



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

March 13, 2026

Angel Drobnica, Chair  
North Pacific Fishery Management Council  
1007 West 3rd Ave., Suite 400  
L92 Building, 4th floor  
Anchorage, Alaska 99501

Dear Ms. Drobnica:

In our October, 2025, B2 National Marine Fisheries Service (NMFS) Management Report, we informed the Council of questions related to the ability of shoreside processors to accept prohibited species catch (PSC) and convert it to fishmeal. The questions arose in reference to vessels in the trawl electronic monitoring (EM) program, but are relevant to other Alaska fisheries as well. This letter clarifies what is permissible under applicable regulations.

While vessels historically discarded PSC at sea, vessels are now required to retain and land PSC at the dock under an increasing number of regulatory programs. We acknowledge there has been some uncertainty about how processors may dispose of this PSC. Current regulations do not prohibit processors in the Gulf of Alaska from converting PSC into fish meal, fish oil, or bone meal, and selling these low value products. This is consistent with a longstanding pattern of practice that NMFS did not constrain when we implemented the final rule for the trawl EM program. Disposing of retained PSC in this manner minimizes waste and reduces environmental and economic impacts, providing a way to handle PSC that cannot be marketed or for which donation is not feasible and that would otherwise go to waste. Because vessels remain subject to regulatory PSC limits, are prohibited from selling PSC to processors even when required to retain it, and due to the low value of fish meal, allowing processors to send PSC to fish meal plants and sell the resulting products does not create a financial incentive for vessels to target PSC. Further, there is no conservation benefit to restricting processors from disposing of PSC at a fishmeal plant, which otherwise would need to be transported offshore before it could be discarded. This clarification increases overall efficiency and reduces waste within the Federal fisheries off Alaska.

Due to the complexity of the regulations that address disposition of PSC under multiple fishery management programs, we plan to examine this matter holistically and work with the Council to consider any necessary updates to regulations.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in blue ink, appearing to read "Jonathan M. Kurland".

Jonathan M. Kurland  
Regional Administrator

