence to indicate that the groundfish fisheries' take of Chinook salmon is causing escapement failures in Alaska rivers. Since 2011, efforts have been underway to improve genetic sampling of salmon PSC in the GOA pollock fishery, which should, in time, allow for a better understanding of the stock composition of PSC

in that GOA trawl target fishery. While it is not one of the target fisheries that is subject to the PSC limits that are currently under consideration, the pollock target fisheries occur in similar geographical areas, and with a somewhat similar gear type, to the non-pollock trawl fisheries. As such, understanding the stock composition of PSC in that fishery would provide an additional perspective on the non-pollock trawl fisheries' Chinook salmon PSC.

Alternative 2 would establish a PSC limit that would be an upper limit on the PSC of Chinook salmon in the GOA non-pollock trawl fisheries in the Western and Central GOA. This limit would represent an upper threshold of Chinook salmon PSC in the GOA non-pollock trawl fisheries, as the non-pollock trawl fisheries will be closed when the limit is reached. The Regulatory Impact Review evaluates the PSC limit retrospectively, to see how many Chinook salmon would not have been caught had the cap been in place, and a summary is provided in Table ES-2. Note, however, that the PSC limit and potential salmon savings in years of higher Chinook salmon PSC do not translate directly into adult salmon that would otherwise have survived to return to its spawning stream. Salmon caught as PSC in the GOA groundfish trawl fisheries are generally immature salmon, with an average weight varying between 5 and 9 pounds. Some proportion of the Chinook salmon caught as PSC would have been consumed as prey to other marine resources, or been affected by some other source of natural or fishing mortality. In the GOA non-pollock trawl fisheries, data is not available to assess (a) how many of the intercepted salmon were likely to have returned to their streams as adults, and (b) to which river system or region they would likely have returned. It is assumed that the non-pollock trawl fisheries could be catching Chinook salmon that originate from anywhere in Alaska or elsewhere, and it is not possible to estimate the proportion any stock has contributed to the Chinook salmon PSC. Therefore our ability to assess the impacts of reducing salmon PSC on salmon populations is constrained.

**Table ES-2 Number of years the fishery would have closed under the PSC limits and Alternative 2 options, applied retrospectively to 2003 to 2011, and range of estimated salmon savings that could have occurred in a single year.**

PSC Limit	GOA-wide		Option 1 - by regulatory area		Option 2 - by operational sector		Options 1 & 2 combined	
	Number of years closed	Salmon savings	Number of years closed	Salmon savings	Number of years closed	Salmon savings	Number of years closed	Salmon savings
12,500	0	0	0-4	0-502	0-1	0-113	0-4	0-554
10,000	1	0-1,057	0-4	0-1,102	0-1	0-754	0-4	0-1,732
7,500	2	0-2,384	2-4	0-2,704	2-3	0-1,918	0-5	0-2,372
5,000	6	0-3,361	4-6	0-3,598	4-6	0-3,893	0-7	0-4,415

Note, due to confidentiality restrictions, the salmon savings are estimated using the week the closure would have occurred in a particular year (2003 to 2011), and applying that closure to a characteristic or average year representing 2003 to 2011. Source: NMFS Alaska Region Catch Accounting System, data compiled by AKFIN in Comprehensive\_PSC.

Nonetheless, it is possible to develop general conclusions for the action that is being proposed. If Chinook salmon PSC is reduced in some years as a result of this action, it would likely have beneficial impacts on Chinook salmon stocks, and the harvesters and consumers of Chinook salmon, compared to the status quo. With a PSC limit in place, it is possible that Chinook salmon PSC may be curtailed in years of otherwise high PSC, such as 2003. To the extent that Alternative 2 reduces a source of direct mortality on Chinook salmon stocks, the impact to Chinook salmon overall is likely to be beneficial.

Under a PSC limit, and especially if the attainment of the threshold appears to be imminent, the non-pollock trawl fleet may be active in making efforts to avoid high PSC rates, in order to preserve the opportunity to fully harvest the groundfish TACs. Efforts to avoid Chinook PSC could take a variety of forms. Particularly at the outset, these efforts may have limited effect, as participants have little understanding of the means of avoiding Chinook PSC. Yet, the adoption of a Chinook PSC limit likely will prompt efforts to gain better information concerning Chinook avoidance, improving the ability of

participants to avoid Chinook in the long run. The extent of any redistribution of effort is difficult to predict and will depend not only on the distribution of Chinook salmon catch rates on the fishing grounds and the participants' ability to accurately estimate Chinook salmon catch rates, but also participants' flexibility to alter their temporal and spatial fishing behavior. It is possible that shifting the spatial or temporal distribution of the non-pollock trawl fisheries may impact some particular Chinook salmon stocks more than others, but as we do not currently know how effort may shift in the non-pollock trawl fisheries, nor the stock composition of Chinook salmon PSC, this impact is not possible to assess.

Under Alternative 2, it appears unlikely that Chinook salmon PSC would increase from the status quo. Any impact to the Chinook salmon stocks as a whole, is likely to represent either no change from the status quo, or to be beneficial, as PSC levels either remain the same or are reduced. None of the options considered under Alternative 2, would have a significant adverse impact to Chinook salmon stocks.

#### Other Resource Components

Under the status quo, marine mammal and seabird disturbance and incidental take are at low levels and are mitigated by seasonal and spatial restrictions on the GOA non-pollock trawl fisheries. Under the alternatives, disturbance or incidental take is not expected to increase to a level that would result in population level effects on marine mammals or seabirds. In years where the hard cap constrains fishing, Alternative 2 may reduce the potential effects of the fishery on prey availability. If the fleet spends longer time fishing in areas with lower catch rates to avoid salmon, there may be some increase to benthic habitat impacts and potential removals of marine mammal and seabird prey. However, this increase is unlikely to result in population level effects.

Previous analyses have found no substantial adverse effects to habitat in the GOA caused by fishing activities (NMFS 2005b). A constraining hard cap may reduce any effects on habitat that are occurring under the status quo, however any effects continue to be limited by the amount of the groundfish TACs and by the existing habitat conservation and protection measures. Overall, the combination of the direct, indirect, and cumulative effects on habitat complexity for both living and non-living substrates, benthic biodiversity, and habitat suitability is not likely to be significant under any of the alternatives.

#### **Regulatory Impact Review**

##### Alternative 1

Selecting the status quo alternative would maintain the current regulations in the action area. Directed GOA non-pollock groundfish trawl fisheries would not be closed due to the attainment of a Chinook salmon PSC hard cap. Fishery closures would only occur if the TAC had been fully harvested, if Pacific halibut PSC limits had been reached, or in accordance with prescribed season end dates. Under existing regulation, while the fisheries would not close due to the fulfillment of Chinook salmon PSC allowances, it is still incumbent upon fishery participants to avoid catching Chinook salmon to the extent practicable.

Maintaining current GOA groundfish regulations should not impact annual harvest in the non-pollock directed fisheries. Over the last decade, harvests of GOA Pacific cod, flatfish, and rockfish have not significantly increased or decreased, and are typically constrained by TACs or halibut PSC limits. Despite this relative consistency, it is possible that harvests may decline in future years in these fisheries (with the exception of the Central GOA rockfish fishery) if reductions in halibut PSC limits result in fishery closures. Rockfish Program participants will have an advantage in being able to time their fishing to maintain their shares in other target fisheries, knowing that their rockfish allocations are secure.

Chinook salmon PSC and PSC rates (the number of Chinook salmon caught per metric ton of groundfish) have varied annually and with no distinct trend, during the analyzed 2003 to 2011 historical period.

Future Chinook PSC levels are unpredictable, as are the timing and location of high trawl-Chinook interactions. Individuals, businesses, and communities that benefit from the use or existence of Chinook salmon will continue to rely on the non-pollock groundfish fleet to minimize their PSC through voluntary measures. In the absence of PSC limits, however, independent vessels participating in increasingly competitive fisheries may lack the incentives to stop fishing in an area with high Chinook salmon PSC. The recent trend of increasing participation in non-pollock groundfish trawl fisheries may limit the ability of vessels to voluntarily avoid Chinook PSC, independently or as part of cooperative agreements, without risking the loss of target catch to vessels that do not avoid Chinook PSC. If other participants continue to fish at high rates of Chinook PSC, vessels that reduce their own catch by taking salmon avoidance measures would earn less gross revenue (and likely net revenue).

The status quo alternative would not require unobserved vessels to retain Chinook salmon on board until they can be biologically sampled at shoreside facilities. Vessels carrying an observer would still be required to retain Chinook until sampling and data collection could occur. The number of vessels in the full observer coverage category is set to increase in 2013, but observer duties will not change from their present definition, which does not always allow for biological sampling of Chinook salmon. Alternative 1 would not greatly enhance the understanding of the stock origins of Chinook salmon taken as non-pollock groundfish trawl PSC.

#### Alternative 2

Alternative 2 would establish an annual Chinook salmon PSC limit for the GOA non-pollock groundfish trawl fisheries. As noted in the Description of Alternatives, this hard cap could be applied to the GOA non-pollock trawl fleet as a whole, or apportioned to subdivisions of the fishery according to either a 5-year or 10-year Chinook salmon PSC history. Full usage of the Chinook PSC limit would trigger the closure of directed trawl fishing in the GOA, the regulatory area (Central or Western GOA), or the operational sector (CP or CV), depending on how the limit is apportioned.

The Regulatory Impact Review uses a retrospective approach to assess the potential impact of a Chinook PSC limit on non-pollock groundfish trawl harvests. Table ES-3 reports the number of years (from 2003 to 2011) in which the proposed permutations of a Chinook salmon hard cap would have caused a fishery closure. The number of years (out of the nine analyzed) in which a PSC closure would have occurred varies across the Alternative 2 Chinook PSC limit and apportionment options. Both the amount and time-distribution (throughout the calendar year) of Chinook salmon PSC and non-pollock trawl harvests varied annually. As a result, the range of maximum potential direct harvest impacts is large. Direct harvest impacts are defined as the amount of target species harvest that occurred in the weeks after a back-cast PSC closure would have occurred, and thus would not have been harvested if a given PSC limit were in place. Table ES-4 includes the maximum and minimum amount of harvest that would have been forgone under each permutation of Alternative 2. None of the proposed options would have caused a PSC closure in all nine analyzed years, meaning that the minimum direct impact on non-pollock trawl harvest is always zero.

**Table ES-3 Number of years (2003 to 2011) during which a trawl fishery closure would have occurred under the analyzed Chinook salmon PSC limits and apportionments thereof**

		Total GOA PSC Limit							
		12,500	10,000	7,500	5,000	12,500	10,000	7,500	5,000
Alternative 2	Gulf-wide	0	1	2	6				
Subdivision		5-year History				10-year History			
Option 1	Central GOA	0	0	2	6	0	2	3	6
	Western GOA	4	4	4	5	0	2	3	4
Option 2	Catcher/Processors	1	1	2	6	0	1	2	6
	Catcher Vessels	0	0	3	4	0	1	3	5
Options 1 & 2	CGOA CP	0	1	2	6	0	1	2	6
	CGOA CV	0	0	2	4	0	2	3	7
	WGOA CP	4	4	4	5	3	3	4	4
	WGOA CV	4	4	5	5	0	0	0	0

**Table ES-4 Range of estimated forgone harvest impacts under Alternative 2 options, applied to a characteristic year representative of 2003 to 2011**

PSC Limit	GOA-wide		Option 1 - by regulatory area		Option 2 - by operational sector		Options 1 & 2 combined	
	Number of years closed	Forgone Harvest (mt)	Number of years closed	Forgone Harvest (mt)	Number of years closed	Forgone Harvest (mt)	Number of years closed	Forgone Harvest (mt)
12,500	0	0	0-4	0-7,437	0-1	0-1,222	0-4	0-6,774
10,000	1	0-11,181	0-4	0-14,562	0-1	0-17,333	0-4	0-23,047
7,500	2	0-38,351	2-4	0-39,382	2-3	0-32,786	0-5	0-34,642
5,000	6	0-42,208	4-6	0-42,700	4-6	0-50,601	0-7	0-50,977

Note, due to confidentiality restrictions, the harvest impacts are estimated using the week the closure would have occurred in a particular year (2003 to 2011), and applying that closure to a characteristic or average year representing 2003 to 2011.  
Source: NMFS Alaska Region Catch Accounting System, data compiled by AKFIN in Comprehensive\_BLEND\_CA.

Table ES-5 reports the maximum gross first wholesale revenue that would be forgone if the GOA experienced the maximum estimated harvest losses reported above. The estimates in Table ES-5 represent the high end of the harvest impact range (reported in Table ES-4) multiplied by the 2011 average first wholesale value per metric ton for all GOA non-pollock target species (\$1,366/mt).<sup>1</sup>

**Table ES-5 Maximum estimated forgone gross first wholesale revenue under Alternative 2 options, using 2011 average non-pollock groundfish value per mt**

PSC Limit	Estimated maximum gross first wholesale revenue impact (2011\$)			
	GOA-wide	Option 1 - by regulatory area	Option 2 - by operational sector	Options 1 & 2 combined
12,500	0	10,158,942	1,669,252	9,253,284
10,000	15,273,246	19,891,692	23,676,878	31,482,202
7,500	52,387,466	53,795,812	44,785,676	47,320,972
5,000	57,656,128	58,328,200	69,120,966	69,634,582

Because historical annual Chinook PSC has varied from year to year, apportioning a PSC limit by either a 5-year or 10-year PSC history can affect the range of target harvest impacts facing a given regulated area or operational sector. The Western GOA fishery recorded lower PSC levels during the most recent 5

<sup>1</sup> 2011 average first wholesale value per metric ton was computed at the trip report level. As a result, the \$/mt values for trip targets that had fewer records (e.g. rex sole) are not weighted equally to the value of trip targets that comprised a greater proportion of the year's harvest (e.g. arrowtooth flounder or rockfish).

years, so apportionment on a 5-year basis would result in a lower Chinook PSC allowance for the Western GOA. As expected, a lower Chinook allowance results estimates of earlier PSC closures and larger amounts of forgone harvest. The Western GOA would receive a relatively larger share of Chinook PSC if a 10-year apportionment basis is selected, meaning that estimated PSC closures would occur relatively earlier and in more years for the Central GOA (compared to a 5-year basis under the same total Chinook PSC limit). The choice between a 5-year and a 10-year historical PSC apportionment period makes less of a difference if the total GOA PSC limit is apportioned only between the CV and CP sectors. If Chinook PSC is apportioned to operational sectors within each regulatory area, the choice of historical basis period makes a great difference to the Western GOA CV sector. Western GOA CV trawlers recorded very low amounts of Chinook PSC during the most recent 5 years, so using only those years as a basis would make their Chinook salmon allowance very low, leading to estimates that would preclude a high percentage of their groundfish harvests.

The timing of fishery closures caused by Chinook salmon PSC impacts each of the GOA non-pollock target fisheries differently. 60% of the GOA Pacific cod fishery is harvested during the A-season in the early part of the fishing year; generally, only the smallest Chinook PSC apportionments trigger closures that would preclude this catch. On the other end of the spectrum, a large proportion of the GOA flatfish fisheries (especially shallow water flatfish, which are primarily harvested by Central GOA catcher vessels) are prosecuted late in the year. So, flatfish harvests (and the Central GOA CV sector) are affected by a wider range of the considered PSC limit and apportionment options. The GOA rockfish fisheries are primarily prosecuted between May and August, but the timing of fishing differs by regulatory area and operational type sector. The number of Alternative 2 options that could curtail a sector's rockfish harvest varies accordingly; sectors that begin fishing rockfish later in the year – namely, the CP sectors – are more likely to lose a greater percentage of their typical harvest to a Chinook PSC closure. If members of this sector expect a Chinook PSC closure, they may harvest their allocations earlier in the year.

In addition to potential reductions in the amount of non-pollock groundfish harvested, setting a Chinook salmon PSC limit may alter fishermen's in-season behavior, potentially causing them to incur additional costs or to impose costs on others. Vessels that typically participate in GOA fisheries later in the year may decide to fish earlier, in an attempt to reduce exposure to PSC-related fishery closures. Vessels may also alter the timing of their participation in order to fish during times of lower expected Chinook salmon encounter. Fishermen's ability to alter the timing of their participation may, however, be limited by the other fisheries in which they choose to participate. Fishermen's ability to delay participation in order to reduce expected Chinook salmon PSC may be limited by the decisions of other vessels that do not attempt to avoid PSC. Vessels may also deviate from their historical area participation patterns. These participation patterns will differ based on the options selected by the Council. For example, under a Gulf-wide limit, a vessel that typically fishes an area during a time period with high PSC rates may instead choose to fish in areas where expected PSC rates are lower. On the other hand, if separate PSC limits are established for the different regulatory areas, vessels may move opportunistically between regulatory areas in anticipation of closures. A vessel that historically only fished in one area may choose to move between two areas, if it perceives an opportunity to gain an increased share of total harvests. Fishermen's ability to alter their historical spatial participation pattern may be limited by the permits that they possess, or by their access to processing facilities, among other factors. To the extent that a PSC limit incentivizes competition between vessels to harvest available groundfish before a potential fishery closure, a hard cap may reduce the instances of voluntary coordination to avoid Chinook salmon.

In-season management of a Chinook salmon PSC limit may require NOAA Fisheries to temporarily suspend, and then re-open, fishing in order to fully utilize available TAC within the confines of a hard cap. Temporary closures could impose additional transit costs on vessels, as well as time costs that may affect vessel and crew opportunities to participate in other fisheries.



Shoreside non-pollock groundfish processors may be affected by a Chinook salmon PSC limit that could reduce harvest from fisheries, shorten the length of fishing seasons, or concentrate deliveries into shorter periods of time. Because the time-distribution of Chinook salmon PSC varies from year to year, it is difficult to anticipate the effects of the limit on fishery closures and season lengths. Processors that utilize outside labor may find it difficult to anticipate their labor demand over the course of the year, and could potentially incur additional costs from underutilized labor or increasing their workforce size in response to intensifying effort in the fisheries. Fishery closures and the associated reduction in the amount of deliveries could increase processors' per unit cost of production, which, in extreme cases, could result in an operating loss if processing revenues fall short of the amount needed to meet fixed capital costs. To the extent that vessels alter their spatial pattern of participation, processors could see some amount of the product that they historically receive being delivered to processors in another area. Finally, uncertainty about the amount of groundfish that will be harvested in a hard capped fishery could limit processors' ability to pre-contract their expected production. The effect of these impacts on total processor profitability would likely vary depending on the amount of total production that a processor generates from fisheries that are not included in this action.

Because the causal link between trawl Chinook salmon PSC and the number of Chinook salmon available to Alaskan users is undeveloped, this analysis does not attempt to monetize the effect of Chinook PSC limits on commercial salmon harvesters, subsistence users, or sport fishermen. The Regulatory Impact Review does estimate the potential reduction in non-pollock trawl Chinook PSC under a hard cap. The range of potential salmon savings is reported earlier in the Executive Summary, under the Chinook salmon heading.

#### Alternative 3

Alternative 3 would require full retention of Chinook salmon by all unobserved non-pollock trawl vessels. Beginning in 2013, under the restructured observer program, most CP vessels will be in the full coverage category, and will always have an observer onboard. In the case of CVs, requiring Chinook salmon to be brought to shore when an observer is not present on board, is not expected to impact deck operations, or to be onerous in terms of utilizing hold space.

Requiring full Chinook salmon retention on unobserved trips could, at some point in the future, increase the amount of biological sampling that occurs on Chinook salmon, and advanced understanding of the stock origin of Chinook salmon taken as PSC will improve managers' ability to assess both impacts on Chinook salmon users and net benefits to the nation. However, as described in the management and enforcement considerations section, the implementation of this alternative as currently considered in the analysis would not result in more genetic data, as it would not allow NMFS to take systematic samples from a census of salmon PSC, in accordance with its current sampling approach.

### **Management and Enforcement Considerations**

#### Alternative 1

Vessels participating in the non-pollock GOA trawl fisheries sort their catch extensively at sea, because of a larger amount of unmarketable bycatch. Because a large amount of sorting occurs at sea and the observers are unable to monitor this sorting while engaged in other sampling duties, it is extremely difficult to verify that no salmon PSC have been discarded at sea. Unlike the CV pollock vessels, there is a high likelihood that salmon PSC has been sorted from the catch prior to delivery. Offload counts of salmon PSC are not possible in these fisheries because of the amount of sorting that occurs in these fisheries. Therefore, PSC estimates from CVs in other GOA trawl fisheries are all derived from at-sea samples. Biological data are not collected at sea or shoreside from fish outside of the observers' composition samples.

Sampling methods used on catcher/processors (CPs) allow observers to collect larger samples under more controlled conditions than CVs because the observer is able to collect samples downstream of the fish holding tanks, just prior to the catch sorting area that precedes the fish processing equipment. Additionally, on many CPs that are in the CGOA Rockfish and Amendment 80 Programs, the observer has access to catch weighing scales and an observer sampling station.

Chinook salmon PSC estimates from trawl CP and non-pollock trawl CV fisheries in the GOA are based on at-sea sampling for salmon. NMFS uses the at-sea samples on observed trips and extrapolates the sample to the week (CP) or trip (CV). These estimates are used to create PSC rates that are applied to unobserved vessels. There is a relationship between the abundance of given species in a haul, sample size, and the level of precision in the resulting estimate of species catch from sampling. In general, we can have very high precision in the catch estimate for common (target species) with very small samples of the haul. Conversely, even extremely large samples of a haul provide relatively imprecise estimates of catch for very rare species, such as Chinook salmon.

In addition, from an inseason management perspective, the PSC rates change as additional observer information is obtained. This creates temporal variation in Chinook salmon PSC estimates, resulting in a high degree of uncertainty associated with inseason management of Chinook salmon PSC limits.

#### Alternative 2

For a PSC limit to be effective, estimation of PSC needs to be credible to create incentives at the vessel level for Chinook salmon and other PSC avoidance. For CVs, this action will not incorporate sophisticated management and enforcement protocols for estimating a rare species such as Chinook salmon, such as those implemented under Amendment 91 in the Bering Sea, since the catch monitoring infrastructure does not exist in the GOA to the same degree that it did in the Bering Sea when Amendment 91 was being developed. Additionally, as described in the status quo, almost all of the catch in non-pollock fisheries is sorted at-sea and the offload sampling of salmon PSC used in the GOA pollock trawl fishery is not a viable option for vessels in the non-pollock CV trawl fisheries. Thus, the PSC estimates for CVs will be based on at sea samples. For CPs it could be possible to incorporate a suite of monitoring requirements under this action to enable PSC census sampling. However, unlike Amendment 91, the basic monitoring requirements are not in place for CPs across the entire GOA. The monitoring that would be required to implement a census on CPs would include: flow scales, 200% observer coverage, observer sampling stations, video monitoring, salmon storage container, reporting of salmon PSC in electronic logbook, and census counting. These monitoring requirements would impose large costs on the industry without the benefit and management infrastructure of a catch share program. Even under Amendment 91, NMFS has concerns with the adequacy of the monitoring and the enforceability of the program, especially in years of high PSC. In an open access fishery, there would be very little incentive to reduce PSC, and high incentive to bias PSC accounting.

In summary, for both CPs and CVs, this action attempts to implement a high-precision management tool in fisheries with very little monitoring infrastructure to support precise PSC estimates and is highly susceptible to introduction of intentional bias into salmon PSC estimation.

NMFS' ability to manage Chinook salmon PSC limits in the GOA non-pollock fisheries is likely to be difficult for several reasons. As such, NMFS would likely need to take a conservative inseason management approach and there is likely to be constraints on the ability of the fleet to fully harvest target species, especially in fast-paced fisheries and in years of high PSC. In addition to posing risk for inseason management, the PSC limit may be ineffective in reducing salmon PSC in the non-pollock fisheries. The salmon PSC limits proposed under this alternative may prevent harvesters from being able to fully

prosecute the target fisheries and this increases incentives for vessels to misreport or under report the amount of salmon caught. Additionally, without the management structure of a catch share program, vessels do not have the incentives to move from an area of higher salmon PSC if the race for fish still exists, particularly in high-paced fisheries.

The current alternatives do not include an option to apportion Chinook salmon PSC limits by non-pollock targets or between the CGOA Rockfish Program and the rest of the non-pollock fisheries. The Central GOA rockfish directed fisheries are managed under the Rockfish Program, a catch share, and participants in cooperatives have tools to reduce Chinook salmon PSC that are not available for vessels not in cooperatives. A Chinook salmon PSC limit for the aggregate non-pollock fisheries could close the Rockfish Program directed fisheries, and this would undermine the Rockfish Program.

### Alternative 3

In non-pollock CV trawl fisheries, such as flatfish or Pacific cod fisheries, sorting at sea is very common and some vessels have conveyor systems on deck to facilitate this sorting. Unlike the pollock fishery, the likelihood that full retention of salmon PSC would occur in the non-pollock trawl fisheries aboard vessels without an observer is highly unlikely given the incentives to under-report salmon PSC. The full retention of salmon PSC requirement may be more effective aboard vessels that are required to carry an observer at all times and have some of the monitoring tools (increased observer coverage, flow scales, CMCPs, observer sampling stations) necessary to monitor and enforce a full retention requirement, such as CGOA Rockfish Program CVs and CPs. However, even in these programs, NMFS will have no way of verifying that full retention of salmon has occurred aboard unobserved vessels. Therefore, NMFS would continue to calculate Chinook salmon PSC numbers and manage a PSC cap for Chinook salmon using the existing system of extrapolating PSC rates from observed vessels to the unobserved portion of the fleet

The operational characteristics of the pollock fishery allow full retention of salmon and thus collection of genetic samples following sampling methods developed for the Bering Sea (Pella and Geiger 2009). However, this sampling method does not lend itself to the operational characteristics and current monitoring protocols of non-pollock CV fisheries in the GOA, with the potential exception of the Rockfish Program. The Rockfish Program requires 100% observer coverage, and deliveries are monitored by NMFS staff, which would allow observers to verify full retention and NMFS staff could collect genetic samples at offload.

### **Roadmap to the Document**

The document begins by describing the purpose for this amendment (Section 1) and a description of the alternatives (Section 2). The Environmental Assessment is in Section 3, and discusses the environmental impacts of the proposed action and alternatives for the environmental assessment. Section 4 contains the Regulatory Impact Review, and provides background information for the economic analysis, describes how fleet behavior may change as a result of the alternatives, and evaluates the economic and socioeconomic impacts of the action. The management and enforcement considerations for this action are addressed in Section 5. Section 6 contains the Initial Regulatory Flexibility Analysis, which evaluates the impact of the action on small businesses. Sections 7 and 8 discuss the alternatives with respect to the requirements of the Magnuson-Stevens Fishery Conservation and Management Act and other analytical considerations.

**Supplement to Section 4.7.1  
 Impact of Chinook salmon PSC limits on harvester revenue**

The following information is supplementary to the analysis of the potential direct impact of the Chinook salmon PSC limits and apportionments considered under Alternative 2 (located in the Regulatory Impact Review, Section 4.7.1).

Tables S-2 to S-8 expand upon Tables 4-51 to 4-57 from the Initial Review document (pages 156 to 160). Tables 4-51 to 4-57 include the estimated maximum GOA non-pollock groundfish trawl harvest that would not have occurred if the considered Chinook salmon PSC limits had been implemented during the 2003 to 2011 historical period.<sup>1</sup> The supplementary tables, below, monetize the estimates of maximum forgone harvest, using unit first wholesale revenues from the 2011 fishing year (Table S-1).<sup>2</sup> First wholesale revenues are derived from data reported at the trip target level, as is the case throughout the RIR.

Table S-1 should augment Table 4-49 (page 151). Table 4-49 reports the 2011 average value per metric ton of GOA non-pollock groundfish *products*, by processor type. These values are higher than the first wholesale unit values in Table S-1 because they describe the value of a ton of processed, value-added product. Table 4-49 is also reporting a value specific to each groundfish species, whereas trip target data combines the first wholesale revenues generated by the set of species attributed to a target fishery according to the trip target determination made by NOAA's Catch Accounting System. Translating the information in Table S-1 to the level of Table 4-49 would require data on catch composition and processor recovery rates.

**Table S-1 2011 Gulf-wide average first wholesale price per metric ton, by trip target**

TARGET	2011\$/mt
Rockfish	2,130
Pacific Cod	1,578
Rex Sole	1,254
Shallow Water Flatfish	880
Flathead Sole	994
Arrowtooth Flounder	986

\* Reference Table 4-49

<sup>1</sup> These estimates were derived using the "characteristic year" approach, described in Section 4.7.1.1 (page 154), where the retrospectively simulated fishery closure dates that would have occurred from 2003 to 2011 are applied to the average weekly harvest and Chinook PSC of the analyzed period.

<sup>2</sup> Source: ADFG Commercial Operators Annual Report, data compiled by AKFIN in Comprehensive\_ENCOAR\_PROD

**Table S-2 Gulf-wide Chinook PSC limit: estimated maximum forgone first wholesale revenue (2011\$)**

PSC Limit	Week of Closure	GOA Total	Estimated Maximum Forgone First Wholesale Revenue (2011\$)					
			Rockfish	Pacific Cod	Rex Sole	Shallow Water Flatfish	Flathead Sole	Arrowtooth
5,000	17	67,643,664	44,328,341	6,729,967	1,862,082	5,563,260	577,046	8,582,967
7,500	20	63,490,948	43,698,122	6,701,352	1,322,037	4,931,397	374,519	6,463,522
10,000	36	44,394,423	22,163,278	6,195,719	398,232	1,699,636	189,884	5,747,675
12,500	None	-	-	-	-	-	-	-

\* Reference Table 4-51

**Table S-3 Option 1 - Chinook PSC limit apportioned by regulatory area (5-year basis period): estimated maximum forgone first wholesale revenue (2011\$)**

PSC Limit	Week of Closure	Area Total	Estimated Maximum Forgone First Wholesale Revenue (2011\$)					
			Rockfish	Pacific Cod	Rex Sole	Shallow Water Flatfish	Flathead Sole	Arrowtooth
<b>* Central GOA *</b>								
5,000	17	54,120,116	32,326,698	6,600,560	1,655,290	5,525,714	467,776	7,544,079
7,500	21	49,489,579	30,923,134	6,581,462	1,117,490	4,701,804	298,597	5,867,091
10,000	None	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
12,500	None	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
<b>* Western GOA *</b>								
5,000	13	14,026,670	12,001,643	140,471	262,127	39,615	280,308	1,302,505
7,500	13	14,026,670	12,001,643	140,471	262,127	39,615	280,308	1,302,505
10,000	14	13,880,102	12,001,643	140,471	248,331	39,615	199,794	1,250,247
12,500	14	13,880,102	12,001,643	140,471	248,331	39,615	199,794	1,250,247

\* Reference Table 4-52

**Table S-4 Option 1 - Chinook PSC limit apportioned by regulatory area (10-year basis period): estimated maximum forgone first wholesale revenue (2011\$)**

PSC Limit	Week of Closure	Area Total	Estimated Maximum Forgone First Wholesale Revenue (2011\$)					
			Rockfish	Pacific Cod	Rex Sole	Shallow Water Flatfish	Flathead Sole	Arrowtooth
<b>* Central GOA *</b>								
5,000	17	54,120,743	32,326,698	6,600,560	1,655,541	5,525,890	468,973	7,543,881
7,500	20	50,652,831	31,696,266	6,581,304	1,161,387	4,907,892	309,134	5,996,848
10,000	37	10,197,788	8,657,739	2,929,373	336,125	1,656,799	143,156	2,661,616
12,500	None	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
<b>* Western GOA *</b>								
5,000	14	13,880,102	12,001,643	140,471	248,331	39,615	199,794	1,250,247
7,500	14	13,880,102	12,001,643	140,471	248,331	39,615	199,794	1,250,247
10,000	21	12,658,109	12,001,643	119,953	158,029	21,128	152,682	1,302,674
12,500	None	-	-	-	-	-	-	-

\* Reference Table 4-53

**Table S-5 Option 2 - Chinook PSC limit apportioned by operational type (5-year basis period): estimated maximum forgone first wholesale revenue (2011\$)**

PSC Limit	Week of Closure	GOA Operational Type Total	Estimated Maximum Forgone First Wholesale Revenue (2011\$)					
			Rockfish	Pacific Cod	Rex Sole	Shallow Water Flatfish	Flathead Sole	Arrowtooth
<i>* Catcher/Processors *</i>								
5,000	17	32,234,115	24,825,405	445,088	1,824,857	243,854	418,473	4,476,437
7,500	20	30,743,598	24,825,405	435,302	1,284,298	206,880	293,230	3,698,484
10,000	21	30,423,886	24,825,405	435,618	1,237,893	184,871	270,368	3,469,732
12,500	41	1,332,213	95,843	115,218	153,012	12,325	169,974	785,842
<i>* Catcher Vessels *</i>								
5,000	9	42,730,254	19,502,937	7,762,208	106,607	6,041,769	4,370,762	8,945,978
7,500	29	18,998,749	6,907,068	6,046,568	37,626	3,296,871	12,922	2,697,694
10,000	None	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
12,500	None	-	-	-	-	-	-	-

\* Reference Table 4-54

**Table S-6 Option 2 - Chinook PSC limit apportioned by operational type (10-year basis period): estimated maximum forgone first wholesale revenue (2011\$)**

PSC Limit	Week of Closure	Area Total	Estimated Maximum Forgone First Wholesale Revenue (2011\$)					
			Rockfish	Pacific Cod	Rex Sole	Shallow Water Flatfish	Flathead Sole	Arrowtooth
<i>* Catcher/Processors *</i>								
5,000	17	32,233,799	24,825,405	444,772	1,824,857	243,854	418,473	4,476,437
7,500	20	30,743,914	24,825,405	435,618	1,284,298	206,880	293,230	3,698,484
10,000	21	30,047,627	24,825,405	435,618	1,861,634	184,871	270,368	3,469,732
12,500	None	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
<i>* Catcher Vessels *</i>								
5,000	18	44,576,044	19,502,937	9,225,316	125,420	6,062,016	4,370,762	9,289,599
7,500	28	22,889,102	10,610,858	6,048,146	37,626	3,480,862	13,916	2,697,694
10,000	46	428,811	80,934	24,735	10,034	9,223,606	6,958	8,102,544
12,500	None	-	-	-	-	-	-	-

\* Reference Table 4-55

**Table S-7 Options 1 & 2 - Chinook PSC limit apportioned by regulatory area and operational type (5-year basis period): estimated maximum forgone first wholesale revenue (2011\$)**

PSC Limit	Week of Closure	Sector Total	Estimated Maximum Forgone First Wholesale Revenue (2011\$)					
			Rockfish	Pacific Cod	Rex Sole	Shallow Water Flatfish	Flathead Sole	Arrowtooth
<b>* Central GOA Catcher/Processors *</b>								
5,000	17	18,814,942	12,906,825	333,027	1,617,915	206,880	312,116	3,498,180
7,500	20	18,006,349	12,906,825	333,027	1,123,761	183,991	227,626	3,231,120
10,000	41	11,735,110	10,649	108,905	151,758	12,325	135,184	275,429
12,500	None	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
<b>* Central GOA Catcher Vessels *</b>								
5,000	11	40,587,809	19,419,873	6,275,425	106,607	5,987,187	325,038	18,473,679
7,500	29	18,981,387	6,907,068	6,029,206	37,626	3,296,871	12,922	2,697,694
10,000	None	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
12,500	None	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
<b>* Western GOA Catcher Vessels *</b>								
5,000	13	13,910,994	11,918,580	121,531	262,127	37,855	270,368	1,300,533
7,500	13	13,910,994	11,918,580	121,531	262,127	37,855	270,368	1,300,533
10,000	13	13,910,994	11,918,580	121,531	262,127	37,855	270,368	1,300,533
12,500	14	13,767,391	11,918,580	121,531	248,331	37,855	190,848	1,250,247
<b>* Western GOA Catcher Vessels *</b>								
5,000	6	4,203,025	83,064	4,103,648	0	4,402	9,940	1,972
7,500	6	4,203,025	83,064	4,103,648	0	4,402	9,940	1,972
10,000	6	4,203,025	83,064	4,103,648	0	4,402	9,940	1,972
12,500	6	4,203,025	83,064	4,103,648	0	4,402	9,940	1,972

\* Reference Table 4-56

**Table S-8 Options 1 & 2 - Chinook PSC limit apportioned by regulatory area and operational type (10-year basis period): estimated maximum forgone first wholesale revenue (2011\$)**

PSC Limit	Week of Closure	Sector Total	Estimated Maximum Forgone First Wholesale Revenue (2011\$)					
			Rockfish	Pacific Cod	Rex Sole	Shallow Water Flatfish	Flathead Sole	Arrowtooth
<b>* Central GOA Catcher/Processors *</b>								
5,000	16	19,484,924	12,906,825	333,027	1,887,567	206,880	336,966	3,812,860
7,500	20	18,006,349	12,906,825	333,027	1,123,761	183,991	227,626	3,231,120
10,000	21	11,787,189	12,906,825	333,027	1,079,864	163,743	217,686	3,166,044
12,500	None	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
<b>* Central GOA Catcher Vessels *</b>								
5,000	7	33,065,978	19,419,873	7,246,095	139,216	6,106,914	374,738	19,079,142
7,500	28	22,848,864	10,589,560	6,029,206	37,626	3,480,862	13,916	2,697,694
10,000	38	15,986,438	11,401,008	1,489,940	21,321	1,554,679	7,952	1,511,537
12,500	None	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
<b>* Western GOA Catcher Vessels *</b>								
5,000	13	13,910,994	11,918,580	121,531	262,127	37,855	270,368	1,300,533
7,500	14	13,767,391	11,918,580	121,531	248,331	37,855	190,848	1,250,247
10,000	14	13,767,391	11,918,580	121,531	248,331	37,855	190,848	1,250,247
12,500	18	13,053,016	11,918,580	112,061	180,604	33,453	97,412	710,906
<b>* Western GOA Catcher Vessels *</b>								
5,000	None	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
7,500	None	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
10,000	None	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
12,500	None	-	-	-	-	-	-	-

\* Reference Table 4-57

**Subject C-2(c): GOA Chinook bycatch all trawl fisheries**

To whom it may concern,

The following comments come from the perspective of my last 30 years as a commercial fisherman and resident of Southeast Alaska. Chinook salmon, halibut and crab of all commercial species has always been an important part of my livelihood, subsistence diet, and recreational fishing activities as well as an important part of the cultural and spiritual heritage I hope to pass on to my grandchildren and their children.

Bycatch of chinook salmon in trawl fisheries is of particular concern to me as it becomes more and more apparent the chinook salmon of many major river systems such as the Yukon, Upper Cook Inlet, and Kuskokwim River systems are in serious decline. Consequently, a non-pollock trawl bycatch cap of 5000 chinook salmon is a reasonable and essential number which should be reduced still further if warranted.

Given the chinook bycatch of Gulf non-pollock trawl fisheries is quite significant yet are not sufficiently restricted, and given chinook represents a vital commercial, subsistence, and cultural resource to Alaskans which must also reduce their harvest to conserve chinook, this action to curtail nonpollock trawl bycatch of chinook is fair, reasonable, and consistent with National Standard 9 of the Magnuson-Stevens Act.

Sincerely,  
David Beebe  
FV JerryO  
POB 148  
Petersburg  
AK 99833



**Subject:** C-2(c): GOA Chinook bycatch all trawl fisheries  
**From:** David Beebe <fvjerryo@me.com>  
**Date:** 11/15/2012 8:38 PM  
**To:** " npfmc.comments@noaa.gov" <npfmc.comments@noaa.gov>

To whom it may concern,

The following comments come from the perspective of my last 30 years as a commercial fisherman and resident of Southeast Alaska. Chinook salmon, halibut and crab of all commercial species has always been an important part of my livelihood, subsistence diet, and recreational fishing activities as well as an important part of the cultural and spiritual heritage I hope to pass on to my grandchildren and their children.

Bycatch of chinook salmon in trawl fisheries is of particular concern to me as it becomes more and more apparent the chinook salmon of many major river systems such as the Yukon, Upper Cook Inlet, and Kuskokwim River systems are in serious decline. Consequently, a non-pollock trawl bycatch cap of 5000 chinook salmon is a reasonable and essential number which should be reduced still further if warranted.

Given the chinook bycatch of Gulf non-pollock trawl fisheries is quite significant yet this bycatch is not sufficiently restricted, and given chinook represents a vital commercial, subsistence, and cultural resource to other Alaskans which must also reduce their harvest to conserve chinook, this action to curtail non-pollock trawl bycatch of chinook is fair, reasonable, and consistent with National Standard 9 of the Magnuson-Stevens Act.

Sincerely,

David Beebe  
FV JerryO  
POB 148  
Petersburg  
AK 99833

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— Attachments: —

C-2(c)- GOA Chinook bycatch all trawl fisheries Beebe Comments.doc

19.0 KB

**Subject:** C-2(c): GOA Chinook bycatch all trawl fisheries Comments

**From:** "Brita Mjos" <britamjos@care2.com>

**Date:** 11/16/2012 9:14 AM

**To:** <npfmc.comments@noaa.gov>

Re: C-2(c): GOA Chinook bycatch all trawl fisheries

To Whom It May Concern:

I urge the North Pacific Fishery Management Council to reduce allowable bycatch by all trawl fisheries. The Chinook salmon returns are suffering, and the amount of allowable bycatch is an inexcusable waste of the valuable Chinook salmon resource. Please support instituting a limit on the Chinook bycatch of 5000 fish.

Thank you for considering my comments.

Brita Mjos  
1725 E. 24th Ave.  
Anchorage, AK 99508

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**Subject:** C-2(c): GOA Chinook bycatch all trawl fisheries  
**From:** Thom Ely <akthome@yahoo.com>  
**Date:** 11/16/2012 10:48 AM  
**To:** "npfmc.comments@noaa.gov" <npfmc.comments@noaa.gov>

Dear North Pacific Fishery Management Council,

As a subsistence fisherman and consumer of Chinook salmon I strongly support reductions in Gulf of Alaska Chinook salmon bycatch in all trawl fisheries. The Council should set a cap of 5,000 Chinook salmon for the non-pollock fisheries in the GOA as a starting point. Bycatch must be reduced further in future actions.

Chinook salmon have declined severely throughout Alaska: Commercial fishery failures and disasters were declared for the Upper Cook Inlet, Yukon River and Kuskokwim River. Our harvest in the Upper Lynn Canal of SE Alaska has declined dramatically. The Gulf non-pollock fisheries are the only fishery left which catches significant amounts of salmon bycatch, yet has no limit. Chinook salmon is critical to subsistence, sport and commercial fisheries, and a major contributor to the economy and culture of Alaska.

All other users have to reduce their harvest to conserve Chinook salmon in years of low returns, the trawl fisheries must do the same. National Standard 9 of the Magnuson-Stevens Act requires that bycatch be reduced. The Canadian fisherman are impacted by our decisions as well. We owe it to our neighbors to curb Chinook bycatch.

Sincerely,

Thom Ely  
POB 1014  
Haines, AK 99827  
907-314-0860

C-2(c): GOA Chinook bycatch all trawl fisheries

**Subject:** C-2(c): GOA Chinook bycatch all trawl fisheries  
**From:** Sharon Hart <sharonehart@yahoo.com>  
**Date:** 11/17/2012 7:36 PM  
**To:** "npfmc.comments@noaa.gov" <npfmc.comments@noaa.gov>

## **C-2(c): GOA Chinook bycatch all trawl fisheries**

North Pacific Fishery Management Council  
605 West 4th Ave, Suite 306  
Anchorage, AK 99501  
Email: [npfmc.comments@noaa.gov](mailto:npfmc.comments@noaa.gov)  
Fax: (907) 271-2817

November 17, 2012

My name is Sharon Hart, I am a commercial salmon fisherman in Bristol Bay and I strongly support reductions in Gulf of Alaska Chinook salmon bycatch in all trawl fisheries.

Chinook salmon have declined severely throughout Alaska: Commercial fishery failures and disasters were declared for the Upper Cook Inlet, Yukon River and Kuskokwim River.

All other users have to reduce their harvest to conserve Chinook salmon in years of low returns, if we have to, then the trawl fisheries should do the same.

The Council should set appropriate Chinook salmon Caps for the non-pollock fisheries in the GOA as a starting point. Bycatch must be reduced further in future actions.

The Gulf non-pollock fisheries are the only fishery left which catches significant amounts of salmon bycatch, yet has no limit. National Standard 9 of the Magnuson-Stevens Act requires that bycatch be reduced.

Chinook salmon is critical to subsistence, sport and commercial fisheries, and a major contributor to the economy and culture of Alaska statewide. Why should some fishers sit on the beach to comply with the act of sustainability while others directly impact it?

Alaska sets the premiere example for sustainable fisheries Worldwide and should continue to set high standards in all its fisheries.

Thank you,

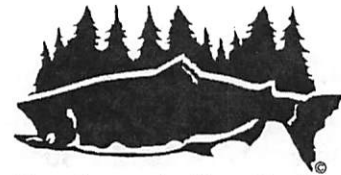
Sharon Hart –Commercial Fisherman  
P.O. Box 322 Port Hadlock, Wa.98339  
[sharonehart@yahoo.com](mailto:sharonehart@yahoo.com)

November 16, 2012

Eric Olson, Chairman  
North Pacific Fishery Management Council  
605 West 4th Ave, Suite 306  
Anchorage, AK 99501

Via email: [npfmc.comments@noaa.gov](mailto:npfmc.comments@noaa.gov)

**Reference: C-2(c): GOA Chinook bycatch all trawl fisheries**



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Dear Mr. Olson and members of the Council:

The following excerpt is taken from the lead statement in the recently published (10/08/2012) Alaska Department of Fish and Game DRAFT GAP ANALYSIS for Alaska Chinook salmon knowledge:

"Chinook salmon are critically important to subsistence, commercial, and sport users across many diverse fisheries in Alaska. Recent Alaska-wide downturns in productivity and abundance of Chinook salmon stocks have created social and economic hardships across many communities in rural and urban areas of Alaska."

Data analysis by Dr. Matt Catalano, of Auburn University, presented at the ADF&G Chinook Symposium mentioned above indicates that all of the twelve indicator runs of Chinook are "at a low ebb" and "approximately half of the runs are at their lowest in history."

There is ample evidence that the situation is dire for Chinook salmon throughout the state. While many users, commercial, sport and subsistence, are being severely curtailed and in some instances shut down completely the Gulf trawl fisheries are allowed to catch thousands of Chinook salmon as bycatch. The Gulf non-pollock trawl fisheries are the only fishery remaining that catches a significant amount of salmon bycatch, yet does not have a limit.

On average the non-pollock trawl fisheries are responsible for about a third of the Chinook salmon bycatch every year, but in some years they have been responsible for 60% or more of the bycatch. In 2010, the non-pollock Gulf trawl fisheries caught nearly 10,000 Chinook salmon as bycatch.

In the Council's deliberations to consider the motion for a bycatch cap range between 5,000 and 12,500 Chinook salmon in the non-pollock trawl fishery, given the critical condition of Chinook stocks, their importance to the state, and our commitments under treaties, prudent and conservative management should dictate mandating the lowest cap under consideration.

Respectfully submitted,

*Larry "Mac" McQuarrie*  
Sportsman's Cove Lodge  
Prince of Wales Island, Alaska

[www.alaskasbestlodge.com](http://www.alaskasbestlodge.com)

*"We've been doing this awhile"*

**Subject:** C-2(c): GOA Chinook by-catch all trawl fisheries

**From:** Art Kolter <alkolter@gmail.com>

**Date:** 11/16/2012 6:02 PM

**To:** npfmc.comments@noaa.gov

North Pacific Fishery Management Council  
605 West 4th Ave, Suite 306  
Anchorage, AK 99501

Dear Council Members,

As an Alaskan fisherman I strongly support reductions in Gulf of Alaska Chinook salmon by-catch in all trawl fisheries. The Council should set a cap of 5,000 Chinook salmon for the non-pollock fisheries in the GOA as a starting point. By-catch must be reduced further in future actions. Chinook salmon have declined severely throughout Alaska: Commercial fishery failures and disasters were declared for the Upper Cook Inlet, Yukon River and Kuskokwim River. The Gulf non-pollock fisheries are the only fishery left which catches significant amounts of salmon by-catch, yet has no limit. Chinook salmon is critical to subsistence, sport and commercial fisheries, and a major contributor to the economy and culture of Alaska. All other users have to reduce their harvest to conserve Chinook salmon in years of low returns, the trawl fisheries must do the same. National Standard 9 of the Magnuson-Stevens Act requires that by-catch be reduced.  
**Reduce Chinook Salmon by-catch in Gulf of Alaska, put a Cap on Non-Pollock Fisheries NOW!**

Thank you

Art Kolter  
[alkolter@gmail.com](mailto:alkolter@gmail.com)  
P.O. Box 20414  
Juneau Alaska 99802-0414

**Subject:** Trawler ByCatch

**From:** "Jimmie Jack's Alaska Lodge" <jimmiejack@jimmiejackfishing.com>

**Date:** 11/21/2012 2:05 PM

**To:** <npfmc.comments@noaa.gov>



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Jack Fishing**  
www.jimmiejackfishing.com

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P.O. Box 4326 - Soldotna, Alaska 99669 (907) 262-5561

November 21, 2012

North Pacific Fishery Management Council  
605 West 4th Ave, Suite 306  
Anchorage, AK 99501  
To the NPMFC,

As a charter operator and sport fisherman, I strongly support reductions in Gulf of Alaska Chinook salmon by-catch in all trawl fisheries.

The Council should set a cap of 5,000 Chinook salmon for the non-pollock fisheries in the GOA as a starting point. By-catch must be reduced further in future actions.

Chinook salmon have declined severely throughout Alaska: Commercial fishery failures and disasters were declared for the Upper Cook Inlet, Yukon River and Kuskokwim River.

The Gulf non-pollock fisheries are the only fishery left which catches significant amounts of salmon by-catch, yet have no limit.

Chinook salmon is critical to subsistence, sport and commercial fisheries, and a major contributor to the economy and culture of Alaska.

All other users have to reduce their harvest to conserve Chinook salmon in years of low returns, therefore the trawl fisheries must do the same.

National Standard 9 of the Magnuson-Stevens Act requires that this by-catch be reduced.

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Bottom of Form

Bottom of Form



Trawl Bycatch

Subject: Trawl Bycatch  
From: Richard Koskovich <rk2kby@yahoo.com>  
Date: 11/21/2012 2:16 PM  
To: npfmc.comments@noaa.gov

NPFMC  
Please open the enclosed testimony on Trawl Bycatch.  
Thankyou, RK

Trawl Bycatch 11-21-12 copy copy.jpg

North Pacific Fishery Management Council  
605 West 4<sup>th</sup> Ave. Suite 306  
Anch. AK 99501

Re; C-2(c): GOA Chinook Bycatch all trawl fisheries.

Council Members,  
I am a 40 year resident of Alaska and have harvested King Salmon  
for my family all along.

I have a huge concern for the drastic reduction in the King returns.

All trawl fisheries MUST reduce their bycatch immediately.  
The Council must immediately set a cap of 5000 Chinook or less.

Thank you,  
Richard Koskovich  
Homer, AK

Attachments:

Trawl Bycatch 11-21-12 copy copy.jpg

231 KB

Chinook

**Subject:** Chinook

**From:** Steve Novakovich <steve@emeraldpineslodge.com>

**Date:** 11/21/2012 2:42 PM

**To:** npfmc.comments@noaa.gov

Hope somebody with a brain limits the bycatch before it's too late. ....

--

Steve & Roma Novakovich

Emerald Pines Lodge

P.O. Box 3087

Homer, Alaska 99603

907-235-6204

888-350-6204

[www.emeraldpineslodge.com](http://www.emeraldpineslodge.com)

[steve@emeraldpineslodge.com](mailto:steve@emeraldpineslodge.com)

**Subject:** Agenda item C-2(c): GOA Chinook bycatch all trawl fisheries  
**From:** "geteven tds.net" <geteven@tds.net>  
**Date:** 11/23/2012 3:40 AM  
**To:** npfmc.comments@noaa.gov

November 22, 2012  
Eric Olson, Chairman  
North Pacific Fishery Management Council  
605 West 4th Ave, Suite 306  
Anchorage, AK 99501

Mr. Olson and members of the Council:

As you may be aware, Dr. Matt Catalano, of Auburn University, in his studies of Chinook salmon for presentation at a recent ADF&G symposium, determined that all twelve indicator runs are at a low ebb and approximately half of the runs are at their lowest in history. Chinook salmon are critically important to commercial, subsistence and sport fishing users. The social and economic hardships this will create across many communities is very disturbing.

There are many avenues open that will need to be taken/attempted to address this problem. One obvious approach that can have a substantial and immediate impact on the numbers is to address the bycatch allowed by the Gulf non-pollock trawl fisheries. That industry alone is responsible for about one third of the Chinook bycatch every year. I also want to bring to your attention, in some years they have been responsible for more than sixty percent of the by catch. In 2010, the non-pollock Gulf trawl fisheries caught nearly 10,000 Chinook salmon as bycatch.

The bycatch range to be considered by the Council for Chinook salmon is to be between 5,000 and 12,500 in the non-pollack trawl fishery. Reflecting on Dr. Catalano's studies of the Chinook runs, the Council should mandate the lowest the lowest cap under consideration.

Thank you for your consideration of my opinion.

Sincerely,

C A Neeley

Charter boat captain

Sportsman's Cove Lodge

Prince of Wales Island, Alaska

cc: Governor Sean Parnell

**RECEIVED**

**NOV 26 2012**

Sunday, November 25, 2012

Chairman Olsen and members of the NPFMC:

My name is Carter Hughes and I am a small boat (40 ft) fisherman ported out of Sitka AK. I participate in the salmon troll and halibut/sablefish IFQ fisheries. I am writing this letter to ask that the Council place a king salmon bycatch cap on the GOA non pollock trawl fisheries.

As you know, the GOA bottom trawl fisheries are currently uncapped for king salmon bycatch. The GOA has significant king salmon bycatch issues, typically accounting for one third of the Chinook bycatch. Further, 11 rivers in Alaska are experiencing serious king salmon declines. The State of AK closed setnet fisheries in the Cook Inlet area because of chinook bycatch concerns this past summer. I personally have experienced cuts in both king salmon quota and halibut over the past five to ten years while the drag fisheries were unconstrained on prohibited species bycatch until recently.

The Council has seen fit to put a 25000 chinook cap on the GOA pollock trawl fishery and implement a 15% halibut bycatch reduction over the next three years in the GOA bottom trawl fisheries. Thank you for that. I hope that the Council can implement a similar measure for chinook on the GOA bottom trawl fisheries. Frankly, with the reduced observer coverage on the GOA trawl fleet that will come in to play next year under the NMFS Observer Redeployment Program, something has to be done to encourage cleaner fishing. Although the quality of the accounting is likely to drop with observer coverage being less than half of what it has been, a cap is likely to have some deterrent effect. I support a cap of 5000 chinook, the low end of the caps being considered. With reduced observer coverage on the GOA bottom trawl fleet, I just can't see being any more lenient.

Thanks for your consideration.

Carter Hughes  
F.V. Radio  
Sitka, AK



**PO Box 2850, Valdez, Alaska 99686**

November 26, 2012

Chairman Eric Olson  
North Pacific Fishery Management Council  
605 W. 4th Avenue, Suite 306  
Anchorage, AK 99501

**Re: C-2(c): GOA Chinook by-catch all trawl fisheries**

The members of the Prince William Sound Charter Boat Association strongly support reductions in Gulf of Alaska Chinook salmon by-catch in all trawl fisheries.

In recent years Chinook salmon have declined severely throughout Alaska with commercial fishery failures and disasters declared for the Upper Cook Inlet, Yukon River and Kuskokwim River. It is unacceptable that the Gulf non-pollock fisheries are the only fisheries left which catch significant amounts of salmon by-catch with no limit. Chinook salmon is critical to subsistence, sport and commercial fisheries, and a major contributor to the economy and culture of Alaska.

All other users have to reduce their harvest to conserve Chinook salmon in years of low returns and it's time the trawl fisheries do the same. National Standard 9 of the Magnuson-Stevens Act requires that by-catch be reduced and we ask that the council set a cap of 5000 Chinook salmon for the non-pollock fisheries with further reduction in the future.

Sincerely

Melvin B. Grove Jr.  
President

November 26, 2012

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NOV 26 2012

North Pacific Fishery Management Council  
605 West 4<sup>th</sup>, Suite 306  
Anchorage, AK 99501-2252

Dear Chairman Olson and members of the Council,

I own and operated a 58' Pollock, Cod trawler that is based in Sand Point, Alaska that fishes predominately in the Western Gulf. This past C and D season we had a bit of chaos that I fear is only going to get worse. Because the Council has decided to pursue a catch-share plan for the Central Gulf only, there is not only a race for fish in the Western Gulf, but a race for history. The Kodiak fleet agreed to a voluntary catch-share program for themselves this past C season, but they did not include any sideboards for the Western Gulf. We had at least five Kodiak boats that are larger and more powerful than the local Sand Point and King Cove fleet, which I have never seen before at the beginning of the season. We thought, obviously, because we were allowed to fish until the end of the month, that we were not catching too many Chinook salmon. Since then we have learned that we were two thousand fish over the cap. This does not give me much confidence in the ability to account for in season by-catch numbers. How is it going to be managed next year?

I have three suggestions. First, I ask that the Council place a control date, the same that you placed on the Central Gulf, for both fishing and processing.

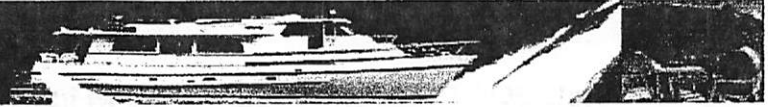
Second, I ask that the Council include the Western Gulf when building a catch-share plan for the Central Gulf. There will be local users at the December Council meeting that will also ask to be included. If this Council is sincere in the economic viability of the local fishing fleet, processors, communities, and reducing Chinook by-catch, you will include the Western Gulf with the Central Gulf catch-share plan. I do not see how you can control, or reduce by-catch while racing for fish, and now racing for history too. I do not support any plan that rationalizes just by-catch.

Third, I want to state that I have no problem being observed, in fact I may welcome it, but this new observer program does not give me much confidence. I am afraid that it is not going to provide enough coverage to really get a true picture of what is going on. From our stand point I don't believe the "system" understands the fishing practices of the smaller fleet, and will result in being cumbersome, at best, for us to comply. I know that electronic monitoring is used in Canada, and I believe in Washington and Oregon, with success. I wish the money spent on this year's observer program had been invested in electronic monitoring for our fleet. Unless I am mistaken, full retention of by-catch and electronic monitoring would result in one hundred percent observer coverage and a real time accurate count.

Thank you for your time.

*John T. Evich*

John T. Evich  
Owner/Operator  
F/V Karen Evich



November 21, 2012

RECEIVED  
NOV 26 2012

North Pacific Fishery Management Council  
605 West 4th Ave, Suite 306  
Anchorage, AK 99501

Dear sirs,

As a member of the Alaska Charter Association I urge you to consider the following points in your deliberations:

- As a charter operator, I strongly support reductions in Gulf of Alaska Chinook salmon bycatch in all trawl fisheries.
- The Council should set the lowest possible Chinook salmon cap for the non-pollock fisheries in the GOA as a starting point. Bycatch must be reduced further in future actions.
- Chinook salmon have declined severely throughout Alaska: Commercial fishery failures and disasters were declared for the Upper Cook Inlet, Yukon River and Kuskokwim River.
- The Gulf non-pollock fisheries are the only fishery left which catches significant amounts of salmon bycatch, yet has no limit.
- Chinook salmon is critical to subsistence, sport and commercial fisheries, and a major contributor to the economy and culture of Alaska.
- All other users have to reduce their harvest to conserve Chinook salmon in years of low returns, the trawl fisheries must do the same.
- National Standard 9 of the Magnuson-Stevens Act requires that bycatch be reduced.

Respectfully,

Bernard F. Wostmann  
Master



**C-2(c): GOA Chinook bycatch all trawl fisheries**

November 21, 2012

**RECEIVED**

NOV 26 2012

Dearest Council Members,

I wanted to reach out to you at a time when our King Salmon runs and returns are in dire need.

I am an avid sport-fisherman, business owner, fishing guide, and retired Army veteran. A significant portion of my annual income is provided by our sport-fishing industry in Alaska. Fishing is my financial wellbeing, my life, and hopefully my future. My family (of four) and I rely on sustainable, healthy runs of our King Salmon. As I am sure you are aware, Chinook are critical to subsistence, sport and commercial fisheries, and a major contributor to the economy and culture of Alaska. Sport-fishing alone provides \$1.4 Billion annually to Alaska.

In the last decade or so, Trawlers have had a devastating effect on our King Salmon populations. As such, I strongly support reductions in Gulf of Alaska Chinook Salmon bycatch in all trawl fisheries. Chinook salmon has declined severely throughout Alaska. I believe the number was over 136,000 King Salmon *declared as* bycatch in 2008? This number is only going up, and it is appalling! I am sure that you are aware of the commercial fishery failures and disasters that were declared for the Upper Cook Inlet, Yukon River and Kuskokwim River.

Please strongly consider a cap of 5,000 Chinook Salmon for the non-Pollock fisheries in the Gulf of Alaska as a starting point. Then, further bycatch must be reduced in future actions. This is critical! We, Alaskans and American citizens, are counting on you to make the right decision. For us, and these prized fish.

If I am correct, the Gulf of Alaska non-pollock fisheries are the only fisheries remaining which catch significant amounts of salmon bycatch, yet there is no limit placed upon this wanton waste. In this situation, National Standard 9 of the Magnuson-Stevens Act requires that bycatch be reduced. All other users have reduced their harvest to conserve Chinook Salmon in years of low returns, the trawl fisheries must do the same. I believe this requires immediate, and decisive action! I have also written to my Senators Murkowski and Begich, Congressman Young, as well as Governor Sean Parnell. What a shame if decisive action is not taken to stop this waste. I fear in my heart that we are all subject to jeopardize and lose another of our earths and oceans great resources. Please do not allow that to happen.

With utmost regard and sincerity,



Phillip J. Goldstine

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NOV 26 2012

North Pacific Fishery Management Council  
605 West 4th Ave, Suite 306  
Anchorage, AK 99501  
Email: [npfmc.comments@noaa.gov](mailto:npfmc.comments@noaa.gov)

- As a sport halibut fisherman and consumer of halibut, I strongly support reductions in Gulf of Alaska Chinook salmon bycatch in all trawl fisheries.
- The Council should set a cap of 5,000 Chinook salmon for the non-pollock fisheries in the GOA as a starting point. Bycatch must be reduced further in future actions.
- Chinook salmon have declined severely throughout Alaska: Commercial fishery failures and disasters were declared for the Upper Cook Inlet, Yukon River and Kuskokwim River.
- The Gulf non-pollock fisheries are the only fishery left which catches significant amounts of salmon bycatch, yet has no limit.
- Chinook salmon is critical to subsistence, sport and commercial fisheries, and a major contributor to the economy and culture of Alaska.
- All other users have to reduce their harvest to conserve Chinook salmon in years of low returns, the trawl fisheries must do the same.
- National Standard 9 of the Magnuson-Stevens Act requires that bycatch be reduced.

Sincerely,



Don Mizota  
725 Morninghome Road  
Danville, CA 94526  
(925) 820-8582

"C-2(c): GOA Chinook bycatch all trawl fisheries"

**Subject:** "C-2(c): GOA Chinook bycatch all trawl fisheries"

**From:** Switgard Duesterloh <switgard@gci.net>

**Date:** 11/26/2012 3:58 PM

**To:** npfmc.comments@noaa.gov

Kodiak, November 26, 2012

Dr. Switgard Duesterloh

P.O.Box 2787

Kodiak, AK 99615

North Pacific Fishery Management Council

605 West 4th Ave, Suite 306

Anchorage, AK 99501

**Concerns: "C-2(c): GOA Chinook bycatch all trawl fisheries"**

Dear members of the Council,

As a concerned Kodiak resident, and member of the Board of Directors of the Alaska Marine Conservation Council, I respectfully implore the Council to take further action to reduce the wasteful bycatch of king salmon in trawl fisheries. I was delighted at the steps taken to limit bycatch in the pollock trawl fishery, and would like to emphasize that similar caps for non-pollock fisheries would be a necessary and fair next step in the right direction.

It is our ethical duty to preserve the diversity of species in our seas. It further makes economical sense to support conservation of one of the most valuable species of salmon, by commercial revenue, nutritional health and taste. It is further written into the Magnuson Stevens Act to manage the fisheries in a sustainable way.

"C-2(c): GOA Chinook bycatch all trawl fisheries"

In the last years with dwindling king salmon numbers, all users had to reduce the number of king salmon taken. I have little understanding for wasteful fisheries techniques. There are many precedents of bycatch caps and it appears to be merely an oversight that king salmon are not protected from harmful bycatch in the non-pollock trawl fisheries.

Thank you for your time and consideration and I hope you will make the right decision on this issue today. The AMCC recommends a cap of 5,000 Chinook salmon for a start, however, bycatch must be further reduced in future actions.

Respectfully,

Switgard Duesterloh

C-2(c): GOA Chinook by-catch all trawl fisheries

**Subject:** C-2(c): GOA Chinook by-catch all trawl fisheries  
**From:** "Val Early" <val@earlyfishing.com>  
**Date:** 11/27/2012 5:39 AM  
**To:** <npfmc.comments@noaa.gov>  
**CC:** <governor@alaska.gov>

North Pacific Fishery Management Council

RE: C-2(c): GOA Chinook by-catch all trawl fisheries

As a charter operator and land owner on the Kenai River, we strongly support reductions in Gulf of Alaska Chinook salmon by-catch in all trawl fisheries.

We respectfully request the council set a cap of 5,000 Chinook salmon for the non-pollock fisheries. By-catch must be reduced to help determine where Chinook salmon are declining. Chinook salmon have declined severely throughout Alaska culminating with the largest decline, and mystery, in 2012. Commercial fishery failures and disasters were declared for the Upper Cook Inlet, Yukon River and Kuskokwim River. The Gulf non-pollock fisheries are the only fishery left which catches significant amounts of salmon by-catch, yet has no limit. All other users have to reduce their harvest to conserve Chinook salmon in years of low returns; the trawl fisheries must do the same. The burden of conservation must be shared among all user groups if we are to maintain the sustainability of these magnificent animals. Chinook salmon is critical to subsistence, sport and commercial fisheries, and a major contributor to the economy and culture of Alaska.

National Standard 9 of the Magnuson-Stevens Act requires that by-catch be reduced.

We encourage the Council to adopt a by-catch limit to protect this fabulous fish and preserve a way of life for many in the State of Alaska.

Sincerely,  
Gary & Val Early  
Early Fishing, Inc.  
[www.earlyfishing.com](http://www.earlyfishing.com)

"C-2(c): GOA Chinook bycatch all trawl fisheries"

**Subject:** "C-2(c): GOA Chinook bycatch all trawl fisheries"

**From:** cash joyce <cashjoyce@gmail.com>

**Date:** 11/26/2012 9:57 PM

**To:** npfmc.comments@noaa.gov

Limit the bycatch to 5000 chinook for the non pollock trawlers. There are many mouths that depend on it. In fact more mouths than the few bank accounts that are being fattened.

National Standard 9 of the Magnuson-Stevens Act requires that bycatch be reduced. Please take the logical action.

--

Cash Joyce

907-350-3982 cell

**Subject:** Letter to the Council

**From:** Andrea Cavner Anderson <andreacavner@gmail.com>

**Date:** 11/26/2012 9:21 PM

**To:** npfmc.comments@noaa.gov

To Whom it May Concern at the North Pacific Fishery Management Council,

As an Alaska resident and Kenai Peninsula business owner, I strongly support reductions in Gulf of Alaska Chinook Salmon by-catch in all trawl fisheries. The Council should set a cap of 5,000 Chinook Salmon for the non-Pollock fisheries in the Gulf of Alaska as a starting point. By-catch must be reduced further in future actions as well. Chinook Salmon have declined severely throughout Alaska: Commercial fishery failures and disasters were declared for the Upper Cook Inlet, Yukon River, and Kuskokwim River. The Gulf non-Pollock fisheries are the only fishery left which catches significant amounts of salmon by-catch, yet has no limit.

Chinook salmon is critical to subsistence, sport, and commercial fisheries, and is a major contributor to the economy and culture of Alaska. All other users have to reduce their harvest to conserve Chinook salmon in years of low returns, the trawl fisheries must do the same.

Thank you for your time and consideration.

Sincerely,

Andrea Anderson



**Subject:** C-2(c): GOA Chinook bycatch all trawl fisheries

**From:** Daniel Perry <perrydaniel@mac.com>

**Date:** 11/26/2012 8:19 PM

**To:** npfmc.comments@noaa.gov

North Pacific Fishery Management Council:

I am writing to express my concern about king salmon bycatch in the non-pollock fisheries in the Gulf of Alaska. This is the only fishery which catches significant amounts of salmon bycatch but does not yet have any limits. A 5,000 Chinook cap should be put in place as a starting point. All other users have to reduce their harvest to conserve kings and the trawl fisheries must do the same.

Thank you for helping to conserve such a vital resource for us all.

Daniel Perry  
Homer, AK

C-2(c): GOA Chinook bycatch all trawl fisheries

**Subject:** C-2(c): GOA Chinook bycatch all trawl fisheries  
**From:** Peter Branson <wrangelloid@yahoo.com>  
**Date:** 11/26/2012 6:56 PM  
**To:** "npfmc.comments@noaa.gov" <npfmc.comments@noaa.gov>

Dear npfmc,

It's great the pollock trawl fleet, how about extending that cap to the rest of the trawlers: flatfish, cod and rockfish. The overall bycatch for all trawlers shouldn't exceed 5000 per year in my opinion. I've been watching the chinook stocks struggle on the stikine river near my home of wrangell for years. Please give them a chance to recover.

thank you, Peter Branson, PO Box 1259, wrangell, ak 99929

comment on "C-2(c): GOA Chinook bycatch all trawl fisheries"

**Subject:** comment on "C-2(c): GOA Chinook bycatch all trawl fisheries"

**From:** Ryan Burt <cawstee@yahoo.com>

**Date:** 11/26/2012 5:00 PM

**To:** "npfmc.comments@noaa.gov" <npfmc.comments@noaa.gov>

**Re:** C-2(c): GOA Chinook bycatch all trawl fisheries

As a citizen of Kodiak, I strongly support reductions in Gulf of Alaska Chinook salmon bycatch in all trawl fisheries. The Council should set a cap of 5,000 Chinook salmon for the non-pollock trawl fisheries in the GOA as a starting point. Bycatch must be reduced further in future actions. Chinook salmon have declined severely throughout Alaska: Commercial fishery failures and disasters were declared for the Upper Cook Inlet, Yukon River and Kuskokwim River. The Gulf non-pollock fisheries are the only fishery left which catches significant amounts of salmon bycatch, yet has no limit! I personally find that crazy in this "modern" age of fisheries management. Chinook salmon is critical to subsistence, sport and commercial fisheries, and a major contributor to the economy and culture of Alaska. All other users have to reduce their harvest to conserve Chinook salmon in years of low returns, the trawl fisheries must do the same. Additionally, National Standard 9 of the Magnuson-Stevens Act requires that bycatch be reduced. Please put politics and money aside and do the right thing ecologically and socially - set a cap of 5,000 Chinook salmon for the non-pollock trawl fisheries in the GOA.

Thank you for your time and service on the Council.

Sincerely, Ryan Burt - Kodiak, AK

**Subject:** Chinook Bycatch  
**From:** Craig Matkin <comatkin@gmail.com>  
**Date:** 11/27/2012 9:19 AM  
**To:** npfmc.comments@noaa.gov

I am a gulf of Alaska ex-commercial fisherman and current sportfisherman who lives in Homer, Alaska. I love to catch Chinook salmon just like everyone else. But I am not here to defend my sportfishing privileges for Chinook salmon. There is another user group that I have studied for over 25 years. Their very lives are dependent on healthy stocks of Chinook salmon. These are the southern Alaska resident (fish eating) killer whales. My studies have shown Chinook salmon to be a very important food item for these whales. The high oil content of Chinook may be critical for these whales continued survival. I would like to represent their interests in the debate on bycatch cap for the Gulf of Alaska non pollock trawl fisheries. This cap should be set at the minimum you are considering of 5,000 fish. Please take into account the killer whales that bring thousands of tourists and residents alike to Kenai Fjords and Prince William Sound each year. They are an integral part of the ecological system as well as the economic system of coastal southcentral Alaska. Thanks for your consideration.

Craig Matkin, Director  
North Gulf Oceanic Society

concerning C-2(c): GOA Chinook bycatch all trawl fisheries

**Subject:** concerning C-2(c): GOA Chinook bycatch all trawl fisheries

**From:** Ian MacIntosh <jsirm20@hotmail.com>

**Date:** 11/27/2012 9:54 AM

**To:** <npfmc.comments@noaa.gov>

Hello, my name is Ian MacIntosh, I am a commercial fisherman homeported in Kodiak. As well as having a Kodiak salmon seine permit, I am a subsistence, and sport fisherman. King salmon is very important to me and my community. I urge the council to adopt the lowest chinook cap possible for non-pollock trawl fisheries.

Ian MacIntosh

November 27, 2012

To North Pacific Fisheries  
Management Council  
Re: C02 GOA Chinook bycatch all trawl fisheries

Dear Chairman Eric Olsen,

As a commercial salmon and halibut fisherman I strongly support reductions in Gulf of Alaska salmon bycatch in all trawl fisheries.

The Council should set a cap of 5,000 Chinook salmon for the non-pollock fisheries in the GOA as a starting point. Bycatch must be reduced further in future actions.

Chinook salmon have declined severely throughout Alaska: Commercial fishery failures and disasters were declared for the Upper Cook Inlet, Yukon River and Kuskokwim River.

The gulf non-pollock fisheries are the only fishery left which catches significant amounts of salmon bycatch, yet has no limit.

Chinook salmon is critical to subsistence, sport and commercial fisheries, and a major contributor to the economy and culture of Alaska.

All other users have to reduce their harvest to conserve Chinook salmon in years of low returns, the trawl fisheries must do the same.

National Standard 9 of the Magnuson-Stevens Act requires that bycatch be reduced. Please do not waive or compromise on this critical issue.

Thank you  
Kevin (Kip) Thomet



**RE: TU Comments C-2(c): GOA Chinook bycatch all trawl fisheries**

Trout Unlimited ("TU") is a national conservation organization dedicated to the protection and restoration of coldwater fisheries and their habitats. Over 800 sportsmen and women in Alaska are TU members. These members, along with our Alaska staff and many other TU members who visit Alaska to fish, are committed to efforts to protect and restore Alaska's valuable coldwater fishery resources.

The decline of Chinook salmon runs throughout the state is troubling from an economic, social and ecological perspective and deserves careful attention from all parties. While there are likely many factors contributing to this decline we feel it would be an important first step in conserving stocks for the North Pacific Fishery Management Council to impose a bycatch cap in the Gulf of Alaska, and the lowest cap under consideration.

We also support continuing and expanding the existing genetic sampling of Bering Sea and Gulf of Alaska (GOA) bycatch, and to increase, especially in GOA, more predator/prey analysis and sampling of food sources. To accomplish this, along with the goal of better monitoring, we also advocate for 100% observer status on GOA trawl fisheries.

Thank you for examining this very important issue to Alaskan sportsmen and women. If you have any questions about our comments or would like to talk further, please don't hesitate to contact us.

Respectfully,

Tim Bristol, *Director*  
Trout Unlimited Alaska  
[tbristol@tu.org](mailto:tbristol@tu.org)  
907-321-3291

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*Trout Unlimited: America's Leading Coldwater Fisheries Conservation Organization*

Alaska Office: 419 Sixth Street, Suite 200 / Juneau, AK / 99801

(907) 586.2588 • Fax: (907) 463.3312 • [www.tu.org](http://www.tu.org)

C-2(c): GOA Chinook bycatch all trawl fisheries

**Subject:** C-2(c): GOA Chinook bycatch all trawl fisheries

**From:** "Tellmans" <wtellman@arctic.net>

**Date:** 11/27/2012 11:08 AM

**To:** <npfmc.comments@noaa.gov>

Dear NPFMC:

As a member of a large family of Alaska fishermen and women, I support reducing Gulf Chinook salmon bycatch in the gulf of Alaska. Bycatch must be reduced more by your actions, due to the declines statewide in this important fish to our communities in Alaska.

The Gulf "Non-Pollock Fisheries" need limits to their bycatch of Chinook salmon, just as others have reduced theirs.

Thank you for listening.

Walter Tellman  
Unalaska, AK



## **CHARTER LAKES MARINE INSURANCE**

**11/27/2012**

**North Pacific Fishery Management Council  
605 West 4<sup>th</sup> Ave. Suite 306  
Anchorage, AK 99501**

**RE: Chinook Salmon By Catch Limits**

**Dear sirs and Madams,**

**As the owner of a business that supports the Guided Sportfishing Industry in South Central Alaska I strongly support reductions in Gulf of Alaska Chinook Salmon Bycatch in ALL Trawl Fisheries. People from all over the world visit Alaska to fish for chinook salmon. They spend thousands of dollars on air fare, lodging, licenses, food and tackle to name a few. A pound of sport caught Chinook salmon has a substantial value to the Alaska economy.**

**Chinook salmon is a resource that should not be squandered as bycatch. It is unjust and immoral to let this practice continue. At the very least the council should set a cap of 2500 Chinook Salmon for the non Pollock fisheries in the Gulf of Alaska as a starting point. Bycatch should be reduced further in future years.**

**Chinook salmon have declined severely throughout Alaska. This decline has caused sever economic hardship on entire communities. I ask that common sense be employed to limit this senseless destruction. National Standard 9 of the Magnuson Stevens Act requires that bycatch be reduced and you are responsible for implementation of MSA rules.**

**Please set a cap of 2500 Chinook salmon for the non-pollock fisheries in the Gulf of Alaska for the citizens of Alaska and the peoples of the world.**

**Sincerely,**

**Daniel B. Longman  
Charter Lakes Marine Insurance**

C-2(c): GOA Chinook bycatch all trawl fisheries

**Subject:** C-2(c): GOA Chinook bycatch all trawl fisheries

**From:** Art Bloom <artmbloom@gmail.com>

**Date:** 11/27/2012 1:11 PM

**To:** npfmc.comments@noaa.gov

- As a commercial halibut fisherman, I strongly support reductions in Gulf of Alaska Chinook salmon bycatch in all trawl fisheries.
- The Council should set a cap of 5,000 Chinook salmon for the non-pollock fisheries in the GOA as a starting point. Bycatch must be reduced further in future actions.
- The Gulf non-pollock fisheries are the only fishery left which catches significant amounts of salmon bycatch, yet has no limit.
- Chinook salmon is critical to subsistence, sport and commercial fisheries, and a major contributor to the economy and culture of Alaska.
- All other users have to reduce their harvest to conserve Chinook salmon in years of low returns, the trawl fisheries must do the same.
- National Standard 9 of the Magnuson-Stevens Act requires that bycatch be reduced.
- Thank you,
- Arthur Bloom, Tenakee Springs, Alaska



November 27, 2012

Mr. Eric Olson, Chair  
North Pacific Fishery Management Council  
605 West 4th Ave, Suite 306  
Anchorage, AK 99501  
Email: npfmc.comments@noaa.gov

**RE: C-2(c): GOA Chinook by-catch all trawl fisheries**

Dear Chairman Olson and members of the Council,

Kenai River Sportfishing Association (KRSA) is a 501 ( c ) 3 non-profit association of anglers and conservationists dedicated to the sustainability of fisheries resources in Alaska. We would like to provide comment on agenda item C-2(c): GOA Chinook by-catch all trawl fisheries.

KRSA respectfully requests that the Council set a cap of 5,000 Chinook salmon for the non-pollock fishery in the Gulf of Alaska (GOA). Cook Inlet supports the largest sport fisheries in the state of Alaska, and Chinook salmon are a key component of these highly prized and economically valuable fisheries.

Mirroring the statewide trend for low abundance of Chinook salmon, all sport fisheries for Chinook salmon in Cook Inlet were restricted and then closed to harvest in 2012. The lost economic values this year due to these restrictions and closures is stated at \$17 million for the sport fishing industry in Cook Inlet. Commercial, subsistence and personal use fisheries were also severely impacted in Cook Inlet by the low abundance of Chinook salmon, with the loss to the commercial fisheries estimated at \$16 million. Additionally, commercial and subsistence fishery failures occurred and disasters were declared due to low abundance for Chinook on the Kuskokwim and Yukon rivers.

The GOA non-pollock fisheries remain as the last major fishery with salmon by-catch that does not have a harvest caps for Chinook salmon. All other users have had to reduce their harvest to conserve Chinook salmon in years of low returns; these trawl fisheries must do the same. The burden of conservation must be shared among all user groups if we are to maintain the sustainability and economic viability of the directed sport, commercial, personal use and subsistence Chinook salmon fisheries.

KRSA encourages the Council to adopt a 5,000 by-catch limit for GOA non-pollock trawl fisheries to protect Chinook salmon, especially important during these times of statewide low abundance for Chinook that have resulted in severe restrictions and closures of directed Chinook salmon fisheries.

Respectfully,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Ricky Gease". The signature is written in a cursive, flowing style.

Ricky Gease, Executive Director  
Kenai River Sportfishing Association  
www.krsa.com

## Homer Charter Association

FAXED 11/26/12

P.O. Box 148 Homer, Ak. 99603

President: Gary Ault, Vice president: Donna Bondioli, Secretary/Treasury: Geri Martin,  
Board Members: David Bayes, Phil Warren, Alternates: Scott Glosser, Joe Svymberski

Mr. Eric Olson, Chairman  
North Pacific Fishery Management Council  
605 W. 4th Avenue, Suite 306  
Anchorage, AK 99501-2252

November 25, 2012

Re: Agenda Item C-2(2) GOA Chinook Bycatch All Trawl Fisheries

Dear Chairman Olson,

The Homer Charter Association (HCA) represents thirty one charter companies and associated businesses from the Homer area. Its mission is to preserve and protect the sustainability of fishing rights and resources necessary for the Homer charter fleet to best serve the recreational fishery and our community.

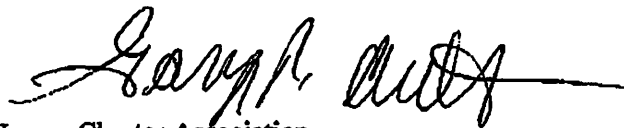
The HCA encourages the North Council to adopt a motion establishing a cap of 5,000 Chinook salmon when final action on this issue is considered.

Chinook salmon runs are vital to many user groups and exist at alarmingly low levels in many areas of Alaska. This year we have witnessed closures and disaster declarations that adversely impacting the Kenai River and upper Cook Inlet. Economic losses in the Cook Inlet commercial fishery and its sport fishing industries are estimated to be around \$10,000,000 and \$17,700,000, respectively. Subsistence fisheries suffered as well. The only user group that did not experience adverse impacts due to low salmon returns was the Non-pollock trawl fleet; a major culprit of bycatch (30% to 60%). Currently, this fleet has no cap. This needs change.

It is The Homer Charter association's belief that all user groups must be responsible for the well being of the Chinook salmon. Given that Chinook levels are so low in many areas of Alaska and the importance of salmon to many users of the resources, the Non-pollock trawl fleet should be capped at the minimum level of alternatives under consideration.

The HCA appreciates the North Council's attention to this very important issue.

Gary Ault,



President Homer Charter Association

# Petersburg Vessel Owners Association

PO Box 232

Petersburg, AK 99833

Phone & Fax: 907.772.9323

[pvoa@gci.net](mailto:pvoa@gci.net) • [www.pvoaonline.org](http://www.pvoaonline.org)

RECEIVED  
NOV 27 2012

November 27<sup>th</sup>, 2012

Mr. Eric Olson, Chair  
North Pacific Fishery Management Council  
605 West 4th Avenue, Suite 306  
Anchorage, AK 99501  
[npfmc.comments@noaa.gov](mailto:npfmc.comments@noaa.gov)

**RE: INITIAL REVIEW ON GOA CHINOOK BYCATCH ALL TRAWL FISHERIES C-2(C).**

Dear Chairman Olson and members of the Council.

The Petersburg Vessel Owners Association (PVOA) is a diverse group of commercial fishermen that participate in a variety of fisheries throughout the State of Alaska and the North Pacific, including the under 60' GOA pacific cod (PCod) trawl fisheries. PVOA appreciates the opportunity to comment on the initial review of Chinook Salmon Prohibited Species Catch in the Gulf of Alaska Non-Pollock Trawl Fisheries.

The analysis presents three alternatives and two options with the possibility that Alternative 2 being adopted with both option 1 and 2 included. The two options presented apportion Chinook PSC limits between regulatory areas (WGOA/CGOA) and/or operational types (CV/CP). The third option, apportionment between the principal non-Pollock target fisheries, was not advanced as an option from the February 2012 Discussion Paper. However, such an option should be considered in the future as more tools are developed and more and better data are obtained that would enable more effective Chinook PSC management. That option would provide for Chinook PSC accountability between the principal target fisheries and could prevent early closure of fisheries that have low Chinook PSC impacts, such as the PCod fishery, in which some PVOA members participate.

PVOA supports bycatch reductions to the greatest extent possible, above all in fisheries where the bycatch may have direct negative impact on our members. However, it is difficult to do much about reducing bycatch in competitive fisheries, unless it is a gear modification that everybody uses, and to avoid hot spots, a coop structure, with data from the fleet and a coop manager is needed. With the GOA rationalization moving forward, better tools will likely be made available when that process is finalized. Absent those sorts of tools, we believe that a reasonable solution would be to implement a higher number at first then drop the number when and if the rationalization program is

implemented. It seems pretty standard that when a fishery is rationalized, it then has the tools to use to reduce bycatch and the bycatch limits are lowered. That being said, we believe it would also be shortsighted not to simultaneously include both the Central and Western GOA in the rationalization program.

**Implementing a hard Chinook PSC cap that is not abundance based also seems to be a bit arbitrary.**

An issue that has been looked at for several years by Alaskan biologists and industry representatives to the Pacific Salmon Commission, is that there is a fairly reasonable correlation between the GOA/BSAI trawl catches and the Southeast Alaska Chinook Abundance Index (AI) and that the trawl catch may be used as a relatively reliable early season indicator of the accuracy of the pre-season AI. Using linear regression analysis comparing the Chinook PSC data in Table 4-31 with the AI in those same years demonstrates a fairly weak correlation between the AI and the 2003-2011 trawl catches. However, when the years 2004-2006 are deleted, the correlation greatly improves and resulted in a regression coefficient of .55. Those years were years of very warm water in the North Pacific that were detrimental to southern Chinook stocks from mid-coast B.C. to California and likely disrupted their normal migration patterns. So, it is apparent that GOA trawl Chinook PSC is likely driven to a great extent by the abundance of southern Chinook stocks rather than being driven solely by the behavior of the trawl fisheries themselves.

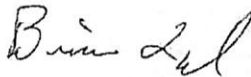
An abundance based cap requires the robust sampling and representative sampling for scales, otoliths, coded-wire tags (CWT) and DNA. Unfortunately, such sampling up to this point has been deficient at best although opportunities for such sampling have actually existed for some time via onboard observers. The explanations given in the analysis for the lack of stock ID samples and sampling seem to revolve around why it couldn't be done rather than exploring methods to improve that sampling. Recent developments in GOA and BSAI genetic sampling plans look to greatly improve the stock ID information but those projects are not yet fully developed nor the samples analyzed. Genetic sampling is an extremely easy process, requiring only small amounts of tissue, and contrary to what was mentioned in the analysis, scale samples provide sufficient material for analysis and do not need to be sampled from the area of the fish normally preferred for scale aging. **Adopting Alternative 3 would greatly improve the number and availability of Chinook, not only for genetic samples but also CWT and age samples as well.**

PVOA has an interest in improved stock ID efforts in order to provide the necessary information to fully understand the actual impacts of GOA trawl fisheries on Chinook salmon abundance. Such information will help to reduce the frequency of the unintended consequence of closing fisheries when the actual impacts on Chinook stocks of concern may be low or even insignificant. At the present time, there is a high level of concern for the recent low abundance of Alaska Chinook stocks. Improved Chinook PSC stock ID information will increase our understanding and decrease unfounded speculation on the actual reasons for the reduced abundances.

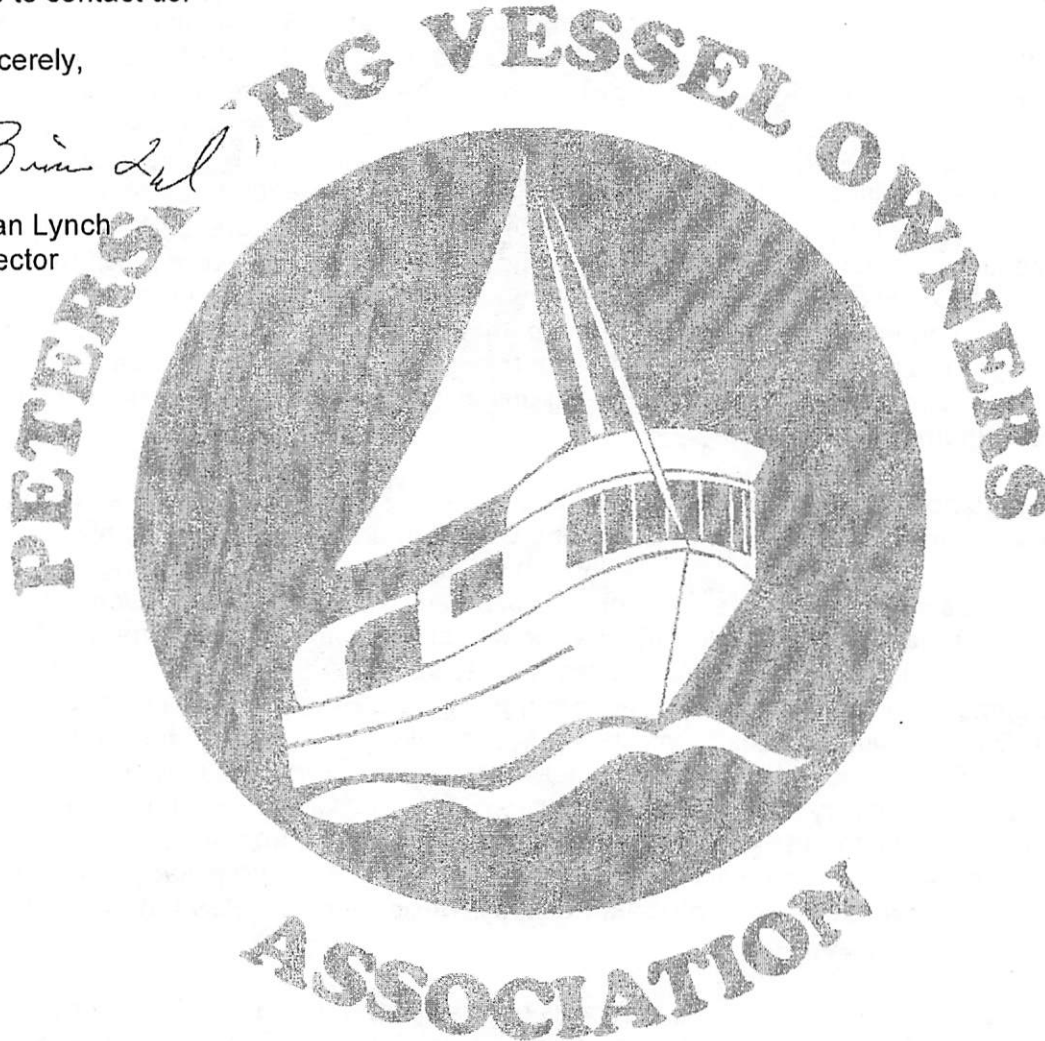
In conclusion, PVOA recommends the Council adopt Alternative 2/Options 1&2, and Alternative 3 and pursue reducing the limit when and if the GOA rationalization program is implemented. In addition, the Council also needs to ensure that with the adoption of Alternative 3, the observer coverage of all non-Pollock trawl fisheries be maintained at levels higher than 30%.

Thank you for your time and attention to this important matter. If we can provide further information or answer any questions as you make this important decision, please feel free to contact us.

Sincerely,



Brian Lynch  
Director



Paul Olson, Attorney-at-Law  
606 Merrell St.  
Sitka, AK 99835  
[polsonlaw@gmail.com](mailto:polsonlaw@gmail.com)

November 27, 2012

Eric Olson, Chairman  
North Pacific Fishery Management Council  
605 W. 4<sup>th</sup> Avenue, Suite 306  
Anchorage, AK 99501-2252  
Fax: (907) 271-2817

Re: Agenda Item C-2(c) Chinook PSC Limits

Dear Mr. Olson:

TBC thanks the Council for its efforts to establish Chinook PSC limits for the Gulf of Alaska (GOA) non-pollock trawl fisheries. TBC is a tax exempt, charitable, education foundation with a long history of operating in southeast Alaska. TBC conducts multi-day conservation and wilderness tours in southeast Alaska aboard its two larger vessels, the 145' M/V Liseron and the 157' M/V Mist Cove and has operated in southeast Alaska since 1980. TBC's clients participate in various activities that include environmental education, kayaking, hiking, beachcombing and fishing. Many clients who enjoy sport fishing in smaller catcher vessels deployed from one of our larger boats consider the opportunity to catch Chinook salmon as one of the key attractions of the Alaska visitor experience. Chinook salmon are the most important salmon species in terms of recreational value. Further, southeast Alaskans have made considerable investments in enhancing Chinook stocks through hatchery programs. TBC directly contributes to these programs. Trawl bycatch of southeast Alaska Chinook reduces the return on those investments.

Therefore, TBC supports the effort to consider limits for GOA Chinook PSC in all trawl fisheries. TBC supports Alternative 3's requirement for full retention of salmon and the effort to improve the assessment of stock composition of trawl bycatch. TBC also supports the hard cap of no more than 5,000 Chinook under Alternative 2 and supports implementation of Options 1 and 2. The 5,000 fish limit is necessary because NMFS is not able to determine the extent to which GOA trawl fisheries affect ESA-listed stocks or the current Alaska Chinook salmon fishery disaster until the agency improves its data collection program. Also, the Council should direct NMFS to eliminate the 10,000 and 12,500 fish limits from further analysis. Those options exceed historical bycatch levels neither minimize bycatch nor respond to declining chinook abundance. Further, the Council should ensure that there is sufficient observer coverage to provide statistically reliable PSC and stock composition data by superseding provisions of the newly restructured observer program and implementing 100% observer coverage. In the alternative, the Council could establish a buffer for marginally observed sectors to minimize the risk of unobserved PSC exceedances.

Finally, the economic analysis in the EA/RIR/IRFA did not objectively evaluate the quantitative and qualitative costs and benefits of regulatory measures. The analysis is skewed toward a conclusion that the economic impacts to trawl fisheries that would result from the 5,000 and 7,500 fish limits are disproportionately severe in comparison to numbers of saved salmon. Economic impacts to salmon fisheries are measured in terms of "salmon savings" rather than the reality of existing closures to salmon fisheries. This approach is unfair. It balances a worst case scenario for the trawl fisheries against saving a few salmon without considering worst case scenarios for salmon fisheries. Further Council action on



this measure should balance the state's estimates of 34.5 million dollars in commercial and sport salmon fishery losses in 2012 against NMFS' estimates of foregone trawl harvests.<sup>1</sup>

### ***The Council Should Select Lower Range Alternatives that Actually Minimize Bycatch***

TBC submits that the Council should only seriously consider those alternatives that have the potential to achieve actual reductions in PSC. National Standard 9 requires that "[c]onservation and management measures, shall, to the extent practicable, (A) minimize bycatch."<sup>2</sup> Alternative 2 contemplates establishing a PSC limit that implements a hard cap of 5,000, 7,500, 10,000 or 12,500 fish.<sup>3</sup> Option 1 would apportion the limit between the western and central gulf reporting areas; Option 2 would apportion the limit by operational type.<sup>4</sup> Alternative 3 requires full retention of salmon pending assessment of the number of salmon and collection of biological data.<sup>5</sup>

Previous efforts to limit Chinook PSC have prioritized flexibility for trawl fisheries rather than implementing measures that actually minimize bycatch. The 25,000 Chinook PSC limit adopted in Amendment 93 did not reduce PSC but instead allowed for an actual increase. The historical annual average bycatch from 1994 – 2011 was 15,116 fish from the GOA Pollock fisheries.<sup>6</sup> The pollock fishery had actually increased its Chinook PSC during the ten-year baseline period selected for the purpose of calculating limits. Similarly, Amendment 91 to the Bering Sea and Aleutian Islands FMP adopted a 60,000 fish limit rather than the pre-2001 five year average of 29,323 chinook recommended by Yukon River fishery managers.<sup>7</sup> NMFS wanted to preserve flexibility for the fleet to catch its quota.<sup>8</sup>

For this amendment, the Council increased the range of PSC limits under consideration to 12,500 Chinook because it wanted to consider a range that encompassed historical catch levels.<sup>9</sup> This approach similarly does not minimize bycatch. The sixteen year average is 5,770 fish and the maximum reported removal was 10,877 fish in 2003.<sup>10</sup> The 5,000 fish limit is the only option that would actually minimize bycatch. The 12,500 fish limit would only trigger management responses until after non-pollock trawl fisheries had already removed more than double the historical average.<sup>11</sup> The 10,000 fish limit would only require actions to limit further Chinook removals during years that are equivalent to the highest PSC year of 2003 when chinook populations were in considerably better shape.<sup>12</sup>

The EA also contemplates using either a five or ten year average for establishing limits under options 1 and 2. For the reasons discussed in the preceding paragraphs, TBC supports option 1 using the ten year average as a relevant baseline. The amendment should not reward groundfish trawlers for increasing their PSC over the most recent five year

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<sup>1</sup> Dan Joling. *Alaska increases estimate of salmon disaster*. JUNEAU EMPIRE. November 14, 2012.

<sup>2</sup> 50 C.F.R. § 600.350(a).

<sup>3</sup> EA/RIR/IRFA at 5.

<sup>4</sup> Id.

<sup>5</sup> Id.

<sup>6</sup> Pollock Chinook PSC Limit EA/RIR/IRFA at 23.

<sup>7</sup> Fisheries of the Exclusive Economic Zone Off Alaska; Chinook Salmon Bycatch Management in the Bering Sea Pollock Fishery. 75 Fed. Reg. 53026, 53035. (August 30, 2010).

<sup>8</sup> 75 Fed. Reg. at 53035.

<sup>9</sup> EA/RIR/IRFA at 3 (FN 4 notes the estimate of 10,877 in 2003 for directed fisheries and the EA adds that the Council wanted to retain flexibility by analyzing the higher limit given the imprecision of data on actual PSC limits).

<sup>10</sup> Id. at 109.

<sup>11</sup> Id. at 161.

<sup>12</sup> Id. at 162.

period.<sup>13</sup> Using a ten-year baseline under option 1 also disperses the mortality over a wider area and slightly reduces the risks associated with higher PSC levels in the CGOA.<sup>14</sup> It makes sense to manage PSC on a finer spatial scale.<sup>15</sup>

TBC also supports option 2 which would divide the cap between CPs and CVs and allocates a slightly higher proportion of the PSC to the CPs.<sup>16</sup> Although TBC has concerns about the higher PSC rate associated with some of the CP fisheries – particularly rex-sole and arrowtooth flounder - TBC supports this option. The main reason for this preference is that the CP fleet receives more observer coverage. Because NMFS proposes to provide only 13% observer coverage for CV fisheries, there is no assurance that collected data will be sufficiently precise and accurate to ensure that CVs remain within their PSC limits.

### ***The Chosen PSC Limit Should Reflect Uncertainties About Impacts to Alaska Stocks and Abundance of Both ESA-Listed and Alaskan Stocks***

TBC submits that the alternative selected by the Council should reflect a number of significant uncertainties regarding the long-term sustainability of the Alaska's Chinook resources. Conservative management strategies for directed fisheries failed to improve escapements in western Alaska watersheds despite a "great cost to the people who rely on these resources for food and income."<sup>17</sup> Council members should take a hard look at the table of subsistence, sport and commercial fishery closures provided on Table 4-43 on page 144 of the analysis. For many of these stocks, the declines are an ongoing trend. But the analysis implies that uncertainties about stock composition make it preferable to adopt the higher limits until there is proof that trawl fisheries are a significant contributing factor to the decline. The EA claims that there is no evidence to suggest that trawl bycatch is related to escapement failures in Alaska's rivers and that "there is no available evidence that the incidental trawl catch of [...] prey species has a measurable impact on food availability for Chinook salmon."<sup>18</sup>

The problem with this approach is that the reverse statement is also true: there is no evidence to support the hypothesis that direct and indirect mortalities associated with trawl bycatch are not significant contributing factors to the Chinook fishery disaster. The only certainty is that there is a fishery disaster. NMFS does not have adequate information available for the purpose of assessing the annual catch for stock composition analysis because previous sampling rates can be measured in the thousandths of a percent and are primarily from the pollock fishery.<sup>19</sup> There have been less than ten genetic samples taken from non-pollock trawl fisheries.<sup>20</sup> Inadequate sampling and CWT limitations have made it impossible to estimate relative abundance or harvested numbers of specific stocks.<sup>21</sup> The scarce information available indicates that most of the past data indicates that British Columbia and Alaska provide for the majority of Chinook recovered as PSC in the GOA.<sup>22</sup>

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<sup>13</sup> Id. at 7.

<sup>14</sup> Id.

<sup>15</sup> Id. at 6 - 7.

<sup>16</sup> Id. at 6.

<sup>17</sup> Id. at 142.

<sup>18</sup> Id. at 57, 167.

<sup>19</sup> Id. at 19-20.

<sup>20</sup> Id. at 20.

<sup>21</sup> Id. at 22.

<sup>22</sup> Id. at 22-23 (adding that most of the Alaska Chinook represented by CWT originate from SE and Cook Inlet; 75% of observed CWTs are SE and provide 92% of Alaska origin fish when accounting for mark expansions; Alaska overall is 35% of CWT PSC when accounting for mark expansion).

### ***Significant Uncertainties About Chinook Stocks Warrant a Precautionary Approach***

Because of this uncertainty, it is critical for the Council to consider the precautionary approach adopted by the National Standard 9 implementing regulations.<sup>23</sup> The regulation directs Councils to act cautiously when there is uncertainty regarding how a management measure relates to factors that range from population effects for the bycatch species to changes in the distribution of benefits and costs and social effects. The basic principle embodied in the precautionary approach lies in the recognition that scientific certainty often comes too late to design effective management responses to environmental changes.

The risks associated with continued bycatch mortality levels are significant. The precautionary approach requires that policies manage risks so as to minimize serious or irreversible damage until NMFS can show that current bycatch levels do not pose a significant risk of long-term damage to the Chinook salmon resource. TBC fears that this Amendment may mirror past efforts to address chinook bycatch by increasing the allowable PSC over historical levels in order to respond to the “uncertainty and variability in Chinook salmon bycatch.”<sup>24</sup> Alternatives which increase rather than decrease PSC due to “uncertainty” are directly at odds with the precautionary approach. NMFS says that it is difficult to assess how much PSC to reduce at a cost of foregone trawl harvest because it needs “greater information on the proportion of GOA trawl-caught Chinook salmon that return to United States rivers, and their total socioeconomic value to United States entities.”<sup>25</sup> The precautionary approach dictates that NMFS must manage its fisheries conservatively until it acquires that information.

### ***Abundance Based Concerns: PSC Limits Should Reflect Declines in Chinook Abundance***

TBC also requests that the Council also consider declines in Chinook abundance in setting the PSC limit. Since 1999, abundance based management has governed fisheries that target Chinook salmon. It is disconcerting that the approach in the analysis reflects historical bycatch levels rather than concerns with overall Chinook abundance. The impacts of trawl Chinook removals at lower population levels heighten already significant risks to long-term stock sustainability.

In particular, the Council should carefully consider the recent catch history of Chinook in the BSAI pollock fishery as a cautionary tale. Over a five-year period from 2003 – 2007, BSAI pollock trawlers removed an average of roughly 80,000 chinook per year.<sup>26</sup> Over the last four years, that average has dropped to roughly 15,000 fish per year.<sup>27</sup> Directed fishery harvests have declined by more than half over the same time period, suggesting that prior removals have had a predictable impact on present take levels.<sup>28</sup> There was no commercial fishery in 2012.<sup>29</sup> TBC recognizes that there are many uncertainties about how and when ocean and freshwater conditions affect the mortality rates of a highly migratory species that utilizes a wide range of habitats. But the circumstantial evidence of impacts caused by the BSAI pollock fishery is compelling. There were five years of intensive bycatch removals followed by dramatic population declines in subsequent spawning cycles.

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<sup>23</sup> 50 C.F.R. § 600.350(d)(3)(ii).

<sup>24</sup> Fisheries of the Exclusive Economic Zone Off Alaska; Chinook Salmon Bycatch Management in the Bering Sea Pollock Fishery. 75 Fed. Reg. 53035, 53036.

<sup>25</sup> EA/RIR/IFRA at 151.

<sup>26</sup> See [alaskafisheries.noaa.gov/sustainablefisheries/inseason/chinook\\_salmon\\_mortality.pdf](http://alaskafisheries.noaa.gov/sustainablefisheries/inseason/chinook_salmon_mortality.pdf).

<sup>27</sup> *Id.*

<sup>28</sup> See [yukonriverpanel.com/salmon/wp-content/uploads/2009/02/jtc-report-summary-2011-preseason-2012.pdf](http://yukonriverpanel.com/salmon/wp-content/uploads/2009/02/jtc-report-summary-2011-preseason-2012.pdf).

<sup>29</sup> Dan Joling. *Alaska increases estimate of salmon disaster*. JUNEAU EMPIRE. November 14, 2012.

The concern here is that NMFS is taking a parallel course with other declining Alaska stocks impacted by its GOA fisheries by using historical bycatch levels as a baseline rather than relative abundance. The Council and NMFS should carefully consider the historical relationship between bycatch statistics and Yukon River chinook populations; it is important to remember the past so as to avoid the repetition of the same mistakes.<sup>30</sup>

Therefore, the Council should carefully consider the discussion of PSC rates and statewide harvests on pages 120 – 137 of the EA. The PSC rates reflect the number of Chinook caught per metric ton of groundfish harvest. The overall decline in PSC rates during the past five years mirrors data that indicate decreased abundance.<sup>31</sup> From 2003 – 2007 the average Alaska commercial Chinook harvest was 673,000 fish; over the next five years that average dropped nearly in half to 378,000 fish.<sup>32</sup> This means that even if trawl fisheries take fewer Chinook, the effects of lower take levels are more significant because the take comes from a smaller and more fragile population. For this reason, it is disturbing that the highest Chinook PSC in non-pollock trawl fisheries since 2003 occurred in 2010 and 2011 and likely removed a greater percentage of the population.<sup>33</sup> The 5,000 fish limit is the only option under Alternative 2 that responds to abundance based management.

Finally, these same concerns may also apply to ESA listed stocks. A recent supplemental biological opinion for authorization of the groundfish fisheries in the GOA noted that reported take of listed ESUs affected by GOA trawl fisheries has declined.<sup>34</sup> The Council should direct NMFS to review its most recent stock assessments and add that information in further analysis. Are affected ESUs now facing heightened extinction risks relative to the 1990s? If so, the impacts of further removals – even if small – have increased potential to undermine recovery efforts.

### ***Regulatory Impact Review (RIR) and Impacts Analysis Need to Provide Equal Consideration to Salmon Fishery Closures***

The approach taken in the RIR and other portions of the analysis measures lost revenue to trawl fisheries and unfairly fails to provide corresponding measurements for Chinook user groups under alternatives that would reduce the PSC limits. The analysis presents the impact information in a way that implies that trawl fisheries will forego harvests of tens of thousands of metric tons of groundfish in order to achieve “salmon savings” of a mere few thousand fish.<sup>35</sup> The chosen method of comparing significant costs to one fleet with minimal benefits to another biases the result in favor of allowing for higher PSC limits. The key problem is that the economic analysis emphasizes the worst case scenario for the trawl fisheries and ignores the worst case scenario for chinook resource users. This is unfair and ignores real impacts to communities and the overall health of the Chinook resource.

The Council should direct NMFS to redo its RIR in a more balanced manner. NMFS may not be able to quantify the values of specific Chinook stocks but the analysis should discuss both the quantitative and qualitative value of Chinook fisheries. Further, the analysis needs to quantify the significant public investment in Chinook salmon recovery, enhancement and

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<sup>30</sup> Santayana, G. 1905. *Life of Reason, Reason in Common Sense*.

<sup>31</sup> EA/RIR/IRFA at 120.

<sup>32</sup> Id. at 137.

<sup>33</sup> Id. at 109.

<sup>34</sup> NMFS. 2012. Endangered Species Act Section 7(a)(2) Supplemental Biological Opinion: Supplemental Biological Opinion Reinitiating Consultation on the January 11, 2007 Supplemental Biological Opinion Regarding Authorization of the Gulf of Alaska (GOA) Groundfish Fisheries. NMFS Salmon Management Division, Northwest Region. January 9, 2012.

<sup>35</sup> EA/RIR/IRFA at 156, Table 4-51.

protection and acknowledge that many Chinook populations are at sufficiently low levels so that proceeding with a higher PSC limit risks undermining these investments.

### ***The Council Should Consider Impacts to Chinook Fisheries in Terms of Fishery Closures***

The analysis in the EA relies on uncertainty about stock composition and other sources of mortality to excuse the refusal to monetize or even quantify the benefits of reduced PSC or estimate the cost of taken PSC.<sup>36</sup> This approach ignores the cumulative effects of long-term salmon savings and ignores the very real possibility that Chinook fishery closures are in part attributable to disproportionate impacts on Alaska-origin stocks. Ignorance of the stock of origin is not a good excuse for failing to quantify Chinook values. The losses to Chinook fisheries are not a mere matter of individual fish. Weak stock management dictates fishery closures regardless of whether NMFS has the ability to determine whether the loss occurs in Homer, Sitka, Vancouver, B.C. or Portland, Oregon.

But the analysis limits its assessment of impacts to specific numbers of salmon saved without considering the relationship between salmon savings and saving salmon fisheries. The community impacts analysis focuses exclusively on communities that serve as ports for 90 groundfish trawl vessels to the exclusion of communities that host hundreds of commercial and sport fishing vessels that harvest Chinook salmon or communities that depend on returning Chinook for food.<sup>37</sup>

The more relevant economic consideration for a balanced analysis is the loss of entire Chinook fishery values. NMFS acknowledges that it has no idea whether or not trawl bycatch impacts specific Chinook stocks. But if trawlers are taking disproportionate amounts of a specific stock, modest amounts of Chinook saving can result in significant differences in escapement, preserving existing fishery economies. ADF & G's October 2012 gap analysis shows that escapements in many affected watersheds can be improved with just a few thousand fish – the equivalent of several “lightning strike” tows.

Further analysis should also consider the cumulative benefits of reduced Chinook PSC in terms of benefits associated with reducing PSC for other species and ecosystem effects. The analysis should also consider halibut and crab savings. The reader is led to believe that it would cost millions of dollars in lost revenue to save a few thousand Chinook but the analysis fails to account for the thousands of halibut and crab also saved as a result of Chinook PSC limits. In the absence of this information, the “net economic benefits” determination will not reflect the full spectrum of appropriate economic considerations.

Finally, it is important to emphasize that “salmon savings” in terms of numbers of fish reflects data that NMFS staff have characterized the October 2012 meeting as so statistically biased as to be useless for some fisheries management purposes. NMFS characterized its estimates of ESA-listed species in the GOA groundfish fisheries as “very minimum estimates.”<sup>38</sup> Previous analyses have included reports suggesting that chinook bycatch is under-reported by a substantial amount.<sup>39</sup> Further, it is notable that more heavily observer CPs targeting arrowtooth flounder have a PSC rate nearly three times as high as the marginally observer arrowtooth CVs.<sup>40</sup>

Therefore, the Council should consider, and direct NMFS to consider, the real potential economic losses associated with salmon fishery closures such as the figures estimated by the state of Alaska in its updated estimates. Commercial fisherman lost \$16.8 million in direct

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<sup>36</sup> Id. at 43, 167-168.

<sup>37</sup> Id. at 173.

<sup>38</sup> Id. at 40.

<sup>39</sup> 75 Fed. Reg. at 53030.

<sup>40</sup> EA/RIR/IRFA at 147.

revenue.<sup>41</sup> In Cook Inlet alone, the state lost 29,630 angler days which would have generated \$17.7 million in direct and indirect spending.<sup>42</sup> In 2005, a healthier chinook resource provided enough harvestable numbers to provide substantial net economic benefits to the nation - \$54 million in ex-vessel value, \$17 million in processor value and \$90 million in regional economic benefits.<sup>43</sup>

***NMFS and the Council Should Consider Alternative Measures to Address Impacts to Trawl Fisheries***

NMFS notes that annual PSC limits are advantageous to fisheries that derive most of their revenue from fisheries that occur early in the year.<sup>44</sup> The fisheries of greatest concern are the lower value rex sole and arrowtooth fisheries occurring in March and April when the weekly Chinook take averages are high.<sup>45</sup> The rex sole fishery has the highest overall PSC rate and takes an average of 1,336 chinook per year, mostly in the CGOA.<sup>46</sup> The fishery is but a small portion of the GOA non-pollock harvest - 4% - yet it is a significant driver of Chinook PSC.<sup>47</sup> The arrowtooth flounder fishery takes the largest number of Chinook and has the third highest PSC rate.<sup>48</sup>

The Council should work with NMFS to ameliorate the worst case scenario economic effects discussed in the RIR through specific management measures. The analysis discusses behavioral changes but it seems more appropriate to mandate those changes if the Council is to succeed in minimizing bycatch.<sup>49</sup> In general, NMFS' analysis indicates that the most significant economic impact of the two lower PSC limits is that they could result in rockfish season closures entirely.<sup>50</sup> The Council could reconsider apportioning PSC among target fisheries as a reasonable alternative that would allow for a more balanced distribution - and evaluation - of economic impacts. Another reasonable alternative would be to modify the seasonal progression of fisheries in a manner that shifts the economic impacts of mandatory bycatch minimization measures to lower value fisheries with high PSC rates.

***The Analysis Should Clarify Whether it Accounts for the Cumulative Effects of Other PSC Closures***

One important question regarding the closure analysis is whether it measures impacts solely on the basis of Chinook PSC rather than accounting for independent closures occurring as a result of halibut PSC exceedances. If so, the actual impacts are likely overstated. NMFS uses a "characteristic fishing year" to evaluate potential closures that would result from Chinook PSC limits. The approach taken in the analysis needs to consider whether and to what extent foregone harvest would occur independently of problems with Chinook PSC.

The Council should direct NMFS to redo its analysis and ensure that the characteristic fishing year accounts for expected halibut PSC closures discussed in Section 4.6.3.3 of the

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<sup>41</sup> Dan Joling. *Alaska increases estimate of salmon disaster*. JUNEAU EMPIRE. November 14, 2012.

<sup>42</sup> Id.

<sup>43</sup> North Pacific Harvests and Economic Value Measurement in 2005 to 2007 at 16.

<sup>44</sup> EA/RIR/IRFA at 169.

<sup>45</sup> Id. at 18-19.

<sup>46</sup> Id. at 146.

<sup>47</sup> Id. at 164.

<sup>48</sup> Id. at 146; see also id. at 147 (showing that rex sole is a catcher processor issue; arrowtooth is roughly split but worse for the CPs (.209 versus .071) and for catcher vessels P.cod is the biggest number in terms of Chinook PSC).

<sup>49</sup> Id. at 155.

<sup>50</sup> Id. at 164 - 166.

Public Review Draft for the GOA halibut PSC limits. For example, the halibut PSC analysis indicates early season rex sole and arrowtooth flounder have high rates of halibut PSC and may be subject to early season closures in most years. Thus, the closure analysis of a characteristic fishing year needed to include potential halibut closures in order to accurately illustrate potential economic impacts.

### ***Monitoring and Enforcement Considerations: NMFS and the Council Need to Implement a Census for Chinook Bycatch***

TBC requests that the Council supersede the restructured observer program amendment and address the chinook fishery disaster by implementing a census approach for GOA pollock and non-pollock trawl fisheries. In response to the similar decline in Yukon River fisheries, NMFS had concluded that it was necessary to “monitor all salmon bycatch by each vessel in the pollock fishery through a census, 100 percent observer coverage, and an expanded biological sampling program.”<sup>51</sup> But for this action, NMFS will not be taking genetic samples from non-pollock fisheries because a census is not available and because logistics associated with offload sampling.<sup>52</sup> NMFS assumes that improved stock composition analysis in the pollock fisheries will provide “perspective” on PSC composition in other GOA trawl fisheries.<sup>53</sup>

The problem is that NMFS needs more than “perspective” in order to prosecute its trawl fisheries without running the risk of wrecking coastal community economies dependent on the chinook fishery. The restructured observer program falls well short of standards that NMFS had previously determined to be bare minimums for purposes of bycatch monitoring. The analysis in the EA/RIR/IFRA for the restructured observer program described the 30% coverage level as a “requirement” and a “minimum standard” for the randomized, restructured program.<sup>54</sup> The 30% coverage level was the “least conservative” rate based on previous variance estimates produced by the agency in Bering Sea studies during the 1990s and was below recommended coverage rates defined from past optimization analyses.<sup>55</sup> Further, NMFS work on improving data collection on impacts to Chinook salmon assumed that NMFS would continue to improve observer coverage and begin with 30% coverage levels under the restructured program.<sup>56</sup> The most recent supplemental biological opinion clearly assumed 30% observer coverage rates and recommended further improvements to address ESA considerations and meet salmon retention requirements.<sup>57</sup>

During the 1990s, the AFSC and contracted scientists calculated precision values at different observer coverage levels for BSAI trawl fisheries.<sup>58</sup> In general, 36.6% observer coverage was necessary to achieve precision goals.<sup>59</sup> In particular, results from those studies

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<sup>51</sup> Fisheries of the Exclusive Economic Zone Off Alaska; Chinook Salmon Bycatch Management in the Bering Sea Pollock Fishery. 75 Fed. Reg. 53026, 53036. (August 30, 2010).

<sup>52</sup> EA/RIR/IFRA at 19-20.

<sup>53</sup> Id. at 20.

<sup>54</sup> NMFS. 2012. Environmental Assessment/Regulatory Impact Review/Initial Regulatory Flexibility Analysis for Proposed Amendment 86 to the Fishery Management Plan for Groundfish of the Bering Sea/Aleutian Islands Management Area and Amendment 76 to the Fishery Management Plan for Groundfish of the Gulf of Alaska (hereinafter Observer EA/RIR/IFRA) at 180.

<sup>55</sup> Id.

<sup>56</sup> NMFS. 2012. Endangered Species Act Section 7(a)(2) Supplemental Biological Opinion: Supplemental Biological Opinion Reinitiating Consultation on the January 11, 2007 Supplemental Biological Opinion Regarding Authorization of the Gulf of Alaska (GOA) Groundfish Fisheries. NMFS Salmon Management Division, Northwest Region. January 9, 2012.

<sup>57</sup> Id. at 6.

<sup>58</sup> Observer EA/RIR/IFRA at 173-174.

<sup>59</sup> Id. at 176.

generally indicated that 30 percent coverage levels are inadequate to achieve sufficient statistical reliability in Chinook bycatch estimates.<sup>60</sup> Other prior work indicated that NMFS should prescribe haul-specific coverage levels of 50 to 70 percent in order to obtain a reasonable level of precision for Chinook bycatch estimates.<sup>61</sup>

But the restructured program will begin with a deployment rate of 13% - well below these recommendations. This raises concerns with regard to NMFS' ability to obtain the stock composition data necessary to determine effects on Chinook populations and user groups. Previously, the observed portion of the overall catch in the GOA catch ranged from 25 - 37 % between 2004 and 2007 while BSAI coverage ranged between 86 and 95 percent.<sup>62</sup> At those levels, scientists have not been able to estimate impacts of GOA groundfish fisheries on western Alaska or other stocks of Pacific salmon.<sup>63</sup> The observation levels made it impossible to monitor bycatch hot spots as has been done for the BSAI fleet.<sup>64</sup> In sum, in light of the severity of the Chinook fishery disaster, the Council should modify this action so as to implement an industry funded, pay as you go 100% observer program for all trawl fisheries that remove Chinook.

### **Conclusion**

TBC thanks the Council for acting on Chinook PSC and supports Alternative 2 using a ten-year baseline and implementing options 1 and 2. The analysis needs to provide a more balanced assessment of impacts to Chinook resource and the Council should modify the action in a manner that ensures adequate monitoring.

Sincerely,

Paul Olson, Attorney-at-Law

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<sup>60</sup> Id. at 173 - 174.

<sup>61</sup> Karp, W.A. & H. McElderry. 1999.

<sup>62</sup> GOA Chinook Salmon Bycatch Discussion Paper, November 2010 at 4.

<sup>63</sup> Witherell, D., D. Ackely & C. Coon. 2002. An Overview of Salmon Bycatch in Alaska Groundfish Fisheries. Reprinted from the Alaska Fishery Research Bulletin, Vol. 9, No. 1, Summer 2002 at 62.

<sup>64</sup> Id. at 61.



Please Reduce Chinook salmon bycatch in all trawl fisheries

**Subject:** Please Reduce Chinook salmon bycatch in all trawl fisheries

**From:** Chris Zwolinski <rikadog9@gmail.com>

**Date:** 11/27/2012 2:26 PM

**To:** npfmc.comments@noaa.gov

As an Alaskan, as well as a life long sport fisherman, commercial fisherman (IFQ holder) and conservationist, I strongly support the reduction of Chinook salmon bycatch.

Please stand up to the political power of the trawl fishery and set the cap at 5000 Chinook before it is too late for this important resource to rebound in our lifetimes. Please do not waste any time to make this bycatch reduction, as it has been put off for way too long.

The time to act is NOW.

Thank you for considering this important topic.

Chris J Zwolinski

po box 83218

Fairbanks, AK 99708

November 27, 2012

To North Pacific Fisheries  
Management Council  
Re: C02 GOA Chinook bycatch all trawl fisheries

Dear Chairman Eric Olsen,

**As a concerned commercial salmon fisherman and community member, I strongly support reductions in Gulf of Alaska salmon bycatch in all trawl fisheries.**

- The Council should set a cap of 5,000 Chinook salmon for the non-pollock fisheries in the GOA as a starting point. Bycatch must be reduced further in future actions.
- Chinook salmon have declined severely throughout Alaska: Commercial fishery failures and disasters were declared for the Upper Cook Inlet, Yukon River and Kuskokwim River.
- The gulf non-pollock fisheries are the only fishery left which catches significant amounts of salmon bycatch, yet has no limit.
- Chinook salmon is critical to subsistence, sport and commercial fisheries, and a major contributor to the economy and culture of Alaska.
- All other users have to reduce their harvest to conserve Chinook salmon in years of low returns, the trawl fisheries must do the same.
- National Standard 9 of the Magnuson-Stevens Act requires that bycatch be reduced. Please do not waive or compromise on this critical issue.

Thank you  
Margaret Bosworth  
Kodiak, Alaska



November 27, 2012

Eric Olson, Chair  
North Pacific Fishery Management Council  
605 W. Fourth Ave.  
Anchorage, AK 99501

Re: Agenda Item C-2 (c) Chinook Salmon PSC in the GOA Non -Pollock Trawl Fisheries

Submitted via email to [npfmc.comments@noaa.gov](mailto:npfmc.comments@noaa.gov)

Dear Chairman Olson and Council members:

The Alaska Marine Conservation Council is dedicated to protecting the long-term health of Alaska's oceans and sustaining the working waterfronts of our coastal communities. Our members include fishermen, subsistence harvesters, marine scientists, small business owners and families. Our ways of life, livelihoods and local economies depend on sustainable fishing practices and productive oceans. The Gulf of Alaska (GOA) provides a plethora of commercial, sport and subsistence fisheries which are revered world wide.

Significant and unrestricted Chinook salmon bycatch has been occurring in the GOA for decades. The Council recently took action to put a long overdue limit on Chinook salmon bycatch in the GOA pollock fisheries. It is time to follow suit for the non-pollock trawl fisheries in the GOA. While these fisheries on average contribute a third of the known Chinook salmon bycatch in the GOA, and in some years as much as 70% of the bycatch, they remain at present unrestricted. Given the disastrous state of Chinook salmon runs throughout the GOA it is long past time that the Council meets its obligations under National Standard 9 and reduce bycatch in this fishery. **We urge the Council to act now and select a bycatch limit under Alternative 2 of 5,000 Chinook salmon for the GOA non-pollock trawl fleet as a starting point for bycatch reduction.**

In 2012, the state of salmon stocks around the GOA was quite literally a disaster. All monitored Chinook salmon runs were below average.<sup>1</sup> In Upper Cook Inlet, Chinook salmon runs were so poor that the Secretary of Commerce declared a fisheries disaster. The setnet fishery was almost completely shut down, and the Kenai River was closed to all recreational Chinook salmon fishing. Despite these closures, only four out of twelve escapement goals were met in Upper Cook Inlet in 2012.<sup>2</sup> **Economic losses in Cook Inlet to commercial fishing alone are estimated at almost \$10 million, with another**

<sup>1</sup> North Pacific Fishery Management Council, Initial Review Draft Environmental Assessment/Regulatory Impact Review/Initial Regulatory Flexibility Analysis, Nov. 2012 at 43 [hereinafter EA/RIR/IRFA].

<sup>2</sup> *Id.*

**\$17.7 million in direct and indirect spending lost to sport fisheries and additional losses to subsistence fishers.**<sup>3</sup> Seven GOA Chinook salmon stocks are currently listed as Stocks of Concern by the Alaska Board of Fisheries.<sup>4</sup> Beyond the Gulf of Alaska, at least three Endangered Species Act-listed Chinook salmon are caught in the Gulf of Alaska trawl fisheries.

While the analysis is not able to provide direct estimates of the number of any particular salmon stock which would be “saved” under any of the alternatives, it is clear that any reduction in bycatch would be beneficial to the impacted Chinook salmon stocks. In this particular case, the magnitude of the bycatch is important – fisheries around Cook Inlet were closed down completely because of the possibility that they may catch a few hundred Chinook salmon. The GOA trawl fisheries, on the otherhand, are allowed to catch thousands. Placing a limit on non-pollock trawl fisheries now is critical both as a matter of conservation and equity in these times of Chinook salmon shortages.

A bycatch limit of 5,000 Chinook salmon is barely below the 2003 to 2011 average bycatch for the GOA non-pollock fisheries of 6,001 Chinook salmon.<sup>5</sup> The Council’s mandate under National Standard 9 is to minimize bycatch, not to maintain it at historic levels. The GOA non-pollock trawl fisheries have been operating without any requirement to minimize bycatch, and under the status quo there is no economic incentive to do so. A potentially constraining limit will provide the incentives necessary to prompt the development of methods to avoid Chinook salmon. The analysis highlights this effect:

Under a PSC limit, and especially if the attainment of the threshold appears to be imminent, the non-pollock trawl fleet may be active in making efforts to avoid high PSC rates, in order to preserve the opportunity to fully harvest the groundfish TAC’s..... the adoption of a Chinook PSC limit likely will prompt efforts to gain better information concerning Chinook avoidance, improving the ability of participants to avoid Chinook in the long run.<sup>6</sup>

We understand that the Council has begun the process of developing a catch share program for the GOA, and this may provide additional bycatch reduction “tools.” However, past experience designing and implementing catch share programs tells us this process will be lengthy and complex, and is unlikely to provide anything resembling a quick fix to bycatch issues. Our Chinook salmon populations in the Gulf are in crisis now, and we cannot wait three years to begin to put limitations on bycatch. Additional bycatch reduction can appropriately be addressed through a catch share program, but it is imperative that the Council takes a first step now to put an upper bound on the allowable bycatch in the Gulf of Alaska non-pollock trawl fisheries.

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<sup>3</sup> Susan Bell, Commissioner Alaska Department of Commerce, Community, and Economic Development, Letter to Senator Murkowski, Senator Begich, and Congressman Young, Nov. 8, 2012. *Available at* <http://www.scribd.com/doc/113181249/Susan-Bell-letter-to-congressional-delegation-on-salmon-disaster>.

<sup>4</sup> EA/RIR/IRFA, *supra* note 1 at 36.

<sup>5</sup> *Id.* at 109.

<sup>6</sup> *Id.* at ES-4.

The Draft EA/RIR/IRFA raises some compelling and disturbing concerns related to monitoring and enforcement.<sup>7</sup> According to this analysis, deck sorting is common practice in this fishery and on unobserved boats “there is a high likelihood that salmon PSC has been sorted from the catch prior to delivery.”<sup>8</sup> Furthermore, under a PSC limit, this action is “highly susceptible to introduction of intentional bias into salmon PSC estimation,” meaning that under a PSC limit it is highly likely that fishermen would discard Chinook salmon at sea rather than have them be counted, and potentially trigger a cap. This supposition raises substantial concerns about current bycatch estimation, discussed further below. In the context of this action, however, the Council should not allow concerns over the current observer coverage to obfuscate the need or ability to take action now. The Council’s obligation is to identify and recommend necessary management measures. Monitoring and enforcement needs, including observer coverage can then be adapted to meet the needs of the management regime. In this case, a lack of observer coverage is no reason to delay action, but rather identifies a need to design monitoring programs which will meet the management requirements of our fisheries. In the Bering Sea pollock fishery, observer coverage for all catcher vessels was increased to 100% to meet these concerns with the implementation of Amendment 91. If similar concerns exist in the Gulf of Alaska, the solution would seem to be the same.

The concerns raised in the management enforcement considerations<sup>9</sup> also create substantial doubt as to the actual degree of impact the status quo fisheries have on salmon. If the monitoring concerns are accurate, then the numbers presented throughout this document as the salmon bycatch numbers are likely inaccurate. In fact, if a great deal of at-sea discards are occurring in the fishery, the actual impact on Chinook salmon is likely greatly understated throughout the draft analysis. Similarly, these monitoring concerns call into question the information on which the Biological Opinion for ESA-listed Chinook salmon caught in these fisheries is based. If in fact a high degree of catch is discarded at sea, estimates of the incidental take of ESA-listed stocks are likely biased low as well.

While estimates of Chinook salmon impacts are likely *underestimated* throughout the analysis due to the monitoring concerns addressed above, economic impacts to the non-pollock trawl fisheries are likely *overestimated* throughout the document. The analysis of foregone revenue assumes no change in fishing behavior: “...regulatory impacts must be viewed with the caveat that fishers did not alter their behavior to avoid Chinook salmon and forestall PSC-related fishery closures.”<sup>10</sup> In addition, and perhaps more importantly, the analysis of foregone pollock, because it looks retrospectively, simply assigns the foregone pollock and revenue from the projected season closure date on. In reality, with a PSC limit in place harvesters will likely alter their fishing behavior to shift away from target fisheries with high levels of PSC to ensure that higher value, lower PSC fisheries can occur. While these mitigating circumstances are discussed qualitatively in the

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<sup>7</sup> See EA/RIR/IRFA, *supra* note 1 at 176-187.

<sup>8</sup> *Id.* at 178.

<sup>9</sup> *Id.* at 176.

<sup>10</sup> *Id.* at 154.

analysis, the quantitative tables of impacts do not reflect these probable adaptations and are therefore likely much higher than actual impacts.

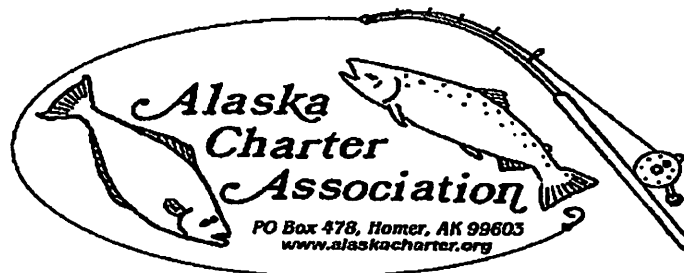
In closing, Chinook salmon are a vital and essential component of our communities, our cultures and our economies in the Gulf of Alaska. For reasons of conservation and equity it is critical that bycatch of this critical species is reduced in a meaningful way. **We urge the Council to act now and select a bycatch limit under Alternative 2 of 5,000 Chinook salmon for the GOA non-pollock trawl fleet as a starting point for bycatch reduction.**

Thank you for your continued attention to this important issue.

Sincerely,



Kelly Harrell  
Executive Director  
Alaska Marine Conservation Council



*"To Preserve and Protect the Rights and Resources of Alaska's Sport Fishermen"*

November 27, 2012

Mr. Eric Olson, Chairman  
North Pacific Fishery Management Council  
605 W. 4th Avenue, Suite 306  
Anchorage, AK 99501-2252

Re: Agenda Item C-2(2) GOA Chinook Bycatch All Trawl Fisheries

Dear Chairman Olson,

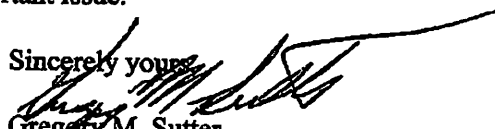
The Alaska Charter Association (ACA) is a statewide organization representing over 150 charter and associated businesses. Its mission is to preserve and protect the fishing rights and resources necessary for the Alaska charter fleet to best serve the recreational fishery.

The ACA encourages the North Council to adopt a motion establishing a cap of 5,000 Chinook salmon when final action on this issue is considered. Chinook salmon runs are vital to all user groups and exist at alarmingly low levels in many areas of Alaska. This year we have witnessed closures and disaster declarations that adversely impacted the Kenai River, the Yukon River, the Kuskokwim River and upper Cook Inlet. Economic losses in the Cook Inlet commercial fishery and its sport fishing industries are estimated to be around \$10,000,000 and \$17,700,000, respectively. Subsistence fisheries are suffering as well.

One user group that did not experience adverse impacts due to low salmon returns was the Non-pollock trawl fleet; a major culprit of bycatch (30% to 60%). Currently, this fleet has no cap. This needs to change. When the resource is healthy, all groups benefit.

The North Council needs to make necessary changes consistent with National Standard 9 of the Magnuson-Stevens Act. Given that Chinook levels are so low in many areas of Alaska and the importance of salmon to many users of the resources, the Non-pollock trawl fleet should be capped at the minimum level of alternatives under consideration. In advance, the ACA appreciates the North Council's attention to this very important issue.

Sincerely yours,

  
Gregory M. Sutter  
President

November 27, 2012

Mr. Eric Olson, Chair  
North Pacific Fishery Management Council  
605 W. Fourth Avenue, Suite 306  
Anchorage, AK 99501-2252

Dr. James Balsiger, Regional Administrator  
NOAA Fisheries, Alaska Region  
709 West Ninth Street  
Juneau, AK 99802-1668

Re: Agenda Item C-2: Gulf of Alaska Chinook Salmon Bycatch

Dear Chairman Olson, Dr. Balsiger, and Council Members:

Oceana commends the National Marine Fisheries Service (NMFS) and North Pacific Fishery Management Council for their commitment to reduce Chinook salmon bycatch in the Gulf of Alaska groundfish fisheries. The decision to cap Chinook salmon bycatch in the pollock fishery was an important first step, and you have legal, social, and scientific responsibilities to limit the uncontrolled salmon bycatch in the bottom trawl fisheries. You are currently considering a draft Environmental Assessment evaluating the adverse impacts of bycatch on salmon stocks and necessary management changes. As you continue this process, we urge you to pick a preliminary preferred alternative that would impose a prohibited species cap of 5,000 Chinook salmon for the Gulf of Alaska bottom trawl fleet.

NMFS and the Council have recognized that the uncontrolled bycatch of Chinook salmon in the bottom trawl fisheries is a problem. Per-vessel, the bottom-trawl fisheries catch and kill nearly the same number of salmon as the pollock fishery in the Gulf of Alaska. Chinook salmon killed by the bottom trawl fisheries are not available as spawning fish and do not contribute to the commercial, personal use, subsistence, tourism charter boat, or sport catch. These salmon are not available as prey for orcas and Steller sea lions protected by the Endangered Species Act (ESA). Ultimately, bycatch of Chinook salmon reduces recruitment, spawning biomass, and yields for other fisheries.

Further, Chinook harvests and abundance have been on a declining trend for over 50 years in Alaska and on the entire Pacific coast. Chinook salmon populations are in trouble, and scientists cannot understand why. The State of Alaska identified this trend as a Chinook salmon crisis and recently convened an expert science panel to address the issue. The lack of information about the causes of the Chinook salmon crisis counsels strongly in favor of conservative action by the Council and NMFS.

Endangered Chinook salmon from the Lower Columbia River, Upper Columbia River, and Upper Willamette River are killed as bycatch by the Gulf of Alaska groundfish fisheries. Additionally, research surveys have found endangered Puget Sound Chinook, Snake River Spring/Summer Chinook and the Snake River Basin steelhead in the vicinity. NMFS, as



required by the Endangered Species Act, reinitiated Section 7 consultation in November 2010 to analyze the impacts of the Gulf of Alaska groundfish fisheries on endangered salmon. One of the reasons cited for concluding that the fisheries do not cause jeopardy to endangered salmon stocks was the impending restructuring of the groundfish observer program that was thought at the time to increase observer coverage and result in a more precise monitoring of salmon bycatch. However, a draft observer deployment plan recently presented by NMFS indicated that observer coverage levels may actually be reduced on trawl vessels. This change may undermine the existing ESA documentation and require a new consultation process.

In selecting the preliminary preferred alternative for limiting Chinook bycatch, the Council should consider the disproportionate impacts of the rex sole (*Glyptocephalus zachirus*) bottom trawl fishery. The fishery is not large compared to other Alaskan groundfish fisheries; it retains less than 3,000 mt of rex sole per year on average, and, on average, only four factory trawlers and three catcher trawlers participate in this fishery.<sup>1</sup> The fishery, however, has substantial bycatch problems. In 2010, it was estimated that the rex sole fishery discarded over two pounds of fish for every pound of rex sole retained.<sup>2</sup> That same year, one pound of halibut was killed as bycatch for every eight pounds of rex sole retained.<sup>3</sup> Though the arrowtooth flounder fishery catches more Chinook (estimated to be more than 3,000 in 2011), the rex sole fishery has the highest Chinook salmon bycatch rate among the groundfish fisheries; it catches 0.51 Chinook salmon per metric ton of rex sole. This rate exceeds even the bycatch rate of the GOA pollock fishery.

In the last few years, boats targeting rex sole have consistently trawled off the Shumagin Islands and southwest tip and Cape Barnabas regions off Kodiak Island,<sup>4</sup> which puts them in close proximity to Chinook salmon stocks of concern like the Karluk and in Cook Inlet. In 2010, the four factory trawlers targeting rex sole in this area caught an estimated 2,273 Chinook salmon.<sup>5</sup>

We urge you to impose a prohibited species cap of 5,000 Chinook salmon for the Gulf of Alaska bottom trawl fleet. Such a cap is the best way for NMFS to meet its Magnuson-Stevens Act requirement "to the extent practicable and in the following priority-(A) minimize bycatch; and (B) minimize the mortality of bycatch which cannot be avoided." 16 U.S.C. § 1853(a)(11). This requirement is reinforced in National Standard 9, with which all Fishery Management Plans must be consistent, and which restates the requirement to minimize bycatch to the extent practicable. *See id.* § 1851(a)(9). When it added these provisions to the Act, Congress was very clear that its intent was to halt the "shameful waste" occurring in the nation's fisheries. 142 Cong. Rec. S10,794, at 10,820 (1996). Action to limit bycatch of Chinook salmon in the Gulf of Alaska trawl fisheries is needed to comply with these obligations

The cap should be apportioned such that dirty fisheries like the rex sole fishery will be forced to avoid the bycatch or stop fishing, and it should be reviewed annually to determine whether

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<sup>1</sup> Stockhausen, W.T., M.E. Wilkins, and M.H. Martin. Assessment of the Rex Sole Stock in the Gulf of Alaska (2011) (hereinafter "GOA rex sole assessment"); Halibut EA at Table 4-22 & 4-23.

<sup>2</sup> GOA rex sole assessment. at Table 6.20.

<sup>3</sup> GOA rex sole assessment at Table 6.18b.

<sup>4</sup> GOA rex sole assessment at Figure 6.2.

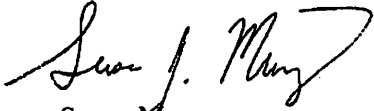
<sup>5</sup> Initial Review Draft EA/RIR/IRFA GOA Chinook PSC limits for non-pollock trawl fisheries, November 2012.

escapement goals were met, whether subsistence and commercial salmon needs were satisfied, information on the stock-of-origin of the bycatch are updated, and new insights in ocean research are incorporated. The cap should be adjusted accordingly. Innovations in fishing gear and fishing techniques, research on salmon behavior and habitat, and improvements in management could further reduce salmon bycatch on a trajectory toward zero.

Finally, funding should be secured for comprehensive management of salmon and necessary research, including identification of the stock-of-origin and age of every salmon caught as bycatch. Funding can be generated through the Council's authority to levy fines as an incentive to reduce bycatch and to make these funds available to offset costs including conservation and management measures and research. Additionally, proceeds generated by fishing associated with exempted or experimental fishing permits should be used as a source of funding.

Thank you again for your commitment to this issue. By reducing and minimizing wasteful bycatch, more salmon will survive to spawn in the rivers and streams of Alaska, the Pacific Northwest, and Canada. We will continue to work with you and support your efforts.

Sincerely,



Susan Murray  
Deputy Vice President, Pacific  
Oceana

**C-2(c) GOA Chinook Salmon Bycatch in the Non-Pollock Trawl Fisheries**  
**Council motion**  
**December 9, 2012**

The Council forwards the analysis for public review with changes to the alternatives and options described below. The Council requests staff revise the analysis to address SSC minutes and requests in the AP motion to NMFS and Council staff. Additions to the original motion are underlined.

**Problem statement:**

*Magnuson-Stevens Act National Standards require balancing achieving optimum yield with minimizing bycatch, while minimizing adverse impacts on fishing dependent communities. Chinook salmon prohibited species catch (PSC) taken incidentally in GOA trawl fisheries is a concern, and incidental take is limited in the Biological Opinion for ESA-listed Chinook salmon stocks. The Council recently adopted a PSC limit of 25,000 Chinook salmon for the Western and Central GOA pollock trawl fisheries, while also indicating an intent to evaluate Chinook salmon bycatch in the non-pollock GOA trawl fisheries, which currently do not have a Chinook salmon bycatch control measure.*

**The following alternatives apply to non-pollock trawl fisheries in the Central and Western GOA.**

Alternative 1: Status quo.

Alternative 2: 5,000, 7,500, 10,000, or 12,500 Chinook salmon PSC limit (hard cap).

Option 1: Apportion limit between Central and Western GOA.

Option 2: Apportion limit by directed fishery operational type (CV vs. CP).

Applies to both options 1 and 2: Apportion proportional to historic average bycatch of Chinook salmon (5- or 10-year average).

Option 3: No more than 50% or 66% of the annual hard cap limit can be taken before June 1.

Option 4: Separate Chinook salmon PSC limit (hard cap) to the CGOA rockfish program:

a) 1,500

b) 2,500

c) 3,500

Suboption 1: Divide by sector (CV and CP) based on actual Chinook salmon PSC usage by sector for the rockfish catch share program years of 2007 – 2012.

Each LLP holder within sector will receive an allocation of Chinook salmon PSC equivalent to the license's proportion of the sector's target rockfish catch history from the program's initial allocations. Member LLP allocations will be allocated to their respective cooperative.

Suboption 2: On October 1<sup>st</sup>, rollover all but 200, 300, or 400 remaining Chinook salmon to support other fall non-pollock trawl fisheries.

Suboptions 1 and/or 2 can be selected for Option 4.

Alternative 3: Full retention of salmon.

Vessels will retain all salmon bycatch until the number of salmon has been determined by the vessel or plant observer and the observer's collection of any scientific data or biological samples from the salmon has been completed.

Note, both Alternative 2 and Alternative 3 could be selected by the Council in their preferred alternative. Likewise, under Alternative 2, both Option 1 and Option 2, or Option 2 and Option 3, could be selected by the Council; Option 4 can be selected with any of the other options.

# PUBLIC TESTIMONY SIGN-UP SHEET

Agenda Item: C-2(c) GOA Chinook Salmon Bycatch Now pelagic Trawl

	NAME (PLEASE PRINT)	TESTIFYING ON BEHALF OF:
1	Myron P. Naung Sr	AUCP
2	HELMAN SQUARTSOFF	NATIVE VILLAGE OF OUKTAK
3	George Holdring	F/Us and Self
4	Ben Stewart	Peninsula Fishermen's Coalition
5	DAVID DAHL	Self
6	Tom Evich	Self
7	Jody Cook	Self
8	Aikle Alfieri	Self
9	Simon Hurley	Self
10	Theresa Peterson	AmeC
11	Pete Wedin	Self
12	Bob Krueger	AK Whitefish Trawlers Assoc.
13	John Gauvin	AKSC
14	Sarah Melton	American for Equal Access
15	Lori Swanson	GFF
16	Mike Symanski	FFT - "Fishing For The Future"
17	Julie Bennis	AG-DB
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NOTE to persons providing oral or written testimony to the Council: Section 307(1)(I) of the Magnuson-Stevens Fishery Conservation and Management Act prohibits any person "to knowingly and willfully submit to a Council, the Secretary, or the Governor of a State false information (including, but not limited to, false information regarding the capacity and extent to which a United State fish processor, on an annual basis, will process a portion of the optimum yield of a fishery that will be harvested by fishing vessels of the United States) regarding any matter that the Council, Secretary, or Governor is considering in the course of carrying out this Act.

# **Control Date For Central Gulf**

## Peninsula Fishermen's Coalition

Beth Stewart, Executive Director

2767 John Street, Juneau, AK 99801

Phone: 907.364.3646 Cell Phone: 907.635.4336 Email: [bethontheroad@gmail.com](mailto:bethontheroad@gmail.com)

Eric Olson, Chairman

December 4, 2012

North Pacific Fishery Management Council

605 West 4<sup>th</sup> Avenue

Anchorage, AK 99801

In Re: CGOA Trawl Bycatch Management

Dear Chairman Olson:

The Peninsula Fishermen's Coalition recognizes the Council's wish to approach Gulf of Alaska trawl bycatch management in a way that presents minimal complication. We also admit that the WGOA resident fleet has been divided over previous discussions of rationalization proposals.

That being said, we have given serious consideration to the impacts of rationalizing the CGOA without taking measures to move the WGOA in the same direction. Our coalition represents nearly every <60' trawl vessel in the WGOA. Because of our markets, our only groundfish opportunities are pollock and P. cod.

The 157 degree Line: At your October meeting, Beth Stewart testified that we were particularly concerned about the impacts to our fleet's participation in that portion of area 620 below the 157 degree line. Our proposal to redraw that boundary was not offered in lieu of moving forward with a program of our own. We still support that measure, and believe that it is a step towards building a complete for the WGOA Pacific cod and pollock fisheries.

WGOA P.cod and Pollock Control Date: Understanding that control dates are not a guarantee against speculative participation in the WGOA P. cod and pollock fisheries, we would like the Council to put a December, 2012 control date on its agenda. Rationalizing the CGOA trawl fisheries signals to fishermen that rationalization is on the horizon and will undoubtedly encourage speculative participation in both

the CGOA and the WGOA. If even a small number of vessels decide to forego fishing in our area, we believe the control date will have served its purpose.

WGOA Plans To Develop a Rationalization Proposal: We plan to hold a meeting in Sand Point in mid-January to develop a proposal to present to the Council at your February meeting. While our primary focus will be on the WGOA pollock trawl and P. cod trawl fisheries, we will also be working to provide some stability for the P. cod pot fishery. Unlike the CGOA, WGOA trawlers (<60') also participate in the P. cod pot fishery. It doesn't make sense to detach part of our groundfish fisheries.

Fishery Dependent Communities: Sand Point and King Cove are entirely dependent on commercial fisheries. We have no other industries, state or federal facilities, or tourism. Our tax base is derived from raw fish taxes levied by the cities and by the Aleutians East Borough.

Locally our vessels are the "large" boats. These limit seiners have been adapted to participate in the federal P. cod and pollock fisheries. We also use them for salmon, crab, halibut and to pot fish for P. cod.

King Cove is home to a plant owned by Peter Pan and Sand Point is home to a plant owned by Trident Seafoods. These processors do not have the capacity to take on rockfish or flatfish that constitute an important part of the CGOA trawl fleet's income.

We hope that you can see how important these fisheries are to us, and trust that we are ready to work with you to make sure that the WGOA doesn't languish during the efforts to work out a program for the CGOA trawl fleet. We are committed to maintaining healthy fisheries in our region, and acknowledge that rationalization is inevitable. We ask that the Council assist us, by scheduling WGOA issues during your 2013 sessions.

Sincerely,  
  
Beth Stewart

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Kiley Thompson, President (F/V Decision)

Steven Galovin (F/V Shawna Rae)

A.J. Newman, Vice President (F/V Lady Lee Dawn)

Art Holmberg (F/V Tern)

Ben Ley, Treasurer (F/V Alaskan Lady)

Melvin Larsen (F/V Temptation)

Mike Alfeiri (F/V Ocean Storm)

Robin Larsen (F/V Courtney Noral)

Jody Cook (F/V Cape Reliant)

Taylor Lundgren (F/V Primus)

John de Groen (F/V Primus)

Tom Manos (F/V Alaskan Lady)

Tom Evich (F/V Karen Evich)

Pete Schoenberg (F/V Equinox)

Dwain Foster (F/V Heather Margene)

Corey Wilson (F/V Justin Case & F/V Miss Courtney Kim)