



UNITED STATES DEPARTMENT OF COMMERCE
National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration
National Marine Fisheries Service
P.O. Box 21668
Juneau, Alaska 99802-1668

February 1, 2021

Agenda B-2: NMFS Management Report

Status of Actions Report Online

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

Progress on Rulemaking

Highlights on progress since the December 2020 meeting include:

- Comment period for the proposed 2021 and 2022 BSAI and GOA harvest specifications for Groundfish ended on January 4, 2021. The final harvest specifications are expected to publish in early 2021.
- **Attachment 1** provides additional detail.

Trawl Electronic Monitoring (EM) Exempted Fishing Permit (EFP)

The Trawl EM EFP (#2019-03), issued on January 6, 2020, to evaluate the use of EM as a monitoring tool for compliance with fishery management regulations in the pollock pelagic trawl catcher vessels (CVs) in the BS and GOA was modified for 2021. The modified permit was issued on January 12, 2021, incorporating changes recommended by the Trawl EM committee and NPFMC in October. Project participants were awarded a NFWF grant to scale-up the existing effort to evaluate the feasibility and cost efficiency of using EM systems on Bering Sea and Gulf of Alaska pollock pelagic trawl CVs. In 2020, 43 vessels participated in the trawl EM EFP. With this additional funding, an additional 28 vessels will join the EFP in 2021. The EFP is currently underway and bi-weekly meetings with project participants have resumed for 2021. An interim report on the EFP will be reviewed at the Trawl EM Committee meeting later in 2021.

Halibut Excluder EFP Application

In June 2020, NMFS received an EFP application from the Alaska Seafood Cooperative. This EFP would enable a collaborative study with Amendment 80 fishermen of halibut excluders in the Bering Sea flatfish trawl fishery. The objective of this EFP is to develop a halibut excluder design that avoids high target species losses with more significant reductions in halibut bycatch. Field testing would be conducted between August 2021 and December 2022. The Council will receive a presentation from the applicant and review this application during this meeting with an



opportunity for public comment. A Federal Register Notice noting the receipt of this application was published on January 15, 2021 (86 FR 3996) with a public comment period open through February 12, 2021.

Modified Scale Inspection Process

Regulations require inspection of all at-sea scales annually to ensure accuracy and compliance requirements are met. NMFS Alaska Region (AKR) developed alternative at-sea scale and video inspection procedures to accommodate health and safety concerns for everyone involved. Out of an abundance of caution, NMFS AKR Inspectors did not conduct on-site inspections as would normally occur. An alternative “Annual Inspection” procedure was developed and used.

The inspections were conducted in two parts. The first part covers the at-sea scales and test weights. All vessels have successfully completed the first part as of January 21, 2021. The second part will cover the associated compliance video systems and video systems associated with the halibut deck sorting program. This will consist of a video request correlated with a daily flow scale test from the vessel’s first fishing trip. Once the video has been reviewed for required scale compliance and halibut deck-sorting camera views, and the vessel’s daily flow scale test methods, the vessel will receive final approval for the 2021 fishing year. Most vessel operators have received instructions to provide video and to complete this final step. Thanks to the scale vendors and vessel operator/owners for a safe and successful scale inspection process while accommodating all the necessary Covid mitigation protocols.

Alaska Region Electronic Technology Implementation Plan

NMFS policy on Electronic Technologies and Fishery-Dependent Data Collection ([Policy Directive 04-115](#)) directs each NMFS region to develop an Electronic Technology (ET) Implementation Plan. ET includes the use of vessel monitoring systems (VMS), electronic reporting (ER), video cameras, gear sensors, and automated image processing for EM, electronic data collection technologies for observers, and other technologies that can improve the timeliness, quality, integration, cost effectiveness, and accessibility of fishery-dependent data. The ET implementation plans address regionally specific fishery dependent data collection goals and the electronic technologies that are being deployed to meet these needs. Together, the regional plans provide a holistic view of ET priorities and implementation across the country and they are a reference for external partners, such as the National Fish and Wildlife Foundation.

NMFS finalized the first [Alaska Region ET Implementation Plan](#) in January, 2015. An [amendment](#) was completed in September 2018. The purpose of the document that is currently being presented (posted under NPFMC agenda item B-2 NMFS Management Report) is to update and revise the ET implementation plan for Alaska.

Next Steps: NMFS presented a draft of the ET Implementation Plan to the Trawl EM Committee in September, 2020 and has incorporated suggestions from that meeting into the document. NMFS will address any comments from the Council and the plan will be submitted to NMFS headquarters in March 2021. NMFS staff from the AKR and AFSC will continue to gather input

from the Council's 3 monitoring committees during their upcoming meetings and will incorporate this input into the next iteration of the document.

Cost Recovery Reports

Reports on NMFS Cost Recovery are available on the [Cost Recovery Programs and Fee Payment](#) webpage and posted under NPFMC agenda item B-2 NMFS Management Report.

Halibut and Sablefish IFQ Transfer Activity

The following table shows the number of Halibut and Sablefish Quota Share and Individual Fishing Quota (IFQ) transfers processed by AKR RAM in 2019 and 2020.

Quota Share Transfer Activity

Prepared: 27-Jan-2021

		2019	2020
Halibut	Regular QS/IFQ Transfers; 679.41(d), (e)	319	181
	Emergency Waivers and Medical Transfers; 679.42(d)	262	413
	Temporary IFQ Transfers ("lease") 679.41(f), (k), (l), (m), (n), (o), (p) ¹	321	877
	Sweep-up of Small Blocks 679.41(e)(2),(3)	17	8
	Total - Halibut Transfers	1,135	1,423
Sablefish	Regular QS/IFQ Transfers; 679.41(d), (e)	125	97
	Emergency Waivers and Medical Transfers; 679.42(d)	121	165
	Temporary IFQ Transfers ("lease") 679.41(f), (k), (l), (m), (n), (o), (p) ¹	146	307
	Sweep-up of Small Blocks 679.41(e)(2),(3)	--	--
	Total - Sablefish Transfers	271	405
Both Species	Regular QS/IFQ Transfers; 679.41(d), (e)	444	278
	Emergency Waivers and Medical Transfers; 679.42(d)	383	578
	Temporary IFQ Transfers ("lease") 679.41(f), (k), (l), (m), (n), (o), (p) ¹	467	1,184
	Sweep-up of Small Blocks 679.41(e)(2),(3)	17	8
	Total - All Transfers	1,406	1,828

¹ Temporary IFQ Transfers ("lease") include the following :

679.41(d) Regular QS/IFQ Transfers

679.41(f) Transfer of QS or IFQ with restrictions.

679.41(k) Survivorship transfer privileges

679.41(l) Transfer of QS to CQEs

679.41(m) Temporary Military transfers

679.41(o) Transfer of IFQ to CDQ groups.

679.41(p) Temporary IFQ transfer for 2020.

Proposed Critical Habitat for Ringed and Bearded Seals

On January 8, 2021, NMFS published in the Federal Register two proposed rules to designate critical habitat in the northern Bering, Chukchi, and Beaufort seas off the coast of Alaska for Arctic ringed seals and the Beringia distinct population segment of bearded seals, which are listed as threatened under the Endangered Species Act (ESA). Designation of critical habitat is required for species listed under the ESA and NOAA Fisheries is subject to a stipulated court-ordered schedule to make our proposed critical habitat determinations by March 15, 2021, and final determinations by March 15, 2022.

Critical habitat identifies areas that contain features essential to the conservation of a threatened or endangered species and that may require special management considerations or protection. Under the ESA, the only regulatory effect of critical habitat designation is the requirement under Section 7 that federal agencies ensure their actions are not likely to destroy or adversely modify critical habitat.

NOAA Fisheries is accepting comments on the proposed designations and we will announce the dates and times of telephonic public hearings on the proposals in the near future. Links to the proposed rules, including supporting materials and details on how to submit comments, are below. The comment periods close March 9, 2021.

<https://www.fisheries.noaa.gov/action/designation-critical-habitat-arctic-subspecies-ringed-seal>
<https://www.fisheries.noaa.gov/action/designation-critical-habitat-beringia-distinct-population-segment-bearded-seal>

Maps of the two proposed critical habitat areas can be found as Attachment 3 to this report.

Staff Changes

SF advertised to recruit Fishery Management Specialists for the Monitoring Branch. The job duties of this position will assist in the development and implementation of electronic reporting applications (e.g. eLandings and seaLandings) and EM to collect quality data. The position will interact with the public frequently regarding recordkeeping and reporting, fishery policies, and monitoring regulations.

Glenn Merrill has completed his temporary detail with the USCG District 17 and resumed his role as SF ARA on January 4, 2021.

Attachment 1 -- Status of Regulatory ActionsChanges since December 2020 are noted in **Bold Red** EOC = End of Comment Period

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

Regulatory Amendments								
2021 and 2022 BSAI Groundfish Harvest Specifications	MacLean Whitney	December 2020	PR: 10/16/20 FR: 12/21/20	PR: 10/19/20 FR: 12/28/20	PR: 11/12/20 FR: 2/2/20	N/A	Dec 3, 2020 85 FR 78096 EOC: 1/4/21	
Gulf of Alaska; 2021 and 2022 Harvest Specifications for Groundfish	Cleaver Davis	December 2020	PR: 10/14/20 FR: 01/07/21	PR: 10/15/20 FR: 01/12/21	PR: 11/12/20 FR: 2/2/20	N/A	Dec 3, 2020 85 FR 78076 EOC: 1/4/21	
Squid and Sculpin Product Types	MacLean Mackey	October 2020	PR: 11/16/20	PR: 11/24/20	PR: 12/22/20	N/A		
Other Notices								
2021 Observer Program Fee Notice of Standard ex-Vessel Prices	Jahn	N/A	12/7/20	12/8/20	12/11/20	N/A	N/A	Dec 18, 2020 85 FR 82447 Effective: 12/18/20
2020 Cost recovery Fee Notice for Halibut and Sablefish IFQ Program	Iverson	N/A	12/10/20	12/10/20	12/14/20	N/A	N/A	Dec 18, 2020 85 FR 82442 Effective: 12/18/20
2020 Cost Recovery Fee Notice for the CGOA Rockfish Program	Jahn	N/A	1/27/21	1/27/21	1/28/21	N/A	N/A	Feb 4, 2021 86 FR XXX Effective 2/4/21

Attachment 2 -- Inseason Management Report

Catch during 2021 is through January 23, 2021 and is compared to catch during 2020 through January 25, 2020. All catch amounts are in metric tons. Additional information is available from [daily catch reports and information bulletins](#).

Bering Sea and Aleutian Islands

Bering Sea Pollock

The 2021 Bering Sea pollock TAC is 1,375,000 mt compared to 1,425,000 mt in 2020. For 2021, NMFS reallocated 1,900 mt of CDQ pollock TAC from the Aleutian Islands to CDQ pollock in the Bering Sea. NMFS will assess the potential for a reallocation of the projected unused Aleutian Islands non-CDQ pollock directed fishing allocation.

Directed fishing opened by regulations at noon, A.l.t., January 20, 2021. Pollock catch is only for three days of fishing.

Bering Sea	2021 A season allocation	2021 A season catch	Percent taken
Inshore	267,300	2,521	1%
CP	213,840	85	0%
Mothership	53,460	0	0%
CDQ ¹	62,730	0	0%
Total ¹	597,330	2,606	0%

¹Includes reallocation of 1,900 mt from the Aleutian Islands CDQ allocation.

Salmon in the Bering Sea Pollock Fisheries

NMFS estimates of salmon PSC is preliminary and not ready for reporting. NMFS has determined that 2020 was a low Chinook salmon abundance year, based on the State of Alaska's estimate that Chinook salmon abundance in western Alaska is less than 250,000 Chinook salmon. Therefore, in 2021, the Chinook salmon PSC limit is 45,000 Chinook salmon, allocated to each sector as specified in 50 CFR 679.21(f)(3)(iii)(A).

BSAI Pacific cod by Sector

The 2021 Pacific cod TAC is 111,830 mt in the Bering Sea and 13,796 mt in the Aleutian Islands compared to the 2020 Bering Sea TAC of 141,799 mt and Aleutian Islands TAC of 13,796 mt. In 2021, NMFS prohibited directed fishing for four sectors pot CPs, pot CVs \geq 60 feet, pot and hook-and-line CVs less than 60 feet, and AFA CPs.

BSAI Sector	2021				2020			
	A season allocation ¹	Catch Jan 23	A season closed	# of vessels Jan 23	A season allocation ¹	Catch Jan 25	A season closed ²	# of vessels Jan 25
CDQ	8,037	37	n/a	3	9,989	1,355	n/a	14
Hook-and-line CP	27,600	3,599	n/a	11	34,347	6,489	n/a	14
Pot CP	850	792	Jan 16	3	1,058	950	Jan 12	5
Pot CV \geq 60 ft	4,761	4,383	Jan 21	21	5,924	5,272	Jan 15	38
Hook-and-line CV \geq 60 ft	113	0	n/a	0	141	0	n/a	0
Hook-and-line/Pot CVs < 60 ft	3,122	2,636	Jan 26	26	3,433	3,119	Jan 19	36
Jig	39	0	n/a	0	500	0	n/a	0
Trawl CV	18,281	8	n/a	7	22,723	1,609	n/a	76
AFA CP	1,928	0	Jan 20	0	2,397	151	n/a	12
Amendment 80 CP	11,234	58	n/a	0	13,964	266	n/a	13
Total	75,965	11,513		94	94,476	19,210		88

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

Pacific cod directed fishing - trawl CVs

Currently, the trawl CV sector is voluntarily standing down from directed fishing for Pacific cod. The stand down is to delay fishing for Pacific cod when catch rates are expected to be higher and halibut prohibited species catch rates are expected to be lower. Current catch reported is incidental to other target fisheries.

Blackspotted and Roughey Rockfish

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

Gulf of Alaska**Pacific cod**

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

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

Central GOA – Trawl CV, Trawl CP

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

Pacific cod - Western GOA

Sector	2021				2020			
	A season allocation	Catch Jan 23	A season closed	# of vessels Jan 23	A season allocation	Catch Jan 25	A season closed	# of vessels Jan 25
Hook-and-line CP	588	0	n/a	0	218	0	Jan 1	218
Hook-and-line CV	38	0	Jan 1	0	14	0	Jan 1	14
Jig	117	0	n/a	0	44	0	Jan 1	44
Pot CV/CP	1,068	459	n/a	10	397	0	Jan 1	397
Trawl CV	1,701	0	n/a	0	555	0	Jan 20	555
Trawl CP	49	0	Jan 20	0	18	0	Jan 20	18
Total	3,561				1,246			1,246

Pacific cod - Central GOA

Sector	2021				2020			
	A season allocation	Catch Jan 23	A season closed	# of vessels Jan 23	A season allocation	Catch Jan 25	A season closed	# of vessels Jan 25
Hook-and-line CP	416	0	n/a	0	155	0	Jan 1	0
Hook-and-line CV <50 ft	945	113	n/a	10	351	0	Jan 1	0
Hook-and-line CV ≥50 ft	569	0	n/a	0	211	0	Jan 1	0
Jig	61	0	n/a	0	23	0	Jan 1	0
Pot CV/CP	1,808	1,577	Jan 22	14	672	0	Jan 1	0
Trawl CV	2,565	0	Jan 20	0	796	53	Jan 20	10
Trawl CP	203	0	Jan 20	0	75	0	Jan 20	0
Total	6,567	0			2,283	0		

Pollock

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

The pollock fleet is voluntarily standing down in Area 620 from January 20 to February 4 and for Area 630 from January 20 to February 15.

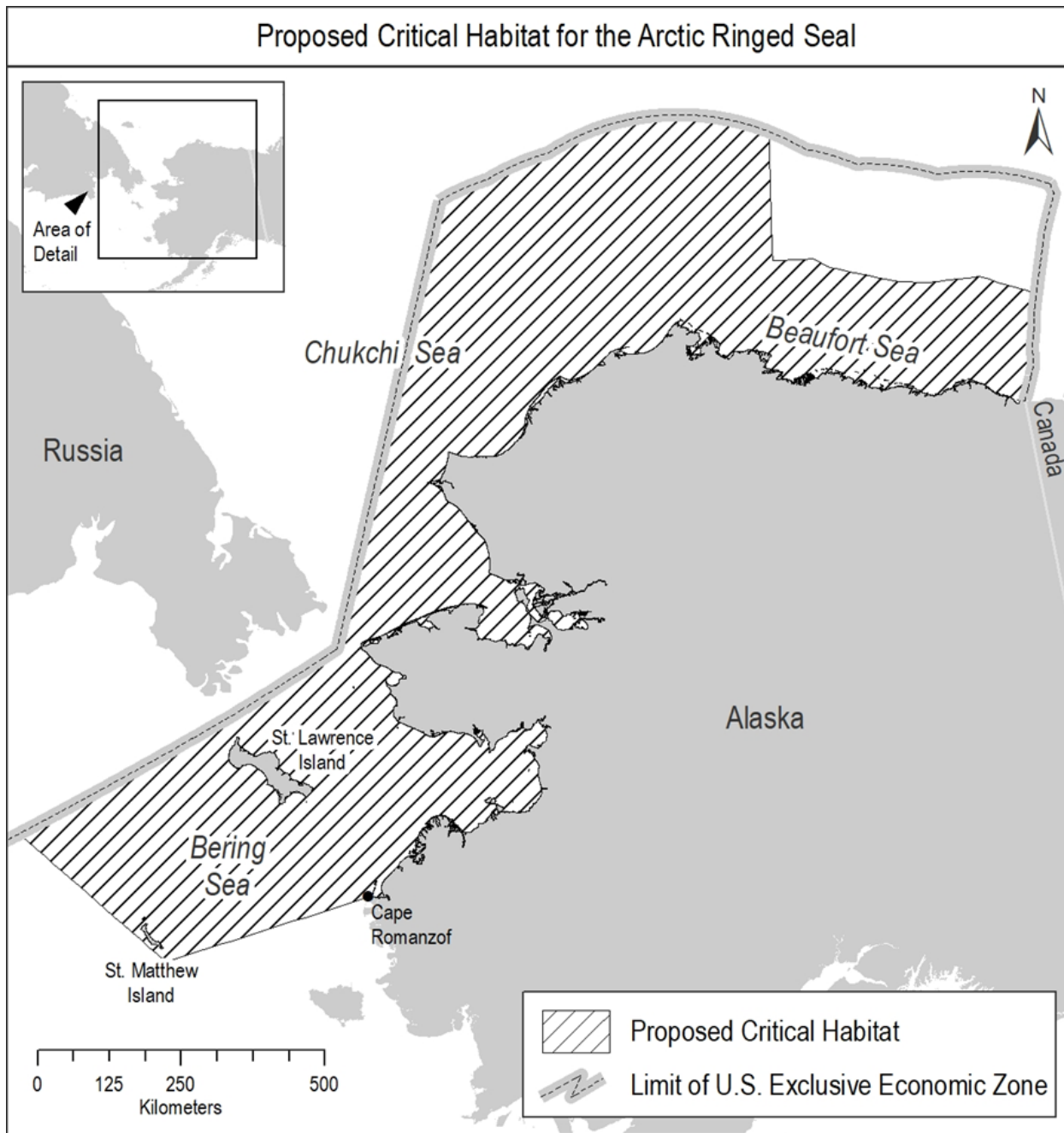
2021 A season	610	620	630	640
A season allocation	799	41,737	6,297	5,412 (annual)
A season catch	0	0	0	0
A season closure	January 20	n/a	n/a	n/a

Halibut Mortality Data

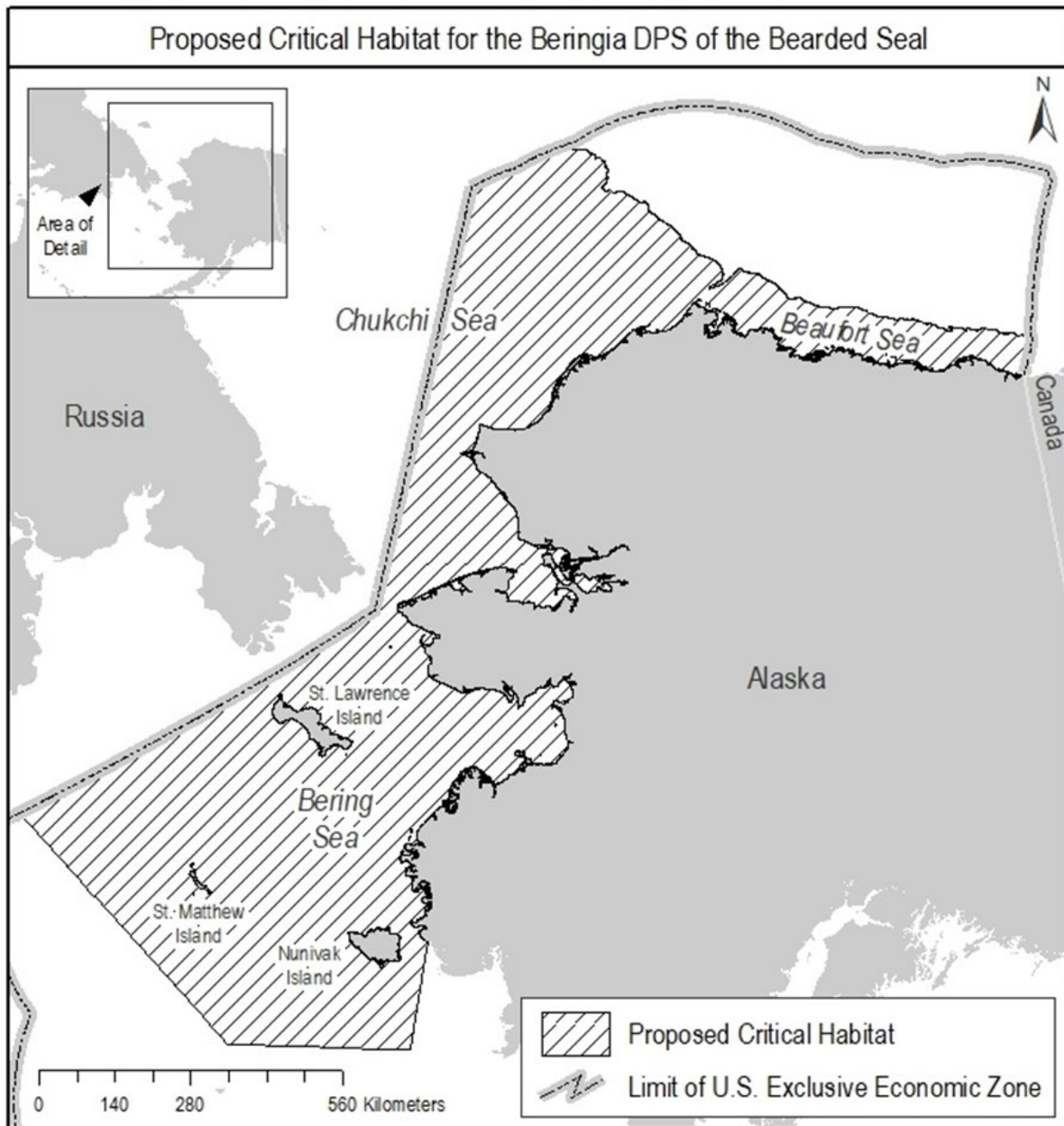
Halibut mortality is preliminary and subject to change. In 2021 relative to 2020, the total halibut mortality and groundfish are lower in the BSAI and GOA.

Area, Gear, and Sector	2021			2020		
	Halibut mortality	Groundfish	Rate	Halibut mortality	Groundfish	Rate
BSAI Total	11	9,198	0.12%	84	69,967	0.12%
Amendment 80	8	2,021	0.40%	17	6,926	0.24%
BSAI trawl limited access	0	2,478	0.12%	58	48,422	0.12%
Non-trawl Pacific cod	3	4,697	0.06%	7	8,063	0.08%
Non-trawl Other	0	0	0	0	0	0
CDQ	0			2	6,556	0.03%
GOA Total	0	0	0	10	97	4.01%
Trawl, Deep-water	0	0	0	7	254	2.75%
Trawl, Shallow-water	0	0	0	3	3,209	0.08%
Hook-and-line CP	0	0	0	0	0	0
Hook-and-line CV	0	0	0	0	41	0.75%

Attachment 3 – Maps for Proposed Critical Habitat for Ringed and Bearded Seals



This map illustrates revised proposed critical habitat for the Arctic ringed seal. For clarification of the revised proposed critical habitat designation, please refer to the narrative description found in the revised proposed rule published in the Federal Register.



This map illustrates proposed critical habitat for the Beringia distinct population segment (DPS) of the bearded seal. For clarification of the proposed critical habitat designation, please refer to the narrative description found in the revised proposed rule published in the Federal Register.