

# Salmon Bycatch Committee report

NPFMC  
December 2022



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Council Staff

**Members in attendance:**

Rachel Baker	ADF&G and NPFMC (co-chair)
Andy Mezirow	Gray Light Fisheries and NPFMC (co-chair)
Ruth Christiansen	United Catcher Boats
Oscar Evon	Coastal Villages Region Fund
Serena Fitka	Yukon River Drainage Fisheries Association
Jennifer Hooper	Association of Village Council Presidents
Mellisa Johnson	Arctic-Yukon-Kuskokwim Tribal Consortium
Stephanie Madsen	At-Sea Processors Association
Elizabeth Reed	Westward Fishing Company
Steve Ricci	Bristol Bay Economic Development Corporation
Kevin Whitworth	Kuskokwim River Inter-Tribal Fish Commission
Dr. Mike Williams, Sr.	Akiak Native Community

# Introductions

- Opportunity for extensive introductions
- Personal statements and expectations
- Description of situations of salmon runs in-river and bycatch avoidance at sea

1. **Purpose:** The North Pacific Fishery Management Council (Council) will establish a Salmon Bycatch Committee (Committee) to address a number of Council related issues on salmon bycatch and research.
2. **Tasks for Committee:**

**Task 1:** Review the discussion paper on chum salmon bycatch for the December Council meeting (2022)

**Task 2:** Review salmon bycatch findings and recommendations from the State of Alaska's Bycatch Task Force and the work of the Western Alaska salmon subcommittee

**Task 3:** Review current information, including Local, Traditional, and Subsistence knowledge, and needed research to determine what is driving western Alaska salmon declines.

The committee will review and discuss these items as they become available and provide comments and any recommendations to the Council in their Committee report.

**The committee will attempt to achieve consensus. In the absence of consensus the Committee will provide rationale and discussion of items that were not agreed upon by all members.**

# Discussion items

- During the discussion, committee members also provided input on the range of historical management actions taken by the Council and what actions should be considered in the future.
- Some Bycatch Committee members asked the committee Co-Chairs to include discussion of a range of possible actions for reducing chum salmon bycatch – including the option of implementing a hard cap on chum salmon bycatch – as soon as possible within the committee and Council process.

# Non consensus recommendation

- some committee members supported a committee recommendation for the Council to immediately initiate analysis for implementation of a chum salmon bycatch cap for the Bering Sea pollock fishery, **there was not consensus on this recommendation.**

# Consensus recommendations

**The Committee requests that the Council direct the committee to continue meeting to address the three primary Council tasks in the terms of reference.** The approach suggested would be to have the committee meet at least two additional times in 2023 between January and April with a report to the Council in conjunction with the April Council meeting. For example, a second meeting could be held to review additional information and begin to discuss recommended management approaches while a third meeting could be used to finalize recommendations to be presented to the Council for their consideration.

# Information requests of staff for subsequent meeting

1. Temperature changes (warm and cold patterns) compared to bycatch.
2. How do temperature changes interact with prey conditions?
3. Salmon encounter rates compared to pollock total allowable catch (TAC).
4. How or what conditions have changed since 2012? E.g., increased CDQ dependance on pollock; in river subsistence restrictions, some synthesis of local and traditional knowledge by in river salmon users across western Alaskan regions.
5. Review State of Alaska Bycatch Task Force recommendations and information available on the Task Force website.
6. Pollock fishery avoidance measures in 2022 for chum salmon.
7. Process for initiating analysis of alternative management measures for chum salmon bycatch
8. Expansion of the discussion of Council rationale for current management priorities for salmon bycatch (i.e., Chinook).
9. Provide information on most recent analyses of fishing effects on habitat related to pelagic fishing gear.



# Public comments

- discussed the importance of preserving the subsistence way of life provided by access to salmon stocks,
- the inequity of in-river users taking on the brunt of conservation of salmon stocks,
- the utility of the forum for discussion provided by the committee regarding these issues and
- the sense of urgency in taking action on chum salmon bycatch by the Council.