

MEMORANDUM

TO: Council, SSC and AP Members

FROM: Clarence Pautzke
Executive Director



DATE: September 21, 2001

ESTIMATED TIME 7 HOURS (for all D-1 items)
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SUBJECT: Groundfish Management

ACTION REQUIRED

- (a) Status report on Preliminary 2002 Groundfish SAFE Reports for the Bering Sea/Aleutian Islands and the Gulf of Alaska.
- (b) Consider emergency rule request to reallocate Pacific halibut PSC.
- (c) Recommend Vessel Incentive Program (VIP) bycatch rate standards for the first half of 2001.

BACKGROUND

- (a) BSAI and GOA SAFE Reports

In past years, ABCs, TACs, bycatch apportionments, and halibut discard mortality rates were approved and made available for public review and comment at both the October (preliminary and interim specifications) and December (final specifications) meetings based on the BSAI and GOA groundfish SAFE reports. For the last several years, the stock assessment authors have focused on changes to the assessment models for the Preliminary SAFE report and on developing the ABC recommendations in the Final SAFE report. As a result, the Plan Teams, SSC, and AP have recommended setting preliminary and interim harvest specifications based on the final specifications of the previous year. Therefore, only a few stock assessments were prepared for Plan Team review in September and no ABCs were recommended.

NMFS implemented the BSAI and GOA 2001 harvest specifications through the emergency interim rule to implement Steller sea lion protection measures. The normal procedure of publishing proposed, interim, and final TAC specifications was not followed in 2001 because of the impracticability of publishing proposed specifications prior to the issuance of the Comprehensive BiOp. NMFS anticipated that changes required by the Comprehensive BiOp to protect endangered Steller sea lions would have a significant enough impact on proposed harvest specifications for the BSAI and GOA to require republication of the proposed specifications. To avoid the uncertainty and disruption to the fisheries that would have been caused by republishing proposed specifications, including a potential delay to the season because the Comprehensive BiOp was not due out until November 30, 2000, NMFS decided to use its authority to issue the final 2001 specifications by emergency rule.

The 2002 harvest specifications again will be tied closely to new Steller sea lion protection measures that will be implemented by emergency rule for the 2002 fishing year. Thus, the final 2002 harvest specifications also will be implemented by emergency rule, similar to the procedure followed last year. The attached tables

from the final 2001 harvest specifications lists the ABCs, TACs, PSC limits, and halibut discard mortality rates for the 2001 BSAI and GOA groundfish fisheries (Item D-1(a)).

(b) Halibut PSC

Pacific halibut bycatch (Prohibited Species Catch) limits are established for the trawl and non trawl fisheries. These limits are further apportioned among specified fisheries. The BSAI non-trawl Pacific cod fishery will be reapportioned an additional amount of Pacific cod (27,000 mt) that is projected to be unused from the trawl allocation. This rollover provision is authorized in regulations. However, representatives for the freezer longliner sector assert that it also will need additional amounts of halibut bycatch to support the additional cod allocation it will receive. A rollover of halibut PSC from the trawl to non-trawl sector is not authorized in regulations. Thus, representatives for the freezer longline fleet have submitted an emergency rule request to the Council to transfer unused trawl halibut bycatch from the trawl sector to the non trawl sector to provide opportunity to harvest available amounts of Pacific cod with non-trawl gear (Item D-1(b)).

The exact amount of the reallocation cannot be identified at this time because of ongoing BSAI trawl fisheries. The Council may adopt the principle and time frame for the reallocation and rely on NMFS to determine the surplus amount to be transferred from the trawl to non trawl sectors as soon as practicable.

(c) Vessel Incentive Program

The VIP to reduce Pacific halibut and crab bycatch rates in the BSAI and GOA trawl fisheries requires that bycatch rate standards be specified for purposes of vessel accountability under the VIP. NMFS staff will present an analysis of vessel bycatch rates in recent years, as well as recommended adjustments to bycatch rate standards for the first half of 2001. These rates have remained unchanged since 1995. The bycatch rates for the first half of 2001 must be specified by NMFS prior to the start of the 2002 trawl fisheries on January 20.

TABLE 3.—2001 ACCEPTABLE BIOLOGICAL CATCH (ABC), TOTAL ALLOWABLE CATCH (TAC), INITIAL TAC (ITAC), CDQ RESERVE ALLOCATION, AND OVERFISHING LEVELS OF GROUND FISH IN THE BERING SEA AND ALEUTIAN ISLANDS AREA (BSAI)¹
[All amounts are in metric tons]

Species	Area	Overfishing level	ABC	TAC	ITAC ²	CDQ reserve ³
Pollock ⁴	Bering Sea (BS)	3,536,000	1,842,000	1,400,000	1,209,600	140,000
	Aleutian Islands (AI)	31,700	23,800	2,000	1,800	200
	Bogoslof District	60,200	8,470	1,000	900	100
Pacific cod	BSAI	248,000	188,000	188,000	159,800	14,100
Sablefish ⁵	BS	1,910	1,560	1,560	663	215
	AI	3,070	2,500	2,500	531	422
Atka mackerel	Total	138,000	69,300	69,300	58,905	5,198
	Western AI	.....	27,900	27,900	23,715	2,093
	Central AI	.....	33,600	33,600	28,560	2,520
	Eastern AI/BS	.....	7,800	7,800	6,630	585
Yellowfin sole	BSAI	209,000	176,000	113,000	96,050	8,475
Rock sole	BSAI	271,000	228,000	75,000	63,750	5,625
Greenland turbot	Total	31,000	8,400	8,400	7,140	630
	BS	.....	5,628	5,628	4,784	422
	AI	.....	2,772	2,772	2,356	208
Arrowtooth flounder	BSAI	141,500	117,000	22,011	18,709	1,651
Flathead sole	BSAI	102,000	84,000	40,000	34,000	3,000
Other flatfish ⁶	BSAI	147,000	122,000	28,000	23,800	2,100
Pacific ocean perch	BS	2,040	1,730	1,730	1,471	130
	AI Total	11,800	10,200	10,200	8,670	765
	Western AI	.....	4,740	4,740	4,029	356
	Central AI	.....	2,560	2,560	2,176	192
	Eastern AI	.....	2,900	2,900	2,465	218
Sharpchin/Northern ⁷	BSAI	9,020	6,764	6,764	5,749	See ⁷
	BS			19	16	
	AI			6,745	5,733	506
Shortraker/Rougheye ⁷	BSAI	1,369	1,028	1,028	874	See ⁷
	BS			116	99	
	AI			912	775	68
Other rockfish ⁸	BS	482	361	361	307	27
	AI	901	676	676	575	51
Squid	BSAI	2,620	1,970	1,970	1,675	148
Other species ⁹	BSAI	69,000	33,600	26,500	22,525	1,988
TOTAL		4,836,812	2,927,359	2,000,000	1,717,494	185,400

¹ Amounts are in metric tons. These amounts apply to the entire Bering Sea (BS) and Aleutian Islands (AI) management area unless otherwise specified. With the exception of pollock, and for the purpose of these specifications, the Bering Sea subarea includes the Bogoslof District.

² Except for pollock and the portion of the sablefish TAC allocated to hook-and-line or pot gear, 15 percent of each TAC is put into a reserve. The ITAC for each species is the remainder of the TAC after the subtraction of the reserve.

³ Except for pollock and the hook-and-line or pot gear allocation of sablefish, one half of the amount of the TACs placed in reserve, or 7.5 percent of the TACs, is designated as a CDQ reserve for use by CDQ participants (see § 679.31).

⁴ The AFA requires that 10 percent of the annual pollock TAC be allocated as a directed fishing allowance for the CDQ sector. NMFS then subtracts 4 percent of the remainder as an incidental catch allowance of pollock,

which is not apportioned by season or area. The remainder is further allocated by sector as follows: inshore, 50 percent; catcher/processor, 40 percent; and motherships, 10 percent. NMFS, under regulations at § 679.24(b)(4), prohibits nonpelagic trawl gear to engage in directed fishing for non-CDQ pollock in the BSAI.

⁵ The ITAC for sablefish reflected in Table 3 is for trawl gear only. Regulations at § 679.20(b)(1) do not provide for the establishment of an ITAC for the hook-and-line or pot gear allocation for sablefish. Twenty percent of the sablefish TAC allocated to hook-and-line gear or pot gear and 7.5 percent of the sablefish TAC allocated to trawl gear is reserved for use by CDQ participants (see § 679.31(c)).

⁶ "Other flatfish" includes all flatfish species, except for Pacific halibut (a prohibited species), flathead sole, Greenland turbot, rock sole, yellowfin sole, and arrowtooth flounder.

⁷ The CDQ reserves for shortraker, rougheye, sharpchin, and northern rockfish will continue to be managed as the "other red rockfish" complex for the BS. For 2001 the CDQ reserve is 10 mt.

⁸ "Other rockfish" includes all Sebastes and Sebastolobus species except for Pacific ocean perch, sharpchin, northern, shortraker, and rougheye rockfish.

⁹ "Other species" includes sculpins, sharks, skates and octopus. Forage fish, as defined at § 679.2, are not included in the "other species" category.

Table 9.—PROHIBITED SPECIES BYCATCH ALLOWANCES FOR THE BSAI TRAWL AND NON-TRAWL FISHERIES¹

[All amounts are in metric tons]

TRAWL FISHERIES	Prohibited Species and Zone					
	Halibut mortality (mt) BSAI	Herring (mt) BSAI	Red King Crab (animals) Zone 1	C. opilio (animals) COBLZ ²	C. bairdi (animals)	
					Zone 1	Zone 2
Yellowfin sole	911	139	11,664	2,876,981	253,894	1,246,502
January 20 - March 31	286	.....	.....	.....	.....	.....
April 1 - May 20	196	.....	.....	.....	.....	.....
May 21 - July 3	49	.....	.....	.....	.....	.....
July 1 - December 31	380	.....	.....	.....	.....	.....
Rocksole/oth.flat/flat sole ³	854	20	64,782	469,130	272,126	415,501
January 20 - March 31	498	.....	.....	.....	.....	.....
April 1 - July 3	179	.....	.....	.....	.....	.....
July 1 - December 31	177	.....	.....	.....	.....	.....
RKC savings subarea ³	.....	.....	22,674	.....	.....	.....
Turbot/sablefish/arrowtooth ⁴	.....	9	.....	40,238	.....	.....
Rockfish (July 1 - December 31) ⁵	69	7	.....	40,237	.....	7,658
Pacific cod	1,334	20	11,664	524,736	136,400	225,941
Pollock/Atka/other ⁶	232	146	1,615	72,428	12,830	19,148
Midwater trawl pollock	.....	1,184	.....	.....	.....	.....
TOTAL TRAWL PSC	3,400	1,526	89,725	4,023,750	675,250	1,914,750
NON-TRAWL FISHERIES						
Pacific cod - Total	755					
Jan. 1 - June 10 ⁷	300					
June 11 - July 31	0					
August 1 - Dec. 31	455					
Other non-trawl - Total	78					
May 1 - December 31	78					
Groundfish pot & jig	Exempt					
Sablefish hook-&-line	Exempt					
TOTAL NON-TRAWL	833					
PSQ RESERVE⁸	342	.....	7,275	326,250	54,750	155,250
GRAND TOTAL	4,575	1,526	97,000	4,350,000	730,000	2,070,000

¹ Refer to § 679.2 for definitions of areas.

² *C. opilio* Bycatch Limitation Zone. Boundaries are defined at 50 CFR part 679, fig. 13..

³ The Council at its December 2000 meeting limited red king crab for trawl fisheries within the RKCSS to 35 percent of the total allocation to the rock sole, flathead sole, and other flatfish fishery category (§ 679.21(e)(3)(ii)(B)).

⁴ Greenland turbot, arrowtooth flounder, and sablefish fishery category.

⁵ The Council at its December 2000 meeting apportioned the rockfish PSC amounts from July 1 - December 31, to prevent fishing for rockfish before July 1, 2001.

⁶ Pollock other than pelagic trawl pollock, Atka mackerel, and "other species" fishery category.

⁷ Any unused halibut PSC from the first trimester may be rolled over into the third trimester.

⁸ With the exception of herring, 7.5 percent of each PSC limit is allocated to the multi-species CDQ program as PSQ reserve. The PSQ reserve is not allocated by fishery, gear or season.

TABLE 10.—ASSUMED PACIFIC HALIBUT MORTALITY RATES FOR THE BSAI FISHERIES

Fishery	Preseason Assumed mortality (percent)
Hook-and-line gear fisheries	
Rockfish	25
Pacific cod	12
Greenland turbot	18
Sablefish	22
Other Species	12
Trawl gear fisheries	
Midwater pollock	84
Non-pelagic pollock	76
Yellowfin sole	81
Rock sole	76
Flathead sole	67
Other flatfish	71
Rockfish	69
Pacific cod	67
Atka mackerel	75
Greenland turbot	70
Sablefish	50
Other species	67
Pot gear fisheries	
Pacific cod	8
Other species	8
CDQ Trawl fisheries	
Atka mackerel	82
Midwater pollock	90
Non-pelagic pollock	88
Rockfish	88
Yellowfin sole	83
CDQ Hook-and-line fisheries	
Pacific cod	10

Table 19 - 2001 ABCs, TACs, and Overfishing Levels of Groundfish for the Western/Central/West Yakutat (W/C/WYK), Western (W), Central (C), Shelikof Strait, Eastern (E) Regulatory Areas, and in the West Yakutat (WYK), Southeast Outside (SEO), and Gulf-Wide (GW) Districts of the Gulf of Alaska. [Values are in metric tons]

Species	Area ¹	ABC	TAC	Overfishing
Pollock²				
Shumagin	(610)	35,240	31,724	
Chirikof	(620)	14,260	12,841	
Kodiak	(630)	26,650	23,996	
Shelikof		20,680	18,619	
WYK	(640)	2,520	2,235	
Subtotal	W/C/WYK	99,350	89,415	117,750
SEO	(650)	6,460	6,460	8,610
Total		105,810	95,875	126,360
Pacific cod³				
	W	24,400	18,300	
	C	38,650	30,250	
	E	4,750	3,560	
Total		67,800	52,110	91,200
Flatfish⁴				
(deep-water)	W	280	280	
	C	2,710	2,710	
	WYK	1,240	1,240	
	SEO	1,070	1,070	
Total		5,300	5,300	6,980
Rex sole⁴				
	W	1,230	1,230	
	C	5,660	5,660	
	WYK	1,540	1,540	
	SEO	1,010	1,010	
Total		9,440	9,440	12,300
Flathead sole				
	W	8,490	2,000	
	C	15,720	5,000	
	WYK	1,440	1,440	
	SEO	620	620	
Total		26,270	9,060	34,210
Flatfish⁵				
(shallow-water)	W	19,510	4,500	
	C	16,400	12,950	
	WYK	790	790	
	SEO	1,160	1,160	
Total		37,860	19,400	45,330

Table 19. (continued)

Species	Area ¹	ABC	TAC	Overfishing
Arrowtooth	W	16,480	8,000	
flounder	C	99,590	25,000	
	WYK	24,220	2,500	
	SEO	7,860	2,500	
Total		148,150	38,000	173,550
Sablefish ⁶	W	2,010	2,010	
	C	5,410	5,410	
	WYK	2,060	2,060	
	SEO	3,360	3,360	
Subtotal	E	5,420	5,420	
Total		12,840	12,840	15,720
Pacific ⁷	W	1,280	1,280	1,520
ocean	C	9,610	9,610	11,350
perch	WYK	870	870	
	SEO	1,750	1,750	
Subtotal	E			3,090
Total		13,510	13,510	15,960
Short	W	210	210	
raker/	C	930	930	
rougheye ⁸	E	590	590	
Total		1,730	1,730	2,510
Other	W	20	20	
rockfish	C	740	740	
^{9,10}	WYK	250	150	
	SEO	3,890	100	
Total		4,900	1,010	6,390
Northern	W	600	600	
Rockfish ^{10,12}	C	4,280	4,280	
	E	N/A	N/A	
Total		4,880	4,880	5,780
Pelagic	W	550	550	
shelf	C	4,080	4,080	
rockfish ¹³	WYK	580	580	
	SEO	770	770	
Total		5,980	5,980	9,040
Thornyhead	W	420	420	
rockfish	C	970	970	
	E	920	920	
Total		2,310	2,310	2,770

Table 19. (continued)

<u>Species</u>	<u>Area¹</u>	<u>ABC</u>	<u>TAC</u>	<u>Overfishing</u>
Demersal shelf rockfish ¹¹	SEO	330	330	410
Atka mackerel	GW	600	600	6,200
Other ¹⁴ species	GW	N/A ¹⁵	13,619	N/A
<hr/>				
TOTAL ¹⁶		447,710	285,994	554,710

1. Regulatory areas and districts are defined at § 679.2.
2. Pollock is apportioned in the Western/Central Regulatory areas to the Shelikof Strait conservation area (defined at §679.22(b)(3)(iii)(B)) in the A and B seasons only (§679.22(b)(3)(iii)(A)) in accordance with §679.22(b)(3)(iii)(C) and the remainder to the three statistical areas in the combined Western/Central Regulatory Area outside the Shelikof Strait based on the relative distribution of pollock biomass at 56 percent, 4 percent, and 40 percent in Regulatory areas 610, 620, and 630 respectively. During the C and D seasons, pollock is apportioned based on the relative distribution of pollock biomass at 42 percent, 25 percent, and 33 percent in Regulatory Areas 610, 620, and 630 respectively. These seasonal apportionments are shown in Tables 21 and 22. In the West Yakutat and Southeast Outside Districts of the Eastern Regulatory Area, pollock is not divided into seasonal allowances.
3. The annual Pacific cod TAC is apportioned 60 percent to an A season and 40 percent to a B season in the Western and Central Regulatory Areas of the GOA. Pacific cod is allocated 90 percent for processing by the inshore component and 10 percent for processing by the offshore component. Seasonal apportionments and component allocations of TAC are shown in Table 23.
4. "Deep water flatfish" means Dover sole, Greenland turbot, and deepsea sole.
5. "Shallow water flatfish" means flatfish not including "deep water flatfish," flathead sole, rex sole, or arrowtooth flounder.
6. Sablefish is allocated to trawl and hook-and-line gears (Table 20).
7. "Pacific ocean perch" means Sebastes alutus.
8. "Shortraker/rougheye rockfish" means Sebastes borealis (shortraker) and S. aleutianus (rougheye).
9. "Other rockfish" in the Western and Central Regulatory Areas and in the West Yakutat District means slope rockfish and demersal shelf rockfish. The category "other rockfish" in the Southeast Outside District means Slope rockfish.
10. "Slope rockfish" means Sebastes aurora (aurora), S. melanostomus (blackgill), S. paucispinis (bocaccio), S. goodei (chilipepper), S. crameri (darkblotch), S. elongatus (greenstriped), S. variegatus (harlequin), S. wilsoni (pygmy), S. habcocki (redbanded), S. proriger (redstripe), S. zacentrus (sharpchin), S. jordani (shortbelly), S. brevispinis (silvergrey), S. diploproa (splitnose), S. saxicola (stripetail), S. miniatus (vermillion), and S. reedi (yellowmouth). In the Eastern GOA only, "slope rockfish" also includes northern rockfish, S. polvspinus.
11. "Demersal shelf rockfish" means Sebastes pinniger (canary), S. nebulosus (china), S. caurinus (copper), S. maliger (quillback), S. helvomaculatus (rosethorn), S. nigrocinctus (tiger), and S. ruberrimus (yelloweye).
12. "Northern rockfish" means Sebastes polvspinis.
13. "Pelagic shelf rockfish" means Sebastes ciliatus (dusky), S. entomelas (widow), and S. flavidus (yellowtail).
14. "Other species" means sculpins, sharks, skates, squid, and octopus. The TAC for "other species" equals 5 percent of the TACs of assessed target species.
15. N/A means not applicable.
16. The total ABC is the sum of the ABCs for assessed target species.

Table 24 - Final 2001 Pacific halibut PSC limits, allowances, and apportionments. The Pacific halibut PSC limit for hook-and-line gear is allocated to the demersal shelf rockfish (DSR) fishery and fisheries other than DSR. The hook-and-line sablefish fishery is exempt from halibut PSC limits. (Values are in mt)

<u>Trawl gear</u>		<u>Hook-and-line gear</u>			
		<u>Other than DSR</u>		<u>DSR</u>	
<u>Dates</u>	<u>Amount</u>	<u>Dates</u>	<u>Amount</u>	<u>Dates</u>	<u>Amount</u>
Jan 1-Apr 1	550 (28%)	Jan 1-May 17	205 (70%)	Jan 1-Dec 31	10 (100%)
Apr 1-Jul 1	450 (22%)	May 17-Aug 31	Any rollover		
Jul 1-Oct 1	700 (35%)	Aug 31-Dec 31	85 (30%)		
Oct 1-Dec 31	300 (15%)				
Total:	2,000 (100%)		290 (100%)		10 (100%)

Table 25 - Final 2001 apportionment of Pacific halibut PSC trawl limits between the trawl gear deep-water species complex and the shallow-water species complex. (Values are in metric tons)

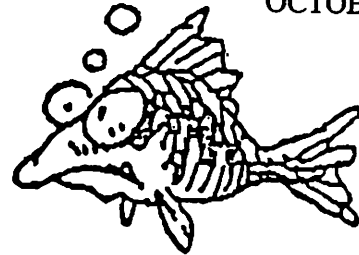
<u>Season</u>	<u>Shallow-water</u>	<u>Deep-water</u>	
<u>Total</u>			
Jan. 20-Apr. 1	450	100	550
Apr. 1-Jul. 1	150	300	450
Jul. 1-Sep. 1	200	400	600
Sep. 1-Oct. 1	<u>100</u>	<u>Any Rollover</u>	<u>100</u>
Subtotal			
Jan. 20-Oct. 1	900	800	1,700
Oct. 1-Dec. 31	---	---	<u>300</u>
Total	---	---	2,000

Unused seasonal apportionments of halibut PSC limits specified for trawl gear will be added to the respective seasonal apportionment for the next season during a current fishing year. No apportionment between shallow-water and deep-water fishery complexes during the October 1 through December 31.

Table 26 - 2001 Assumed Pacific Halibut Mortality Rates for Vessels Fishing in the Gulf of Alaska (Listed values are percent of halibut bycatch assumed to be dead)

Gear and Target	Mortality Rate
<u>HOOK-AND-LINE</u>	
Pacific cod	14
Rockfish	8
Other species	14
Sablefish	24
<u>TRAWL</u>	
Midwater pollock	72
Rockfish	69
Shallow-water flatfish	69
Pacific cod	61
Deep-water flatfish	60
Flathead sole	58
Rex sole	61
Bottom pollock	61
Arrowtooth Flounder	62
Atka mackerel	70
Sablefish	66
Other species	61
<u>POT</u>	
Pacific cod	14
Other species	14

**North
Pacific
Longline
Association**



August 28, 2001

Mr. David Benton, Chairman
North Pacific Fishery Management Council
605 West 4th Avenue
Anchorage, AK 99501

RE: Halibut PSC

Dear Dave:

Because of poor fishing in the BSAI early in the year, it is expected that as much as 35,500 mt of cod will roll over to the fixed gear sector this fall. Fisheries Information Services anticipates that the longline sector will run out of halibut PSC in mid-November, leaving as much as 22,000 mt of cod unharvested.

If by the time of the October Council meeting it appears that there will be excess halibut PSC in the trawl fisheries at the end of the year, we would like to request that the Council consider an emergency rule apportioning all or part of that excess to the longline sector for the purpose of achieving OY. NMFS has approved the concept of an emergency rule, if there is an excess. It is understood that the longline fishery would have no future claim on the halibut PSC or the cod harvested as a result of the transfer.

Earlier projections of excess halibut PSC in the trawl sector have been reduced due to higher than expected halibut bycatch in several trawl fisheries. By October NMFS should be able to project what PSC, if any, may be left at the end of the year. We will discuss this with interested parties before the Council meeting.

We suggest that this issue be taken up under the NMFS fishery report.

Thank you for your attention.

Sincerely,

Thorn Smith

**DRAFT Minutes of the
Bering Sea/Aleutian Islands Groundfish Plan Team
Meeting, September 12, 2001**

Members Present:

Loh-lee Low (NMFS, chair)
Grant Thompson (NMFS)
Ivan Vining (ADF&G)
Kristin Mabry (ADF&G)

Lowell Fritz (NMFS)
Andy Smoker (NMFS)
Paul Spencer (NMFS)
Dave Witherell (NPFMC)

The Bering Sea/Aleutian Islands (BSAI) Groundfish Plan Team met during the afternoon of September 12 in Seattle. Only a few updated assessments were provided; consequently, no preliminary ABC's were recommended.

Terry Sample briefed the team on preliminary results from the 2001 bottom trawl survey. On-bottom pollock biomass appeared to be down 20% from 2000. Biomass for the other principal groundfish species were virtually all up from last year. These species are Pacific cod, yellowfin sole, rock sole, Alaska plaice, Greenland turbot, arrowtooth flounder, and other flatfish species.

Neal Williamson provided a summary of the summer and winter hydroacoustic surveys in the eastern Bering Sea. Summary report were provided and will be included in the preliminary SAFE report. Taina Honkalehto provided the team with results from the Bogoslof hydroacoustic survey. Pollock biomass inside the area 518/CBS specific area was estimated at only 0.208 million tons, the lowest amount in the time-series (1988-present).

Paul Spencer reviewed his methodology for an updated assessment for Pacific Ocean Perch. He developed a stock assessment for BSAI POP using the AD modelbuilder program. With this program, he was able to make several different runs to explore the effects of survey catchability coefficient on biomass estimates. Further, he combined the BS and AI components into a single assessment. The plan team concurred that a combined model might be better, so long as ABC could still be apportioned among the management areas.

GOA PLAN TEAM
September 12-13, 2001

The GOA Plan Team convened on September 12, 2001 at approximately 9 am. Members in attendance were: Sandra Lowe (chairman), Jane DiCosimo, Jim Ianelli, Jeff Fujioka, Tom Pearson, Dave Jackson, Farron Wallace, Kathy Kuletz, and Beth Sinclair.

Survey results Chris Wilson and Mike Guttormsen presented preliminary data from the 2001 hydroacoustic surveys. The 2001 Shelikof Strait survey saw a large number of 2 year olds from the 1999 yearclass, low numbers of adults and relatively few mature pre-spawners in the Shelikof Strait Sea Valley. These results are very similar to the situation observed in the 1988 Shelikof survey.

Eric Brown presented preliminary results of a (new) winter bottom trawl survey designed to assess cod populations in selected SSL critical habitat. High estimates of cod biomass, mainly larger (40-100 cm) fish in Shumagins, smaller fish in Kodiak. Similar levels of pollock biomass, large fish in SE, smaller in Kodiak. Low levels of cod and pollock around east side of Kodiak, mostly small for both. Similar to HAC in terms of biomass, spawning in Shumagin and Shelikof areas; too small for spawning around Kodiak.

Pollock Martin Dorn presented a preliminary report on historical trends of GOA pollock biomass. Initial results indicate an extremely large 1999 year class, however, the team may want to assume that the 1999 year class is "average" rather than as "high" until more corroborating data becomes available.

Thornyheads Sarah Gaichas presented the assessment. Survey results will be incorporated for November. The author expressed concern regarding the lack of coverage by trawl survey in both the eastern GOA and in all deepwater strata during 2001 and recommended continued coverage of deeper stations in future surveys.

Survey coverage The biennial 2001 trawl survey did not cover the eastern GOA (east of 147 degrees). The lack of coverage has implications for stock assessment and biomass distributions, particularly for some rockfish species (e.g., POP, other slope, SR/RE, thornyheads (particularly in West Yakutat)). One solution may be to not include the 2001 GOA trawl survey results for any GOA areas in some assessments. A second solution might be to use the 1999 survey results for EGOA 2001. The authors already use a weighting scheme for survey results. The team encouraged the authors to examine both options. Different choices may be made for the different assessments based on species life history. However, authors are encouraged to consult to develop a rationale for developing weighting schemes, etc to strive for consistent adjustment schemes.

The meeting concluded at approximately noon on Thursday, September 13, 2001.

Joint Groundfish Plan Team meeting September 12 and 13, 2001

The Joint Meeting of the Bering Sea/Aleutian Islands and Gulf of Alaska Groundfish Plan Teams convened on September 12, 2001 from approximately 9 am to noon. Members in attendance were: Loh-lee Low (BSAI chairman) and Sandra Lowe (GOA chairman), Jane DiCosimo, Jeff Fujioka, Jim Ianelli, Dave Jackson, Kathy Kuletz, Kristin Mabry, Tom Pearson, Beth Sinclair, Andy Smoker, Ivan Vining, Farron Wallace, and David Witherell. Fifteen members of the public and Alaska Fisheries Science Center also attended.

SEIS Steve Davis gave a brief presentation on the status of the groundfish programmatic SEIS. Additional tasking may occur at the beginning of next year. Tamra Faris presented a summary of the Steller sea lion protection measures EIS. On its second meeting day, Doug DeMaster provided a summary of the EIS and Biological Opinion, and public comments from the September Council meeting. The teams also discussed the preparation of the TAC-setting EA. Pat Livingston reported that the ecosystem chapter is developing into an analytical component of the EA.

Ecosystem Considerations Pat Livingston provided more detail on the plans for preparing an ecosystem analysis each spring so that it is available as a reference document for developing ABC recommendations each fall. The teams supported: 1) the new timeline for the ecosystem analysis and 2) that the blend database include estimates of non-target species/groups develop to bycatch matrix estimates to enhance development of ecosystem-based assessments. The Plan Teams commended Pat for her contribution.

Other species Jane DiCosimo provided an update on plans for bringing an analysis for managing "other species" to Council for action. Initial review and final action have been delayed one meeting to allow for additional staff consultation with the Plan Teams and SSC in the development of alternatives and options for analysis. Sarah Gaichas provided a summary of the policy issues, data availability, life history and ecology of the groups/species; status of stock assessments for the components, and possible alternatives for analysis.

John Gauvin suggested the following possible fishery modifications that could reduce harvests of non-target species: 1) gear modifications for sharks and large skates developed by Craig Rose (AFSC); 2) tuning mid-water nets to reduce salmon bycatch; and 3) using SeaState to identify hot spots for bycatch avoidance.

As a result of the related discussion (below), the Teams recommended: 1) proceeding with the Council alternatives for analysis and 2) initiating a separate plan amendment to develop a policy for identification of individual species/genera for annual specifications.

Species Defined in the FMPs David Witherell discussed a related issue of which species should be listed as managed under each of the two groundfish FMPs. There is no current "official" list. The annual report to Congress on the status of overfished stocks is based on the NMFS observer and survey database, which, for example, may include one sighting of a species outside its normal distribution. He will generate a proposed list of species using a proposed set of criteria for identifying target, non-target, and non-specified species for team review in November.

Economic SAFE Report Ron Felthoven (AFSC) presented a summary of econometric models that will be incorporated into the Final Economic SAFE Report. The Plan Teams enthusiastically encouraged this approach for assessing management regimes.

September 26, 2001

RECEIVED

SEP 25 2001

N.P.F.M.C

David Benton, Chairman
NPFMC
605 West 4th Avenue
Suite 306
Anchorage, AK 99501-2252

Dear Mr. Chairman:

Every year in the BSAI close to 1,000 MT of halibut go either as un-harvested fish in the IFQ and CDQ fisheries or as un-needed PSC in the trawl fisheries.

This year over 10,000 MT of Pacific cod may go un-harvested in the longline fishery due to lack of halibut PSC. Freezer longline vessels operating in the Bering Sea can harvest 1,000 MT of cod with 10 MT of halibut PSC. Lost revenue to the Pacific cod fleet from lack of halibut PSC could be over \$10 million dollars this year. Sadly there is more than enough halibut to satisfy everyone's needs, however due to current regulations NMFS lacks the simple framework authority to move halibut from one sector to another.

This is a shocking waste of public resources and must be addressed now.

	<u>Un-used halibut MT</u>			
	<u>1997</u>	<u>1998</u>	<u>1999</u>	<u>2000</u>
Trawl PSC	201	373	145	432
Directed IFQ/CDQ	<u>295</u>	<u>1,061</u>	<u>631</u>	<u>515</u>
Total	<u>496</u>	<u>1,434</u>	<u>776</u>	<u>947</u>

Sincerely yours,



David Little



UNITED STATES DEPARTMENT OF COMMERCE
National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration

National Marine Fisheries Service

P.O. Box 21668

Juneau, Alaska 99802-1668

D-1(c)

September 28, 2001

Mr. David Benton
Chairman, North Pacific Fishery
Management Council
605 W. 4th Avenue, Suite 306
Anchorage, Alaska 99501-2252

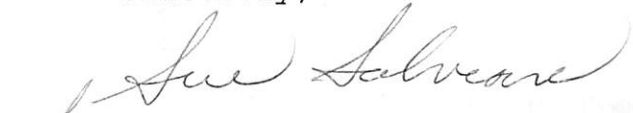
Dear Mr. Benton:

Bycatch rate standards for trawl fisheries under the Pacific halibut and red king crab vessel incentive program (VIP) during the first half of 2002 are scheduled to be published in the Federal Register by January 1, 2002. A summary of 1997 - 2001 observer data on fishery bycatch rates is listed in Table 1 for review by the Council. The halibut bycatch rates for the first three quarters of 2001 have been updated. This information is based on weekly assignments of vessels to a VIP target fishery based on weekly catch and reporting area as determined in the NMFS Blend Database.

We also are providing the Council a series of graphs that show the distribution of bycatch rates in the incentive program fisheries for two periods, the first and second quarters of 2001 and from 1999 through the first and second quarters of 2001. Please note that the bycatch rates portrayed by the graphs are calculated from observer data and are targeted based on haul by haul information. The statistic 'vessel months' noted in the graphs indicates bycatch rates aggregated by vessel by month for fisheries in the incentive program. The rates were then sorted by rate into the histograms without regard to which month they were derived from.

The bycatch rate standards have remained unchanged since 1995. We recommend the Council review the attached information to assess whether adjustments should be made. For purposes of consideration, NMFS staff recommends adjustments to the bycatch rate standards as shown in Table A-1 of the attachment and the accompanying justification for the adjusted rates.

Sincerely,


for James W. Balsiger
Administrator, Alaska Region

Attachments



Table 1 -- 1997 - 2001 (through September 8, 2001) observed bycatch rates, by quarter, of halibut and red king crab in the fishery categories included in the vessel incentive program. Also listed are the bycatch rate standards established since 1995.

Halibut Bycatch (Kilograms Halibut/metric ton Allocated Groundfish Catch)						
Fishery and quarter	Bycatch Rate Standards	1997	1998	1999	2000	2001
BSAI Midwater Pollock						
QT 1	1	0.1	0.02	0.15	0.05	0.13
QT 2	1	0.4	0.00	-	0.15	0.15
QT 3	1	0.1	0.33	0.06	0.11	0.13
QT 4	1	0.1	0.25	0.04	0.13	
BSAI Bottom Pollock						
QT 1	7.5	1.4	9.09	1.29	0.16	0.89
QT 2	5	0.0	0.01	-	4.50	1.89
QT 3	5	1.4	6.70	3.87	0.68	2.72
QT 4	5	0.4	1.47	0.13	1.95	
BSAI Yellowfin sole						
QT 1	5	6.5	9.65	4.21	6.21	19.74
QT 2	5	5.1	6.48	7.30	3.96	18.54
QT 3	5	2.6	7.30	18.59	12.80	9.23
QT 4	5	4.1	13.71	24.26	11.41	
BSAI Other Trawl Fisheries						
QT 1	30	8.9	12.05	14.54	8.19	11.02
QT 2	30	10.3	13.98	24.83	21.08	23.79
QT 3	30	21.2	11.60	6.12	9.79	13.38
QT 4	30	3.1	11.54	8.71	4.57	
GOA Midwater Pollock						
QT 1	1	0.0	0.18	0.31	0.04	0.36
QT 2	1	0.1	0.14	0.23	0.04	0.17
QT 3	1	0.1	0.04	0.12	1.91	0.01
QT 4	1		0.03	0.03	0.56	
GOA Other Trawl Fisheries						
QT 1	40	0.18	26.23	32.48	18.43	10.89
QT 2	40	62.4	58.88	58.87	54.44	56.84
QT 3	40	26.0	37.98	18.14	23.07	28.43
QT 4	40	47.9	58.20	69.04	45.87	
Zone 1 Red King Crab Bycatch Rates						
BSAI Yellowfin sole						
QT 1	2.5	0.1	0.01	0.09	0.23	0.57
QT 2	2.5	0.1	0.03	0.01	0.45	0.08
QT 3	2.5		0.43	1.08	0.21	0.02
QT 4	2.5		0.15	0.25	0.24	
BSAI Other Trawl Fisheries						
QT 1	2.5	0.1	0.04	1.38	0.22	0.09
QT 2	2.5	0.0	0.06	0.20	0.32	0.00
QT 3	2.5	0.0	0.25	0.00	0.00	0.08
QT 4	2.5	0.0	0.02	0.00	0.00	

ATTACHMENT 1

Table A-1. NMFS Staff Recommendations for Adjusted Bycatch Rate Standards

<u>Fishery and Quarter</u>	<u>Bycatch Rate Standard Since 1995</u>	<u>Recommended Standard For the first half of 2002</u>
<u>Halibut rates in kilograms per metric ton</u>		
BSAI		
Mid Water Pollock		
QTR 1	1.0	0.5
QTR 2	1.0	0.5
Bottom Pollock		
QTR 1	7.5	0.5 5.0
QTR 2	5.0	0.5 5.0
Yellowfin Sole		
QTR 1	5.0	15.0
QTR 2	5.0	15.0
Other Trawl Fisheries		
QTR 1	30.0	30.0
QTR 2	30.0	30.0
GOA		
Mid Water Pollock		
QTR 1	1.0	0.5
QTR 2	1.0	0.5
Other Trawl Fisheries		
QTR 1	40.0	40.0
QTR 2	40.0	40.0
BSAI Zone 1 Red King Crab in animals per metric ton		
Yellowfin Sole		
QTR 1	2.5	1.0
QTR 2	2.5	1.0
Other Trawl Fisheries		
QTR 1	2.5	1.0
QTR 2	2.5	1.0

These recommendations are based on the following rationale:

BSAI and GOA Midwater pollock fisheries: Bycatch rates in the midwater pollock fishery consistently have been below 0.5 kg/mt (Table 1). Rates since 1999 have averaged about 0.08 kg/mt in the BSAI and 0.22 kg/mt in the GOA. The distribution of the rates show that 99% and 90% of the BSAI and GOA bycatch rates, respectively, fall below 0.5 kg/mt.

BSAI Bottom pollock fishery: Since 1999 the use of non-pelagic trawl gear has been prohibited in the BSAI pollock fishery. Groundfish are assigned to the bottom pollock target if the majority of the catch is pollock, but that pollock comprises less than 95% of the catch. Since 1999, the average rates in the 'bottom pollock' target have reflected the change in allowable trawl gear as no single quarter has exceeded 5.0 kg/mt (Table 1). The distribution of the rates show that 65% of the bycatch rates are at or below 5 kg/mt. In consideration of the change in allowable gear, NMFS recommends that the Council consider a future amendment to the VIP program so that a single pollock target fishery is established and a bycatch rate be specified to encourage off the bottom activity.

BSAI Yellowfin sole: Average quarterly bycatch rates in the yellowfin sole target have consistently been above the 5.0 kg/mt standard since 1998 (Table 1); the distribution of the halibut bycatch rates show that 73% of the rates are at or below 15 kg/mt. Explanations of relatively higher rates since 1998 might include changes in the physical or biological conditions driving the rate of bycatch in the yellowfin sole fishery since 1995 when the rate was initially established. Another explanation might be that with the decline of Pacific cod, halibut mortality historically assigned to the trawl Pacific cod target has not been used by that fishery and instead has been made available to the flatfish fisheries during the second half of the year. The availability of 'extra' halibut mortality could allow vessels catching flatfish to be less concerned about avoiding halibut bycatch. A third explanation might be that vessels are using larger mesh gear to reduce discard and comply with increased retention/utilization standards for pollock and Pacific cod. Thus, although the amount of groundfish catch may be decreased in a haul, the amount of halibut retained in the net may remain the same and result in an increase in the bycatch rate of halibut.

If the first or third condition is prevailing then it might make sense to increase the bycatch rate standard. If the third condition persists, then it may make sense to leave the standard unchanged and expect the fishery to avoid halibut bycatch to meet it. Unless

further direction is provided by the Council, NMFS staff recommends that the halibut bycatch rate for the yellowfin sole fishery be increased to 15 kg/mt until information is made available to further discern the reasons why the rates have increased in this fishery.

BSAI and GOA "Other trawl fisheries": We recommend no change to the halibut bycatch rate standards for the BSAI and GOA "other trawl fisheries" given that the existing standards seem reasonable compared to observed rates.

Red king crab: Last, we recommend that the Zone 1 red king crab rates for the BSAI yellowfin sole and other trawl fisheries be reduced to 1 crab per mt ground fish. This standard would account for 82 percent and 92 percent, respectively, of the observed vessel month rates since 1999.

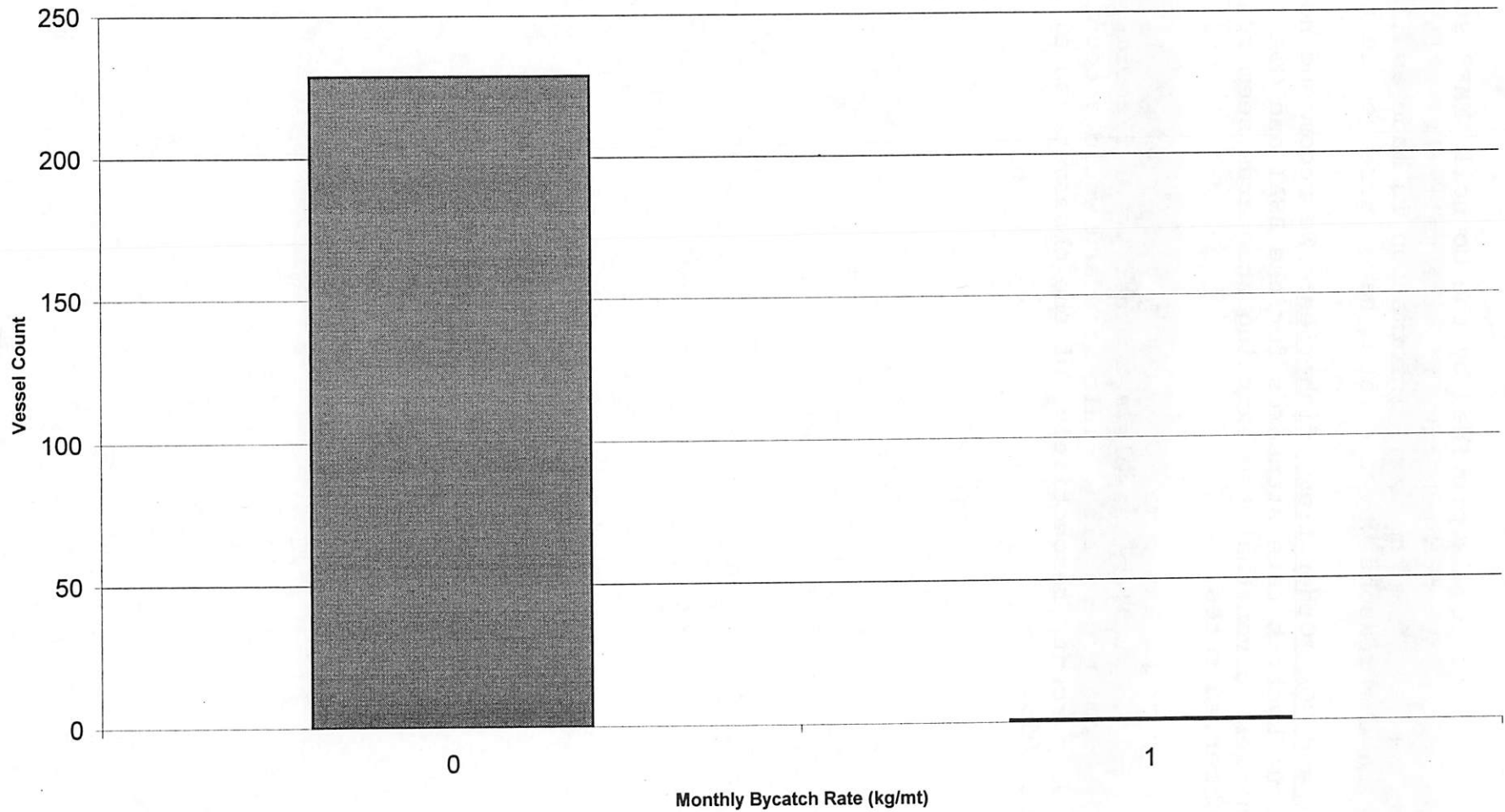
BSA 'P' (mid water) Pollock Target 2001

1st & 2nd Quarters Halibut Bycatch

bycatch std 1.0

mean 2001 bycatch rates: 0.13 1st qtr; 0.15 2nd qtr

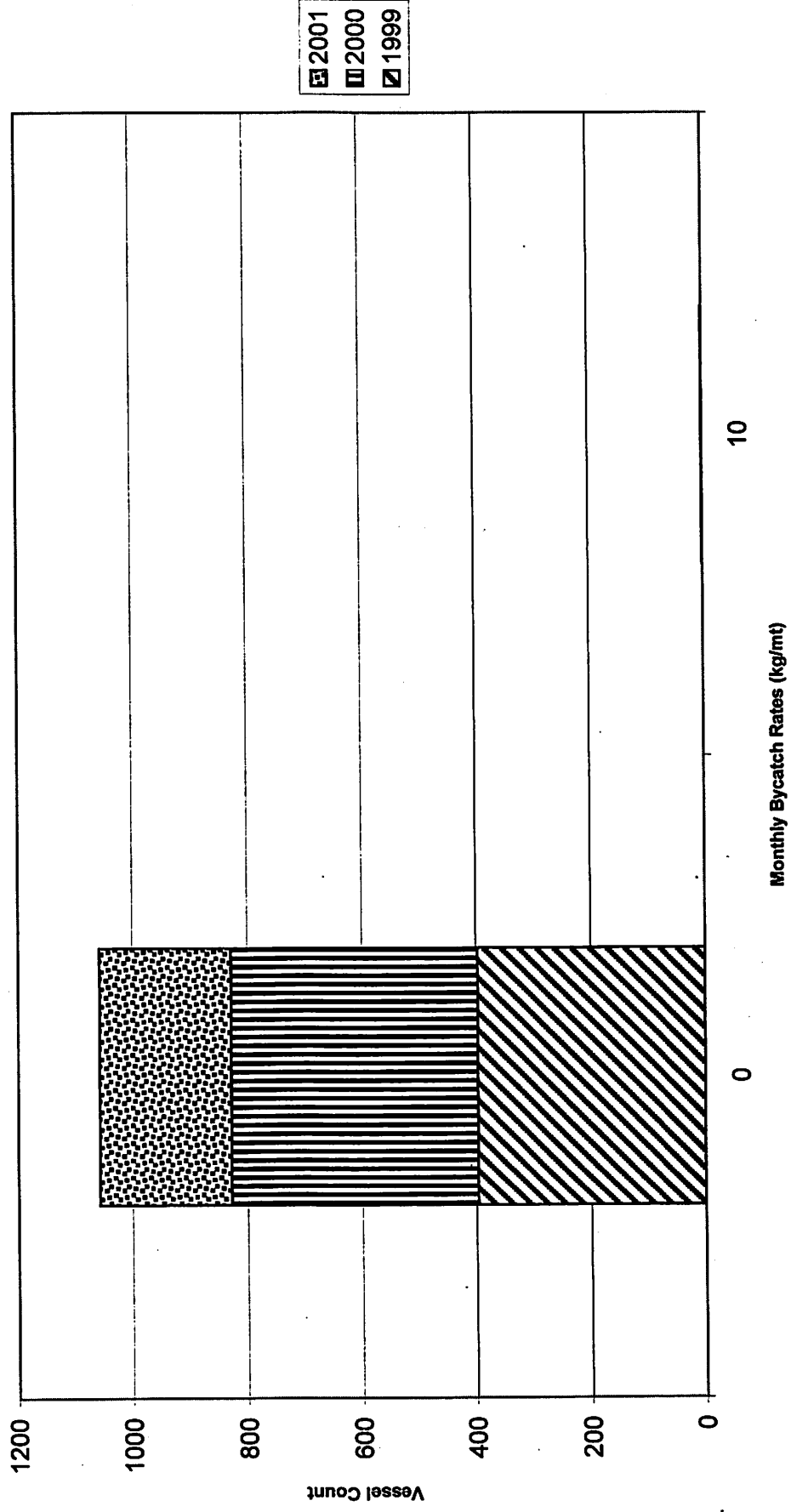
total vessel months: 230



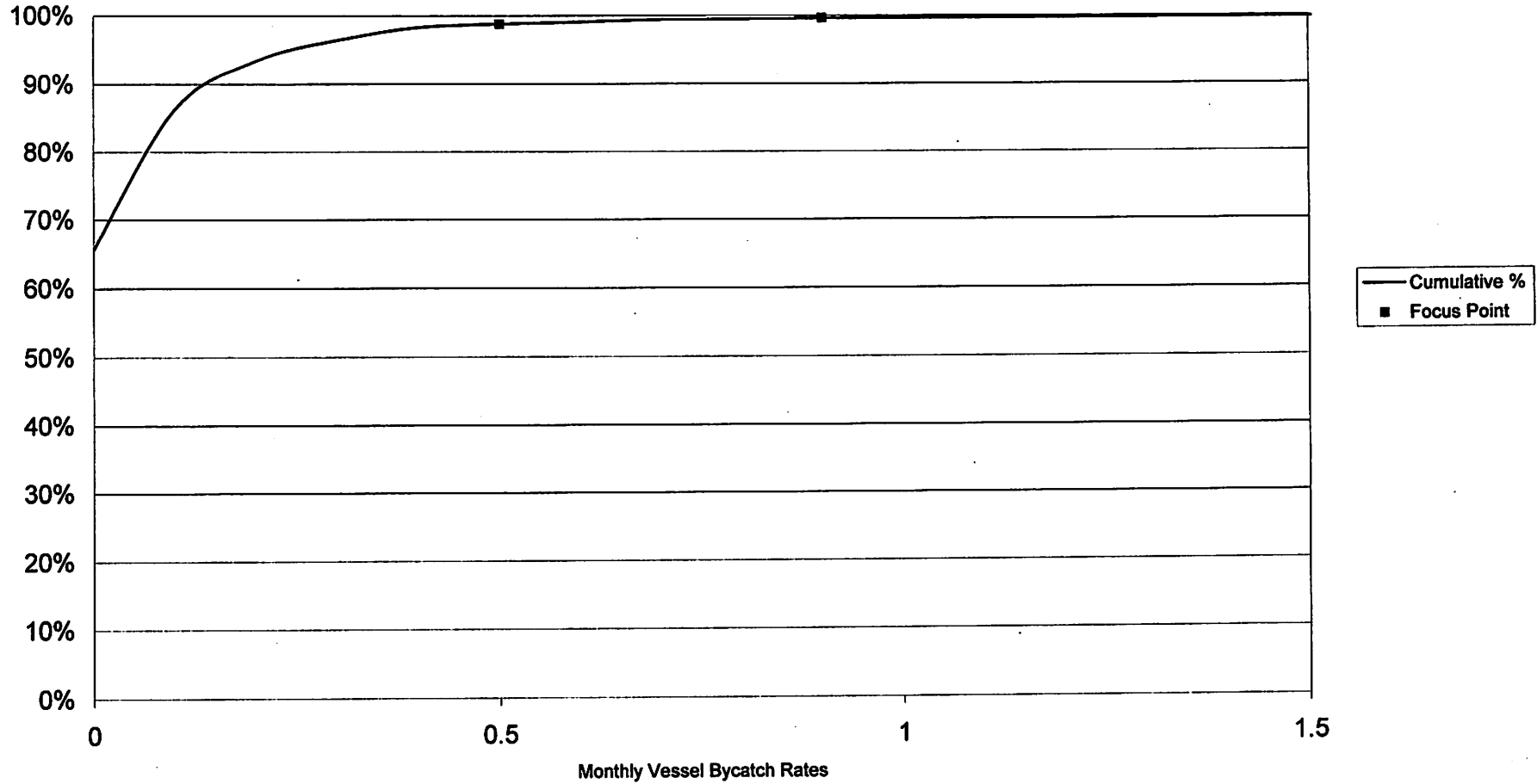
A-4

**BSA 'P' (mid water) Pollock Target
1999-2nd qtr 2001 Halibut Bycatch**

bycatch std = 1.0
total vessel months: 1,058
mean bycatch rate: 0.08



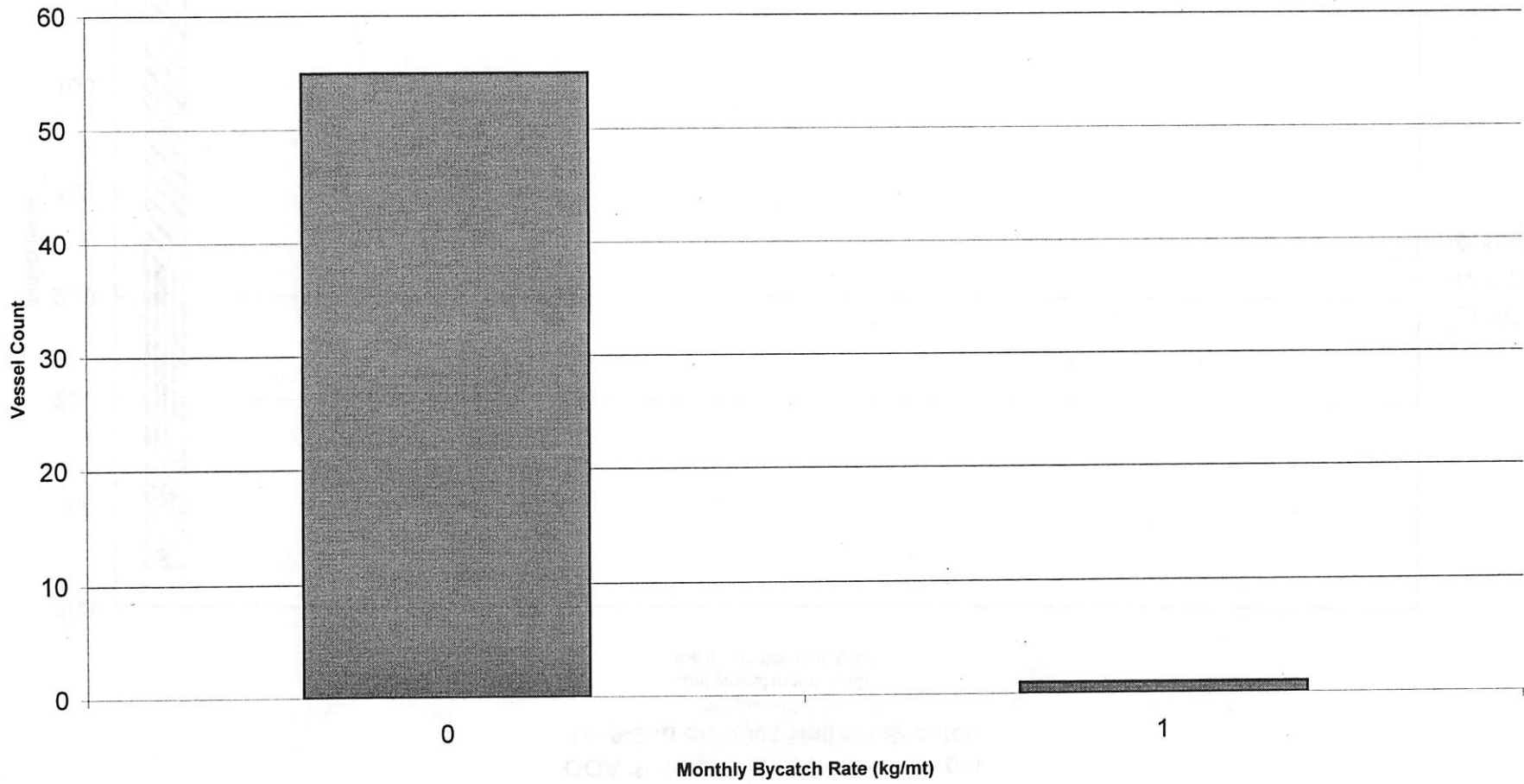
BSA Mid Water Pollock 1999-2nd Qtr 2001
Cumulative % of 'Vessel Month' Bycatch Rates
99.67% are 1.0 kg/mt or less
99 % are 0.5 kg/mt or less



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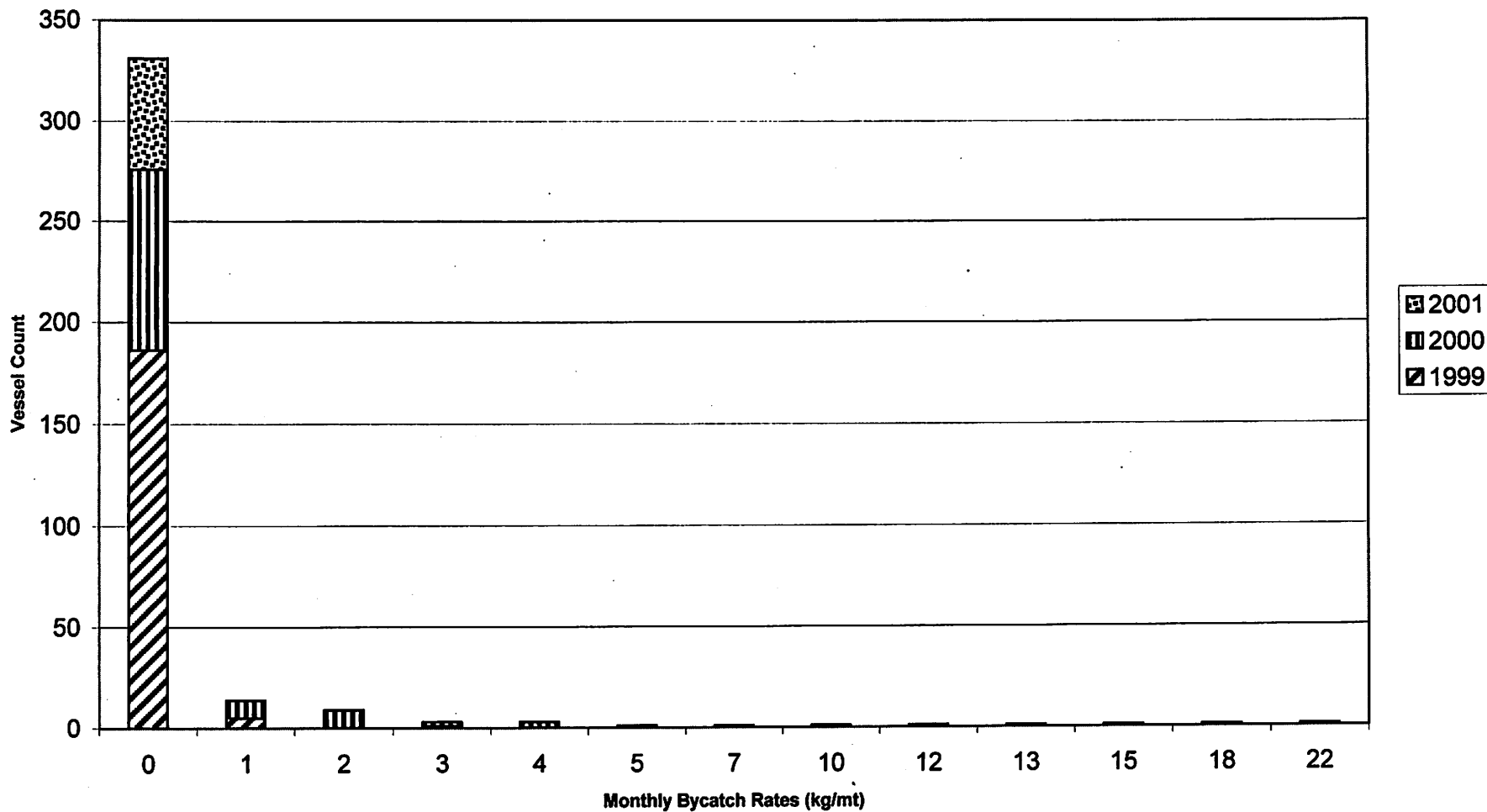
**GOA 'P' (mid water) Pollock Target 2001
1st & 2nd Quarters Halibut Bycatch**

bycatch std = 1.0
mean 2001 bycatch rate: 0.36 1st qtr; 0.17 2nd qtr
total vessel months: 55



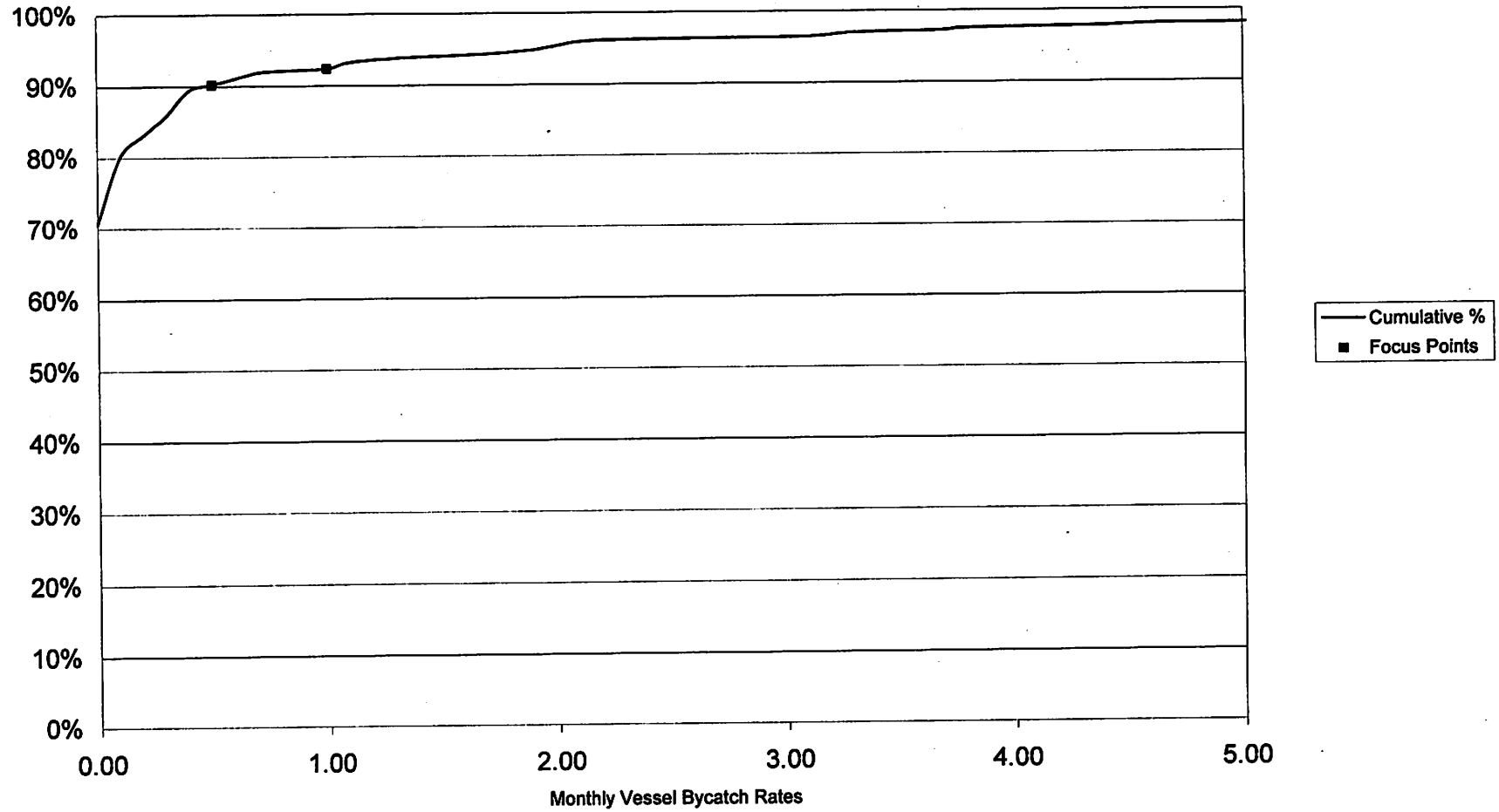
**GOA 'P' (mid water) Pollock Target
1999-2nd qtr 2001 Halibut Bycatch**

bycatch std = 1.0
total vessel months: 368
mean bycatch rate: 0.22



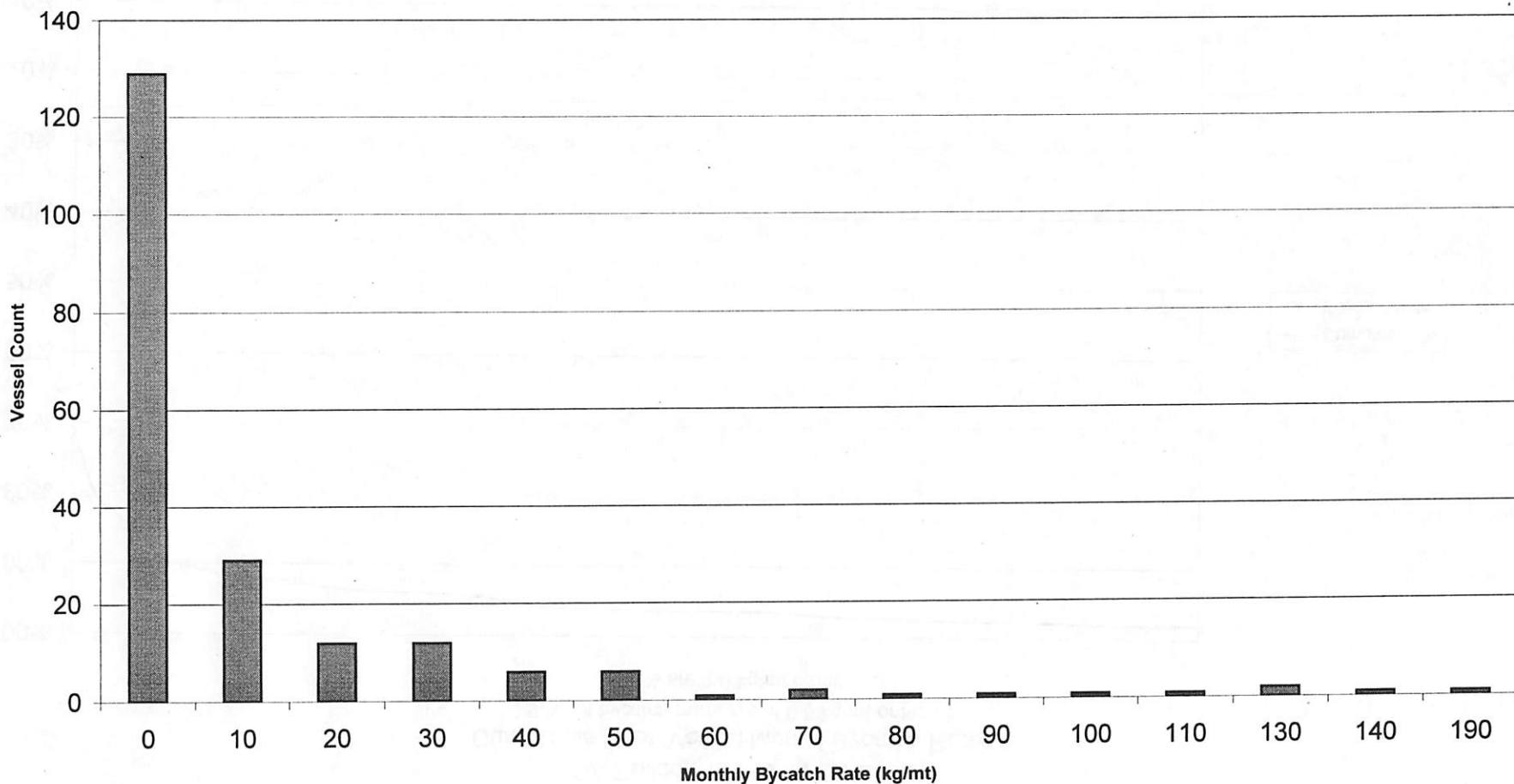
2001
2000
1999

GOA Pollock 1999-2nd Qtr 2001
Cumulative % of 'Vessel Month' Bycatch Rates
90% of bycatch rates are at 0.5 kg/mt or less
92% are 1.0 kg/mt or less



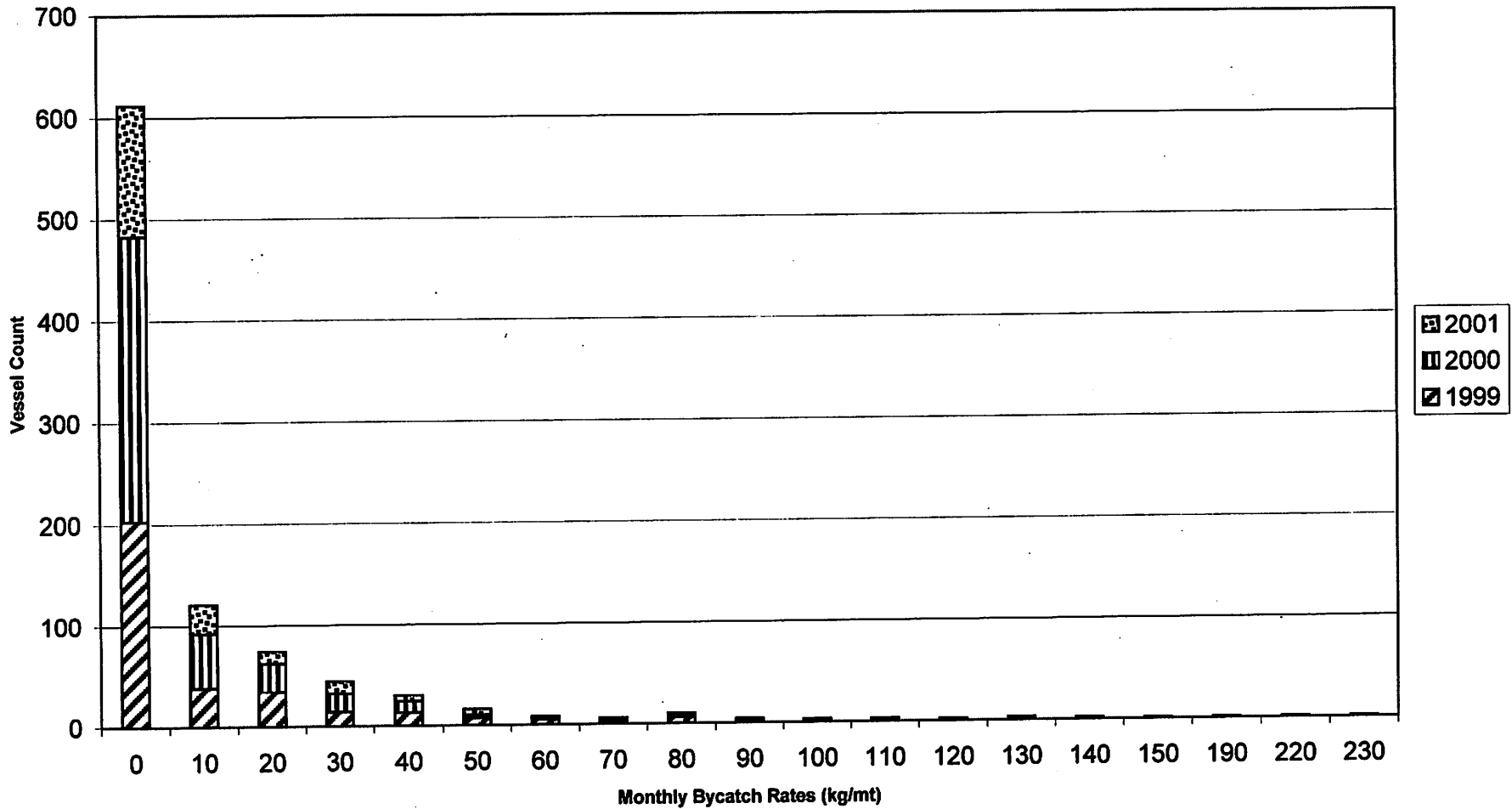
**BSA 'B' Pollock Target 2001
1st & 2nd Quarters Halibut Bycatch**

bycatch std = 7.5 1st; 5.0 2nd
mean 2001 bycatch rates: 0.89 1st; 1.89 2nd
total vessel months: 205

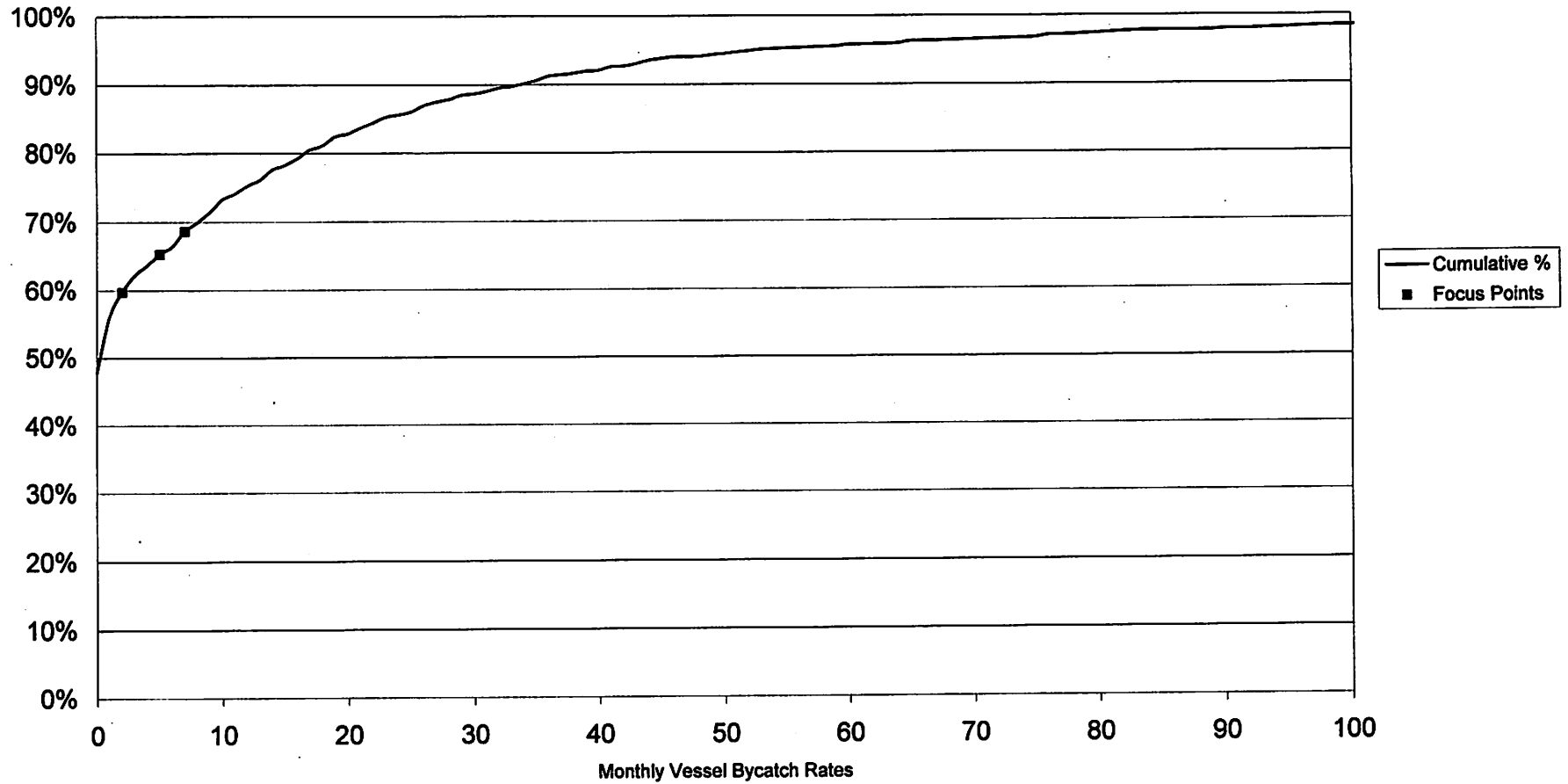


**BSA 'B' Pollock Target
1999-2nd qtr 2001 Halibut Bycatch**

bycatch std = 7.5 1st; 5.0 2nd
total vessel months: 942
mean bycatch rate: 6.68



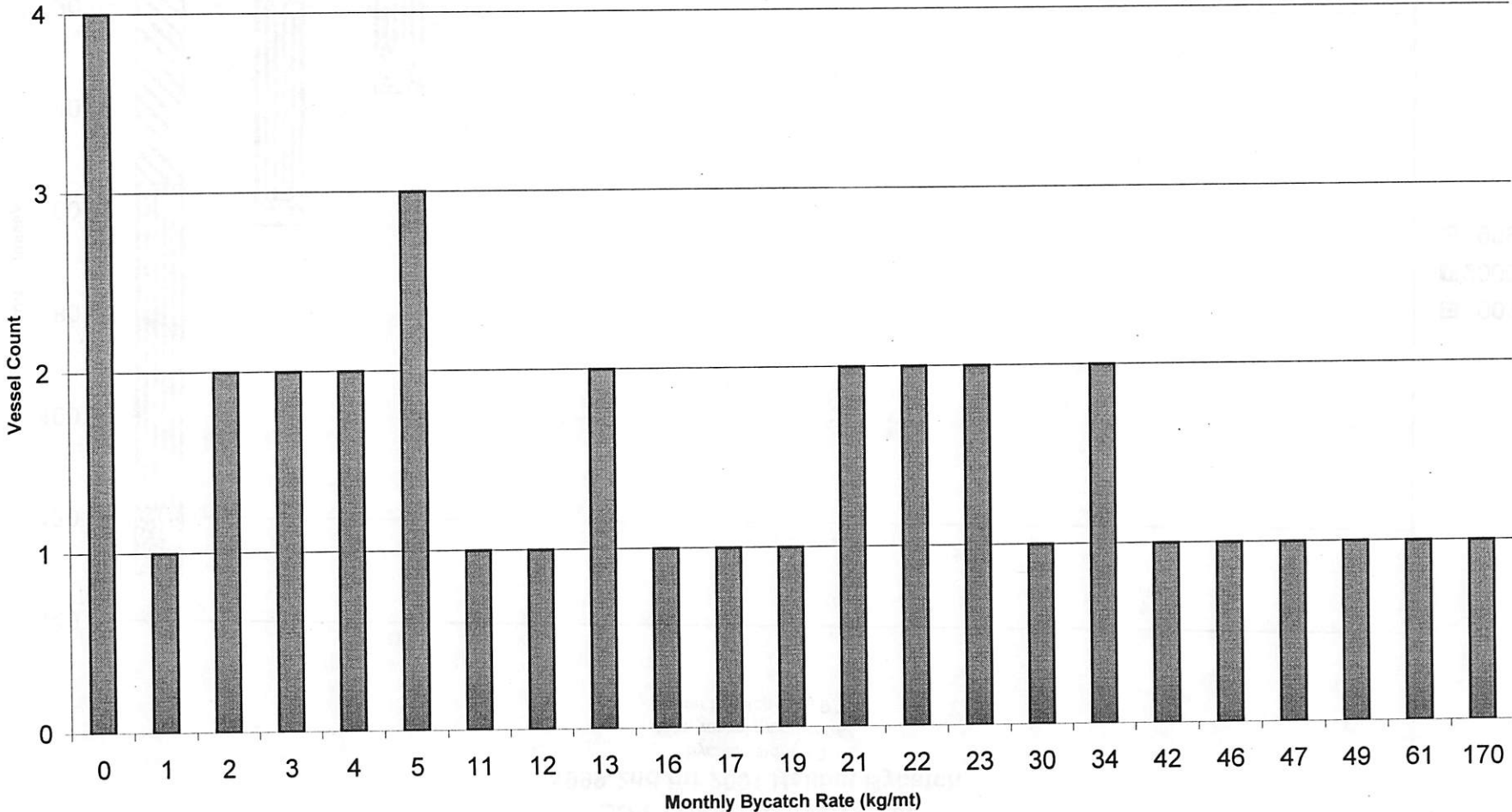
BSA 'B' Pollock 1999-2nd Qtr 2001
Cumulative % of 'Vessel Month' Bycatch Rates
60% of bycatch rates are at 2 kg/mt or less
65% are at 5 kg/mt or less,
69% are at 7 kg/mt or less



A-12

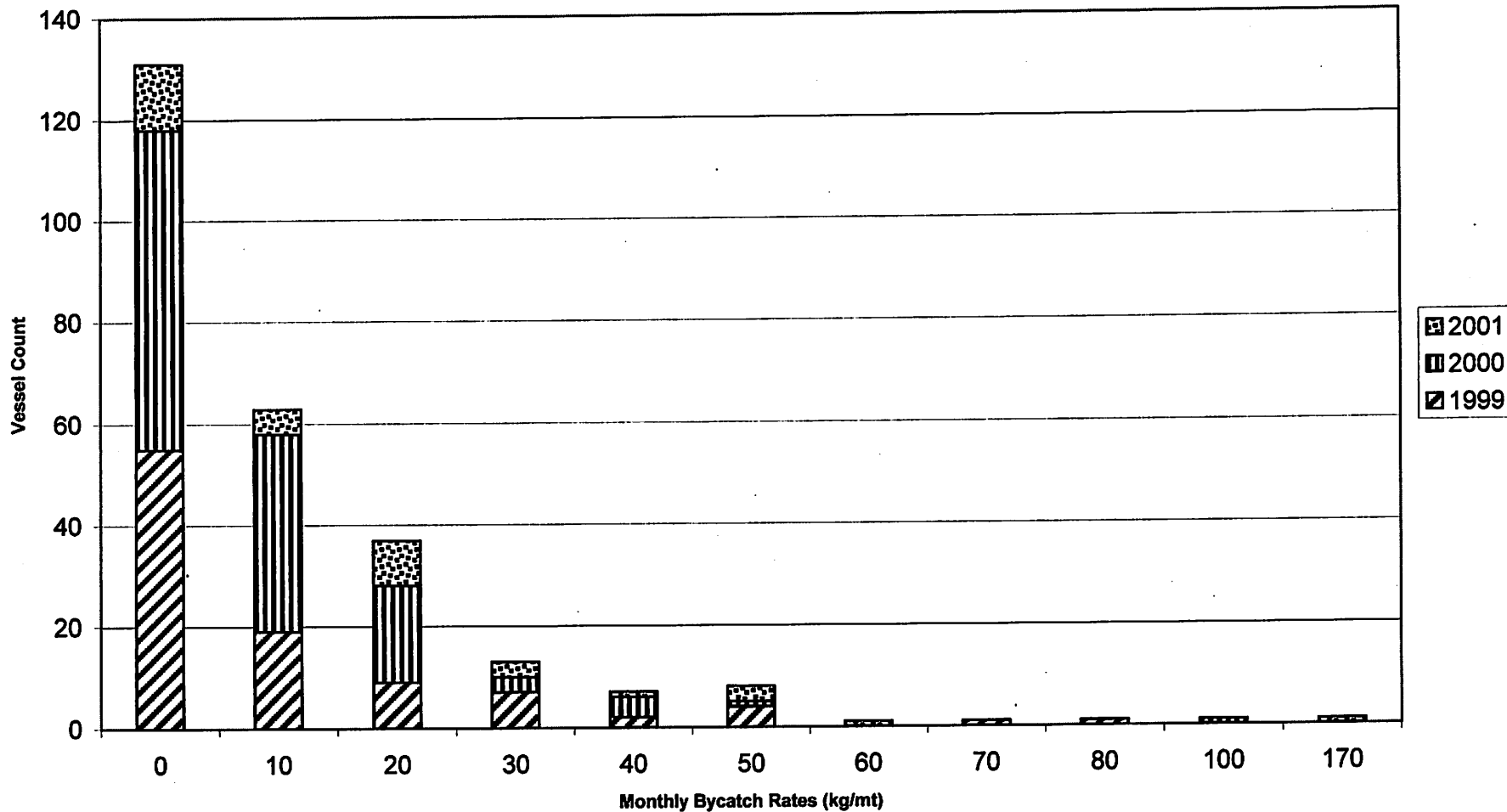
**BSA Yellowfin Sole Target 2001
1st & 2nd Quarters Halibut Bycatch**

bycatch std = 5.0
mean 2001 bycatch rates: 19.74 1st qtr; 18.54 2nd qtr
total vessel months: 36



**BSA Yellowfin Sole Target
1999-2nd qtr 2001 Halibut Bycatch**

bycatch std = 5.0
total vessel months: 264
mean bycatch rate: 9.78

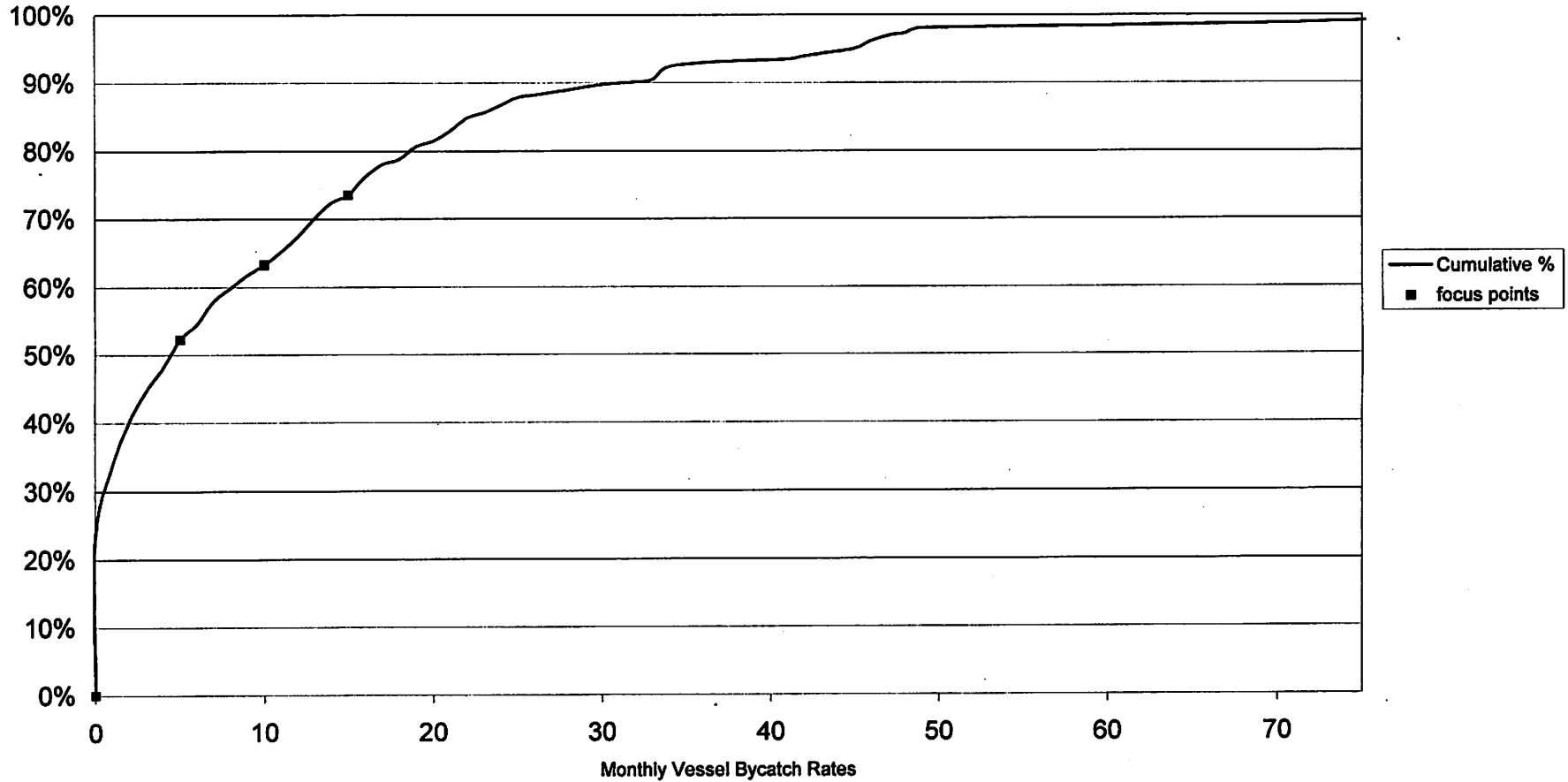


BSA Yellowfin Sole 1999-2nd Qtr 2001
Cumulative % of 'Vessel Month' Bycatch Rates

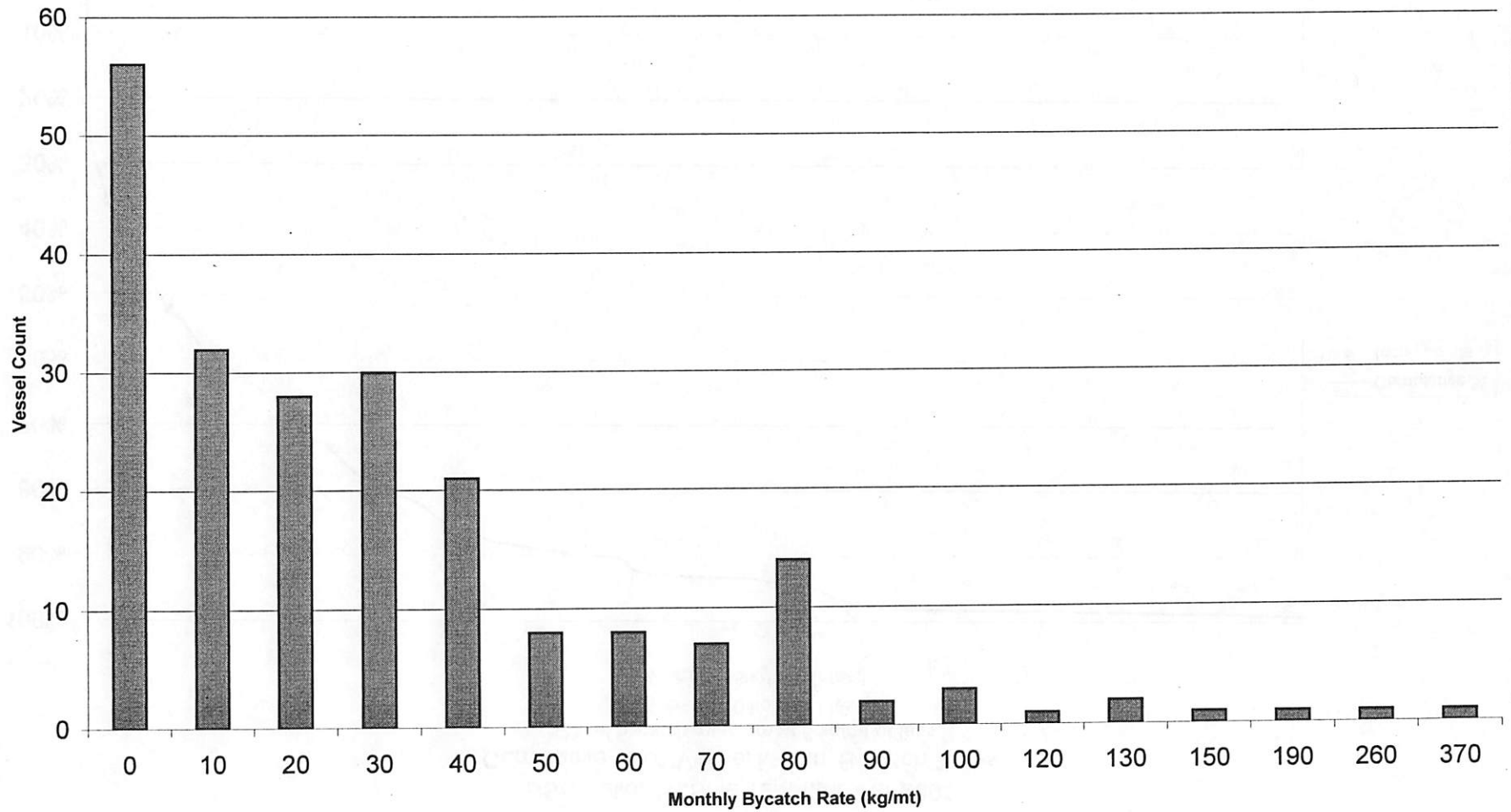
52% of bycatch rates are at 5 kg/mt or less

63% are at 10 kg/mt or less,

73% are at 15 kg/mt or less

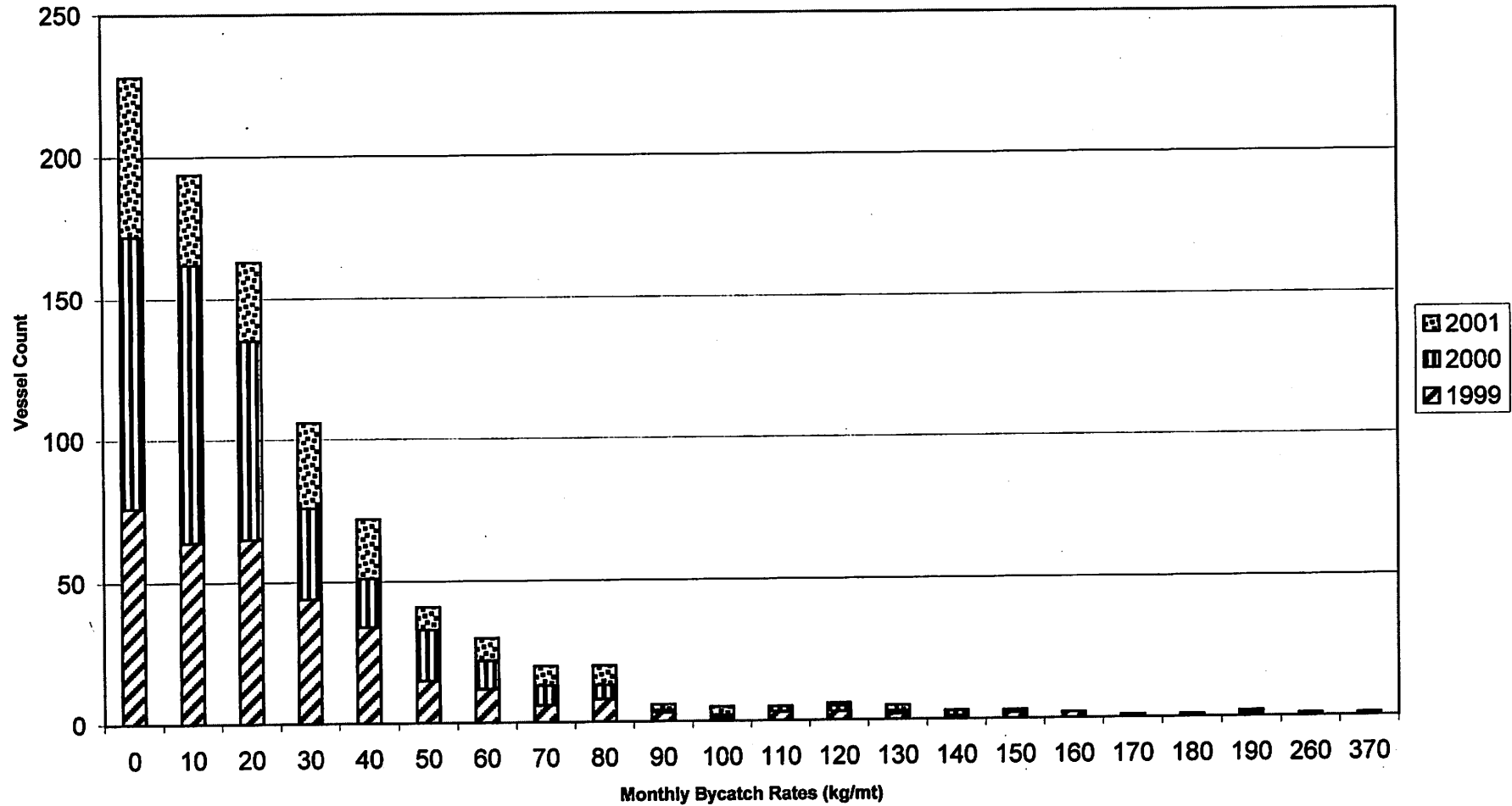


BSA 'Other' Target 2001
1st & 2nd Quarters Halibut Bycatch
bycatch std = 30.0
mean 2001 bycatch rate: 11.02 1st qtr; 23.79 2nd qtr
total vessel months: 209

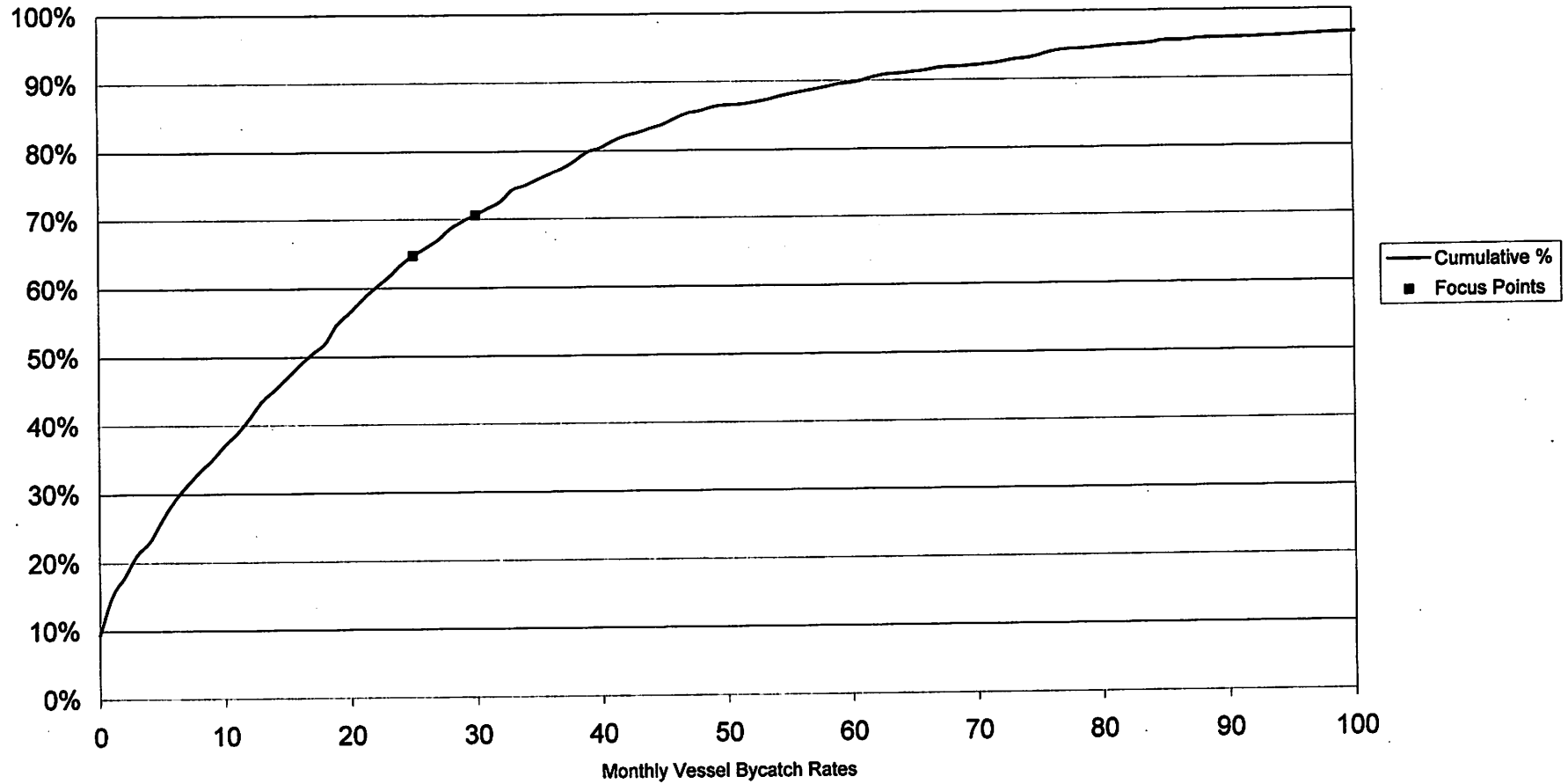


BSA 'Other' Target
1999-2nd qtr 2001 Halibut Bycatch

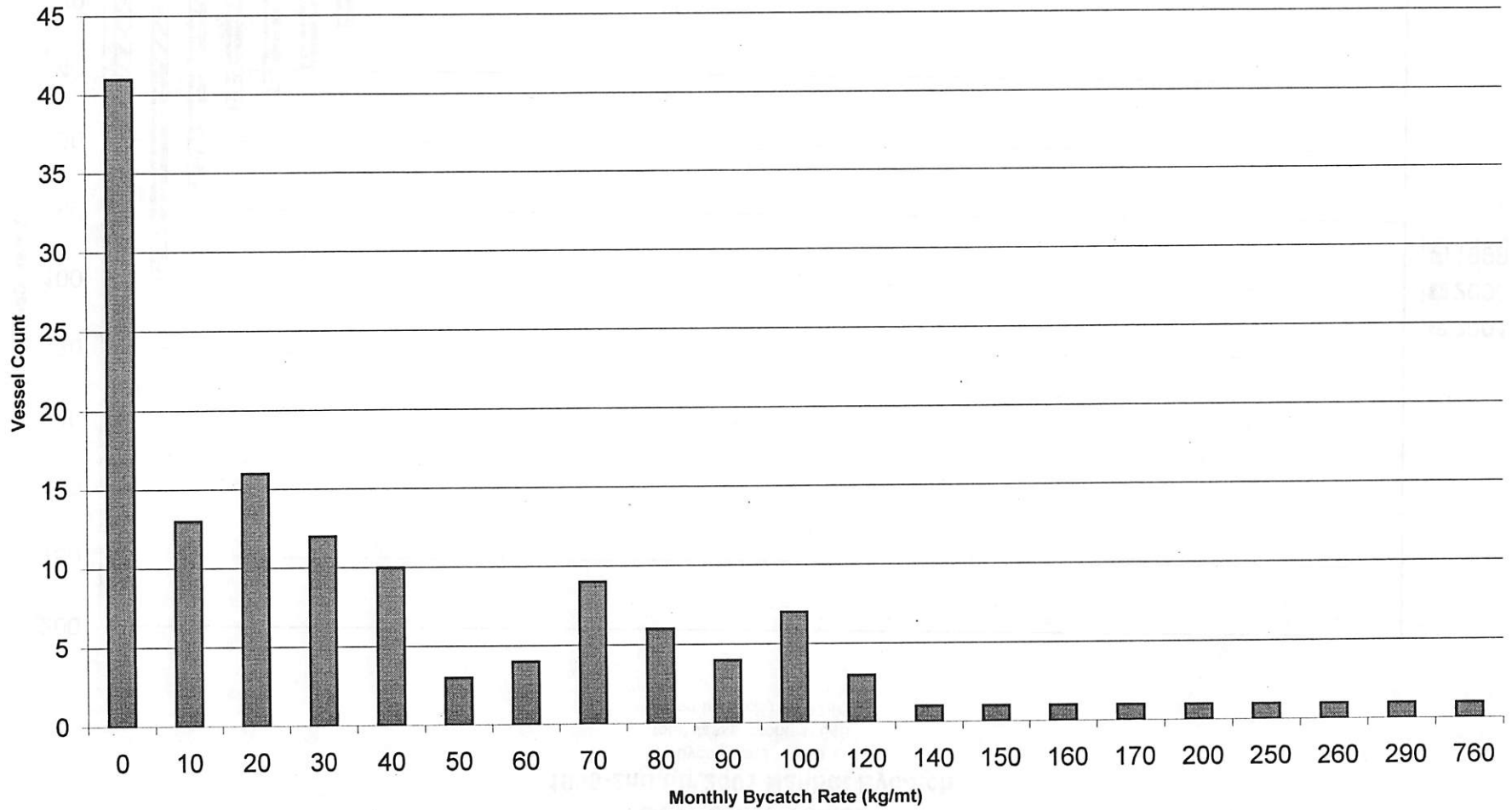
bycatch std = 30.0
total vessel months: 915
mean bycatch rate: 14.65



BSA Other 1999-2nd Qtr 2001
Cumulative % of 'Vessel Month' Bycatch Rates
65% of bycatch rates are at 25 kg/mt or less
71% are at 30 kg/mt or less

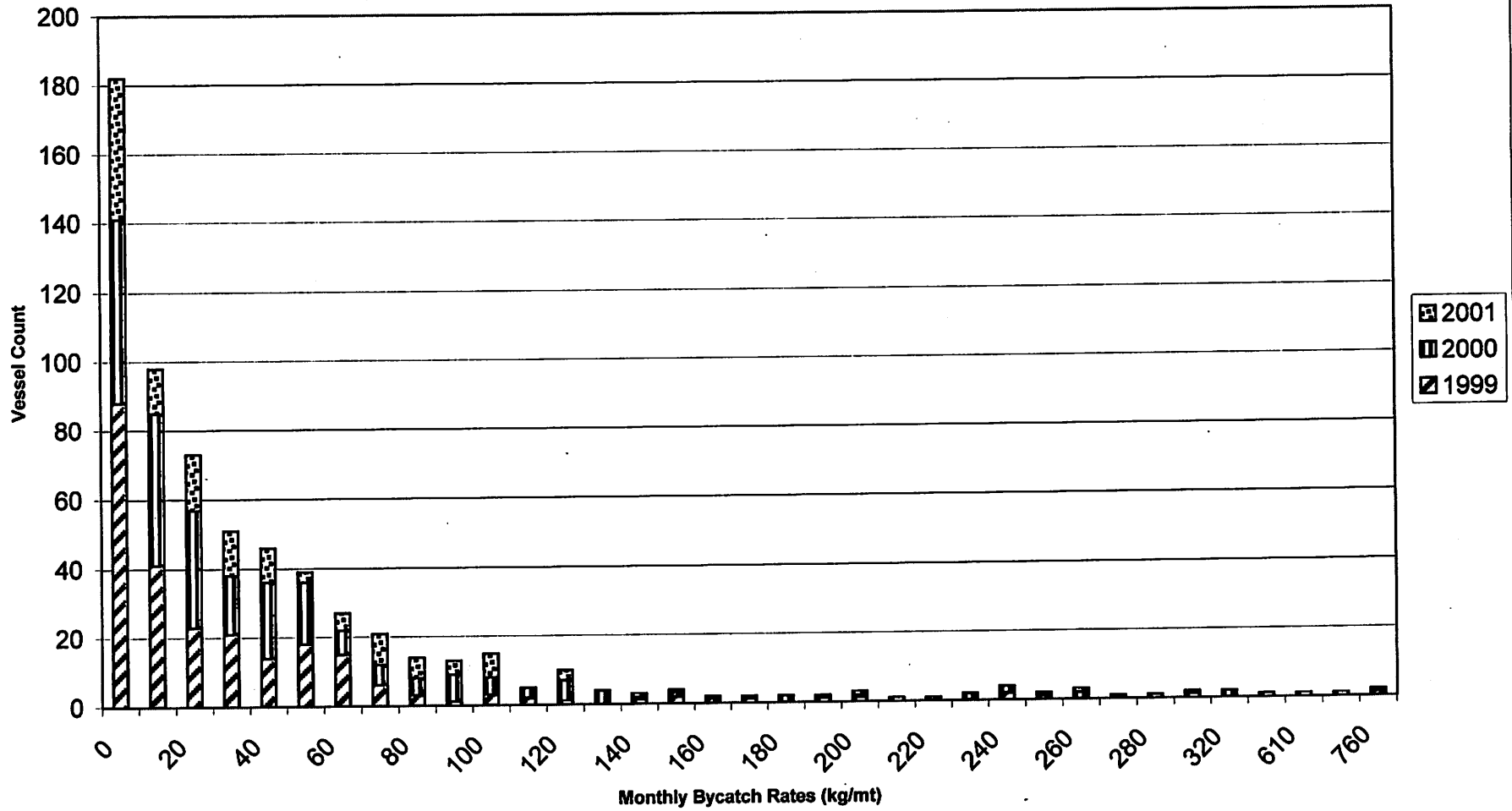


GOA 'Other' Target 2001
1st & 2nd Quarters Halibut Bycatch
bycatch std = 40.0
mean 2001 bycatch rates: 10.89 1st qtr; 56.84 2nd qtr
total vessel months: 137



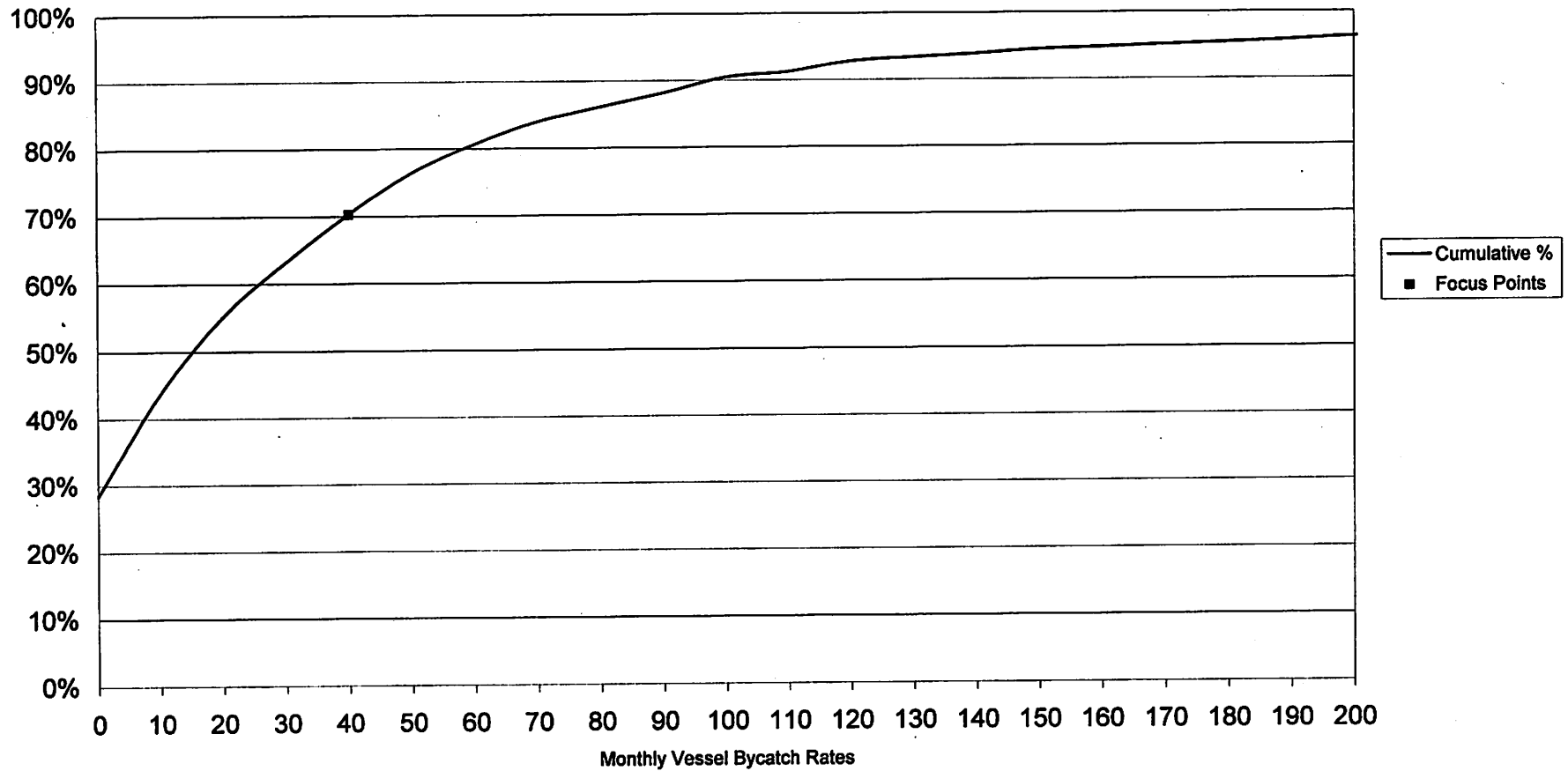
**GOA 'Other' Target
1999-2nd qtr 2001 Halibut Bycatch**

bycatch std = 40.0
total vessel months: 640
mean bycatch rate 37.92



A-20

GOA Other 1999-2nd Qtr 2001
Cumulative % of 'Vessel Month' Bycatch Rates
70% of bycatch rates are at 40 kg/mt or less

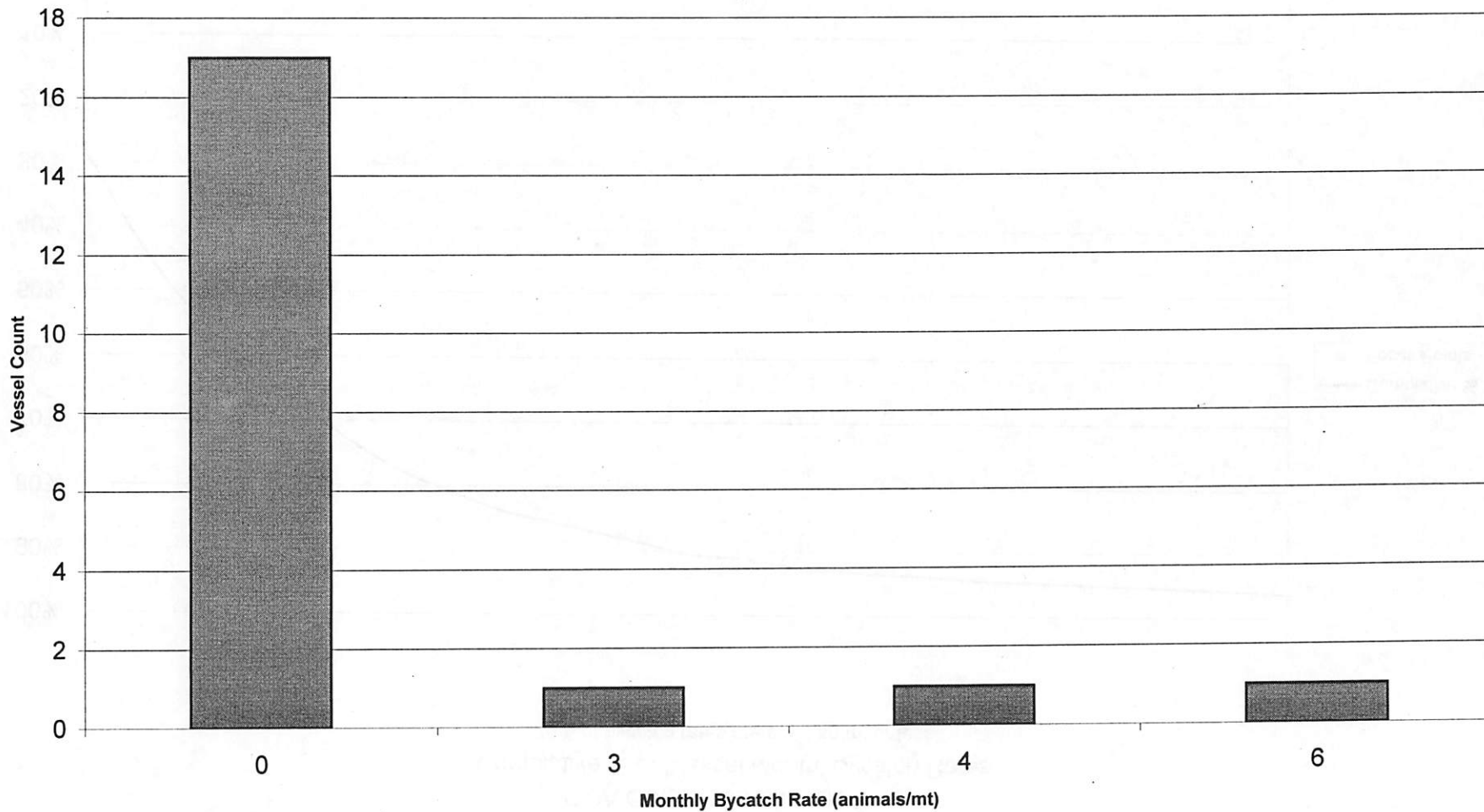


**BSA Zone 1 Yellowfin Sole Target 2001
1st & 2nd Quarters Red King Crab Bycatch**

bycatch std = 2.5

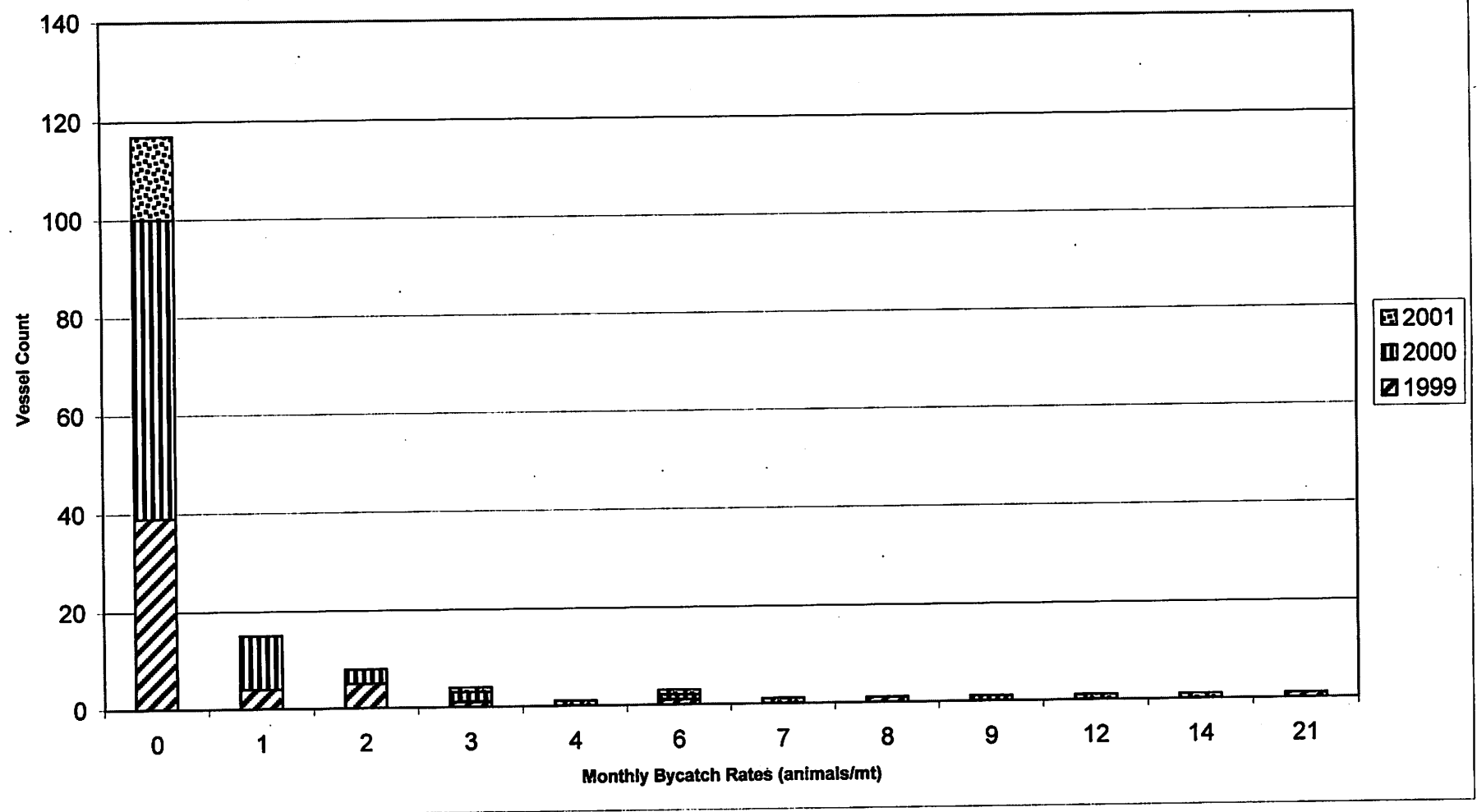
mean 2001 bycatch rates: 0.57 1st qtr; 0.08 2nd qtr

total vessel months: 23

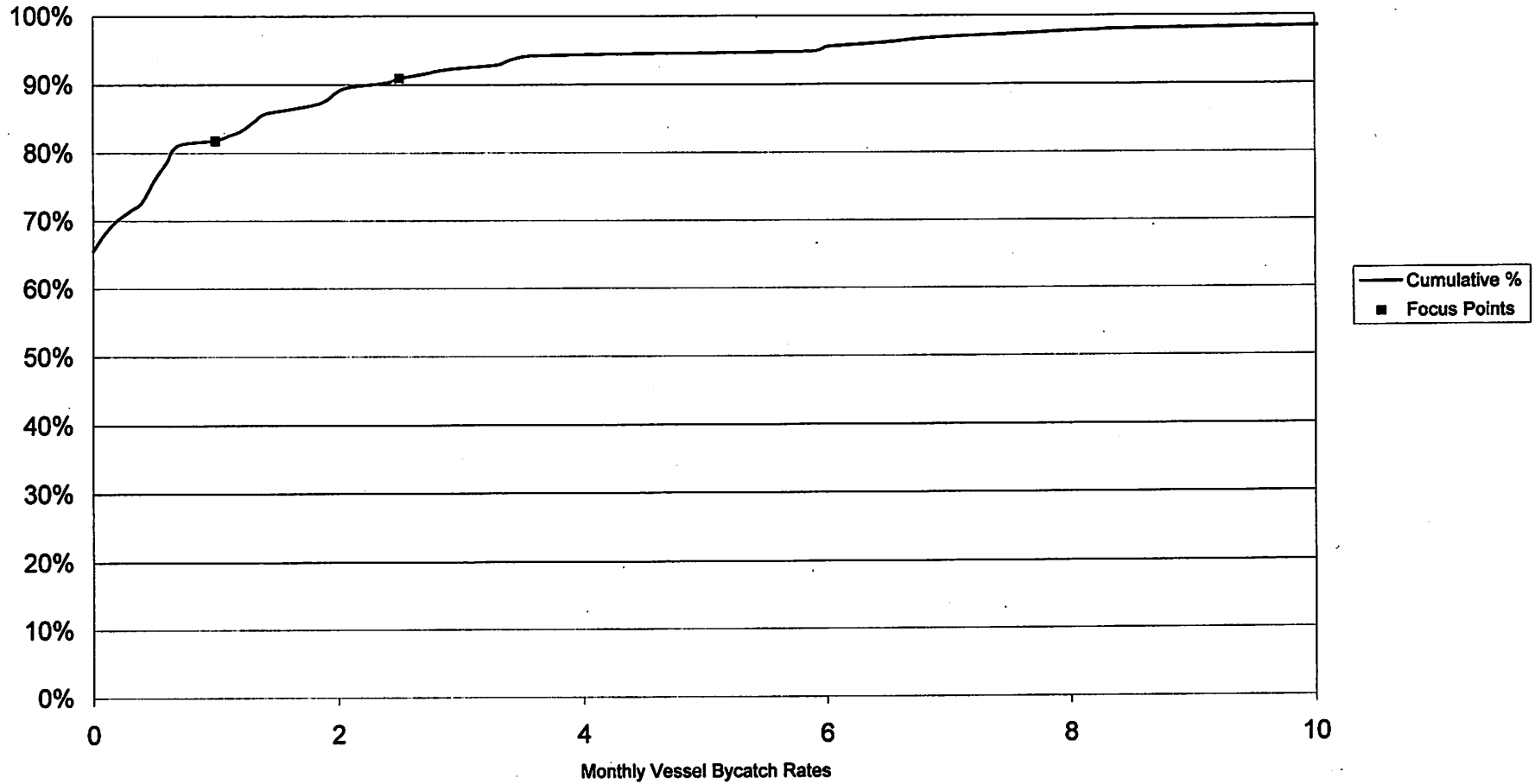


**BSA Zone 1 Yellowfin Sole Target
1999-2nd qtr 2001 Red King Crab Bycatch**

bycatch std = 2.5
total vessel months: 154
mean bycatch rate: 0.60



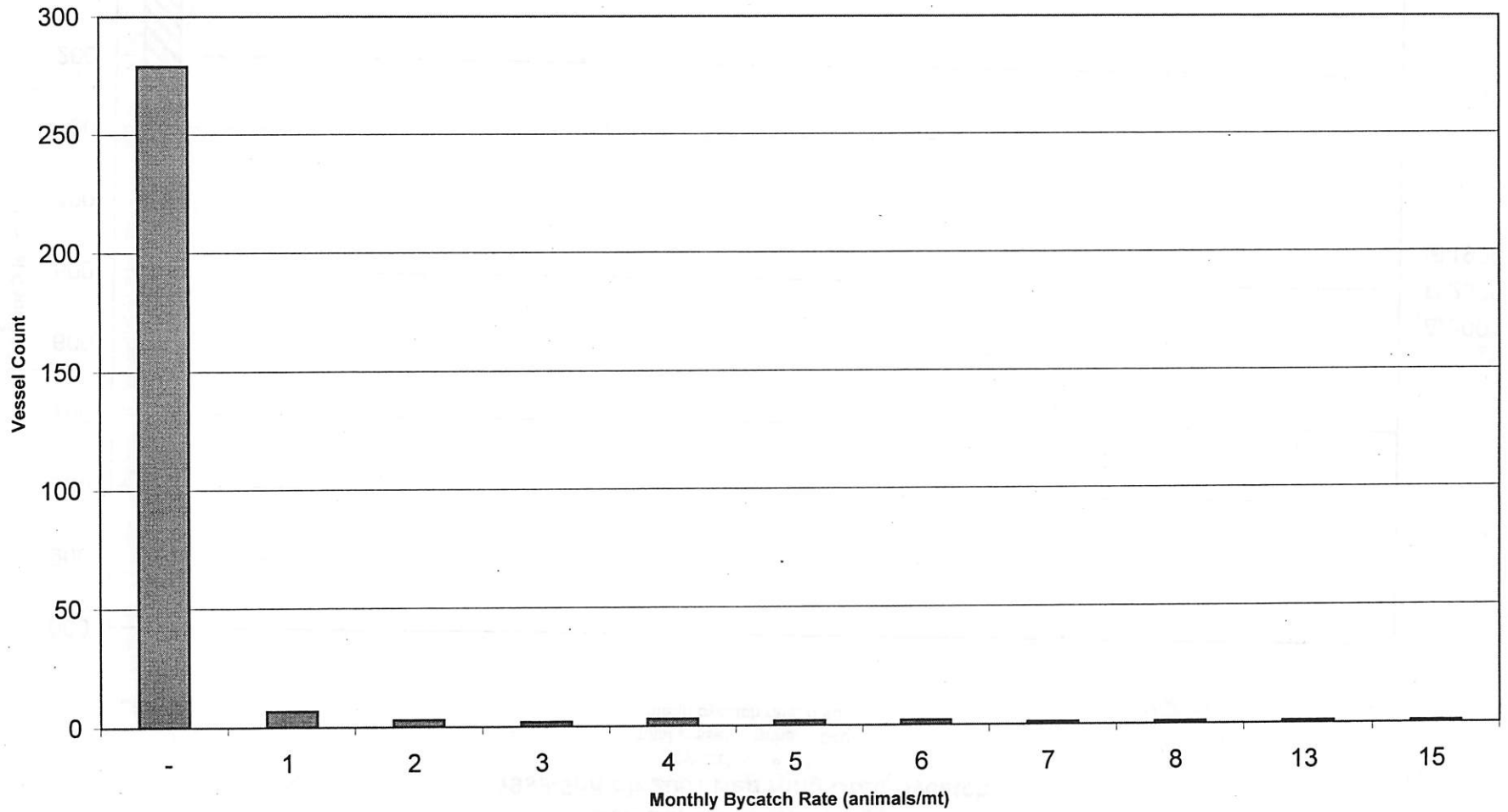
BSA Yellowfin Sole Zone 1 1999-2nd Qtr 2001
Cumulative % of 'Vessel Month' Red King Crab Bycatch Rates
82% of bycatch rates are at 1 #/mt or less
91% are at 2.5 #/mt or less



A-24

**BSA Zone 1 'Other' Target 2001
1st & 2nd Quarters Red King Crab Bycatch**

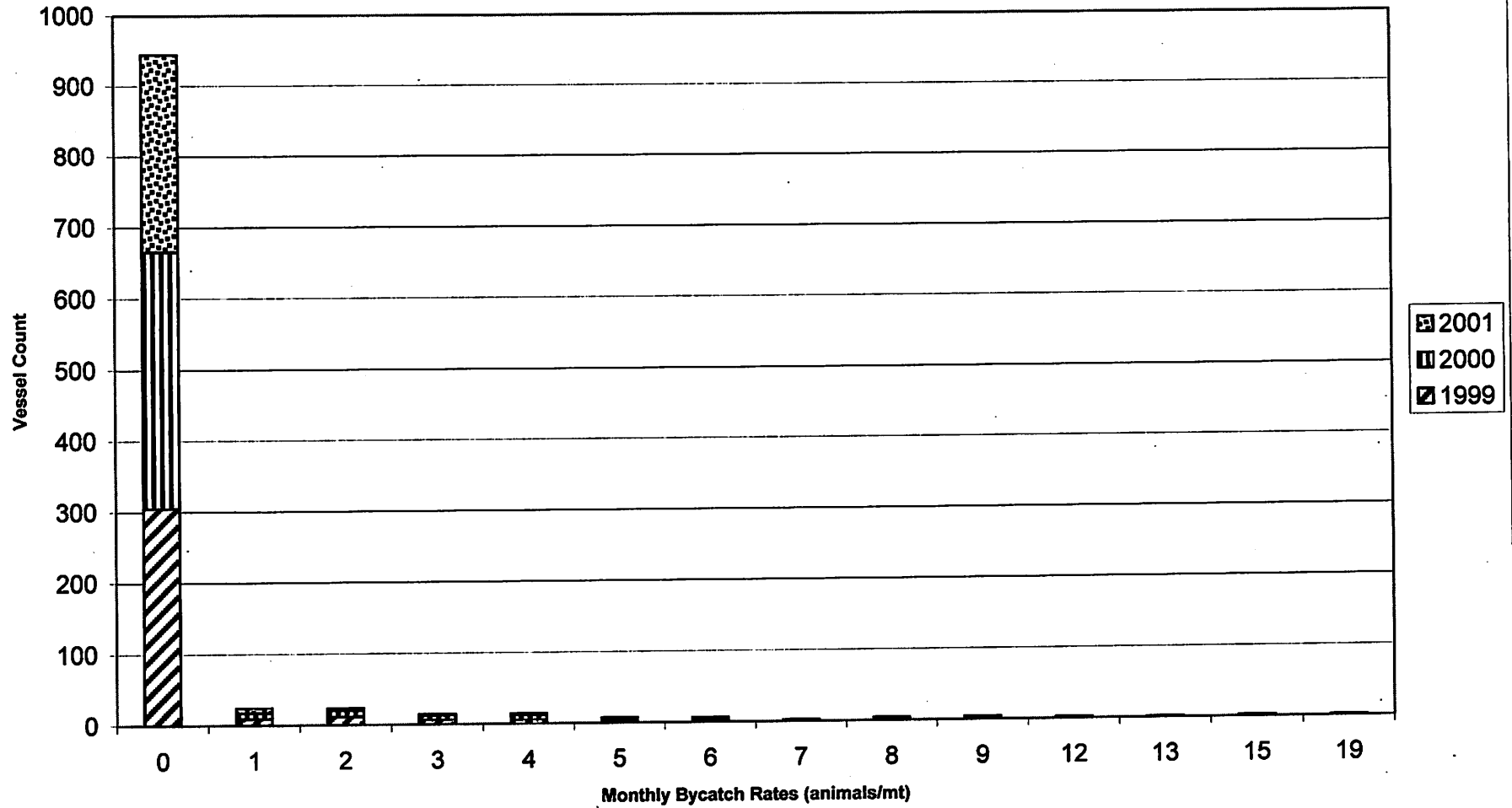
bycatch std = 2.5
mean 2001 bycatch rate: 0.09 1st qtr; 0.00 2nd qtr
total vessel months: 302



A-25

BSA Zone 1 'Other' Target
1999-2nd qtr 2001 Red King Crab Bycatch

bycatch std = 2.5
total vessel months: 1,049
mean bycatch rate: 0.40



BSA 'Other' Zone 1 1999-2nd Qtr 2001
Cumulative % of 'Vessel Month' Red King Crab Bycatch Rates
92% of bycatch rates are at 1 #/mt or less
95% are at 2.0 #/mt or less

