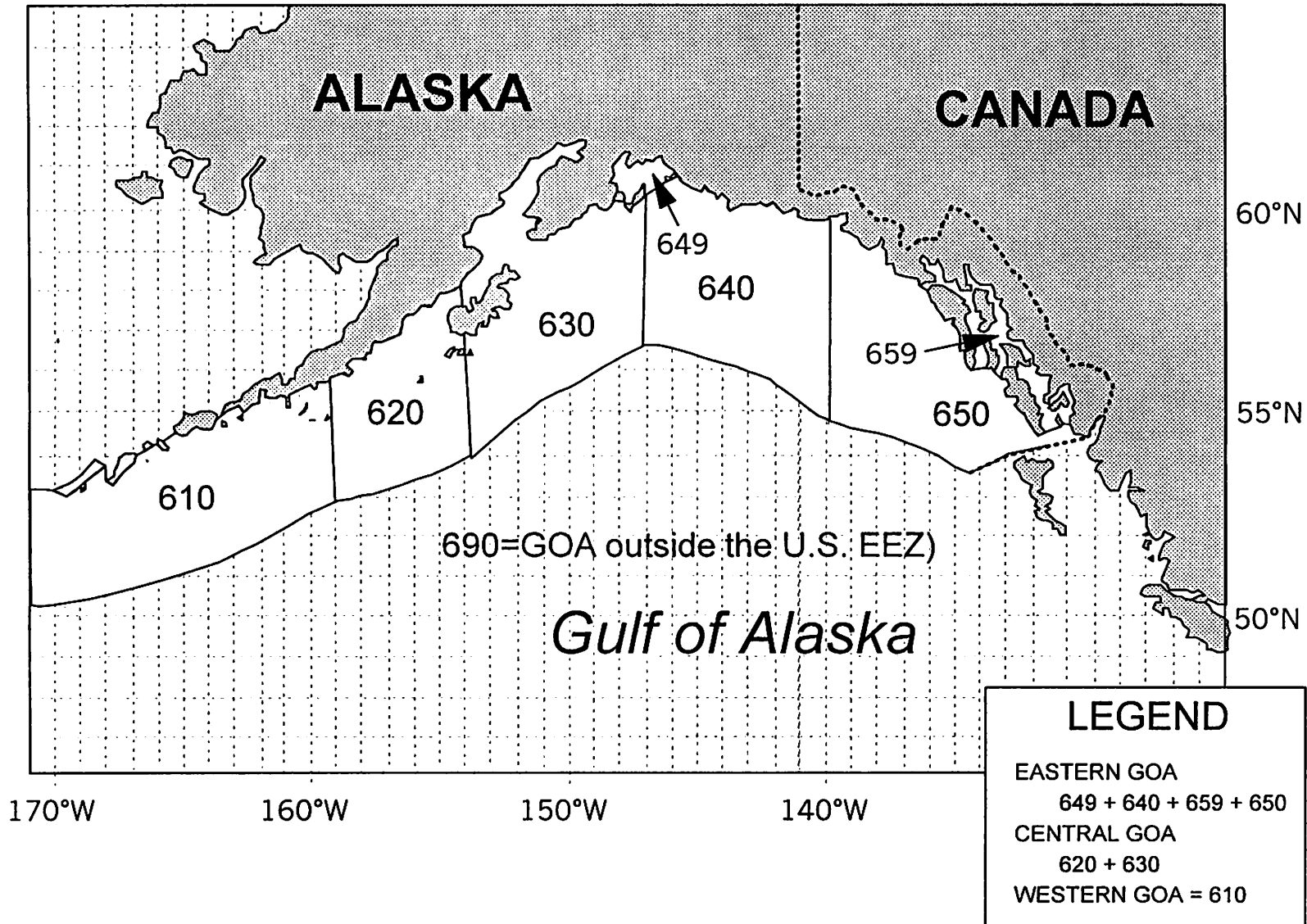


SEPTEMBER 1998

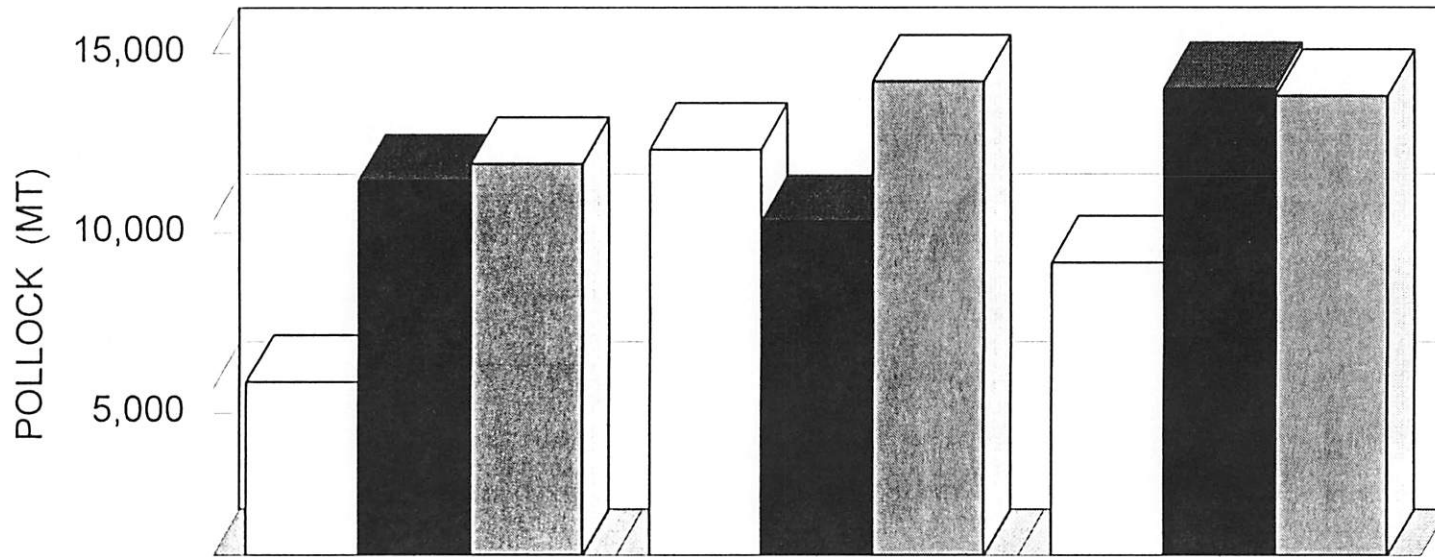
**NMFS FISHERIES
MANAGEMENT
REPORT**



GULF OF ALASKA REPORTING AREAS



1998 GOA POLLOCK CATCH BY AREA & SEASON



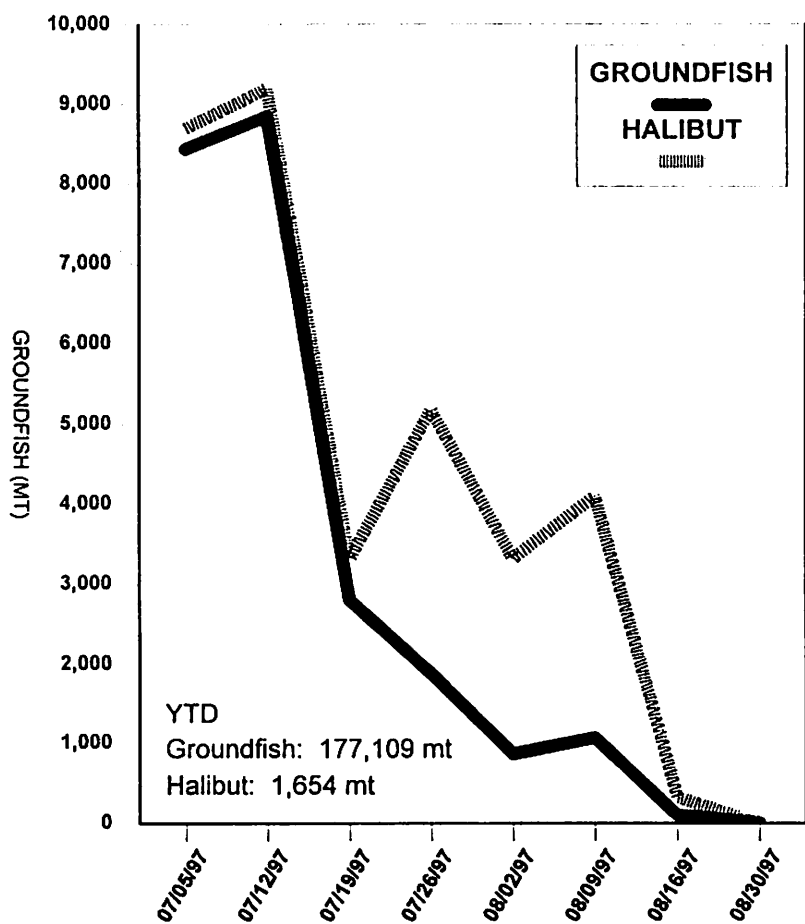
	610	620	630
□ 1ST	5,865	12,320	9,176
■ 2ND	11,447	10,305	14,011
▒ 3RD	11,934	14,221	13,817
TOTAL	29,246	36,847	37,004

(through 9/26/98)

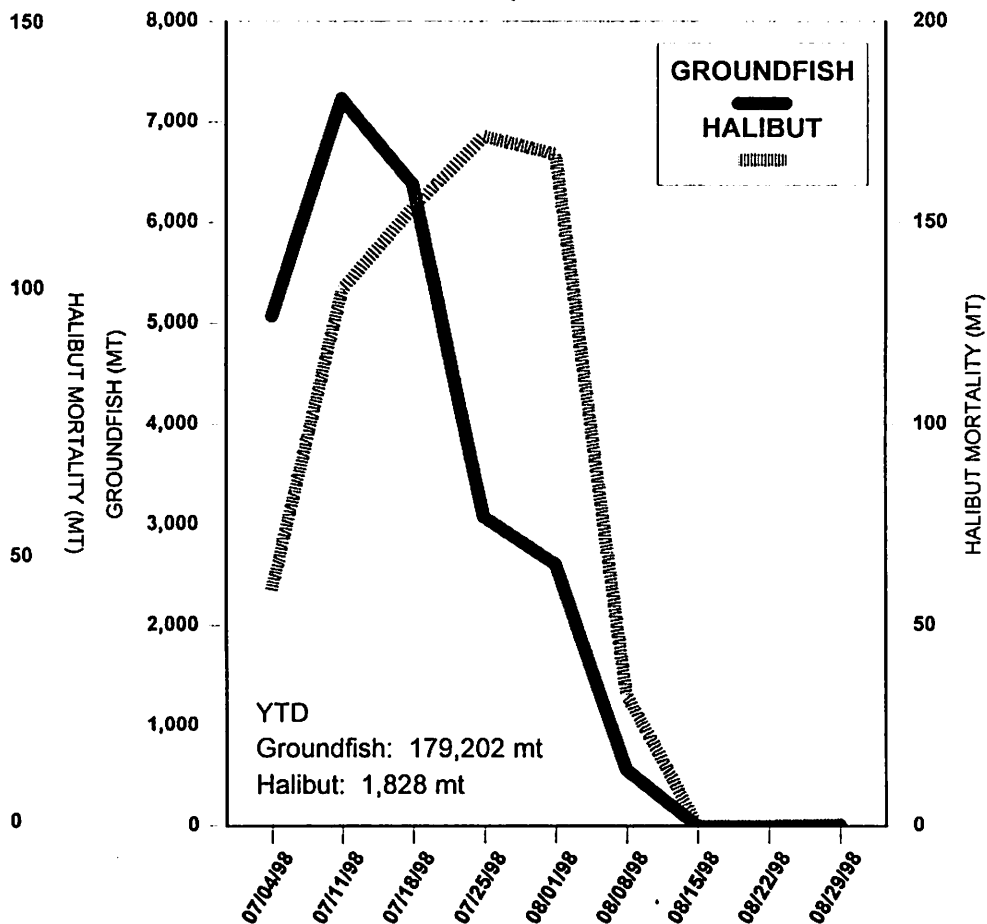
1997/98 GOA TRAWL GROUND FISH* CATCH & HALIBUT MORTALITY

*Deepwater Target = rockfish, Rex sole, deep water flatfish, and arrowtooth flounder. Shallow water target = pollock, Pacific cod, shallow water flatfish, bottom pollock, flathead sole, and 'other species'

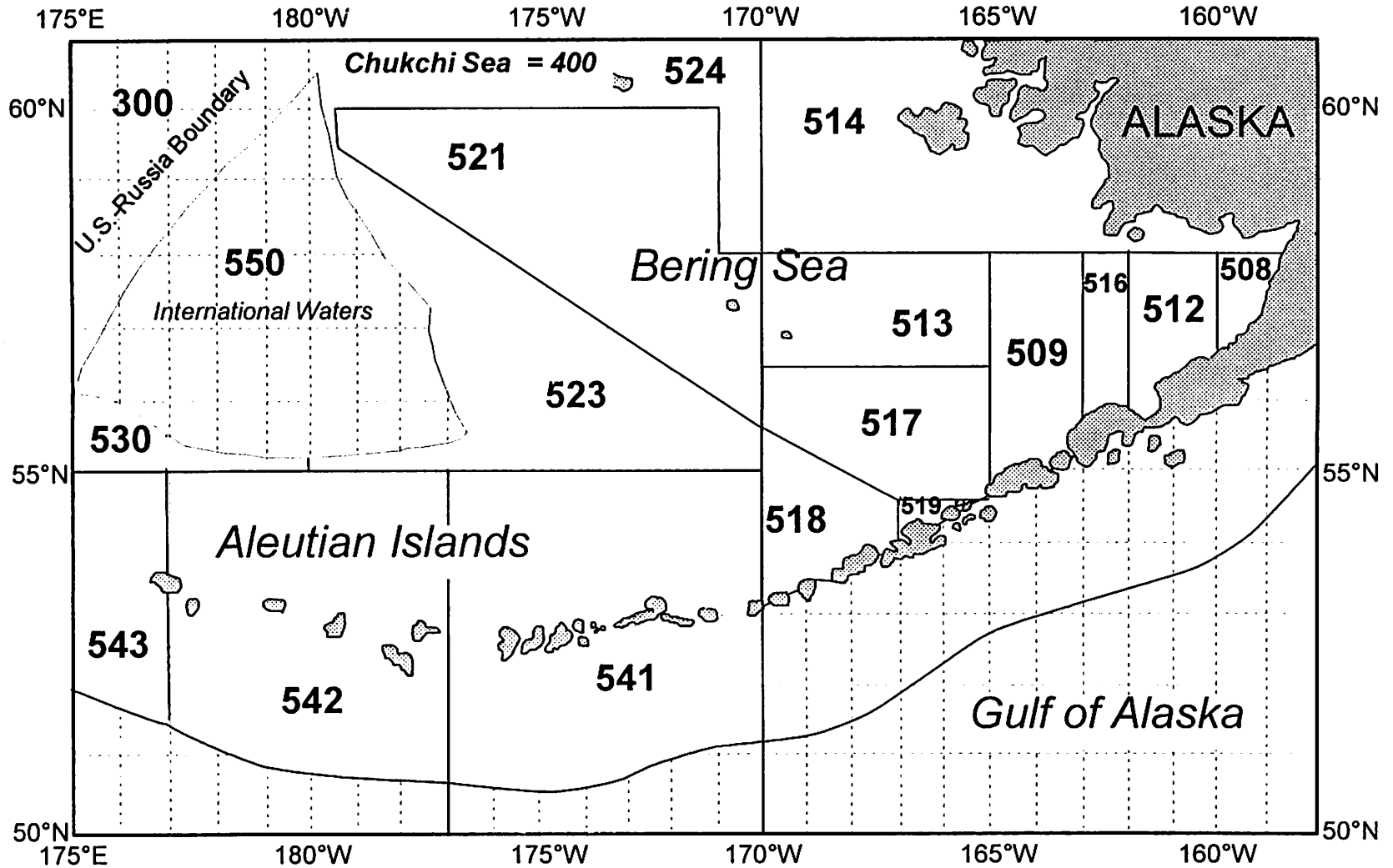
3RD QTR 1997



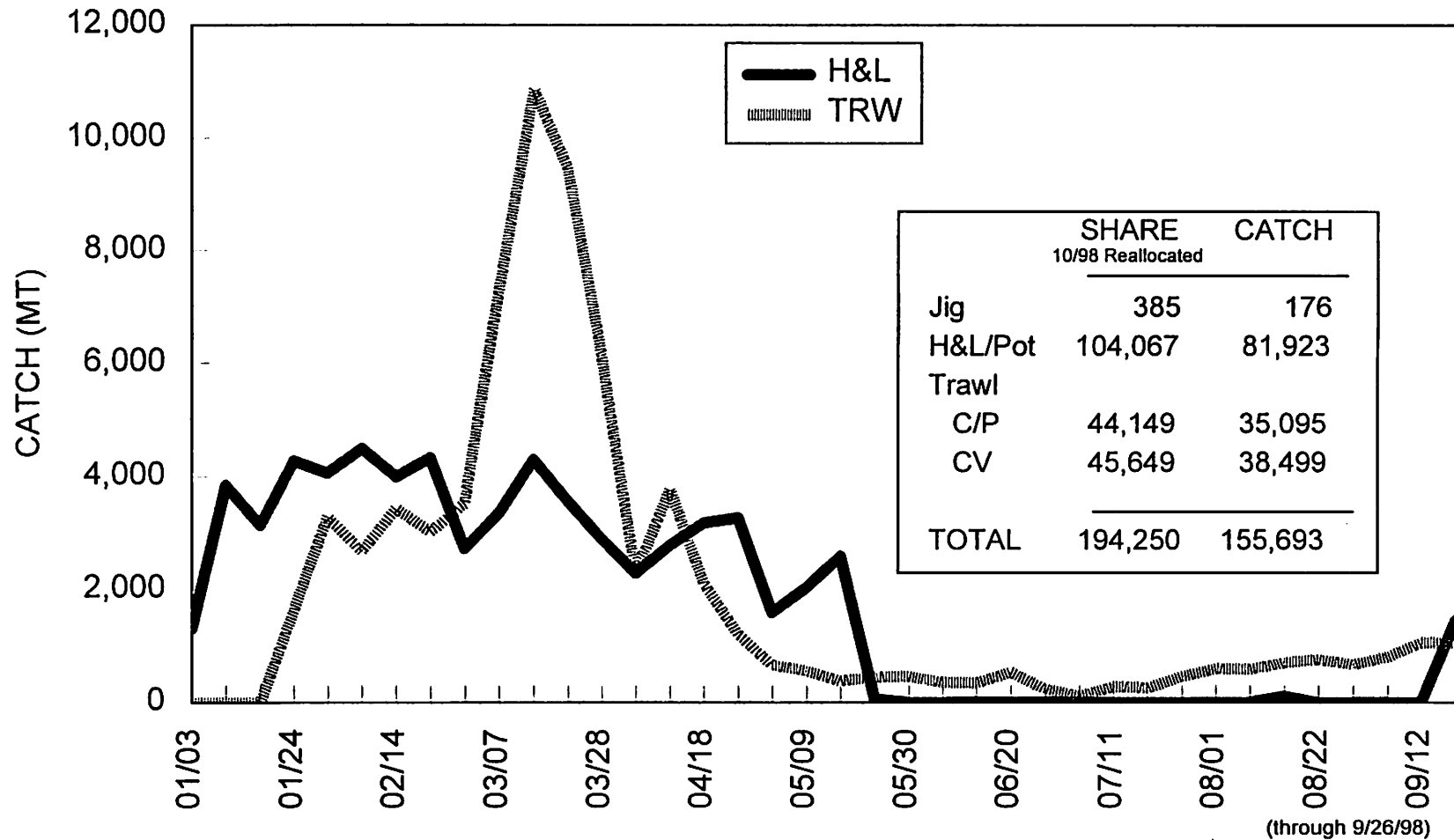
3RD QTR 1998



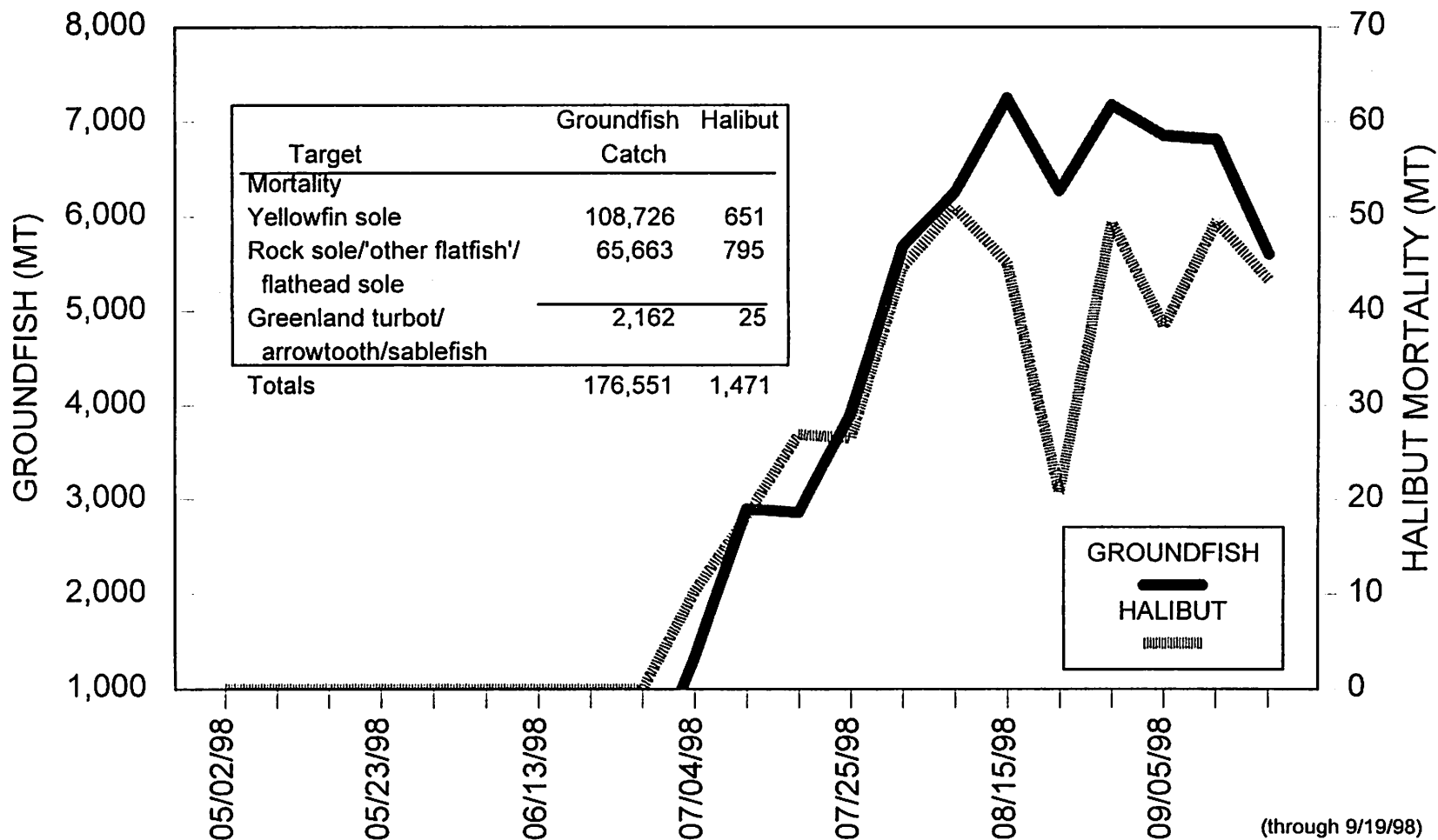
BERING SEA/ALEUTIAN ISLANDS REPORTING AREAS



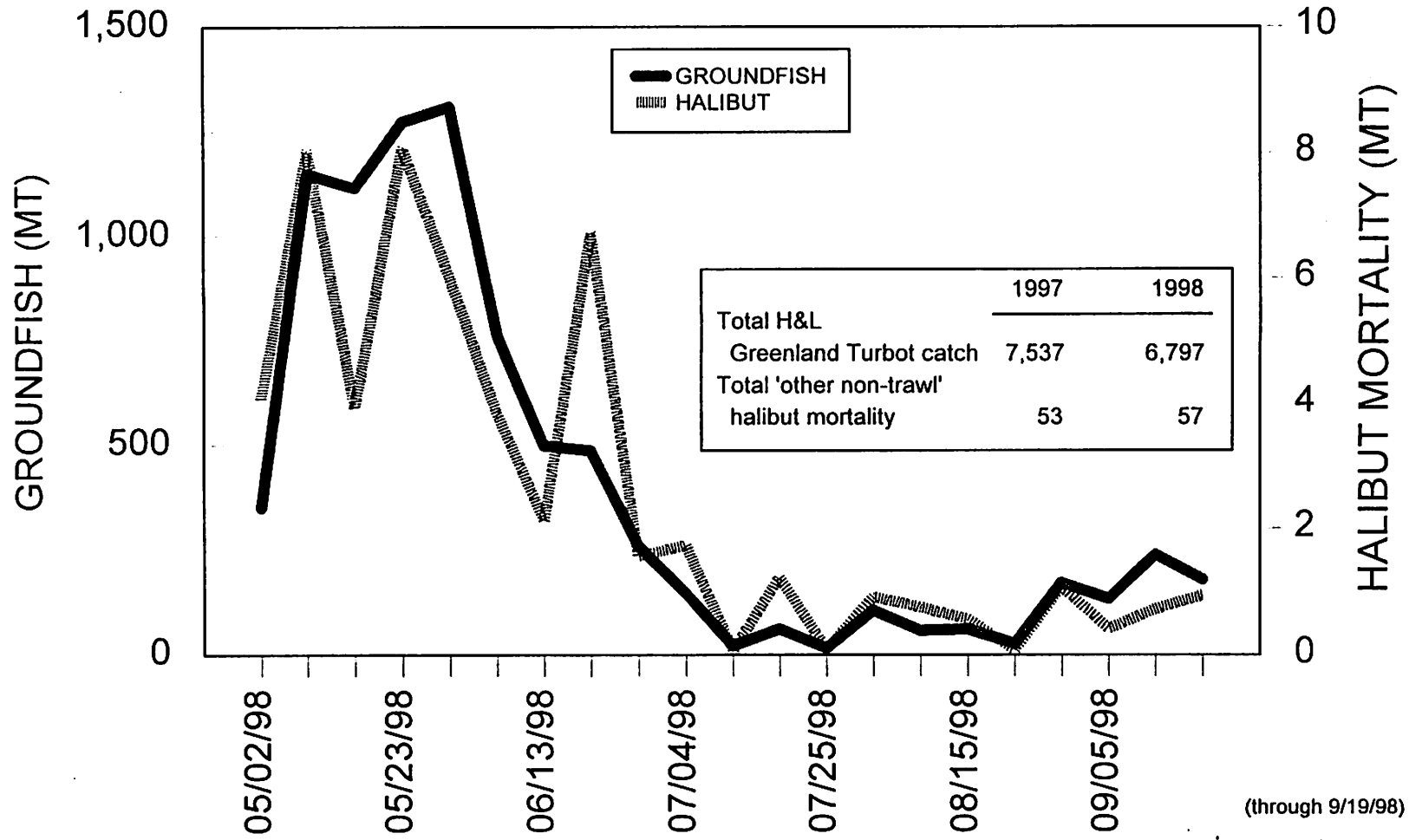
1998 BSAI TRAWL AND H&L PACIFIC COD CATCH



1998 BSAI GROUND FISH CATCH & HALIBUT MORTALITY IN THE TRW FLATFISH TARGETS

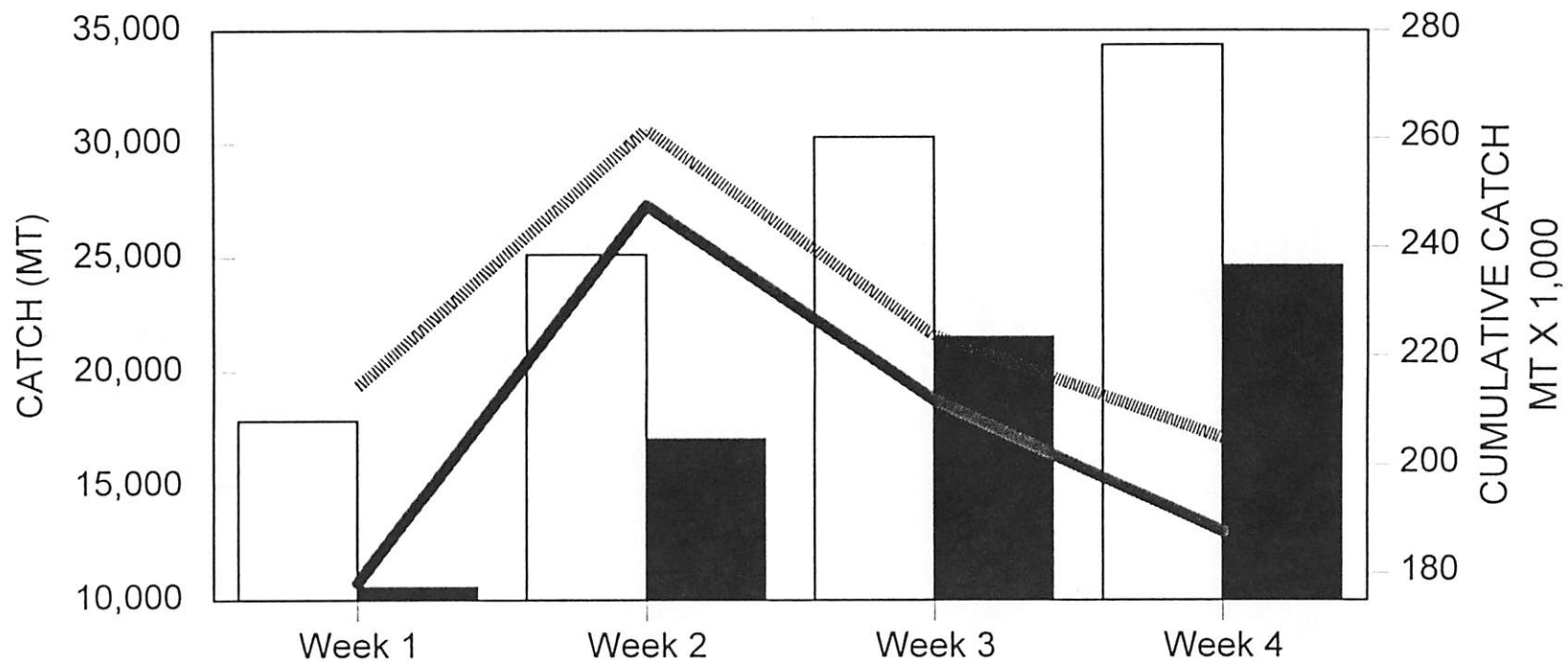


1998 BSAI GROUND FISH CATCH & HALIBUT MORTALITY IN THE H&L GREENLAND TURBOT TARGET







(through 9/19/98)

1997/98 BERING SEA 'B' SEASON INSHORE POLLOCK CATCH

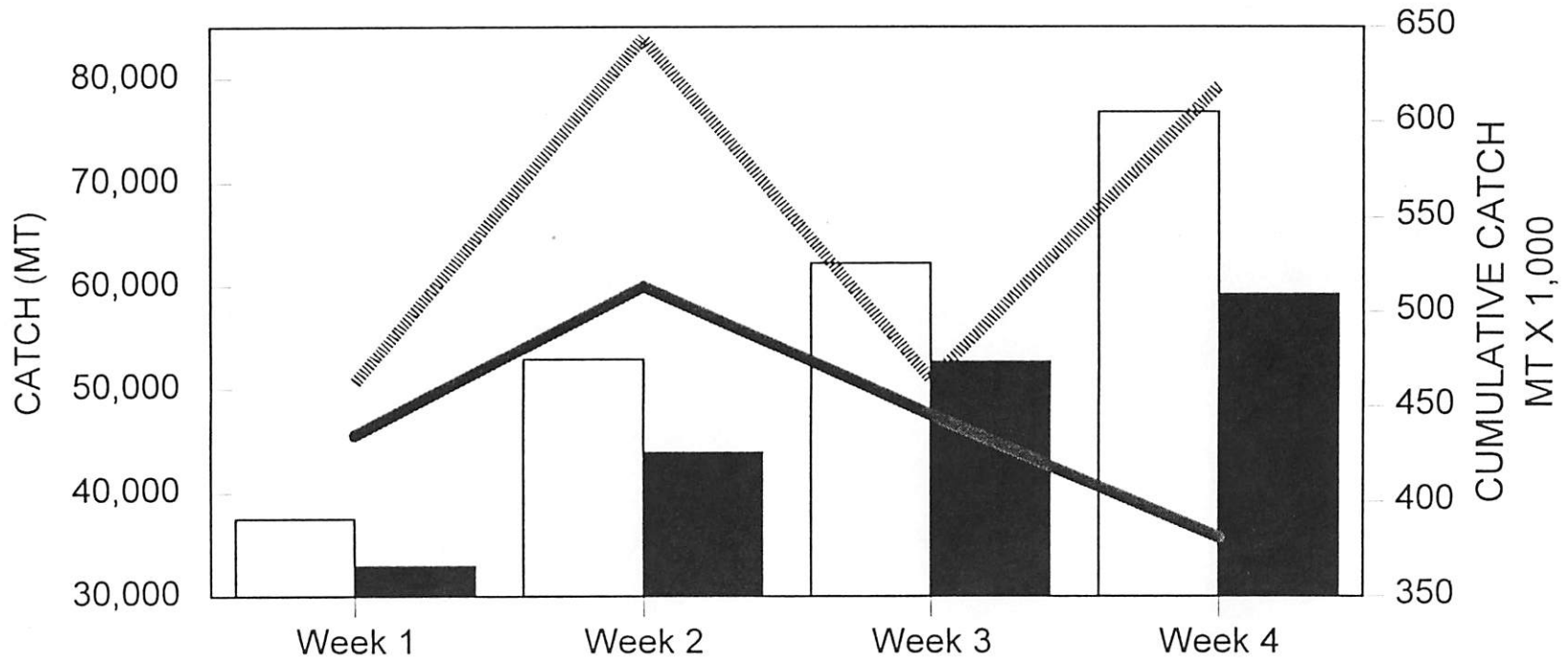


	1997	1998
TAC	365,837	359,363
Catch prior to B season	188,658	166,899
B season quota	177,179	192,464
Cumulative total	277,368	237,726

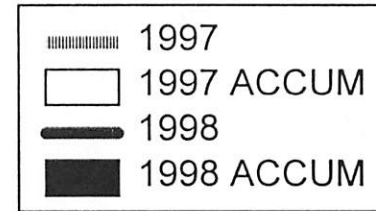
	1997
	1997 ACCUM
	1998
	1998 ACCUM

(through 9/26/98)

1997/98 BERING SEA 'B' SEASON OFFSHORE POLLOCK CATCH



	1997	1998
TAC	679,413	667,388
Catch prior to B season	340,312	320,519
B season quota	339,101	346,869
Cumulative total	605,169	507,742



(through 9/26/98)

The Service and Department have submitted the protocol to recognized species and technical experts for peer review to ensure a scientifically sound basis for determination of the presence of the species within its known range.

The Service and the Department will regularly review and modify, as necessary, the survey protocol to ensure that the best available scientific information is incorporated into the prescribed methodology.

Overall Purpose

The Service is extending the public comment period to ensure that adequate time is available for the public to provide additional information to more adequately understand the occurrence and biology of the cactus ferruginous pygmy-owl in central and southern Arizona. Until more complete scientific information is available, the Service believes that the use of the take guidance document and the proposed survey protocol document will protect the pygmy-owl while allowing carefully considered development to proceed and will provide the most biologically valid data upon which to determine habitat use and occupancy by the pygmy-owl.

Author

The primary author of this document is Tom Gatz, Acting Field Supervisor, Arizona Ecological Services Field Office (see ADDRESSES section).

Authority

The authority for this action is the Endangered Species Act (16 U.S.C. 1532 *et seq.*).

Dated: September 8, 1998.

Nancy M. Kaufman,
 Regional Director, Region 2, Albuquerque,
 New Mexico.
 [FR Doc. 98-24776 Filed 9-14-98; 8:45 am]
 BILLING CODE 4310-55-P

DEPARTMENT OF COMMERCE

National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration

50 CFR Part 679

[I.D. 090898D]

RIN 0648-AK12

Fisheries of the Exclusive Economic Zone Off Alaska; Amendment 51 to the Fishery Management Plan for Groundfish of the Gulf of Alaska and Amendment 51 to the Fishery Management Plan for the Groundfish Fishery of the Bering Sea and Aleutian Islands Area

AGENCY: National Marine Fisheries Service (NMFS), National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration (NOAA), Commerce.

ACTION: Notice of availability; request for comments.

SUMMARY: The North Pacific Fishery Management Council (Council) has submitted Amendment 51 to the Fishery Management Plan for the Groundfish Fishery of the Bering Sea and Aleutian Islands Area (BSAI) and Amendment 51 to the Fishery Management Plan for Groundfish of the Gulf of Alaska (GOA) (FMPs). BSAI Amendment 51 would establish the following allocations and management measures for a 3-year period beginning in January 1999. Comments from the public are requested.

DATES: Comments on Amendments 51/51 must be submitted on or before November 16, 1998.

ADDRESSES: Comments on Amendments 51/51 should be submitted to Sue Salvesson, Assistant Regional Administrator for Sustainable Fisheries, Alaska Region, NMFS, P.O. Box 21668, Juneau, AK 99802, Attn: Lori Gravel, or delivered to the Federal Building, 709 West 9th Street, Juneau, AK. Copies of Amendments 51/51 and the Environmental Assessment/Regulatory Impact Review/Initial Regulatory Flexibility Analysis prepared for Amendments 51/51 are available from the North Pacific Fishery Management Council at 605 West 4th Ave., Room. 306, Anchorage, AK 99501, telephone 907-271-2809.

FOR FURTHER INFORMATION CONTACT: Kent Lind, 907-586-7228.

SUPPLEMENTARY INFORMATION: The Magnuson-Stevens Fishery Conservation and Management Act (Magnuson-Stevens Act) requires that each Regional Fishery Management Council submit any fishery management plan (FMP) or plan amendment it

prepares to NMFS for review and approval, disapproval, or partial approval. The Magnuson-Stevens Act also requires that NMFS, upon receiving an FMP or amendment, immediately publish a document announcing that the FMP or amendment is available for public review and comment. NMFS will consider the public comments received during the comment period in determining whether to approve the FMP or amendment.

BSAI Amendment 51

At its June 1998 meeting, the Council voted 7-4 to adopt BSAI Amendment 51. This amendment, if approved, would make three significant changes to the existing BSAI inshore/offshore pollock allocation provisions: (1) Four percent of the BSAI pollock TAC, after subtraction of reserves, would be shifted to the inshore component resulting in a 39/61 inshore/offshore allocation split; (2) a portion of the inshore component Bering Sea B season allocation, equal to 2.5 percent of the BSAI pollock TAC after subtraction of reserves, would be set aside for small catcher vessels, and would become available on or about August 25 of each year; (3) catcher vessels delivering to the offshore component would be prohibited from fishing inside the CVOA during the B season from September 1 until the inshore component is closed to directed fishing. Amendment 51 would remain in effect for the years 1999 through 2001.

At its June 1998 meeting, the Council voted unanimously to adopt GOA Amendment 51. GOA Amendment 51, if approved, would allocate 100 percent of the GOA pollock TAC and 90 percent of the GOA Pacific cod TAC to vessels catching pollock and Pacific cod for processing by the inshore component. Ten percent of the GOA Pacific cod TAC would be allocated to vessels catching Pacific cod for processing by the offshore component.

A major concern identified during the preliminary review of Amendments 51/51 is that the economic analysis submitted by the Council does not provide a basis upon which to draw unambiguous conclusions about the probable net economic benefits of the competing alternatives. Treated in considerable detail in the document, the reasons for this deficiency pertain to basic data limitations that make conversion from gross to net economic measures impossible.

Completion of the preliminary review with publication of the notice of availability (NOA) for Amendments 51/51 does not mean that either of these two amendments will be approved.

NMFS invites comment on the consistency of the amendments with the provisions of the Magnuson-Stevens Act, the national standards, and other applicable laws. Comments are specifically requested on the adequacy of the analysis to support findings of compliance with national standards 2 (scientific information), 4 (allocations), 5 (efficiency), 7 (costs and benefits), 8 (fishing communities), and 10 (safety of life at sea). Information and analysis that bolster or contradict the conclusions in any of the supporting documents are also welcome.

NMFS will consider the public comments received during the comment period in determining whether to approve Amendments 51/51. A

proposed rule to implement Amendments 51/51 is scheduled to be published within 15 days of this document.

Public comments are being solicited on the amendments through the end of the comment period stated in this NOA; a proposed rule that would implement the amendments may be published in the *Federal Register* for public comment following NMFS' evaluation under the Magnuson-Stevens Act procedures. Public comments on the proposed rule must be received by the end of the comment period on the amendments to be considered in the approval/disapproval decision on the amendments. All comments received by the end of the comment period on the

amendments, whether specifically directed to the amendments or the proposed rule, will be considered in the approval/disapproval decision; comments received after that date will not be considered in the approval/disapproval decision on the amendments. To be considered, comments must be *received* by close of business on the last day of the comment period specified in this NOA; that does not mean postmarked or otherwise transmitted by that date.

Dated: September 10, 1998.

Gary C. Matlock,

*Director, Office of Sustainable Fisheries,
National Marine Fisheries Service.*

[FR Doc. 98-24847 Filed 09-15-98; 8:45 am]

BILLING CODE 3510-22-F



ALASKA MARINE CONSERVATION COUNCIL

Box 101145, Anchorage Alaska 99510
(907) 277-5357 • (fax) 277-5975
amcc@akmarine.org • www.akmarine.org

September 28, 1998

Rick Lauber, Chair
North Pacific Fishery Management Council
605 W. Fourth Ave.
Anchorage, AK 99501

RECEIVED

SEP 29 1998

N.P.F.M.C.

Dear Chairman Lauber,

It has come to our attention that some trawl vessels fishing for rockfish in the central Gulf of Alaska this summer may have misreported their catch. It appears that these vessels were reporting whatever rockfish species happened to be open at the time the reports were made. We understand that when the limit for one rockfish species was reached, these vessels would report a different species of rockfish. We also understand that these vessels were filling their holds with rockfish in order to retain the allowable amount of valuable sablefish bycatch. This activity caused rockfish to go on prohibited species status which then forced longline fishermen to discard their rockfish bycatch.

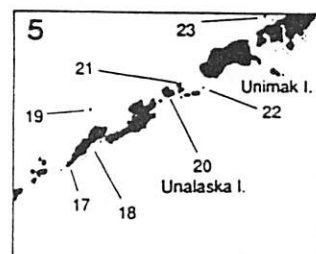
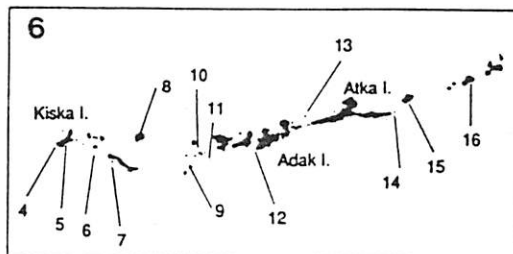
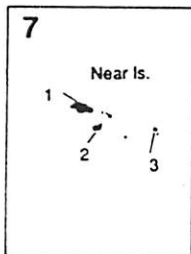
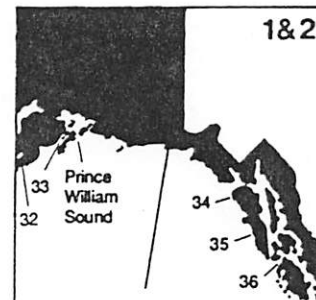
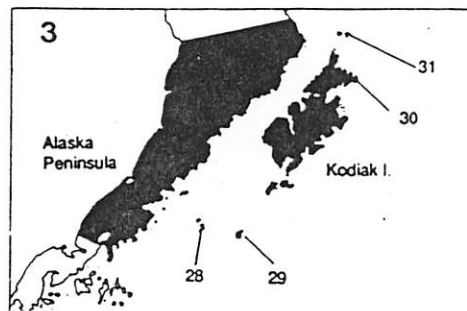
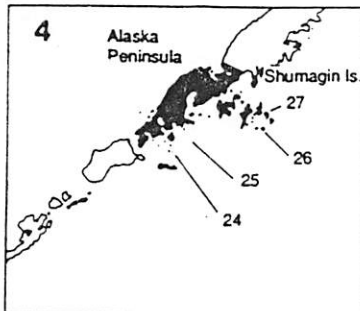
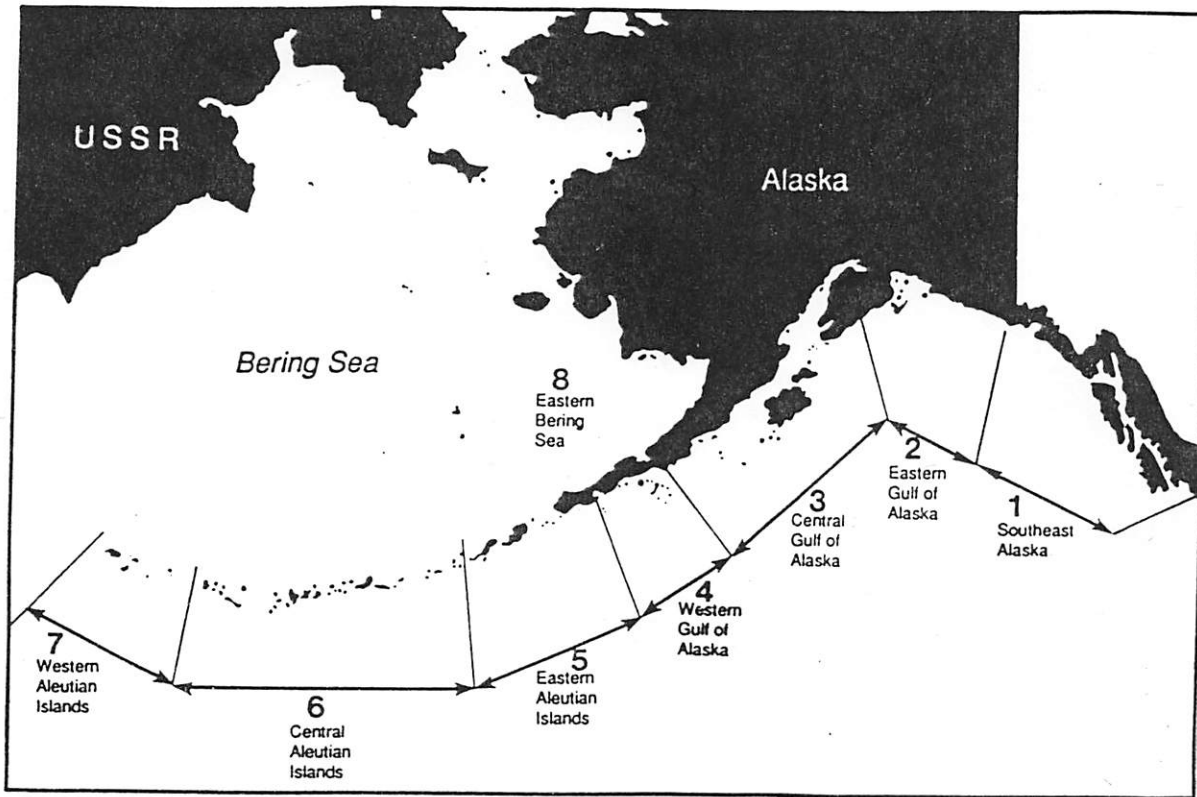
This is very concerning to AMCC because accurate catch data is central to the conservation of our resources. Clearly trawl vessels do not catch only one species of rockfish at a time either as target catch or bycatch. Furthermore, rockfish species are long-lived and many of them are poorly understood. A high degree of care is needed to prevent overfishing of individual stocks within the rockfish complex.

We request the NPFMC look into this problem. If it indeed occurred, we look forward to the NPFMC addressing this issue further.

Thank for your consideration.

Sincerely,

Dorothy Childers
Executive Director



1 Attu
2 Agattu
3 Buldir

4,5 Kiska
6 Ayugadak
7 Amchitka
8 Semisopochnoi
9 Ulak
10 Tag

11 Gramp Rock
12 Adak
13 Kasatochi
14 Agligadak
15 Seguam
16 Yunaska

17 Adugak
18 Ogchul
19 Bogoslof
20 Akutan
21 Akun
22 Ugamak
23 Sea Lion Rock
24 Clubbing Rocks
25 Pinnacle Rock
26 Chernabura

27 Atkins
28 Chowiet
29 Chirikof
30 Marmot
31 Sugarloaf
32 Outer
33 Seal Rocks
34 White Sisters
35 Hazy
36 Forrester

Figure 1.--Eight regions of Alaska showing major Steller sea lion rookeries, as modified from Merrick et al. (1987).

Table 1.--Counts of non-pup Steller sea lions at Trend Sites (rookeries and haulouts) during aerial surveys in Alaska, 1994 to 1998.

Region	Non-pup counts at Trend Sites			Percent change	
	1994	1996	1998	1994-98	1996-98
Western Aleutian Islands	2,037	2,190	1,913	- 6.1	- 12.6
Central Aleutian Islands	5,790	5,528	5,705	- 1.5	+ 3.2
Eastern Aleutian Islands	4,421	4,716	3,847	-13.0	-18.4
Western Gulf of Alaska	3,982	3,741	3,361	-15.6	-10.2
Central Gulf of Alaska	4,520	3,915	3,346	-26.0	-14.5
Kenai to Kiska subtotal	18,713	17,900	16,259	-13.1	- 9.2

Table 3.--Counts of Steller sea lion pups in Alaska, 1994 to 1998.

Region	No. of rookeries	1994	1997	1998	Percent change	
		Count	Count	Count	94-98	97-98
Western Aleutian Islands	4		979	803		-18.0
Central Aleutian Islands	16	3,162		2,862	-9.5	
Eastern Aleutian Islands	6	1,870		1,516	-18.9	
Western Gulf of Alaska	4	1,662		1,493	-10.2	
Central Gulf of Alaska	5	2,831		1,876	-33.7	
Eastern Gulf of Alaska	2	903	610	689	-23.7	+13.0
Western Stock subtotal (Kiska to Seal Rocks)	33	10,428		8,436	-19.1	
Southeast Alaska	3	3,770	4,160	4,234	+12.3	+ 1.8