DRAFT FOR INITIAL REVIEW

Environmental Assessment[1]/Regulatory Impact Review for a Proposed Amendment to the Fishery Management Plan for the Gulf of Alaska to

Modify Halibut PSC Limit Exemption and Monitoring Requirements for Amendment 80 Vessels when Fishing in the Gulf of Alaska

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Abstract: This Environmental Assessment and Regulatory Impact Review analyzes the impacts of regulatory actions to modify the requirements of the Amendment 80 sector's participation in the Gulf of Alaska. These proposed changes are not mutually exclusive and can be adopted in combination. The first proposed change would remove the exemption from the Gulf of Alaska halibut PSC sideboard limits for the F/V GOLDEN FLEECE and any Amendment 80 vessel that replaces the F/V GOLDEN FLEECE. The F/V GOLDEN FLEECE was granted the exception when the Amendment 80 program was implemented because of its participation history in Central Gulf of Alaska flatfish fisheries. The second proposed change would apply the Bering Sea and Aleutian Islands Amendment 80 monitoring requirements to Amendment 80 trawl catcher processors operating in the Gulf of Alaska. The action would require any original Amendment 80 vessel or any Amendment 80 replacement vessel to fish under the monitoring requirements applied to full coverage Amendment 80 trawl catcher processors in the Bering Sea and Aleutian Islands whenever it is fishing in the Gulf of Alaska.

For definitions of acronyms and abbreviations, see online list: https://www.npfmc.org/library/acronyms

[1] This document uses the term "environmental assessment" because it provides an evaluation of the environmental effects of the action and alternatives to inform a potential Council recommendation. If the Council makes a recommendation to NMFS, NMFS will then evaluate whether an environmental assessment, or a different level of NEPA review, is required to support NMFS's agency action, consistent with the National Environmental Policy Act. NMFS also will be responsible for compliance with the time and page limits of NEPA, 42 U.S.C. 4321, et. seq..

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Executive Summary

This Environmental Assessment (EA)/Regulatory Impact Review (RIR) analyzes a proposed regulatory action to modify the halibut PSC exemption that was granted to the F/V GOLDEN FLEECE (and qualifying replacement vessel – currently the F/V DEFENDER) when the Amendment 80 (A80) Program and the A80 vessel replacement provisions were developed. It also proposes modifying the monitoring requirements for any A80 vessel fishing in the Gulf of Alaska (GOA). The proposed GOA monitoring requirements would apply regardless of fishery, season, or whether the vessel was an original A80 vessel or an A80 replacement vessel.

Purpose and Need

The Council adopted a purpose and need statement in June 2026 as follows:

Given declines in coastwide halibut stock status and recent changes to reduce halibut PSC limits for the Amendment 80 sector in the Bering Sea/Aleutian Islands, the Council is evaluating a conservation measure to eliminate the exemption to Amendment 80 halibut PSC sideboard limits in the Gulf of Alaska. Under current regulations, one Amendment 80 catcher processor vessel (GOLDEN FLEECE) is eligible to fish flatfish in the Gulf of Alaska and not be subject to the Amendment 80 halibut PSC sideboard limits in the Gulf of Alaska, due to the vessel's historical participation. While this vessel has not been fishing in the Gulf of Alaska since 2022, it is eligible to be replaced by a different vessel. Current regulations allow the replacement vessel to be exempt from the Gulf of Alaska halibut PSC sideboard limits as long as the replacement vessel is the same length or shorter than the original license allows (≤124 feet length overall). Additionally, Amendment 80 vessels are subject to different monitoring requirements when operating in the Gulf of Alaska, which means that current monitoring requirements do not provide the sufficient PSC accounting that is required to monitor compliance with a sideboard. As a result, the Council is also evaluating whether regulation changes are needed to improve catch monitoring in the Gulf of Alaska and ensure consistent requirements for Amendment 80 vessels operating in BSAI and GOA.

Alternatives

The following alternatives are being considered by the Council to modify the A80 halibut PSC mortality limits in the GOA and to modify the monitoring requirements for A80 vessels operating in the GOA.

Alternative 1: No Action (status quo)

Alternative 2: Remove the exemption from the Gulf of Alaska halibut PSC sideboard limits for an A80 vessel that replaces the GOLDEN FLEECE.

Alternative 3: Apply Amendment 80 monitoring requirements in the BSAI at 679.93(c) to Amendment 80 trawl catcher processors operating in the Gulf of Alaska.

History of A80 Fishery in GOA

The A80 Program was implemented for the 2008 fishing year and was designed to provide specific Bering Sea Aleutian Islands (BSAI) groundfish allocations to the Head and Gut (H&G) trawl catcher processor (CP) sector and allow the formation of cooperatives. The A80 program also limited participation in GOA fisheries to protect participants in those fisheries from potential expansion of A80 harvests resulting from the program's flexibility (NPFMC 2007). The sector allocations and any associated cooperative(s) were intended to help participants focus less on maximizing harvest rates and more on optimizing their harvests. This, in turn, could reduce unwanted incidental catch, improve retention and utilization, and improve the economic health of the A80 sector.

When the Amendment 80 Program was under development, the H&G trawl CP fleet consisted of a relatively diverse group of vessels ranging from 103 ft to 295 ft in length. The initial A80 analysis showed the F/V GOLDEN FLEECE received monitoring, enforcement, and sideboard exemptions due to its clear and consistent dependence on GOA groundfish fisheries over the period considered, which was unique even compared to other small Amendment 80 qualifying vessels at the time (NMFS & NPFMC, 2007). Smaller vessels were found to be relatively less productive than larger vessels, and most have been replaced by larger vessels as allowed under the vessel replacement provisions of Amendment 97.

When the A80 program was designed, the GOA halibut PSC limits for the A80 sector were established based on historical halibut PSC use of the vessels that qualified for an allocation. Halibut PSC limits were calculated as a percentage of the deep-water flatfish complex and shallow-water flatfish complex halibut PSC allotments, by season. The calculations were performed after excluding the F/V GOLDEN FLEECE catch data because it was exempted from GOA halibut PSC limits established.

The A80 Program did not include provisions to replace an A80 vessel. Amendment 97 was implemented in 2012 to allow A80 vessels to be replaced (NMFS 2012). A size limit of 295 ft length overall (LOA) was established for replacement vessels. However, to retain the halibut PSC exemption granted to the F/V GOLDEN FLEECE, its replacement vessel must be 124 ft. or less. The replacement vessel for the F/V GOLDEN FLEECE could be longer; it would just forgo the halibut PSC exemption. The F/V GOLDEN FLEECE has not fished since 2022 and was replaced in 2026 by the F/V DEFENDER which meets the 124 ft or less requirement to retain the halibut PSC exemption.

Since 2012, the halibut resource has declined, resulting in less halibut being available to the directed halibut fishery. Concerns regarding changes to the halibut resource since Amendment 80 and Amendment 97 were implemented have resulted in the Council considering whether the PSC exemption is still justified.

The A80 program did not increase monitoring requirements for participants operating in the GOA limited access[2] fisheries that were not subject to sideboard limits, since increased monitoring was deemed unnecessary to monitor the TACs and PSC limits for the entire sector. However, A80 vessels fishing under sideboard limits, participating in the RP, or utilizing halibut deck sorting in the GOA are subject to higher monitoring requirements than required for trawl CPs fishing in GOA open access fisheries. Fisheries and operational modes with higher monitoring requirements closely mirror the BSAI A80 monitoring requirements.

Dashboard Summary of A80 GOA Fisheries

Figure E-1 provides a high-level graphical overview of the A80 fisheries. The figure shows the number of active vessels, first wholesale value, first wholesale price per metric ton, total allowable catches (TACs), and prohibited species catch (PSC) usage when participating in the License Limitation Program (LLP) limited access fisheries. It excludes catch share program fisheries (i.e., Rockfish Program). Confidentiality rules prevent providing community-level information because of the number of participants in communities other than Seattle.

The number of A80 vessels that have been active in the open access GOA groundfish fisheries has declined by about half since the A80 Program was implemented. After the A80 Program was implemented, more vessels fished in the Western Gulf of Alaska (WGOA) until 2019, when about the same number of vessels fished in WGOA and the combined Central Gulf of Alaska (CGOA) and the West Yakutat District (WY).

[2] Open access fisheries in this context are managed under the LLP. Rockfish Program catch and participation is excludes since it is managed under a catch share program.

After the A80 Program was implemented, GOA groundfish catch by A80 vessels was highest in 2014 but has generally declined, with some year-to-year variability. Catch in 2025 was about 15,000 mt. Catch from 2009 through 2011 was about 30,000 mt.

First wholesale value has consistently been higher in the CGOA and WY areas combined than in the WGOA area. First wholesale value had been about $10 million in real 2026 dollars until 2020. Since 2020, it has averaged closer to $5 million. CGOA first wholesale gross value declined from about $40 million in 2017, but has been in the $10 to $20 million range since then. The CGOA gross first wholesale value was smallest in 2023 (about $10 million) but rebounded to close $20 million in 2024 and 2025.

First wholesale price per metric ton has varied by species. Rex sole first wholesale gross revenue in real dollars has decreased from about $3,500 per metric ton in 2013 to about $1,000 per metric ton since 2021. Arrowtooth flounder gross first wholesale price increased from often less than $500 per metric ton before 2014 to between $1,000 and $1,500 per metric ton from 2022 through 2025. These two species have been important target species for the F/V GOLDEN FLEECE. Since using the F/V GOLDEN FLEECE's original LLP license to fish the F/V has almost exclusively targeted arrowtooth flounder.

The A80 sector's use of PSC species generally declined after 2013. Much lower estimates of Tanner crab PSC were reported from 2021 through 2025. The amounts decreased from over 60,000 animals in 2017 and 2019 to about 5,000 in 2023 through 2025. Chinook salmon PSC varies by year, with relatively low numbers of Chinook caught ranging from about 100 to 750 from 2015 through 2019, and over 2,000 in 2024 and 2025. Halibut mortality has been, on average, lower from 2018 through 2025 than from 2007 through 2017.

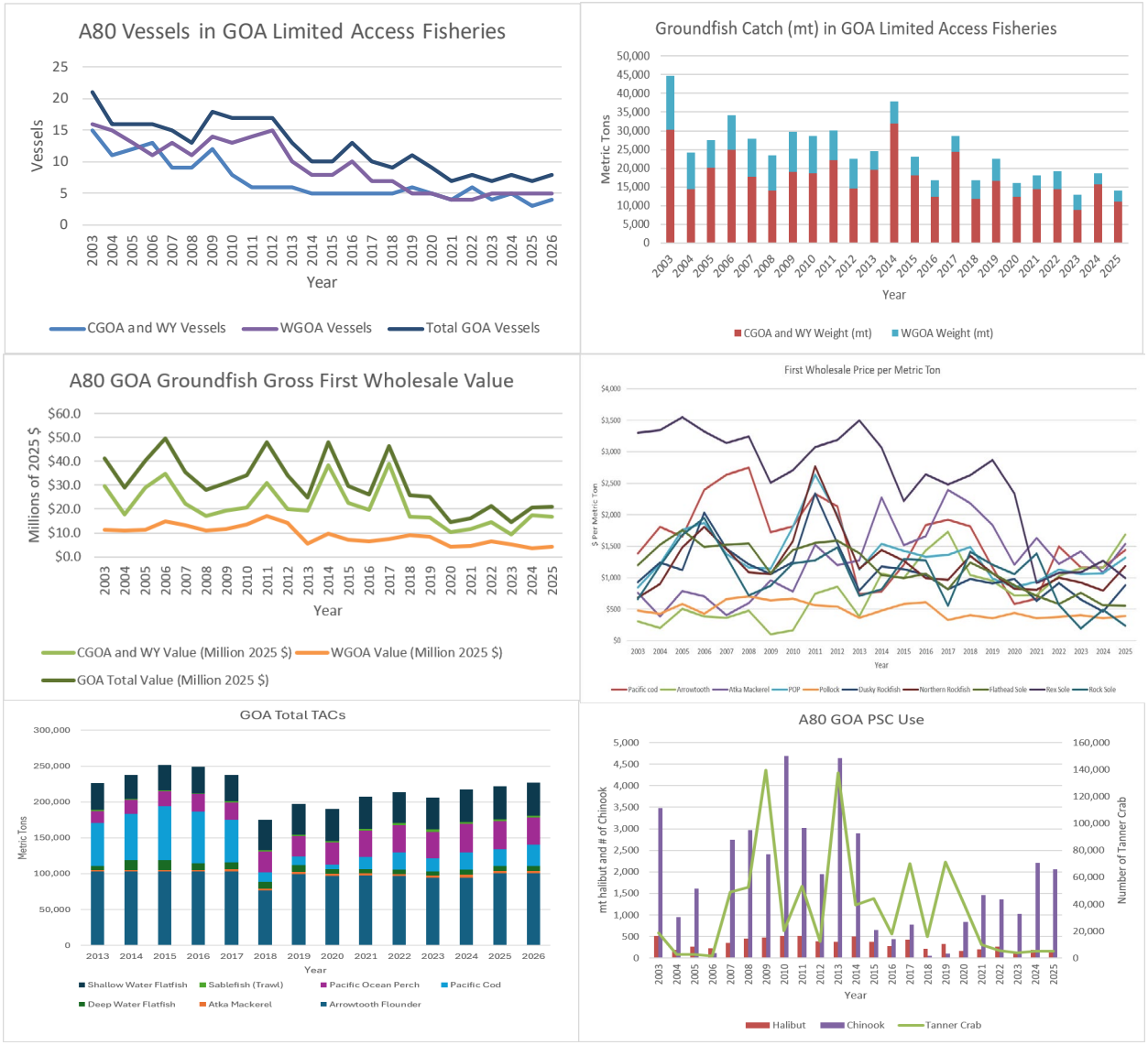


Figure E-1 A80 Vessels Participation in GOA Limited Access Fisheries

Source: NMFS Alaska Region Catch Accounting System, data compiled by AKFIN in Comprehensive_BLEND_CA

Comparison of Alternatives for Decision-making

Table E-2 Comparison of the Alternatives

Issue	Alternative 1	Alternative 2	Alternative 3
GOA Halibut PSC Exemption	The F/V DEFENDER (the F/V GOLDEN FLEECE replacement vessel) would continue to be exempt from the A80 GOA halibut sideboard limit. Its halibut PSC would only be debited from the overall GOA trawl halibut PSC limit (1,705 mt).	The F/V DEFENDER would no longer be exempt from the A80 GOA halibut sideboard limit. The A80 sideboard limit could be increased to account for the F/V GOLDEN FLEECE's historical PSC usage during the original qualifying years, remain the same, or be increased using some other set of years determined by the Council. The overall GOA trawl halibut PSC limit (1,705 mt) would not change and halibut PSC mortality attributed to any trawl vessel fishing in the GOA would be deducted from that limit.	N/A
A80 Monitoring in GOA	Monitoring requirements in the GOA are described in Table 18. In the GOA the BSAI monitoring requirements apply to the Rockfish Program fishery, the Rockfish Program fishery sideboard limits (July), and when a vessel is deck sorting halibut. A80 vessels operating in the limited access fisheries must carry one observer and meet the other requirements described in Table 18. All A80 vessels fishing in the GOA are currently voluntarily meeting the BSAI monitoring standards by having two observers - one being a lead level 2 observer and providing the observer with the required sampling station and sample storage bins. The vessel must have the equipment and protocols in place for moving, weighing, and handling catch, including not mixing catch from hauls	N/A	Increases the limited access fishery monitoring requirements that are established in regulation to be the same as the A80 BSAI monitoring requirements. Observer coverage requirements would be increased to two observers - one being a lead level 2 observer and providing the observer with the required catch weighing and sampling station. The vessel must have no more than one operational line that meets the scale and flow requirements that ensure necessary weighing and sampling of the haul. May not have fish on deck if an observer is not present or mix fish that have not been observed from different hauls. The vessel operator must notify the Observer Program in Kodiak at least 24 hours prior to departure if the observer has not been on that vessel in the last 12 months.

Issue	Alternative 1	Alternative 2	Alternative 3
Impact on A80 Sector	No Change	Impacts mainly fall on the F/V DEFENDER if the A80 halibut PSC sideboard limit is increased to account for its PSC usage. If the A80 sideboard limit is not increased, all A80 vessels fishing in the GOA limited entry fisheries would need to share the limit while accommodating the halibut PSC needs of a vessel that is limited to fishing for flatfish in the GOA. Because the A80 GOA catch limits are managed under a voluntary cooperative, determining the distribution of halibut PSC within the cooperative could disrupt the sector's longstanding cooperative agreement.	The change would update the regulations for A80 vessels fishing in the GOA limited access fisheries. A80 vessels fishing in any GOA fishery would be required to meet the same monitoring requirements that are applied to A80 vessels when fishing in the BSAI. All A80 vessels currently fishing in the GOA voluntarily meet those requirements to provide greater flexibility to move between fisheries on a trip and to reduce the potential that extrapolation of catch data on unobserved hauls could have a negative impact on their operation.
Impact on Trawl CVs	None	Trawl CVs will remain limited by the GOA trawl halibut PSC limit. That limit would not change under the proposed alternatives. CVs would have greater certainty of the maximum amount of halibut PSC that would be available to them, because all A80 sector halibut PSC mortality would be counted against the A80 sideboard limit. If that limit is reached, A80 vessels would be required to stop fishing in that complex and season.	None
Changes in A80 Costs	None	To the extent the A80 halibut PSC limits are more constraining, there could be additional costs associated with avoiding halibut. It is not possible to estimate those costs, but other actions that close fishing areas with different halibut bycatch rates (e.g., Tanner crab closures around Kodiak) could affect costs. Cost to the operator of the F/V DEFENDER will depend on how the A80 sideboard limit is changed. If it remains the same, the replacement vessel may not have any fishing options by not being allowed to join the A80 cooperative. If the limit is	Any changes to monitoring costs would relate to the number of days fished, not the proposed regulatory changes. All A80 vessels fishing in the GOA currently voluntarily follow the same monitoring provisions required in the BSAI, so daily costs are not expected to change.

Issue	Alternative 1	Alternative 2	Alternative 3
		increased, and the operator of the replacement vessel joins the cooperative, the costs will depend on how limiting the PSC limit within the cooperative is and what additional purchases will be made to avoid catching halibut (e.g., excluder devices).	
Impact on Halibut	None	The impact depends heavily on whether market conditions change for flatfish and what fishing opportunities the A80 fleet forgoes to avoid approaching its A80 sideboard limit. Because the trawl sector and the A80 fleet have been well under their limits in recent years, the impact on the directed halibut are expected to be small or zero. If additional effort is put into harvesting flatfish the A80 sideboard limit could be reached and that sector closed to fishing for species in the deep and/or shallow water complex. The A80 is expected to ensure they have sufficient halibut PSC to harvest the most valuable species (e.g., arrowtooth flounder)	None, relative to the voluntary monitoring the A80 fleet is currently employing. Estimated mortality will vary by year based on fishery conditions, as it would under the No Action alternative. Because the vessels monitoring coverage would not change relative to what is currently being employed, the estimated halibut mortality would not change as a result of the amount of catch that would need to be extrapolated.
Impacts on Directed Tanner Crab Fishery	None	Impacts depend on the decisions the A80 fleet will need to make about tradeoffs to avoid all PSC species. If halibut becomes more constraining and limits catches in other fisheries there may be economic incentives to fish areas that have higher PSC rates. However, there are regulatory, economic and social pressures to avoid all PSC to the extent practicable.	None

1 Introduction

This action analyzes management measures that would modify the monitoring requirements for Amendment 80 (A80) vessels operating in the Gulf of Alaska (GOA) and remove the GOA halibut prohibited species catch (PSC) sideboard exemption from one A80 vessel and any replacement for that vessel. Alternative 2 would treat all A80 vessels the same when operating in the Bering Sea and Aleutian Islands (BSAI) or GOA and would limit the amount of halibut the entire A80 fleet may use when fishing in the GOA. The Rockfish Program (RP) halibut PSC sideboard limits would not be affected by this proposed action because the vessel that is exempt from the current A80 halibut PSC limit is using the F/V DEFENDER[3] License Limitation Program (LLP) license, which is not assigned RP quota and the catch history associated with that LLP license was not used to calculate the RP halibut sideboard limit. The increased monitoring requirements under Alternative 3 would ensure NOAA Fisheries has the information needed to precisely account for PSC mortality by all A80 vessels operating in the GOA.

This document is an Environmental Assessment/Regulatory Impact Analysis (EA/RIA). An EA/RIA provides assessments of the environmental impacts of a proposed action and its reasonable alternatives (the EA), the benefits and costs of the alternatives, the distribution of impacts, and identification of the small entities that may be affected by the alternatives (the RIA). This EA/RIA addresses the statutory requirements of the Magnuson-Stevens Act, the National Environmental Policy Act (NEPA), Presidential Executive Order 12866, and some of the requirements of the Regulatory Flexibility Act. An EA/RIA is a standard document produced by the North Pacific Fishery Management Council (Council) and the National Marine Fisheries Service (NMFS) Alaska Region to provide the analytical background for decision-making.

Under the Magnuson-Stevens Act, the United States has exclusive fishery management authority over all marine fishery resources found within the exclusive economic zone (EEZ). The management of these marine resources is vested in the Secretary of Commerce (Secretary) and in the regional fishery management councils. In the Alaska Region, the North Pacific Fishery Management Council (Council) has the responsibility for preparing Federal FMPs and FMP amendments for the marine fisheries that require conservation and management, and for submitting its recommendations to the Secretary. Upon approval by the Secretary, NMFS is charged with carrying out the Federal mandates of the Department of Commerce with regard to marine and anadromous fish.

1.1 Purpose and Need

The Council adopted a purpose and need statement for this action in June 2026 as follows:

> *Given declines in coastwide halibut stock status and recent changes to reduce halibut PSC limits for the Amendment 80 sector in the Bering Sea/Aleutian Islands, the Council is evaluating a conservation measure to eliminate the exemption to Amendment 80 halibut PSC sideboard limits in the Gulf of Alaska. Under current regulations, one Amendment 80 catcher processor vessel (GOLDEN FLEECE) is eligible to fish flatfish in the Gulf of Alaska and not be subject to the Amendment 80 halibut PSC sideboard limits in the Gulf of Alaska, due to the vessel's historical participation. While this vessel has not been fishing in the Gulf of Alaska since 2022, it is eligible to be replaced by a different vessel. Current regulations allow the replacement vessel to be exempt from the Gulf of Alaska halibut PSC sideboard limits as long as the replacement vessel is the same length or shorter than the original license allows (≤124 feet length overall). Additionally, Amendment 80 vessels are subject to different monitoring requirements when operating in the Gulf of Alaska, which means that current monitoring requirements do not provide the sufficient PSC*

[3] The F/V GOLDEN FLEECE has been replaced by the F/V DEFENDER and is using the LLP license originally assigned to the F/V GOLDEN FLEECE. This analysis refers to that LLP License as the F/V DEFENDER LLP license.

accounting that is required to monitor compliance with a sideboard. As a result, the Council is also evaluating whether regulation changes are needed to improve catch monitoring in the Gulf of Alaska and ensure consistent requirements for Amendment 80 vessels operating in BSAI and GOA

1.2 History of this Action

The A80 Program was implemented for the 2008 fishing year and was designed to provide specific BSAI groundfish allocations to the Head and Gut (H&G) trawl catcher processor (CP) sector and allow the formation of cooperatives. The A80 program also limited participation in other fisheries to protect participants in those fisheries from potential expansion of A80 harvests resulting from the program's flexibility (NPFMC 2007). Sector allocations and any associated cooperative(s) were intended to help participants focus less on maximizing harvest rates and more on optimizing their harvests. This, in turn, could reduce unwanted incidental catch, improve retention and utilization, and improve the economic health of the A80 sector.

When the A80 program was under development, the H&G trawl CP fleet consisted of a relatively diverse group of vessels ranging from 103 ft to 295 ft in length. Smaller vessels were found to be relatively less productive than the larger vessels. For example, from 1995-2005, the smaller vessels generated approximately 13 percent of catch. Industry sources indicated that the smaller vessels are unable to retain as many fish as larger vessels because of limitations in hold size and processing space (NMFS & NPFMC, 2007).

The initial A80 analysis showed the F/V GOLDEN FLEECE received monitoring, enforcement, and sideboard exemptions due to its clear and consistent dependence on GOA groundfish fisheries over the period considered, which was unique even compared to other small amendment 80 qualifying vessels at the time (NMFS & NPFMC, 2007).

Since 2022, the last year the F/V GOLDEN FLEECE was active, there has been a large reduction in catch of some species by A80 vessels in the GOA, including GOA shallow water flatfish, flathead sole, and other rockfish (Table 8).

When the A80 program was designed, the GOA halibut PSC limits for the A80 sector were established based on historical halibut PSC use of the vessels that qualified for an allocation. Halibut PSC limits were calculated as a percentage of the deep-water flatfish complex and shallow-water flatfish complex halibut PSC allotments, by season. The calculations were performed after excluding the F/V GOLDEN FLEECE catch data because it was exempted from GOA halibut PSC limits established (sideboards) for the A80 vessels under the A80 program. The A80 sideboard limits established for halibut PSC and groundfish are hard caps, meaning that the A80 sector must stop fishing in any fishery where that species may be caught when a limit is reached. The F/V GOLDEN FLEECE was exempted from A80 halibut limits in the GOA by fishing 80% of its weeks in the GOA from 2000 to 2003 (NPFMC 2007).

The A80 Program did not include provisions to replace an A80 vessel. Amendment 97 was implemented in 2012 to allow A80 vessels to be replaced (NMFS 2012). A size limit of 295 ft length overall (LOA) was established for replacement vessels. However, to retain the halibut PSC exemption granted to the F/V GOLDEN FLEECE, its replacement vessel must be 124 ft. or less. The replacement vessel for the F/V GOLDEN FLEECE could be longer; it would just forgo the halibut PSC exemption.

The F/V GOLDEN FLEECE has not fished since 2022 and was replaced by the F/V DEFENDER which meets the 124 ft or less requirement to retain the halibut PSC exemption in 2026. The F/V DEFENDER has fished in the GOA during 2024 and 2026 using the LLP license originally assigned to the F/V GOLDEN FLEECE. During 2024, two LLP licenses were on the F/V DEFENDER (LLG2524, the original F/V GOLDEN FLEECE license, and LLG3744, the LLP license currently assigned to the F/V ENTERPRISE); during 2026, only LLG2524 is assigned to the F/V DEFENDER.

The F/V GOLDEN FLEECE is the smallest Amendment 80 vessel listed under Table 31 to Part 679, Title 50, with an LOA of 104 feet (31.7m) and width of 31 feet (9.45m). This vessel has a net weight of 90 tons.

The F/V DEFENDER was originally built as a trawl catcher vessel to fish for groundfish and redfish in the Atlantic Ocean, but was later moved to the Pacific, sponsoned by 10 feet (3m), and converted to a factory trawler. The F/V DEFENDER has an LOA of 123 feet (37.5m) with a net weight of 130 tons.

Since 2012, the halibut resource has declined, resulting in less halibut being available to the directed halibut fishery. Concerns regarding changes to the halibut resource since Amendment 80 and Amendment 97 were implemented have resulted in the Council considering whether the PSC exemption is still justified.

The A80 program did not increase monitoring requirements for participants operating in the GOA limited access[4] fisheries that were not subject to sideboard limits, since increased monitoring was deemed unnecessary to monitor the TACs and PSC limits for the entire sector. However, A80 vessels fishing under sideboard limits, participating in the RP, or utilizing halibut deck sorting in the GOA are subject to higher monitoring requirements than required for trawl CPs fishing in GOA open access fisheries. Fisheries and operational modes with higher monitoring requirements closely mirror the BSAI A80 monitoring requirements.

Current regulations state that the replacement vessel would continue to be exempt from the GOA halibut PSC sideboard limits and associated monitoring requirements if the replacement vessel is the same length or shorter than the original license allows (≤124 feet length overall). In consideration of these exemptions, continued coastwide declines of Pacific halibut, and recent changes to reduce halibut PSC limits for the Amendment 80 sector in the GOA, the Council passed a motion initiating an analysis for a regulatory and GOA groundfish FMP amendment to require any Amendment 80 replacement vessel operating in the GOA to be subject to A80 halibut prohibited species catch (PSC) sideboard limits and to ensure A80 vessels are subject to the same monitoring requirements when they are operating in the GOA.

1.3 Description of Management Area

This action would directly affect certain GOA areas as defined in the GOA Groundfish Fishery Management Plan (FMP). GOA groundfish management areas are shown in Figure 1. The FMP management area is the United States (U.S.) EEZ of the North Pacific Ocean, exclusive of the Bering Sea, between the eastern Aleutian Islands at 170° W longitude and Dixon Entrance at 132° W 40' longitude. For purposes of the proposed action, the Western Gulf of Alaska (WGOA), Central Gulf of Alaska (CGOA), and only the West Yakutat District (Area 640) of the Southeast area are directly impacted. Southeast Outside (areas 650 and 659) would not be impacted directly since the use of trawl gear in those areas is prohibited (50 CFR 679.7(b)(1)).

[4] Open access fisheries in this context are managed under the LLP. Rockfish Program catch and participation is excludes since it is managed under a catch share program.

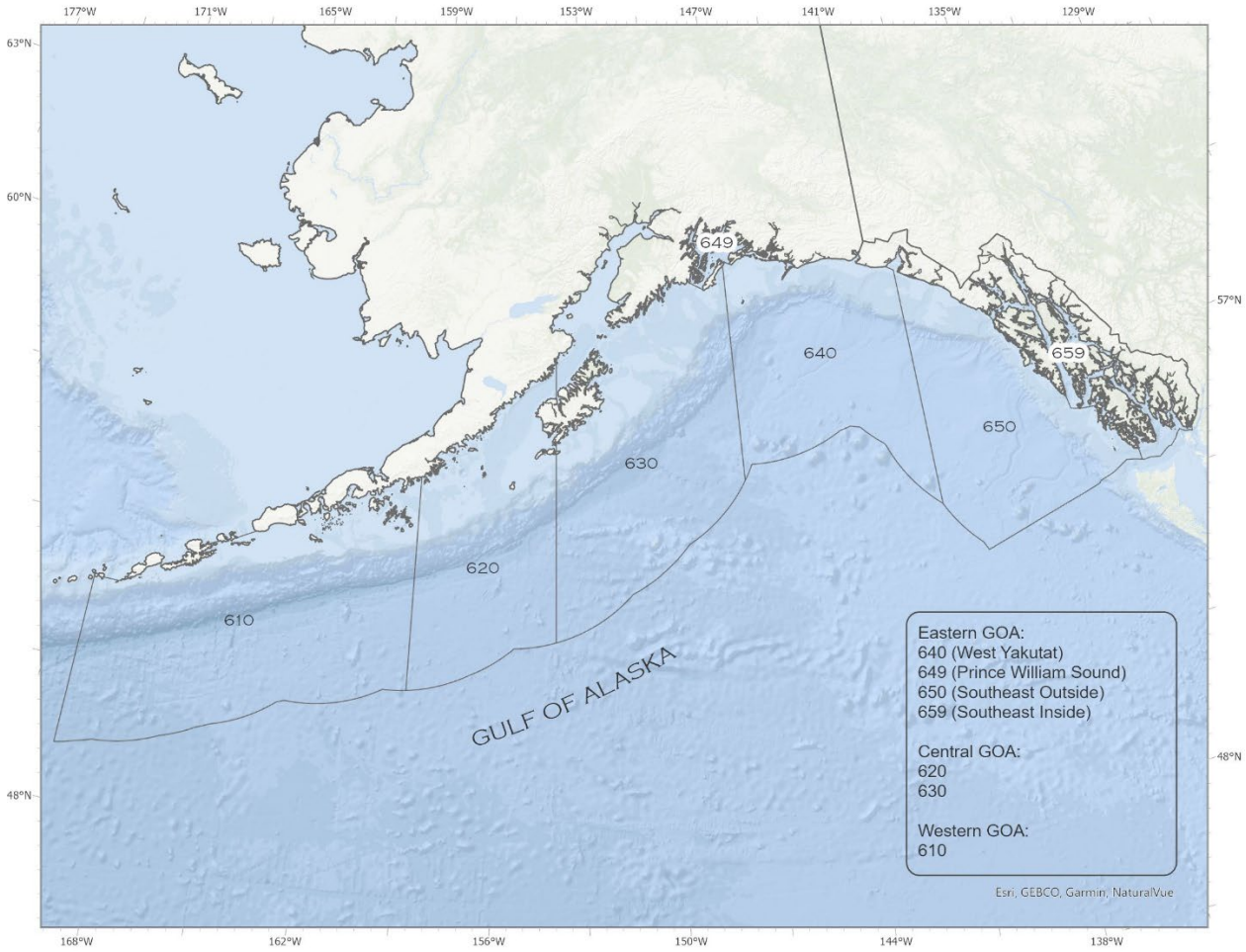


Figure 1 GOA FMP Management Areas

Source: Figure 3 to Part 679

1.4 Documents Incorporated by Reference

Several National Environmental Policy Act (NEPA) analyses define how the A80 sector operates in the GOA. The A80 CPs that may operate in the GOA were defined under the License Limitation Program (NPFMC 1999). The A80 program placed additional limits on vessels that may fish flatfish, and on the amount of various groundfish species and halibut PSC the fleet may catch (NPFMC 2007). GOA trawl halibut PSC limits have been reduced in response to declining halibut biomass and reduced allowable harvests in the directed halibut fisheries (NMFS and NPFMC 2014). The annual GOA Groundfish Stock Assessment and Fishery Evaluation (SAFE) documents provide the best available information on the past, present, and projected future condition of groundfish stocks (NPFMC 2026). The IPHC generates an annual assessment of the halibut stocks, including those in the GOA (IPHC 2026). The Economic SAFE document (Abelman et al. 2026) presents economic information on these fisheries. The most recent A80 review (NPFMC 2025) provides additional information on the A80 sector. The impacts of proposed GOA Tanner crab bycatch regulatory changes are being analyzed. An initial review was presented to the Council at its June 2026 meeting (NPFMC 2026b). The information in these reports is included in this paper by reference.

Environmental Assessment/Regulatory Impact Review/Initial Regulatory Flexibility Act Analysis for Amendment 60 to the Bering Sea/Aleutian Islands FMP, Amendment 58 to the Gulf of Alaska

FMP, Amendment 10 to the Bering Sea/Aleutian Islands Crab FMP - Analysis of Proposed License Limitation Amendment Package. (NPFMC 1999) This EA/RIR/IRFA provides decision makers and the public an evaluation of the economic, social, and administrative effects of modifying the License Limitation Program (LLP) for the federally managed groundfish fisheries off Alaska. The document examines two proposed actions designed to stabilize fleet harvesting capability, restrict speculative gear entry, and control the transferability of licenses in compliance with Federal regulations, the BSAI and GOA Groundfish FMPs, and the Magnuson-Stevens Act. These strategies are applied using historical federal dataset reviews and administrative tracking from 1988 through October 1998 to evaluate how structural licensing changes interact with NMFS implementation frameworks. The analysis evaluates the effects of different management cases on non-federally permitted vessels, including geographic distribution impacts on Alaskan-owned small vessels under 58 feet LOA, negative financial consequences for specific privilege holders, administrative complexities within NMFS, gear-specific capacity shifts via explicit trawl and non-trawl designations, and the potential displacement of fishing effort from federal into state waters. This document is available from https://repository.library.noaa.gov/view/noaa/23225

Final Environmental Assessment / Regulatory Impact Review / Final Regulatory Flexibility Analysis for Amendment 80 to the Fishery Management Plan for Groundfish of the Bering Sea and Aleutian Islands Management Area Allocation of Non-Pollock Groundfish and Development of a Cooperative Program for the H&G Trawl Catcher Processor Sector. (NPFMC 2007) This EA/RIR/IRFA provides decision makers and the public an evaluation of the environmental, social, and economic effects of allocating non-pollock groundfish and developing a cooperative program for the Head and Gut (H&G) trawl catcher processor sector in the Bering Sea and Aleutian Islands management area. The document examines four alternative management strategies designed to resolve the "race for fish," reduce bycatch, minimize waste, and improve resource utilization in compliance with Federal regulations, the BSAI Groundfish FMP, and the Magnuson-Stevens Act. These strategies are applied using the best available scientific information to balance sector allocations, prohibited species catch limits, and cooperative structures. The assessment evaluates the effects of different alternatives on primary target species (including yellowfin sole, rock sole, flathead sole, Atka mackerel, and Aleutian Islands Pacific Ocean perch), prohibited species, other fish species, marine mammals, seabirds, benthic and essential fish habitat, economic net benefits to the Nation, and ecosystem relationships. This document is available from https://www.fisheries.noaa.gov/s3/dam-migration/sec-rev-amd80-eariririrfa-0907pdf.pdf

Final Environmental Assessment/Regulatory Impact Review/ Initial Regulatory Flexibility Analysis to Reduce Gulf of Alaska Halibut Prohibited Species Catch Limits Amendment 95 to the Fishery Management Plan for Groundfish of the Gulf of Alaska. (NMFS and NPFMC 2014) This EA/RIR/IRFA provides decision makers and the public an evaluation of the environmental, social, and economic effects of reducing Pacific halibut prohibited species catch (PSC) limits in the Gulf of Alaska groundfish fisheries. The document examines alternative management strategies designed to address recent declines in halibut biomass and mitigate the impact of halibut accidental mortality on commercial IFQ, charter, unguided, and subsistence user groups in compliance with Federal regulations, the GOA Groundfish FMP, and the Magnuson-Stevens Act. These strategies are applied using the best available scientific information to remove GOA halibut PSC limits from the annual harvest specifications process and establish them in Federal regulation. The assessment evaluates the effects of different alternatives on target species (including Pacific cod, pollock, flatfish, sablefish, and rockfish), prohibited species, other fish species, marine mammals, seabirds, benthic and essential fish habitat, economic aspects across diverse user groups, and ecosystem relationships. This document is available from https://repository.library.noaa.gov/view/noaa/19150

2026 Gulf of Alaska Groundfish Stock Assessment Reports. (NPFMC 2026)
Annual SAFE reports review recent research and provide estimates of the biomass of each species and other biological parameters. The SAFE report includes the ABC specifications used by NMFS in the annual harvest specifications. The SAFE report also summarizes available information on the ecosystems

and the economic condition of the groundfish fisheries off Alaska. These documents are available from https://www.npfmc.org/library/safe-reports/.

Assessment of the Pacific halibut (*Hippoglossus stenolepis*) stock at the end of 2025. (IPHC 2026) This stock assessment provides decision makers and the public an evaluation of the biological, environmental, and fishery-related status of the Pacific halibut resource across the International Pacific Halibut Commission (IPHC) Convention Area for 2025. The document examines an ensemble of four alternative modeling strategies designed to evaluate stock scale, evaluate recent biomass fluctuations, and characterize management risks under varying harvest policies in compliance with the IPHC Harvest Strategy Policy. These strategies are applied using the best available scientific information from fishery-dependent and fishery-independent sources to derive multi-year stock projections and populate the tactical harvest decision table. The assessment evaluates the effects of different catch levels and environmental factors on spawning biomass, relative spawning status, total mortality, cohort recruitment strengths (such as the 2012, 2016, and 2017 year-classes), Pacific Decadal Oscillation (PDO) climate regimes, size-at-age metrics, and future fishery yield trend projections. This document is available from https://www.iphc.int/uploads/2025/12/IPHC-2026-SA-01.pdf

Stock Assessment and Fishery Evaluation Report For The Groundfish Fisheries Of The Gulf of Alaska and Bering Sea/Aleutian Islands Area: Economic Status Of The Groundfish Fisheries Off Alaska, 2025. (Abelman et al 2026) Annual SAFE reports review recent research and provide estimates of the biomass of each species and other biological parameters. The SAFE report includes the ABC specifications used by NMFS in the annual harvest specifications. The SAFE report also summarizes available information on the ecosystems and the economic condition of the groundfish fisheries off Alaska. These documents are available from https://www.npfmc.org/library/safe-reports/.

Final BSAI Amendment 80 Program Review (NPFMC 2025) This program review report provides decision makers and the public an evaluation of the environmental, social, and economic effects of the Amendment 80 (AM80) Catch Share Program for the non-AFA trawl catcher processor sector in the Bering Sea and Aleutian Islands (BSAI). The document examines changing conditions, fleet structure, and performance metrics since 2014 to satisfy the 7-year statutory review requirement under the Magnuson-Stevens Act. The review assesses the program's long-term efficacy against its original goals: maintaining a healthy marine ecosystem, reducing prohibited species catch (PSC) of halibut and crab, minimizing waste, maximizing community and CDQ sector benefits, and controlling spillover impacts on Gulf of Alaska (GOA) fisheries via regulatory sideboards. It evaluates target allocation trends, physical fleet recapitalization, and intensive data monitoring additions—such as Halibut Deck Sorting (HDS) and internal cooperative compliance audits—while tracking ongoing operational cash-flow performance amidst destabilizing global seafood market challenges. This document is available from https://files.npfmc.org/catch_shares/AM80/AM80ProgramReview_0425.pdf

Draft Regulatory Impact Review/Environmental Assessment for Proposed Regulatory Amendment to GOA Groundfish Fishery Management Plan for GOA Tanner Crab Protection Measures (NPFMC 2026b) This draft EA/RIR provides an evaluation of the environmental, social, and economic effects of proposed Tanner crab protection measures in the Gulf of Alaska (GOA) groundfish fisheries. The document examines management strategies to implement new time and area closures on the east side of Kodiak Island, as well as a process to evaluate, modify, or remove existing federal crab closures (including the Marmot Bay Tanner Crab Protection Area and Type I, II, and III red king crab closures) in compliance with Federal regulations, the GOA Groundfish FMP, and the Magnuson-Stevens Act. These protective measures are evaluated using the best available scientific data, species distribution modeling, and spatial mapping to conserve Tanner crab populations while minimizing adverse operational and economic impacts on Central GOA groundfish harvesters. The assessment evaluates the effects of different alternatives—spanning variable gear types (groundfish pot, pelagic trawl, and nonpelagic trawl) and seasonal or year-round closure durations—on Tanner crab stock status and prohibited species catch (PSC) limits, target groundfish species (such as pollock, Pacific cod, flatfish, and rockfish), Chinook

salmon and halibut bycatch, seafloor habitat and bottom contact, and regional shoreside processing operations. This document is available from https://meetings.npfmc.org/CommentReview/DownloadFile?p=daaaff95-a62b-4f19-846d-13b54166dffd.pdf&fileName=C5%20GOA%20Tanner%20Crab%20RIR%20EA.pdf

2 Description of Alternatives

The Council adopted alternatives for the proposed action at its June 2026 meeting. The Council adopted the purpose and need statement at that same meeting. In addition to the No Action alternative, the motion included two action alternatives. Relevant regulations at §§ 679.92 and 679.93 are included in the appendix for reference.

Alternative 1: No Action (status quo)

The action alternatives are not mutually exclusive. Both may be selected at final action.

Alternative 2. Remove the exemption from the Gulf of Alaska halibut PSC sideboard limits for an Amendment 80 vessel that replaces the GOLDEN FLEECE.

Alternative 3. Apply Amendment 80 monitoring requirements in the BSAI at 679.93(c) to Amendment 80 trawl catcher processors operating in the Gulf of Alaska.

2.1 Alternative 1: No Action (status quo)

The No Action alternative would maintain the current halibut PSC exemption that was originally granted to the F/V GOLDEN FLEECE when the A80 Program was implemented. That action excluded the halibut PSC usage history of the F/V GOLDEN FLEECE from the calculations that established the A80 PSC sideboard limits. The F/V DEFENDER has replaced the F/V GOLDEN FLEECE and benefits from the halibut PSC exemption. All other A80 vessels are subject to the A80 PSC sideboard limits established for the GOA. The No Action alternative would also maintain the current monitoring requirements for A80 vessels when participating in GOA fisheries. Those requirements vary depending on whether the vessel is operating under the default trawl CP limit (limited access management), RP monitoring requirements, the RP sideboard requirements, or employing deck sorting to reduce halibut mortality.

2.2 Alternative 2: Remove the exemption from the Gulf of Alaska halibut PSC sideboard limits for an Amendment 80 vessel that replaces the F/V GOLDEN FLEECE.

When the A80 Program was developed, limits on A80 vessels' participation in other fisheries in the BSAI and GOA were established for vessels that qualified for A80 allocations. These sideboard limits were intended to prevent A80 vessels that primarily fished in the BSAI non-pollock fisheries from expanding their participation in other fisheries, given the flexibility provided under the A80 Program. Sideboard limits were established for species harvested as directed fisheries in both the BSAI and GOA, as well as for PSC species that are to be avoided to the extent practicable.

Section § 679.92 establishes groundfish harvesting sideboard limits on A80 Program vessels, other than the F/V GOLDEN FLEECE (now the F/V DEFENDER), to amounts no greater than the limits shown in Table 7. Under regulations at § 679.92(d), the F/V GOLDEN FLEECE (F/V DEFENDER) is prohibited from directed fishing for pollock, Pacific cod, Pacific ocean perch, pelagic shelf rockfish, and northern rockfish in the GOA (75 FR 76352). Removing the halibut PSC sideboard limit exemption would not impact the other prohibitions the F/V DEFENDER or its replacement vessel(s) are subject to in the future. It would also not change the A80 groundfish sideboard limits.

The proposed change does not specify how the A80 halibut PSC sideboard limit would be modified if the amendment is implemented. Because the motion provides no specific direction on how the sideboard limit would change, it is assumed that there are three options to address the A80 halibut PSC limit. The first option would increase the A80 halibut PSC sideboard limit using the same methodology that created the current limit, except the F/V GOLDEN FLEECE's halibut usage during the 1998 through 2004 period

would be included in the calculation. The option would set the limit as if the F/V GOLDEN FLEECE had never received an exemption when the A80 Program was implemented. The second option is to keep the limit unchanged. The halibut PSC sideboard limit available to the A80 fleet would need to be shared among all A80 CP vessels. The number of vessels fishing under the limit would be increased by one, and that vessel is limited to harvesting flatfish in the CGOA. The third option would be to select more recent years to determine the A80 halibut sideboard limit. If the Council wants to include an option based on more recent history, it will need to define the years to use.

2.3 Alternative 3: Apply Amendment 80 monitoring requirements in the BSAI to Amendment 80 trawl catcher processors operating in the Gulf of Alaska.

Implementing Alternative 3 would modify the monitoring requirements for all A80 CPs operating in the GOA limited access groundfish fisheries. It would not alter the monitoring requirements for A80 CPs when operating in the CGOA RP, RP sideboard limit fisheries during the month of July, or when the CPs are utilizing the halibut deck sorting provision in the GOA. Those fisheries require monitoring coverage that is the same as A80 vessels operating in the BSAI (see § 679.51).

Implementing the same monitoring requirements for A80 vessels in the GOA as in the BSAI would simplify the regulatory framework, since monitoring requirements currently differ depending on the management program under which they fish or whether they are deck-sorting halibut. All A80 vessels currently fishing in the GOA are constructed to comply with the BSAI monitoring regulations, including operational flow scales, bins, and other necessary observer workspace and equipment; all A80 vessels have voluntarily complied with the A80 BSAI monitoring requirements in the recent past.

3 Regulatory Impact Review

This Regulatory Impact Review (RIR) examines the benefits and costs, as well as the distribution of impacts, of the FMP and regulatory amendments to modify the A80 requirements in the GOA.

Preparing an RIR is required under Presidential Executive Order (E.O.) 12866 (58 FR 51735, October 4, 1993). The requirements for all regulatory actions specified in E.O. 12866 are summarized in the following statement from the E.O.:

In deciding whether and how to regulate, agencies should assess all costs and benefits of available regulatory alternatives, including the alternative of not regulating. Costs and benefits shall be understood to include both quantifiable measures (to the fullest extent that these can be usefully estimated) and qualitative measures of costs and benefits that are difficult to quantify, but nevertheless essential to consider. Further, in choosing among alternative regulatory approaches agencies should select those approaches that maximize net benefits (including potential economic, environmental, public health and safety, and other advantages; distributive impacts; and equity), unless a statute requires another regulatory approach.

E.O. 12866 requires that the Office of Management and Budget review proposed regulatory programs that are considered to be "significant." A "significant regulatory action" is one that is likely to result in a rule that may:

- Have an annual effect on the economy of $100 million or more or adversely affect in a material way the economy, a sector of the economy, productivity, competition, jobs, the environment, public health or safety, or State, local, territorial, or tribal governments or communities;
- Create a serious inconsistency or otherwise interfere with an action taken or planned by another agency;
- Materially alter the budgetary impact of entitlements, grants, user fees, or loan programs or the rights and obligations of recipients thereof; or
- Raise novel legal or policy issues arising out of legal mandates, the President's priorities, or the principles set forth in E.O. 12866.

3.1 Analysis of Economic Impacts

This section summarizes the current state (status quo) of the A80 GOA fisheries and provides information on past trends realized under the regulations in place during those years. This section considers the information provided under the status quo (No Action Alternative) and how the proposed alternatives may impact the GOA trawl groundfish limited access fisheries as well as halibut and GOA Tanner crab.

3.1.1 Alternative 1 (No Action)

3.1.1.1 A80 GOA LLP Licenses

To fish as an A80 vessel in the GOA, the vessel must be assigned an LLP license with an A80 endorsement. All LLP licenses with an A80 endorsement are presented in Table 1. The licenses are sorted by the maximum length overall (MLOA) of a vessel that may be assigned to the LLP license. Only two LLP licenses with an A80 endorsement have a MLOA endorsement for less than 125 feet LOA. One of those licenses, the F/V DEFENDER's LLP license, authorizes the vessel to fish under the halibut PSC exemption. That LLP license is only endorsed for the CGOA area. The other LLP license with a MOLA is not currently assigned to a vessel and can only authorize a vessel to fish in the Bering Sea. It is also worth noting that the F/V DEFENDER's LLP license does not have an endorsement allowing the vessel to participate in the CGOA RP. These distinctions may matter under current regulations because CPs with an

LOA less than or equal to 124 feet may qualify for partial observer coverage in the GOA and allow any replacement vessel to operate under the halibut PSC exemption. For a CP to qualify for partial observer coverage, the average annual production per week is limited to 35.8 mt (§ 679.51(a)(3)(iii)). Based on that requirement, no A80 is expected to qualify for the partial coverage category, since the weekly production of A80 vessels substantially exceeds that amount. Also, vessels operating in the CGOA RP are subject to specific monitoring requirements when fishing under that program and when participating in fisheries in July that are subject to the CGOA RP sideboard limits.

Table 2 summarizes that information to show that 10 of the 26 A80 LLP licenses are assigned quota for the CGOA RP. Vessels operating under these licenses are subject to CGOA RP monitoring requirements in specific areas and during specific times of the year.

Table 1 LLP Groundfish Licenses with an A80 Endorsement

LICENSE	LICENSEE NAME	CITY	STATE	MLOA	ORIGINAL VESSEL	CURRENT VESSEL	AI	BS	CG	WG	RP CP QUOTA
LLG3895	NORTH STAR FISHING COMPANY LLC	SEATTLE	WA	122	ARCTIC ROSE		N	Trawl	N	N	N
LLG2524	GOLDEN FLEECE INC.	SOUTH BEND	WA	124	GOLDEN FLEECE	DEFENDER	N	Trawl	Trawl	N	N
LLG2785	NORTH STAR FISHING COMPANY LLC	SEATTLE	WA	131	TREMONT		N	Trawl	N	N	N
LLG4831	O'HARA CORPORATION	ROCKLAND	ME	132	JUPITER	ENTERPRISE	N	Non-trawl; Trawl	N	N	N
LLG2432	CAPE HORN VESSEL LLC	SEATTLE	WA	158	CAPE HORN	CAPE HORN	Trawl	Trawl	N	N	N
LLG1147	O'HARA CORPORATION	ROCKLAND	ME	166	CONSTELLATION	CONSTELLATION	Trawl	Trawl	N	Trawl	N
LLG3662	U.S. FISHING L.L.C.	KIRKLAND	WA	185	US INTREPID	US INTREPID	Trawl	Trawl	Trawl	Trawl	Y
LLG2429	ARICA VESSEL LLC	SEATTLE	WA	186	ARICA	ARICA	Trawl	Trawl	N	Trawl	N
LLG2118	O'HARA CORPORATION	ROCKLAND	ME	203	ALASKA RANGER		Trawl	Trawl	N	Trawl	N
LLG2138	OCEAN PEACE INC.	SEATTLE	WA	219	OCEAN PEACE	OCEAN PEACE	Trawl	Trawl	N	Trawl	N
LLG3043	O'HARA CORPORATION	ROCKLAND	ME	220	ALASKA SPIRIT	ALASKA SPIRIT	Trawl	Trawl	Trawl	Trawl	Y
LLG2080	AK VICTORY INC.	SEATTLE	WA	227	ALASKA VICTORY	ALASKA VICTORY	Trawl	Trawl	Trawl	Trawl	Y
LLG2014	M/V SAVAGE INC.	SEATTLE	WA	230	SEAFISHER	SEAFISHER	Trawl	Trawl	Trawl	Trawl	Y
LLG2905	ALASKA LEGACY LLC	SEATTLE	WA	295	ALLIANCE	SEAFREEZE ALASKA	N	Trawl	Trawl	Trawl	Y
LLG1402	ALASKA VAERDAL LLC	SEATTLE	WA	295	VAERDAL	SEAFREEZE AMERICA	Trawl	Trawl	Trawl	Trawl	N

LLG2028	AMERICA'S FINEST FISHING LLC	KIRKLAND	WA	295	AMERICAN NO I	FV AMERICAS FINEST	Trawl	Trawl	Trawl	Trawl	Y
LLG4360	CAPE FLATTERY WASHINGTON LLC	SEATTLE	WA	295	OCEAN ALASKA	CAPE FLATTERY	N	Trawl	Trawl	N	Y
LLG3217	NORTH PACIFIC FISHING LLC	KIRKLAND	WA	295	DEFENDER	AMERICAN NO I	N	Trawl	Trawl	Trawl	N
LLG3957	NORTH STAR VESSEL LLC	SEATTLE	WA	295	UNIMAK	NORTH STAR	Non-trawl; Trawl	Non-trawl; Trawl	Non-trawl; Trawl	N	Y
LLG2083	O'HARA CORPORATION	ROCKLAND	ME	295	ALASKA WARRIOR	ARAHO	Trawl	Trawl	Trawl	Trawl	Y
LLG3744	O'HARA CORPORATION	ROCKLAND	ME	295	BERING ENTERPRISE	ENTERPRISE	Non-trawl; Trawl	Non-trawl; Trawl	Non-trawl; Trawl	Non-trawl	N
LLG1802	OCEAN PEACE INC.	SEATTLE	WA	295	PROSPERITY		Non-trawl; Trawl	Non-trawl; Trawl	Non-trawl; Trawl	Non-trawl; Trawl	Y
LLG2084	FISHING COMPANY OF ALASKA INC.	SEATTLE	WA	295	ALASKA VOYAGER	ALASKA WARRIOR	Trawl	Trawl	N	Trawl	N
LLG2082	FISHING COMPANY OF ALASKA INC.	SEATTLE	WA	295	ALASKA JURIS	ALASKA WARRIOR	Trawl	Trawl	N	Trawl	N
LLG3958	UNIMAK VESSEL LLC	SEATTLE	WA	295	REBECCA IRENE	UNIMAK	Trawl	Trawl	Trawl	Trawl	N
LLG4692	SEAFREEZE ALASKA I LLC	SEATTLE	WA	296	SEAFREEZE ALASKA	SEAFREEZE ALASKA	Trawl	Trawl	N	Trawl	N

Source: NMFS 2026 Groundfish LLP license file (August 28, 2026)

Table 2 GOA LLPs by GOA Area Endorsement and If Rockfish Program Quota is Assigned to the License

CG Trawl	WG Trawl	LLPs	RP Quota Assigned to LLP
No	No	4	0
No	Yes	7	0
Yes	No	4	2
Yes	Yes	11	8
Total		26	10

Source: NMFS 2026 Groundfish LLP license file (August 28, 2026)

Four A80 endorsed LLP licenses are not currently assigned to a vessel. Three companies are reported to own those four LLP licenses.

Eleven A80 vessels may be used to fish flatfish in the directed arrowtooth flounder, deep-water flatfish, flathead sole, rex sole, and shallow-water flatfish fisheries in the GOA under the A80 sideboard restrictions (Table 3). There is no requirement that A80 vessels eligible to directed fish for flatfish in the GOA must use a specific LLP license, but any A80 endorsed LLP license used must comply with the necessary length and area endorsements.

Table 3 A80 Original Vessels That May Be Used to Fish GOA Flatfish and Their Replacement Vessel

Original Vessel	*USCG#*	*Reported Vessel Length (ft)*	*Replacement Vessel*	*Reported Vessel Length (ft)*
ALLIANCE	622750	107	SEAFREEZE AMERICA	208
AMERICA NO 1	610654	160	AMERICA'S FINEST	295
DEFENDER	665983	123	ENTERPRISE	120
GOLDEN FLEECE	609951	104	DEFENDER	123
LEGACY	664882	132	SEAFREEZE AMERICA	208
OCEAN ALASKA	623210	107	CAPE FLATTERY	186
OCEAN PEACE	679399	219	n/a	n/a
SEAFREEZE ALASKA	517242	295	n/a	n/a
U.S. INTREPID	604439	185	n/a	n/a
UNIMAK	637693	185	NORTH STAR	295
VAERDAL	611225	124	SEAFREEZE AMERICA	208

Source: Table 39 to 50 CFR 679

Table 4 shows the A80 vessels by length and whether they were active during the 2013 and 2026 fishing years in the GOA limited access fisheries. Information in the table highlights the increase in vessel length of the active fleet. The F/V DEFENDER is the only A80 vessel that was less than 185 feet in the limited access fishery during 2026. Vessel replacement requirements to retain the halibut PSC exemption create an incentive to have the LLP license on a vessel that is 124 feet or less.

Table 4 Active A80 Vessels in the GOA 2013 Compared to 2026 by Length

Vessels	Length (ft) 2013	Active GOA Open Access 2013	Length (ft) 2026	Active GOA Open Access 2026
ALASKA JURIS	238	Yes		
ALASKA SPIRIT				
ALASKA VICTORY	227	Yes		
ALASKA WARRIOR	215	Yes		
AMERICAN NO I	160	Yes		
AMERICA'S FINEST			262	Yes
ARAHO			194	Yes
ARICA	186	Yes		
CONSTELLATION	166	Yes		
DEFENDER	123	Yes	123	Yes
GOLDEN FLEECE	104	Yes		
LEGACY	132	Yes		
NORTH STAR			261	Yes
OCEAN PEACE	219	Yes		
REBECCA IRENE	140			
SEAFISHER			230	Yes
SEAFREEZE AMERICA	230	Yes	230	Yes
UNIMAK	185	Yes	185	Yes
US INTREPID	185	Yes	185	Yes
VAERDAL	124			

Source: NMFS Alaska Region Catch Accounting System, data compiled by AKFIN in Comprehensive_BLEND_CA and Federal Fishery Permit data for length.

3.1.1.2 GOA Groundfish

Table 5 shows the 2013 through 2026 GOA TACs available to vessel operators using trawl gear. Sablefish and Pacific cod are fisheries in which the TAC is subdivided by gear type (trawl or fixed gear). The tables show only the trawl portion of those TACs. Pacific cod is the only fishery with an endorsement on the LLP license. For species where the TAC is not divided by gear type, vessels using any legal gear type may harvest the TACs.

Within the trawl sector, vessels operating as either CVs or CPs may harvest the established TACs, but the A80 sector must stay within its established sideboard limits (Table 7). TACs are reported by the area to which they apply.

Flatfish TACs have remained relatively stable across years. Pacific Ocean perch (POP) TACs increased substantially in the CGOA and have remained higher than the 2013 TAC. Pacific cod decreased substantially, has rebounded, but not to levels seen during the early years of the period considered. Table 6 lists the percentage of each TAC that was caught. Most TACs are not fully harvested, and most flatfish catches are well below the available TAC. For example, since 2016, less than 10% of the deep-water flatfish TAC has been harvested from any area. Less than 25% of most other flatfish species' TACs have been harvested since 2016. A large percentage of the more valuable rockfish species (under the RP), Pacific cod, pollock, and sablefish TACs are typically caught.

The sablefish fishery is not open to directed fishing by the A80 sector. A80 sector catches of sablefish are limited by maximum retainable amounts (MRAs) that are defined by directed fishery. For the A80 sector, the sablefish MRA in the POP fishery limits sablefish catch to 7% of basis species (POP) onboard during a trip. The catch of POP by the A80 sector in the GOA is limited by their RP sideboard limits. In the arrowtooth flounder fishery the sablefish MRA is 1% of the basis species[5].

[5] https://www.ecfr.gov/current/title-50/part-679/appendix-Table 10 to Part 679

Table 5 GOA Groundfish TACs 2013 through 2026 (mt)

Central Gulf	2013	2014	2015	2016	2017	2018	2019	2020	2021	2022	2023	2024	2025	2026
Arrowtooth Flounder	75,000	75,000	75,000	75,000	75,000	48,000	70,995	68,669	69,072	68,394	65,000	64,871	68,261	68,511
Big Skate	1,793	1,532	1,257	1,850	1,850	1,774	1,774	1,560	1,560	1,482	1,482	1,749	1,749	1,749
Deep Water Flatfish	2,308	3,727	3,689	3,495	3,454	3,400	3,443	1,948	1,914	2,139	2,105	2,655	2,616	2,570
Dusky Rockfish	3,533	3,584	3,336	4,147	3,786	3,502	2,764	2,746	4,548	4,534	7,647	7,365	5,818	5,527
Flathead Sole	15,400	15,400	15,400	15,400	15,400	15,400	15,400	15,400	15,400	15,400	21,487	21,307	21,817	22,083
Longnose Skate	1,879	1,935	2,090	2,513	2,513	2,804	2,804	1,875	1,875	2,044	2,044	1,894	1,894	1,894
Northern Rockfish	3,122	4,017	3,772	3,547	3,354	3,261	3,338	3,178	3,334	3,202	2,350	2,280	3,680	3,549
Other Rockfish	606													
Pacific Cod	36,966	39,825	45,990	36,984	33,135	6,089	5,750	3,806	10,242	14,814	11,123	15,442	15,379	21,549
Pacific Ocean Perch	10,926	12,855	15,873	17,033	16,671	20,112	19,646	23,678	27,429	30,806	29,940	28,757	28,209	27,156
Rex Sole	6,376	6,231	5,816	4,445	4,930	8,739	8,357	8,579	8,912	12,076	13,110	13,639	13,698	13,582
Rougheye Rockfish	856	864	632	707	706	556	550	455	456	235	232	315	359	366
Sablefish (Trawl)	1,108	936	932	805	903	1,032	1,036	1,289	1,612	1,993	1,985	1,930	1,949	1,924
Shallow Water Flatfish	18,000	17,813	19,297	19,242	19,306	25,315	25,731	27,732	28,082	25,305	26,769	27,783	28,279	28,455
Shortraker Rockfish	452	397	397	301	301	305	305	284	284	280	280	189	189	189
Thornyhead Rockfish	766	875	875	988	988	921	911	911	910	910	693	693	590	590
West Yakutat														
Arrowtooth Flounder	6,900	6,900	6,900	6,900	6,900	6,900	6,900	6,900	6,900	6,707	7,886	7,870	6,695	6,719
Deep Water Flatfish	1,581	5,532	5,474	2,997	3,017	3,239	3,280	2,105	2,068	1,431	1,407	1,856	1,828	1,796
Dusky Rockfish	495	1,384	1,288	275	251	232	95	115	468	427	90	84	215	204
Flathead Sole	4,686	3,525	3,535	2,930	2,949	1,932	2,016	2,354	2,424	1,511	2,320	3,876	3,970	4,018
Other Rockfish	230	580	580	574	574	368	368	369	369	370	370	5,565	5,282	3,883
Pacific Ocean Perch	1,641	1,931	2,014	2,847	2,786	3,371	3,296	1,470	1,705	1,409	1,370	2,110	2,070	1,993
Pollock	3,385	4,741	4,719	9,348	7,492	6,833	5,748	5,554	5,412	6,722	7,523	2,514	2,269	2,240
Rex Sole	832	813	772	766	850	1,737	1,657	1,174	1,206	1,361	1,439	1,453	1,436	1,413
Sablefish (Trawl)	261	221	220	190	211	240	241	300	375	455	440			
Shallow Water Flatfish	4,647	2,039	2,209	3,177	3,188	2,242	2,279	2,773	2,808	2,531	2,677	2,778	2,828	2,846
Western Gulf														
Arrowtooth Flounder	14,500	14,500	14,500	14,500	14,500	14,500	14,500	14,500	14,500	14,500	14,500	14,500	14,500	14,500
Big Skate	469	589	731	908	908	504	504	758	758	591	591	745	745	745
Deep Water Flatfish	176	302	301	186	256	413	416	226	225	256	256	237	234	231
Dusky Rockfish	377	317	296	173	158	146	781	776	270	269	149	145	209	199
Flathead Sole	8,650	8,650	8,650	8,650	8,650	8,650	8,650	8,650	8,650	8,650	8,650	8,650	8,650	8,650
Longnose Skate	70	107	152	61	61	149	149	158	158	151	151	104	104	104
Northern Rockfish	2,008	1,305	1,226	457	432	420	1,190	1,133	2,023	1,944	2,614	2,535	1,396	1,346
Other Rockfish	44													
Pacific Cod	21,210	22,922	27,091	28,352	25,404	5,657	5,343	2,076	5,590	6,959	5,225	6,121	6,097	6,693
Pacific Ocean Perch	2,040	2,399	2,302	2,737	2,679	3,312	3,227	1,437	1,643	2,602	2,529	1,787	1,753	1,688
Rex Sole	1,300	1,270	1,258	1,315	1,459	3,086	2,951	2,901	3,013	2,981	3,236	3,367	3,382	3,353
Rougheye Rockfish	81	82	115	105	105	176	174	168	168	184	180	197	224	229
Sablefish (Trawl)	350	296	295	255	270	309	316	388	486	745	895	940	949	937
Shallow Water Flatfish	13,250	13,250	13,250	13,250	13,250	13,250	13,250	13,250	13,250	13,250	13,250	13,250	13,250	13,250
Shortraker Rockfish	104	92	92	38	38	44	44	52	52	51	51	34	34	34
Thornyhead Rockfish	150	235	235	291	291	344	326	326	352	352	314	314	206	206

Source: NMFS Alaska Region Catch Accounting System, data compiled by AKFIN in Comprehensive_BLEND_CA

Table 6 Percentage of GOA Groundfish TAC Caught 2013 through Sept 5, 2026

Central Gulf	2013	2014	2015	2016	2017	2018	2019	2020	2021	2022	2023	2024	2025	2026	Average
Arrowtooth Flounder	28%	46%	25%	25%	36%	37%	34%	30%	14%	16%	13%	27%	19%	24%	27%
Big Skate	129%	91%	96%	100%	79%	52%	63%	52%	29%	50%	62%	47%	96%	37%	71%
Deep Water Flatfish	9%	7%	5%	6%	7%	5%	3%	5%	4%	5%	3%	3%	3%	4%	5%
Dusky Rockfish	83%	79%	78%	78%	65%	81%	79%	69%	60%	55%	45%	29%	38%	56%	59%
Flathead Sole	14%	15%	12%	14%	13%	13%	16%	12%	4%	3%	2%	4%	4%	4%	9%
Longnose Skate	67%	60%	56%	35%	30%	21%	22%	19%	28%	25%	23%	27%	38%	28%	34%
Northern Rockfish	87%	85%	79%	93%	48%	63%	58%	51%	50%	44%	40%	36%	33%	16%	57%
Other Rockfish	79%														79%
Pacific Cod	87%	101%	79%	65%	51%	94%	103%	93%	86%	89%	99%	98%	92%	80%	82%
Pacific Ocean Perch	102%	107%	93%	103%	111%	90%	97%	95%	93%	83%	87%	76%	87%	88%	91%
Rex Sole	56%	55%	32%	35%	29%	19%	18%	14%	3%	5%	3%	4%	4%	8%	16%
Rougheye Rockfish	46%	64%	56%	71%	48%	79%	81%	41%	40%	79%	68%	47%	36%	22%	56%
Sablefish (Trawl)	60%	80%	86%	103%	132%	206%	189%	160%	81%	78%	60%	57%	50%	66%	91%
Shallow Water Flatfish	30%	25%	16%	19%	12%	11%	11%	16%	7%	5%	4%	10%	7%	5%	12%
Shortraker Rockfish	108%	94%	70%	160%	91%	106%	83%	67%	74%	105%	94%	72%	189%	41%	96%
Thornyhead Rockfish	68%	75%	65%	70%	62%	74%	42%	23%	11%	19%	13%	9%	13%	14%	42%
West Yakutat															
Arrowtooth Flounder	1%	1%	1%	1%	1%	1%	1%	1%	1%	1%	0%	0%	0%	0%	1%
Deep Water Flatfish	0%	0%	0%	0%	0%	0%	0%	0%	0%	0%	0%	0%	0%	0%	0%
Dusky Rockfish	1%	6%	0%	3%	9%	5%	98%	72%	6%	1%	1%	6%	11%	20%	7%
Flathead Sole	0%	0%	0%	0%	0%	0%	0%	0%	0%	0%	0%	0%	0%	0%	0%
Other Rockfish	35%	11%	6%	9%	8%	37%	50%	28%	34%	21%	16%	25%	35%	54%	32%
Pacific Ocean Perch	94%	97%	98%	99%	99%	99%	100%	100%	97%	99%	100%	92%	91%	92%	97%
Pollock	87%	28%	5%	1%	1%	60%	115%	93%	95%	96%	92%	87%	94%	83%	61%
Rex Sole	0%	0%	0%	0%	0%	0%	0%	0%	0%	0%	0%	0%	0%	0%	0%
Sablefish (Trawl)	66%	69%	96%	93%	98%	98%	52%	28%	31%	23%	20%				53%
Shallow Water Flatfish	0%	0%	0%	0%	0%	0%	0%	0%	0%	0%	0%	0%	1%	0%	0%
Western Gulf															
Arrowtooth Flounder	6%	14%	4%	7%	2%	7%	5%	2%	2%	3%	3%	3%	2%	1%	4%
Big Skate	26%	27%	32%	18%	21%	60%	26%	4%	17%	29%	30%	21%	11%	10%	22%
Deep Water Flatfish	12%	23%	18%	3%	8%	1%	0%	0%	0%	1%	10%	3%	0%	1%	6%
Dusky Rockfish	58%	44%	62%	55%	80%	35%	25%	30%	54%	39%	50%	50%	33%	19%	41%
Flathead Sole	7%	3%	2%	3%	1%	2%	2%	1%	1%	0%	0%	2%	1%	0%	2%
Longnose Skate	123%	55%	90%	254%	310%	38%	40%	13%	27%	51%	62%	47%	60%	39%	67%
Northern Rockfish	108%	65%	80%	26%	54%	71%	69%	68%	35%	24%	15%	12%	33%	17%	44%
Other Rockfish	461%														461%
Pacific Cod	91%	95%	70%	65%	71%	89%	95%	11%	77%	76%	89%	73%	90%	62%	77%
Pacific Ocean Perch	22%	87%	89%	97%	100%	97%	97%	93%	99%	96%	98%	93%	103%	88%	91%
Rex Sole	8%	10%	6%	13%	3%	3%	3%	1%	0%	1%	1%	1%	0%	0%	2%
Rougheye Rockfish	12%	30%	45%	62%	39%	45%	53%	3%	13%	52%	57%	27%	25%	35%	36%
Sablefish (Trawl)	4%	21%	15%	18%	24%	72%	101%	47%	37%	30%	23%	8%	4%	9%	24%
Shallow Water Flatfish	1%	2%	2%	1%	2%	0%	1%	0%	0%	0%	0%	0%	1%	0%	1%
Shortraker Rockfish	27%	79%	60%	166%	113%	66%	193%	15%	15%	14%	41%	47%	9%	0%	58%
Thornyhead Rockfish	195%	102%	96%	68%	48%	50%	37%	15%	12%	31%	19%	12%	9%	17%	44%

Source: NMFS Alaska Region Catch Accounting System, data compiled by AKFIN in Comprehensive_BLEND_CA and annual GOA specification.

WY fisheries for the A80 sector closes during the month of July when RP sideboard limits are in effect. Because of the timing of these fisheries, the RP sideboard limits are the constraint on A80 vessels operating in these fisheries and not the A80 sideboard limits. For example, in 2026 the POP and dusky rockfish fisheries in the WY both closed on July 22. Since 2020, the POP A80 sideboard fisheries in the WY and WGOA area are typically fully taken with one A80 vessel typically fishing in the WY and four or five A80 vessels fishing in the WGOA. Catch of dusky rockfish and Northern rockfish by A80 vessels is less than the sideboard limit and is taken by the same vessels that fished for POP.

Table 7 A80 GOA Groundfish Sideboard Limits

Area	*Species*	*Sideboard Limit*
Area 610	Pollock	0.3% of the TAC.
Area 620	Pollock	0.2% of the TAC.
Area 630	Pollock	0.2% of the TAC.
Area 640	Pollock	0.2% of the TAC.
West Yakutat District	Pacific cod	3.4% of the TAC.
	Pacific ocean perch	96.1% of the TAC.
	Dusky rockfish	89.6% of the TAC.
Central GOA	Pacific cod	4.4% of the TAC.
	Pacific ocean perch	Based on RP Allocations
	Dusky rockfish	Based on RP Allocations
	Northern rockfish	Based on RP Allocations
Western GOA	Pacific cod	2.0% of the TAC.
	Pacific ocean perch	99.4% of the TAC.
	Dusky rockfish	76.4% of the TAC.
	Northern rockfish	100% of the TAC.

Source: Table 37 to 50 CFR 679.

3.1.1.3 A80 Limited Access GOA Groundfish

GOA groundfish fisheries that the A80 sector participates in are described in this section. This section emphasizes non-RP fisheries (limited access fisheries) managed under the A80 sideboard limits. A80 GOA sideboard limits apply to both groundfish species TACs that may be harvested with trawl gear and halibut PSC limits.

Table 8 shows the GOA catch by the A80 sector for 2013 through October 29, 2026. Big skate, octopus, and demersal shelf rockfish were grouped together to meet confidentiality requirements. The viable fisheries for these CPs in the GOA are Pacific Ocean perch (POP) and arrowtooth flounder with some important top-off species like sablefish and other rockfish that help make the directed fisheries more profitable. For A80 vessels, the volume of fish caught and processed in the arrowtooth flounder and POP fisheries is important to keep the plants busy.

When the F/V GOLDEN FLEECE was active during the earlier part of the period considered, it was more dependent on the lower volume and higher-value rex sole fishery. Declines in the first wholesale price of rex sole in more recent years shifted emphasis to the arrowtooth flounder fishery before it left the fishery. The F/V DEFENDER fished almost exclusively arrowtooth flounder in 2024 and 2026. It is prohibited from fishing for species other than flatfish in the CGOA and flatfish species other than arrowtooth flounder have been less viable fisheries due to the volume of fish needed to keep the factory busy, halibut PSC usage, and first wholesale product prices.

Table 8 A80 GOA catch (mt) by TAC species or species group, 2013 through October 29, 2026

Year	2013	2014	2015	2016	2017	2018	2019	2020	2021	2022	2023	2024	2025	2026	Average
Arrowtooth Flounder	8,869	22,176	9,825	5,538	13,302	3,781	7,019	5,260	7,330	8,525	5,672	10,411	6,533	10,468	8,908
Pacific Ocean Perch	2,948	4,834	4,660	5,878	7,229	7,023	7,419	3,506	3,835	4,544	4,037	4,240	4,029	4,034	4,872
Pollock	2,128	1,619	790	596	1,097	853	679	467	793	648	497	1,033	666	1,141	929
GOA Shallow Water Flatfish	1,251	1,075	914	1,401	829	817	804	2,197	1,594	949	23	33	14	12	851
Pacific Cod	1,541	2,307	1,370	423	621	386	615	643	879	838	408	578	620	459	835
Northern Rockfish	2,341	985	1,186	139	316	341	945	788	741	504	398	383	489	229	699
GOA Rex Sole	1,895	1,457	1,118	554	977	840	738	423	189	576	166	228	157	460	698
Sablefish	266	317	338	355	839	658	1,115	732	752	824	566	516	393	1,011	620
Atka Mackerel	715	646	560	345	507	750	826	604	611	579	459	377	463	308	554
Flathead Sole	1,195	639	757	538	1,168	460	513	367	538	418	141	279	211	280	536
GOA Dusky Rockfish	399	311	378	139	277	102	425	359	279	133	91	126	105	82	229
Other Rockfish	175	174	209	143	120	91	246	127	191	145	54	63	90	65	135
Shortraker Rockfish	70	168	121	159	155	122	171	107	117	82	135	148	89	168	129
GOA Thornyhead Rockfish	51	173	88	78	101	163	212	84	61	151	60	59	23	68	98
Shark	59	164	82	92	311	76	296	72	51	28	67	35	26	12	98
BSAI Skate and GOA Skate, Other	129	197	139	77	163	52	111	30	28	30	11	29	12	11	73
GOA Big Skate, Octopus, and Demersal Shelf Rockfish	2	15	16	33	39	40	56	91	93	108	154	159	177	7	71
Rougheye Rockfish	31	57	47	42	85	72	69	20	37	106	111	67	58	114	66
GOA Deep Water Flatfish	38	105	82	35	148	74	30	23	51	74	42	45	28	63	60
GOA Skate, Longnose	81	159	113	60	110	43	75	21	38	16	14	13	7	5	54
Total	26,077	39,328	24,614	18,545	30,154	18,646	24,277	17,898	20,140	21,211	15,073	20,789	16,180	20,953	22,420

Notes: NMFS Alaska Region Catch Accounting System data provided by NMFS staff. The amounts differ (and are somewhat larger) from the other catch tables because of the different data source, the species/fisheries included in the table, and when the data were queried.

The number of A80 vessels operating in the GOA has declined from 21 in 2003, before the A80 program was implemented in 2008, to either seven or eight vessels since 2021. These counts exclude any vessels that only participated in the RP.

The number of active vessels, catch, and gross first wholesale value generated by A80 vessels when fishing in the GOA limited access fisheries is presented in Table 9. Information is presented by area, with the WY and CGOA areas combined to meet confidentiality requirements. Value information is not yet available for the 2026 fishing year and catch data is only for a portion of that year (through September 5). Value information shows that 2018 through 2025 are below the long-term average in real 2025 dollars. COVID impacts in 2020 and the rex sole price decline in 2021, along with other factors like limited flatfish markets, helped drive the corresponding revenue decline.

Table 9 A80 Vessels Active in GOA Limited Access Fisheries, with Catch (mt) and First Wholesale Gross Value (million 2025 $) 2003 Through Sept 5, 2026

Year	CGOA and WY Vessels	CGOA and WY Weight (mt)	CGOA and WY Value (Million 2025 $)	WGOA Vessels	WGOA Weight (mt)	WGOA Value (Million 2025 $)	Total GOA Vessels	Total Weight (mt)	GOA Total Value (Million 2025 $)
2003	15	30,373	$29.8	16	14,278	$11.4	21	44,651	$41.2
2004	11	14,399	$17.7	15	9,849	$11.1	16	24,248	$28.8
2005	12	20,063	$28.8	13	7,536	$11.4	16	27,600	$40.2
2006	13	24,972	$34.8	11	9,222	$14.7	16	34,194	$49.5
2007	9	17,743	$22.2	13	10,206	$13.3	15	27,949	$35.5
2008	9	13,950	$16.9	11	9,472	$11.1	13	23,423	$28.0
2009	12	19,072	$19.3	14	10,732	$11.7	18	29,804	$31.0
2010	8	18,573	$20.6	13	10,030	$13.7	17	28,603	$34.3
2011	6	22,246	$31.0	14	7,902	$17.0	17	30,147	$48.0
2012	6	14,534	$19.8	15	7,971	$14.2	17	22,504	$34.1
2013	6	19,541	$19.4	10	4,970	$5.4	13	24,511	$24.8
2014	5	31,865	$38.3	8	6,046	$9.6	10	37,911	$47.8
2015	5	18,140	$22.6	8	4,935	$7.1	10	23,075	$29.7
2016	5	12,396	$19.6	10	4,410	$6.4	13	16,806	$26.0
2017	5	24,340	$38.8	7	4,243	$7.6	10	28,583	$46.4
2018	5	11,827	$16.8	7	5,062	$9.1	9	16,889	$25.9
2019	6	16,595	$16.6	5	5,861	$8.5	11	22,456	$25.1
2020	5	12,397	$10.4	5	3,653	$4.2	9	16,050	$14.6
2021	4	14,449	$11.6	4	3,704	$4.7	7	18,153	$16.3
2022	6	14,422	$14.6	4	4,789	$6.6	8	19,211	$21.3
2023	4	8,768	$9.5	5	4,199	$5.1	7	12,967	$14.6
2024	5	15,628	$17.3	5	3,051	$3.5	8	18,679	$20.8
2025	3	11,079	$16.8	5	2,946	$4.1	7	14,025	$20.9
2026	4	13,411		5	2,499		8	15,910	
Avg.	7.0	17,533	$21.4	9.3	6,565	$9.2	12.3	24,098	$30.6

Source: NMFS Alaska Region Catch Accounting System, data compiled by AKFIN in Comprehensive_BLEND_CA

Using the data from Table 9, first wholesale gross revenue per vessel was calculated. Revenue from the CGOA and WY area was more variable and larger than the WGOA. Overall revenue per vessel increased after the A80 program was implemented but declined in 2018. Revenue per vessel increased in the CGOA and WY area during 2024 and 2025 but declined in the WGOA.

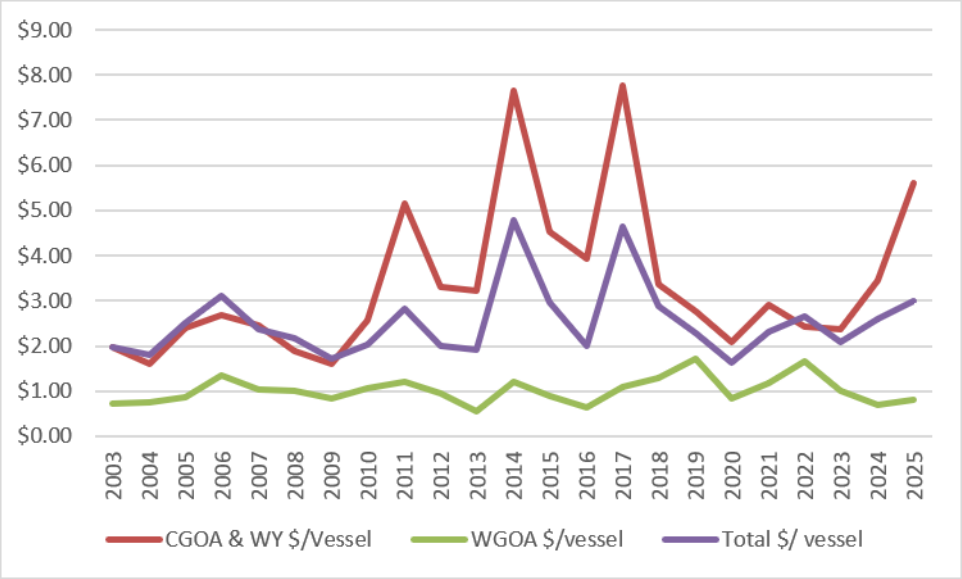


Figure 2. GOA Limited access First Wholesale Gross Revenue (millions of 2025 $) per Active A80 Vessel.

Source: NMFS Alaska Region Catch Accounting System, data compiled by AKFIN in Comprehensive_BLEND_CA

3.1.1.4 Halibut PSC

Limits

Annual halibut PSC limits in the GOA are established by gear type and fishery complex. GOA halibut trawl PSC limits are shown in Table 10 for the years 2012 through the present. The current trawl halibut PSC limit will continue into the future based on current regulations. The 2026 trawl gear halibut PSC mortality limit was set at 1,705 mt, hook-and-line gear at 256 mt, and the demersal shelf rockfish (DSR) fishery in the SEO District at 9 mt. Pot gear and jig gear are currently exempt from halibut PSC limits because of the small amount of halibut mortality associated with those gear types.

The trawl gear limit of 1,705 mt reflects a reduction made under Amendment 95 (79 FR 9625, February 20, 2014) to the GOA FMP. Amendment 95 reduced the trawl halibut PSC mortality limit[6] by 15% and was phased in over a three-year period. That regulatory change also allowed the A80 sector to roll over unused halibut PSC limits from one season to the next season within a year.

[6] All halibut PSC limits described in this analysis are the halibut PSC mortality limits, which account for discard mortality rates.

Table 10 GOA Trawl Halibut PSC Limits 2012 through 2026

Years	*Total Trawl Limit (mt)*	*Description*
2012-2013	2,000	All limits include RP CQ apportionments
2014	1,848	7% reduction under Amendment 95
2015	1,759	5% reduction under Amendment 95
2016-2022	1,706	3% reduction under Amendment 95
2023-2026	1,705	1 mt change due to rounding

Source: NMFS annual specification tables (e.g., https://www.federalregister.gov/d/2023-04315/p-65)

Halibut PSC limits are calculated by applying the discard mortality rate (DMR) to the total amount of halibut caught by gear, sector, and groundfish fishery. The 2026 and 2027 DMR applied to non-pelagic trawl CPs in the GOA is 0.79 (see Section 3.1.1.9). The current (2026/2027) trawl halibut PSC mortality limit in the GOA is divided into five seasonal allocations and two fishery complexes as shown in Table 11. The fifth season does not divide the PSC limit by complex, so any halibut PSC that is rolled over from a previous season or complex could be used by trawl vessels in the fifth season in any fishery. The annual trawl halibut PSC limits and sideboard information are shown in Figure 3. The pie chart assumes that the non-exempt CPs would utilize their entire sideboard limit. That is not expected, but it shows the total amount of GOA halibut PSC currently available only to the trawl CV fleet and the F/V DEFENDER when operating in limited access fisheries.

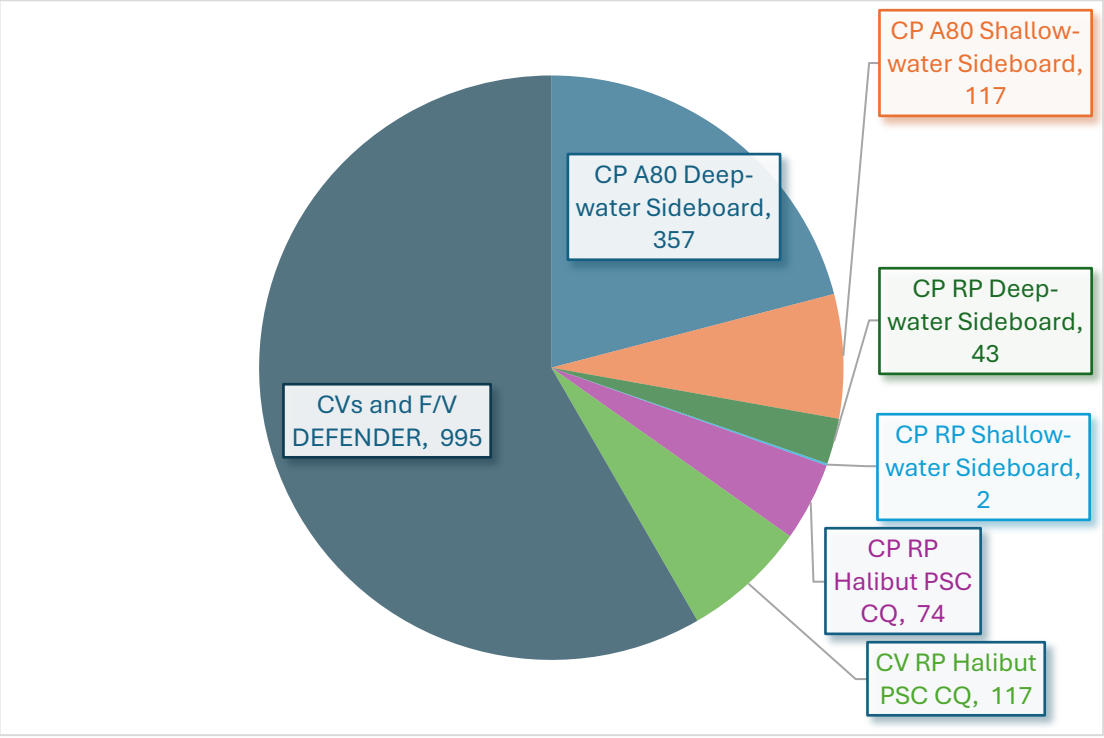


Figure 3 GOA Trawl Halibut PSC Limits and Sideboards (mt) 2026

Source: 2026 annual harvest specifications

The **overall** GOA trawl halibut PSC limit, less the RP cooperative quota (CQ) allocations[7], is available for use by CVs and the F/V DEFENDER so long as they are within the season and species complex limits. Sideboard limits are the maximum amount of the halibut PSC that may be used by the vessels subject to the sideboard limits, but do not guarantee that amount of halibut PSC will be available. If the seasonal and complex limit is used by all trawl vessels first, the A80 vessels would also be prohibited from those fisheries until the next halibut PSC limit is released. For example, the A80 sideboard limits directly regulate only the A80 CPs subject to the **sideboard** limit. Those sideboard limits allow the non-exempt A80 CPs to use only up to the sideboard amount. CVs and the F/V DEFENDER are not subject to any GOA halibut PSC **sideboard** limits, so they are only subject to the **overall** trawl halibut PSC limit for a given season, fishery complex, and year.

The A80 and RP catch share programs have established trawl halibut PSC sideboard limits in the GOA for CPs. The RP CP halibut PSC sideboard limits apply each year from July 1 through July 31 and correspond to the historic CGOA rockfish fishery season. The shallow-water[8] PSC sideboard limit for CP vessels in the RP was calculated as 0.1% (2 mt in 2026 - rounded to the nearest mt) of the total trawl limit (1,705 mt), and the deep-water complex limit is 2.5% (43 mt). A80 CPs typically fish for deep-water flatfish during July. During 2026, the Best Use Cooperative Report noted that 4 mt of halibut was used. The cooperative report indicated that the 2 mt halibut PSC shallow water complex sideboard limit is too small to allow for a viable shallow water flatfish fishery during July.

The A80 GOA halibut PSC sideboard limits are shown in Table 11 and compared to the total limit. Under current regulations CVs and the F/V DEFENDER are trawl vessels that are not subject to those sideboard limits but are subject to the seasonal, complex, and overall trawl halibut PSC limits for the GOA.

Table 11 Trawl Halibut PSC Mortality Limits (mt) and A80 Sideboard Limits for the 2026/2027 Fishing Year

Trawl Halibut PSC Season	*Percent of Total by Season*	*Total (mt)*	*Total Shallow-water Limit*	*Total Deep-water Limit*	*A80 Shallow-water Sideboard Limit*	*A80 Deep-water Sideboard Limit*	*A80 Total Sideboard Limit*	*A80 Shallow-water % of Total Trawl Limit*	*A80 Deep-water Sideboard % of Total Trawl Limit*
January 20 to April 1	30.5%	520	385	135	8	20	28	0.48%	1.15%
April 1 to July 1	20.0%	341	85	256	32	183	215	1.89%	10.72%
July 1 to August 1	27.0%	460	120	340	25	89	114	1.46%	5.21%
August 1 to October 1	7.5%	128	53	75	13	2	15	0.74%	0.14%
October 1 to December 31	15.0%	256	n/a	n/a	39	63	102	2.27%	3.71%
Total	100.0%	1,705			117	357	474		

Source: 91 FR 11902

Note: The A80 CP RP shallow-water (2 mt) and deep-water (43 mt) sideboard limits in effect during July are not shown in the table. Unused A80 sideboard limits are rolled over to the next season within a year. Annual totals are not shown for the deep- and shallow-water complex limits since the fifth season is not divided between complexes.

Based on the current GOA trawl halibut PSC limits, the theoretical maximum[9] amount of halibut PSC available to the F/V DEFENDER is 1,514 mt, excluding any unused RP CQ allocations. If the F/V DEFENDER's exemption is removed, its theoretical maximum is 474 mt, assuming the A80 halibut PSC

[7] CQ allocations are available for the exclusive use of RP cooperative members from April 1 through November 15 and are deducted from the third season deep-water complex apportionment. Up to 55 percent of the initial RP CQ apportionment that is unused may be assigned to the fifth season limit for use by any trawl operator for the remainder of the fishing year.

[8] The deep-water species fishery complex is composed of sablefish, rockfish, deep-water flatfish, rex sole, and arrowtooth flounder. The shallow-water species fishery complex is composed of pollock, Pacific cod, shallow-water flatfish, flathead sole, Atka mackerel, and "other species" (*i.e.,* sharks and octopuses) (§ 679.21(d)(3)(iii)).

[9] 1,705 mt minus 191 mt assigned to the RP.

limit is not changed. While the theoretical maximum will likely never be taken by one vessel, reducing the amount of halibut PSC a vessel may access may negatively affect that vessel and the other A80 vessels that are subject to the 474 mt A80 sideboard limit, which must accommodate the additional vessels' halibut PSC usage in their limit. Because the A80 vessels are members of a cooperative, the cooperative may also need to reexamine how to manage the halibut PSC sideboard at a firm level. Changes to the halibut PSC sideboard limit could affect those decisions and disrupt longstanding cooperative agreements within the A80 sector.

Amendment 97 (NMFS 2012) created provisions to allow A80 vessel owners to replace their vessel for any reason at any time. The replacement vessel may be up to 295 feet LOA. The Final Rule was published on March 3, 2012 (77 FR 13253). In most cases, the GOA sideboard measures assigned to the original A80 vessel are applied to any vessel that replaces it. Since the F/V GOLDEN FLEECE was exempt from GOA halibut PSC limits because of its size and operating history, its replacement vessel is only exempt from A80 GOA halibut PSC limits if it is 124 feet LOA or less. Because of these regulations, the replacement vessel, the F/V DEFENDER, is 123 feet LOA, and it retains the halibut PSC exemption (§ 679.92(d)(2)(i)). The EA/RIR for the Vessel Replacement action noted that NMFS would adjust the Amendment 80 sector GOA sideboards to incorporate the catch history of the F/V GOLDEN FLEECE into the GOA sideboards, if the replacement vessel is greater than the maximum LOA of the LLP license originally assigned to the F/V GOLDEN FLEECE (NPFMC 2012 p. xviii). The vessel replacement regulations also note that if the F/V GOLDEN FLEECE is replaced by a vessel greater than 124 feet LOA, the A80 sector's PSC sideboard limit would apply (§ 679.92(d)(2)(ii)). Those regulations do not directly address how the A80 sideboard limit would be modified if the sideboard limit is removed and the replacement vessel is 124 ft LOA or smaller.

Usage

Halibut PSC mortality in the GOA trawl fisheries[10] during 2025, for both CVs and CPs, was reported at 264 mt, or 16% of the 1,705 mt limit. All trawl vessels took 72 mt in the Shallow-water complex (11% of the limit) and 132 mt was reported in the Deep-water complex (16% of the limit)[11]. A80 vessels were reported to have used 92 mt of the trawl halibut PSC total when participating in the limited access fisheries.

Table 12 2025 Trawl Halibut PSC Mortality (mt) by Fishery

	Deep Water	*Shallow Water*	*RP*	*Total*
Trawl Total	132	72	60	264
A80	92	0	43	135

Sources: NMFS Alaska Region Catch Accounting System, data compiled by AKFIN in Comprehensive_BLEND_CA

https://www.fisheries.noaa.gov/sites/default/files/akro/car150_goa_halibut_mortality2025.html

A80 halibut mortality in the GOA limited access fisheries by year is reported in Table 13. As shown in Table 11, the current halibut PSC sideboard limit for A80 vessels is 474 mt. A80 vessels have been well under their halibut PSC limit in recent years. The relatively low levels of halibut PSC usage have been attributed to cooperative fishing practices employed by vessel operators to avoid halibut, the use of halibut excluders to reduce halibut catch, deck sorting to reduce halibut mortality, and the relatively small percentage of flatfish TACs being harvested[12], even in the rex sole, arrowtooth flounder, and shallow-

[10] Including the RP halibut PSC mortality
[11] https://www.fisheries.noaa.gov/sites/default/files/akro/car150_goa_halibut_mortality2025.html
[12] Due to both the profitability of flatfish fisheries and efforts to reduce halibut PSC mortality.

water flatfish fisheries which accounted for much of the A80 sector's limited access flatfish catch in past years.

Table 13 A80 GOA Limited Access Halibut PSC Mortality (mt) 2007 through Sept 5, 2026

Year	Vessels	Groundfish (mt)	Halibut Mortality (mt)	Halibut Rate (kg/mt)
2007	15	30,281	406	13.40
2008	13	30,521	430	14.10
2009	18	35,547	447	12.57
2010	17	28,361	485	17.09
2011	17	29,585	491	16.60
2012	17	22,044	363	16.47
2013	13	24,366	347	14.26
2014	10	37,514	468	12.48
2015	10	22,786	322	14.13
2016	13	16,764	207	12.34
2017	10	28,415	384	13.53
2018	9	16,773	191	11.36
2019	11	22,224	294	13.21
2020	9	15,935	159	9.97
2021	7	17,395	163	9.36
2022	8	19,150	223	11.63
2023	7	12,967	94	7.24
2024	8	18,679	171	9.14
2025	7	14,025	92	6.53
2026	8	18,677	135	7.25
Average	11.4	23,101	294	12.71

Source: NMFS Alaska Region Catch Accounting System, data compiled by AKFIN in Comprehensive_BLEND_CA

Comparison of A80 PSC Rates

A comparison of halibut mortality, Tanner crab, and Chinook salmon PSC in the GOA by A80 vessels is shown in Figure 4. These species were selected for review because the A80 fleet takes them in the GOA and because the Council has taken action to modify PSC limits or create area closures to protect them since the A80 Program was implemented. Reported halibut mortality has been below the longer-term average since 2018. Tanner crab PSC has been below the longer-term average since 2021, and the following section discusses it in more detail. Chinook salmon PSC was lower from 2015 through 2019, but has been higher than in those lower-usage years from 2020 through 2025.

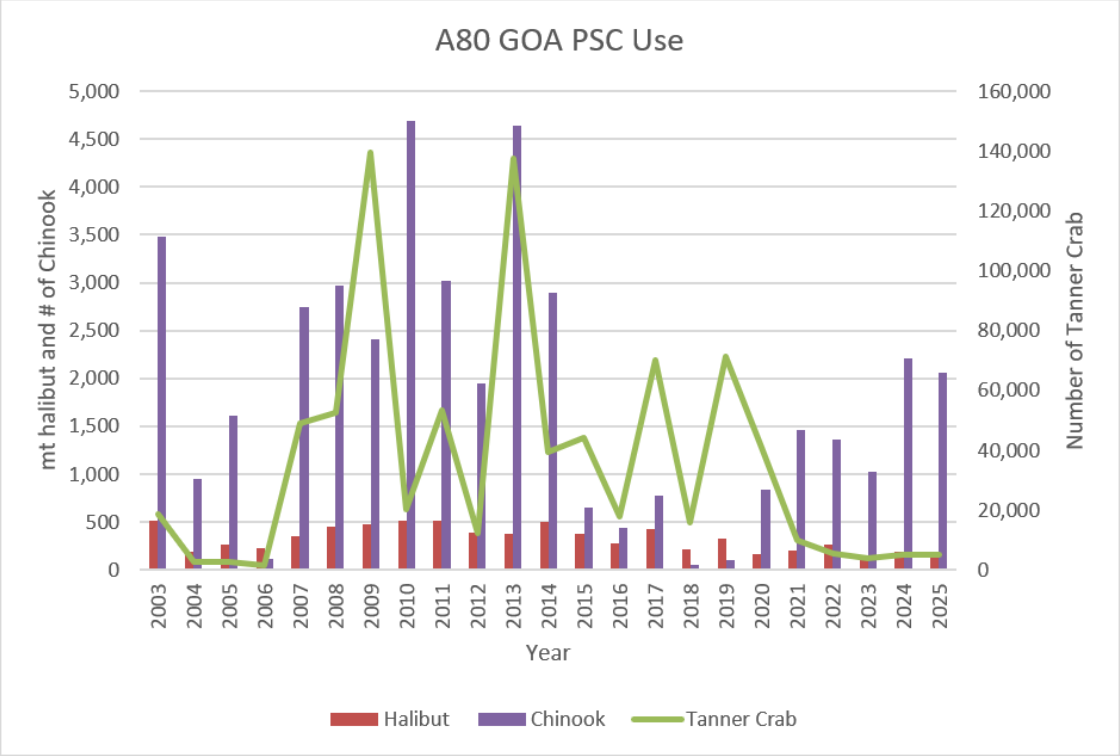


Figure 4. A80 GOA Halibut, Tanner crab, and Chinook salmon PSC Usage by Year

Source: NMFS Alaska Region Catch Accounting System, data compiled by AKFIN in Comprehensive_BLEND_CA

Table 14 compares the rate of PSC usage by the F/V GOLDEN FLEECE and F/V DEFENDER against all other A80 vessels operating in the GOA arrowtooth flounder target fishery. Rates are calculated using the same methodology as NMFS uses to report PSC rates on its website,[13] except this section reports annual rates for A80 vessels in the arrowtooth flounder target fishery. The rates reported in this paper differ from rates reported for other actions the Council is considering (e.g., the Tanner crab action).

Cells in the table are shaded with graduating colors from blue to red and rates are compared within that PSC species. Darker red colors mean the F/V GOLDEN FLEECE or /F/V DEFENDER had relatively high annual rates compared to the rest of the A80 sector. Darker blue cells indicate the F/V GOLDEN FLEECE or F/V DEFENDER had relatively low annual rates compared to the rest of the A80 sector. The F/V GOLDEN FLEECE targeted arrowtooth flounder through 2022 and the F/V DEFENDER targeted arrowtooth in 2024 and 2026.

If the number in the table is positive, the F/V GOLDEN FLEECE or F/V DEFENDER had a lower rate, and if negative, the other vessels in the fleet had a lower rate. Using the average of all years as an example, the A80 fleet excluding the F/V GOLDEN FLEECE and F/V DEFENDER used 4.5 kg/mt of groundfish of halibut PSC less han other vessels and 6.0 more Tanner crab per mt of groundfish catch than the rest of the A80 sector. Only two years of data are available for the F/V DEFENDER as the replacement vessel, but during those two years its halibut PSC rate in the arrowtooth flounder fishery was lower than the other A80 vessel's arrowtooth flounder rate in 2024 and higher in 2026. The F/V DEFENDER was officially designated as the replacement vessel on May 28, 2026 and made its first landing as the replacement vessel late in June 2026. Catch of individual vessels cannot be reported, but the weekly reported catch of groundfish by the F/V DEFENDER was substantially more than the weekly reported catch of the F/V GOLDEN FLEECE.

[13] https://www.fisheries.noaa.gov/alaska/bycatch/halibut-bycatch-rates-alaska

Table 14. GOLDEN FLEECE and DEFENDER PSC Rate Minus All Other A80 Vessels' Rates in GOA Arrowtooth Flounder Fishery, 2007 through September 5, 2026

Year	Halibut Rate (kg/mt Groundfish)	Chinook Salmon Rate (#/mt Groundfish)	Tanner Crab Rate (#/mt Groundfish)
2007	10.977	-0.063	-3.869
2008	-16.689	0.312	-0.159
2009	n/a		
2010	n/a		
2011	-7.478	0.064	-7.749
2012	19.569	-0.032	-3.714
2013	-1.053	-0.225	-21.672
2014	0.985	0.024	-8.322
2015	-0.048	0.047	-2.535
2016	24.120	-0.005	-6.766
2017	15.395	0.012	-6.046
2018	-4.315	0.000	-1.453
2019	32.745	0.000	-4.454
2020	11.482	0.029	-1.616
2021	2.067	0.140	-9.729
2022	3.323	0.017	0.028
2023	n/a		
2024	2.852	-0.052	0.049
2025	n/a		
2026	-8.488	-0.004	-1.583
Average	4.454	0.017	-5.961

Source: NMFS Alaska Region Catch Accounting System, data compiled by AKFIN in Comprehensive_BLEND_CA

In general, the information provided in Table 14 shows that the F/V GOLDEN FLEECE and F/V DEFENDER had lower halibut PSC rates than the rest of the A80 fleet in the arrowtooth flounder fishery most years after 2011 and higher Tanner crab rates over the period considered. Chinook salmon rates were varied less and were smaller than halibut and Tanner crab, partially due to the number of Chinook salmon taken in the fisheries relative to the numbers/amounts of other PSC species taken. Halibut PSC usage by the F/V DEFENDER compared to the rest of the fleet since it began using the LLP license with the halibut PSC exemption, varied by year. The limited number of years of data and the variation across those two years make drawing conclusions regarding its rates relative to the rest of the A80 fleet unreliable. However, the data does show that in years the F/V DEFENDER was active, halibut PSC mortality by A80 vessels increased.

3.1.1.5 GOA Tanner Crab PSC

GOA Tanner crab bycatch in bottom trawl fisheries is a concern to the Council and public which has resulted in the Council considering an amendment to close specific statistical areas around Kodiak (NPFMC 2026). Unlike halibut, Tanner crab bycatch mitigation measures do not place a limit on the number of Tanner crab that may be taken in an area or season. Instead, areas with high densities of Tanner crab and known Tanner crab nursery grounds are closed to fishing by vessels using bottom trawl gear. In addition to the current Tanner crab action being considered, Amendment 89 to the GOA groundfish FMP analyzed the expected impacts of an area closure and gear modification changes (NMFS 2013). Final Rule (79 FR 2794) implemented the Marmot Bay Tanner Crab Protection Area (Marmot Bay Area). The

Marmot Bay Area closure (Figure 5) is year-round when fishing for groundfish using trawl gear; the one exemption is when vessels are directed fishing for pollock using pelagic trawl gear.

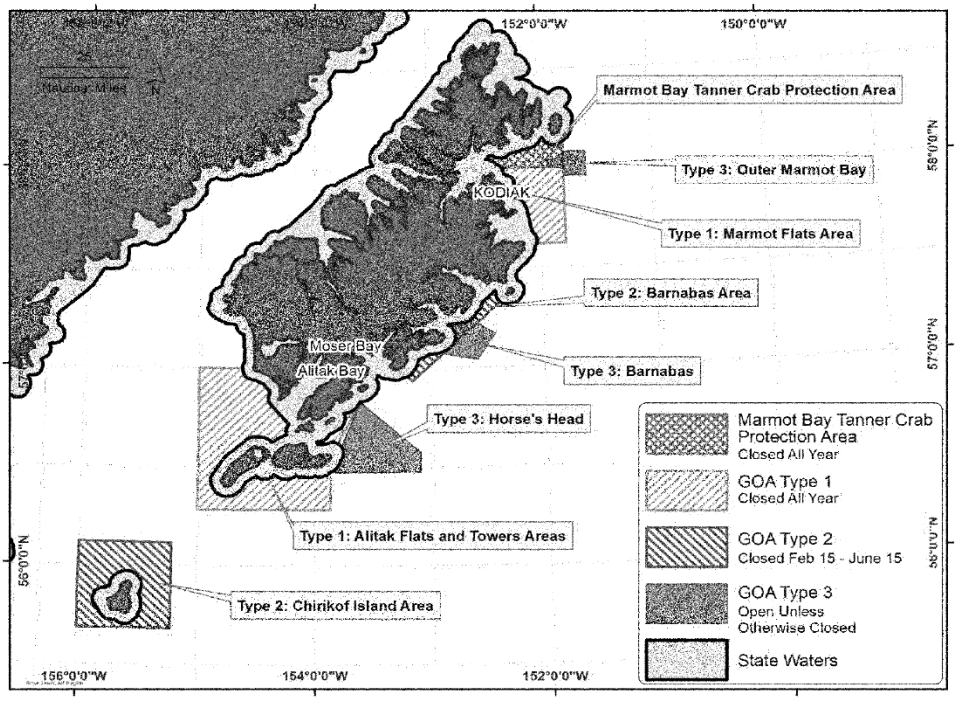


Figure 5 Marmot Bay Tanner Crab Protection Area

Source: Figure 5 to Part 679

The gear modification requirements are designed to raise sections of the trawl gear off the ocean floor by 2.5". The objective is to reduce trawl gear seafloor contact for vessels targeting Central GOA flatfish and, in doing so, protect biologically critical areas and reduce unobserved Tanner crab mortality. Specifically, vessels using nonpelagic trawl gear when directed fishing for flatfish in the CGOA are required to comply with the gear performance standard and construction requirements specified in §679.24(f). Section 679.24(f) requires the use of elevating devices to raise the elevated section of the sweeps at least 2.5 inches and requires these elevating devices be installed on each end of the elevated section and be spaced along the entire length of the elevated section of the sweeps no less than 30 feet (9.1 m) apart.

Information in Table 15 presents the number of Tanner crab that have been reported as being caught in the GOA limited access fisheries by A80 vessels. Catch from the RP is excluded. Tanner crab catches exceeded 130,000 crabs in 2009 and 2013. Usage rates were also high in those years. From 2021 through September 5, 2026, Tanner crab catches by A80 vessels in the limited access fisheries have never exceeded 10,000 crabs. The catches in recent years are also well below the 35,000 crab 2003 through September 2026 annual average. Over the entire period considered, the four A80 vessels with the most Tanner crab bycatch accounted for 96% of Tanner crab bycatch and 55% of the groundfish catch in the GOA limited access fisheries.

Table 15 A80 GOA Limited access Groundfish Catch (mt) and Tanner Crab PSC, 2007 through Sept 5, 2026

Year	Vessels	Groundfish (mt)	Tanner Crab (#)	Tanner Crab Rate (#/mt)
2007	15	30,281	50,191	1.66
2008	13	30,521	52,514	1.72
2009	18	35,547	139,751	3.93
2010	17	28,361	20,112	0.71
2011	17	29,585	53,284	1.80
2012	17	22,044	12,102	0.55
2013	13	24,366	137,553	5.65
2014	10	37,514	39,392	1.05
2015	10	22,786	43,990	1.93
2016	13	16,764	17,758	1.06
2017	10	28,415	69,606	2.45
2018	9	16,773	15,892	0.95
2019	11	22,224	71,487	3.22
2020	9	15,935	40,761	2.56
2021	7	17,395	9,632	0.55
2022	8	19,150	5,387	0.28
2023	7	12,967	3,737	0.29
2024	8	18,679	5,065	0.27
2025	7	14,025	4,632	0.33
2026	8	18,677	8,086	0.43
Average	11.35	23,101	40,047	1.73

Source: NMFS Alaska Region Catch Accounting System, data compiled by AKFIN in Comprehensive_BLEND_CA

3.1.1.6 Chinook Salmon PSC

Trawl vessels operating in the GOA operate under Chinook PSC limits that incentivize avoiding Chinook. Under Amendment 97 to the GOA FMP, annual Chinook PSC limits were established that apply to non-pollock groundfish trawl fisheries in the WGOA and CGOA. The current annual limit for non-pollock trawl CPs when not operating in the RP is 3,600 fish. The limit includes an incentive to stay below 3,120 fish to trigger an increased limit the following year (4,080 fish).

Chinook salmon PSC by the A80 sector in the GOA limited access fisheries are provided in Table 16. The four A80 vessels with the most Chinook salmon PSC from 2003 through 2026 took 57% of the total. These four vessels also accounted for 55% of the groundfish catch, meaning that their Chinook usage rates were on average about equal to the overall A80 rates in terms of Chinook salmon taken per metric ton of GOA groundfish harvested.

Table 16. A80 GOA Limited access Groundfish Catch (mt) and Chinook Salmon PSC, 2007 through Sept 5, 2026

Year	Vessels	Groundfish (mt)	Chinook Salmon (#)	Chinook Salmon Rate (#/mt)
2007	15	30,281	2,983	0.099
2008	13	30,521	2,963	0.097
2009	18	35,547	2,410	0.068
2010	17	28,361	4,443	0.157
2011	17	29,585	2,698	0.091
2012	17	22,044	1,510	0.068
2013	13	24,366	3,631	0.149
2014	10	37,514	2,745	0.073
2015	10	22,786	602	0.026
2016	13	16,764	207	0.012
2017	10	28,415	674	0.024
2018	9	16,773	52	0.003
2019	11	22,224	108	0.005
2020	9	15,935	273	0.017
2021	7	17,395	1,261	0.072
2022	8	19,150	519	0.027
2023	7	12,967	587	0.045
2024	8	18,679	1,499	0.080
2025	7	14,025	352	0.025
2026	8	18,677	401	0.021
Average	11.4	23,101	1,496	0.058

Source: NMFS Alaska Region Catch Accounting System, data compiled by AKFIN in Comprehensive_BLEND_CA

3.1.1.7 Directed Halibut Fishery

One stated reason for considering removing the halibut PSC exemption from the F/V DEFENDER was changes in the halibut resource since the Council last reviewed the halibut PSC exemption when it implemented the vessel replacement regulation. The information in Table 17 shows how the directed commercial halibut limits have changed since 2012. The table shows the amounts established at the IPHC annual meeting. The directed commercial fishery limits include the IFQ fishery and the guided charter halibut fishery in the areas where it receives an allocation.

The total directed halibut fishery across all IPHC fishing areas in Alaska declined from about 25.5 million lbs to 15.3 million lbs, or about 40%. The percentage of the directed fishery limit that is taken annually in IPHC Area 3A, where the F/V DEFENDER is allowed to fish is over 90%. Additional discussion of the impacts of potential changes in the amount of halibut PSC taken are discussed in Section 3.4.

Table 17 Directed Halibut Commercial Fishery Limits, 2012 through 2026

	Directed Commercial Fishery Limits						
Year	2C	3A	3B	4A	4B	4CDE	Total
2012	2,624,000	11,918,000	5,070,000	1,567,000	1,869,000	2,464,000	25,512,000
2013	2,970,000	11,030,000	4,290,000	1,330,000	1,450,000	1,930,000	23,000,000
2014	3,319,000	7,318,000	2,840,000	850,000	1,140,000	1,285,000	16,752,000
2015	3,679,000	7,790,000	2,650,000	1,390,000	1,140,000	1,285,000	17,934,000
2016	3,924,000	7,336,000	2,710,000	1,390,000	1,140,000	1,660,000	18,160,000
2017	4,212,000	7,739,000	3,140,000	1,390,000	1,140,000	1,700,000	19,321,000
2018	3,570,000	7,350,000	2,620,000	1,370,000	1,050,000	1,580,000	17,540,000
2019	3,610,000	8,060,000	2,330,000	1,650,000	1,210,000	2,040,000	18,900,000
2020	3,410,000	7,050,000	2,410,000	1,410,000	1,100,000	1,730,000	17,110,000
2021	3,530,000	8,950,000	2,560,000	1,660,000	1,230,000	1,670,000	19,600,000
2022	3,510,000	9,550,000	3,350,000	1,760,000	1,280,000	2,060,000	21,510,000
2023	3,410,000	7,840,000	3,090,000	1,410,000	1,220,000	2,020,000	18,990,000
2024	3,500,000	7,560,000	2,980,000	1,280,000	1,090,000	2,060,000	18,470,000
2025	3,070,000	5,890,000	2,470,000	1,000,000	900,000	1,610,000	14,940,000
2026	2,910,000	6,320,000	2,480,000	1,010,000	920,000	1,630,000	15,270,000
							Percent Attained
2012	98	99	97	98	92	94	98
2013	98	98	93	91	84	91	96
2014	99	101	99	98	96	97	99
2015	98	99	97	96	95	91	98
2016	99	100	96	97	95	88	97
2017	97	99	95	91	92	95	97
2018	96	98	93	89	99	89	96
2019	95	98	94	83	81	80	94
2020	95	96	94	81	81	93	94
2021	94	97	94	86	61	83	93
2022	93	92	85	72	43	76	87
2023	91	91	90	66	33	62	86
2024	89	91	86	56	26	39	81
2025	87	92	88	67	20	33	83

Directed Commercial Fishery Limits: Fishery limits established at IPHC Annual Meeting

3.1.1.8 Amendment 80 Vessel Monitoring in the GOA and BSAI

Table 18 summarizes the current GOA monitoring requirements, focusing on the A80 vessels. The GOA fishery requirements are reported by the management program the vessel is operating under. Regardless of the management program the vessel is operating in at a given time, the vessel operator may voluntarily fish with more monitoring coverage than is required.

A brief summary of the Observer Program is provided first. The Observer Program was implemented in 1990 under Amendments 13 and 18 to the BSAI and GOA FMPs, respectively.[14] Those FMP changes

[14] https://archives.federalregister.gov/issue_slice/1990/2/12/4838-4848.pdf

required vessels of 125 ft or greater Length Overall (LOA) to carry an observer on every day they fished. Vessels from 60 ft LOA up to 125 ft LOA were required to generally have an observer on the vessel for 30% of the days fished. Vessels less than 60 ft were not required to carry observers. The Observer Program was restructured in 2013 to divide the fishery into full- and partial-coverage categories. Full-coverage vessels must pay directly for observer coverage. Partial coverage vessels must pay a fee (currently 1.65%) based on the value of their exvessel landings to cover the cost of observers. The coverage rates are determined annually under the Annual Deployment Plan. The full coverage category includes catcher processors, motherships, and catcher vessels participating in a catch share program with a transferable prohibited species catch (PSC) limit. The RP and A80 programs imposed the current full coverage monitoring requirements for A80 vessels operating under those programs. In the GOA, A80 vessel operators, including vessels less than 125 ft LOA, are voluntarily operating under those requirements even when they are not fishing under RP rules to allow for halibut deck sorting and to reduce the chance that extrapolated catch estimates could negatively impact their operation.

Trawl catcher vessels operating in the GOA limited access fisheries fall under the partial coverage category (see § 679.51(a)(1)). The 2026 at-sea observer selection rate for GOA trawl catcher vessels is 20.03%. This means the goal is to cover 20.03% of trips in this category[15]. Vessel owners or operators whose vessel is in this selection pool are required to log each fishing trip into the Observer Deploy and Declare System (ODDS). If the trip is randomly selected for observer coverage, the vessel must take an observer on that trip. Electronic monitoring (EM) for CVs in the GOA is currently limited to pollock vessels using pelagic trawl gear in the partial coverage fishery.

[15] https://www.fisheries.noaa.gov/bulletin/ib-26-02-final-2026-annual-deployment-plan-observers-and-electronic-monitoring

Table 18 A80 Vessel Monitoring Requirements

Monitoring	GOA Default A80 CP coverage (see 50 CFR 679.51(a)(2)(ii))	A80 BSAI 50 CFR 679.93(c)	GOA (RP Sideboard Fisheries)	A80 GOA (RP)	orting Halibut in GOA
Observer Coverage	At least one observer aboard at all times when harvesting, receiving, or processing groundfish	At least two observers for each day that the vessel is used to catch, process, or receive groundfish harvested in a federally managed or parallel groundfish fishery. At least one observer must be endorsed as a lead level 2 observer.	Same as BSAI requirements in the West Yakutat District, Central GOA, or Western GOA management areas from July 1 through July 31.	Same as BSAI in the Central GOA from April 1 through the earlier of November 15 or the effective date and time of an approved rockfish cooperative termination of fishing declaration.	Same as BSAI
Catch Weighing and Sampling	n/a	All catch, except halibut sorted on deck by vessels participating in halibut deck sorting described at § 679.102, are weighed on a NMFS-approved scale in compliance with the scale requirements at § 679.28(b). Each haul must be weighed separately, all catch must be made available for sampling by a NMFS-certified observer, and no sorting of catch, except halibut sorted on deck by vessels participating in halibut deck sorting described at § 679.102, may take place prior to weighing.	Same as BSAI	Same as BSAI	Same as BSAI
Observer Sampling Station	n/a	An observer sampling station meeting the requirements at § 679.28(d) is available at all times.	Same as BSAI	Same as BSAI	Same as BSAI
Operational Line	Same as BSAI	The vessel has no more than one operational line or other conveyance for the mechanized movement of catch between the scale used to weigh total catch and the location where the observer collects species composition samples.	Same as BSAI	Same as BSAI	Same as BSAI
Fish on Deck	Same as BSAI	No fish are allowed to remain on deck unless an observer is present, except for fish inside the codend and fish accidentally spilled from the codend during hauling and dumping. Fish accidentally spilled from the codend must be moved to the fish bin.	Same as BSAI.	Same as BSAI	Same as BSAI

Monitoring	GOA Default A80 CP coverage (see 50 CFR 679.51(a)(2)(ii))	A80 BSAI 50 CFR 679.93(c)	GOA (RP Sideboard Fisheries)	A80 GOA (RP)	orting Halibut in GOA
Sample Storage	n/a	There is sufficient space to accommodate a minimum of 10 observer sampling baskets. This space must be within or adjacent to the observer sampling station.	Same as BSAI.	Same as BSAI	Same as BSAI
Pre-Cruise Meeting	n/a	The Observer Program is notified by phone at 1 (907) 581-2060 (Dutch Harbor, AK) or 1 (907) 481-1770 (Kodiak, AK) at least 24 hours prior to departure when the vessel will be carrying an observer who has not previously been deployed on that vessel within the last 12 months. Subsequent to the vessel's departure notification, but prior to departure, NMFS may contact the vessel to arrange for a pre-cruise meeting. The pre-cruise meeting must minimally include the vessel operator or manager and any observers assigned to the vessel.	Same as BSAI except the Observer Program in Kodiak must be notified by phone at 1 (907) 481-1770 (Kodiak, AK)	Same as BSAI except the Observer Program in Kodiak must be notified by phone at 1 (907) 481-1770 (Kodiak, AK)	Same as BSAI
Belt and Flow Operations	Same as BSAI	The vessel operator stops the flow of fish and clears all belts between the bin doors and the area where the observer collects samples of unsorted catch when requested to do so by the observer.	Same as BSAI	Same as BSAI	Same as BSAI
Vessel Crew in Tanks of Bins	Same as BSAI	The vessel owner or operator must comply with the bin monitoring standards specified in § 679.28(i)(1).	Same as BSAI	Same as BSAI	Same as BSAI
Mixing of Hauls	Same as BSAI	Catch from an individual haul is not mixed with catch from another haul prior to sampling by a NMFS-certified observer;	Same as BSAI	Same as BSAI	Same as BSAI

3.1.1.9 Halibut Discard Mortality Rates

Halibut DMRs for fisheries using non-pelagic trawl gear are established annually, using the best available scientific data, and coincide with the harvest specifications process. DMRs define the percentage of halibut that is incidentally caught in groundfish fisheries that do not survive. Estimated halibut mortality is counted against the established GOA trawl PSC limits. DMRs are estimated from viability (injury and condition) data collected by observers.

The DMRs are calculated annually based on the most recent methodology developed by a halibut working group made up of IPHC, Council, and NMFS staff. The DMR methodology and findings are included as an appendix to the GOA groundfish SAFE report. DMRs are calculated using either 2- or 4-year averages, depending on data available. Currently, 4-year averages are used for non-pelagic trawl CVs and 2-year averages are used for the A80 CPs (91 FR 11902) to maintain rates that best capture current fishing practices. The 2026 and 2027 GOA halibut DMRs are 0.62 for CVs using non-pelagic trawl gear in non-RP fisheries and 0.79 for CPs using non-pelagic trawl gear.[16]

3.1.1.10 Halibut Deck Sorting

Vessel operators may deck-sort halibut under the final rule published on October 15, 2019 (84 FR 55044). That final rule allows any trawl CP or mothership operating in a non-pollock groundfish fishery to participate in the halibut deck sorting program, provided it adheres to all the program's requirements. To participate in the deck sorting program, A80 vessel operators must follow monitoring rules that align with the BSAI A80 monitoring requirements. A comparison of monitoring requirements for A80 by management program is provided in Table 18.

Deck sorting halibut by the A80 sector began in 2020. The Alaska Seafood Cooperative (AKSC) Reports[17] to the Council have indicated that vessels participating in halibut deck sorting have reduced halibut mortality. All five companies that comprise the A80 sector are members of AKSC. Deck sorting halibut is used in both GOA and BSAI groundfish fisheries. All active AKSC vessels have participated in deck sorting to help achieve their target mortality rates established by the cooperative agreement. The 2021 AKSC report noted that vessel operators have become comfortable using deck sorting to mitigate halibut mortality and apply it when and where it makes sense. Members of the A80 sector have indicated that deck sorting has increased sector costs. It has also reportedly reduced the number of tows by as much as a tow per day (or approximately one-fifth of a vessel's production) due to reduced operational efficiency. These added costs are reported to have reduced revenues to both vessel owners and crews. Additional information on the estimated costs of halibut deck sorting is provided in the RIR for that action (NMFS 2019). Additional monitoring and operational costs were expected to cost the fleet about $1.3 million per year across all fisheries. The GOA costs are a fraction of the BSAI costs because of the relative amount of time spent fishing in each area.

3.1.2 Alternative 2

3.1.2.1 PSC Impacts on A80 CPs and CVs

Under the proposed action, any halibut PSC taken by the A80 sector would be deducted from the 1,705 mt trawl limit that is used by both trawl CPs and trawl CVs and the A80 sideboard limit. Any halibut PSC not used by the CV sector is available to A80 CPs if they still have halibut available under their A80 sideboard limit. The overall trawl fishery and seasonal limits available to the CVs would not be altered. The A80 sector halibut sideboard limits may or may not be increased in proportion to F/V GOLDEN FLEECE's historical usage during the qualifying period selected by the Council. Confidentiality rules limit the release of data for an individual vessel, so this analysis cannot report how much the A80 sideboard limit would

[16] The halibut DMRs are effective at 1200 hours, A.l.t., March 17, 2026, through 1200 hours, A.l.t., March 17, 2027
[17] https://www.npfmc.org/cooperative-reporting/

increase or how the increase would be divided by fishery/season. The limit would be managed by NMFS and any limit that is established may be published after the regulations are implemented.

Based on the current GOA trawl halibut PSC limits, the theoretical maximum amount of halibut PSC available to the F/V DEFENDER is 1,514 mt, excluding any unused RP CQ allocations. If the F/V DEFENDER's exemption is removed, its theoretical maximum is 474 mt, assuming the A80 halibut PSC limit is not changed. While the theoretical maximum will likely never be taken by one vessel, reducing the amount of halibut PSC a vessel may access may negatively affect that vessel and the other A80 vessels that are subject to the 474 mt A80 sideboard limit, which must accommodate the additional vessels' halibut PSC usage in their limit. Given the F/V DEFENDER's size relative to the F/V GOLDEN FLEECE, it has the potential to catch more target species than the F/V GOLDEN FLEECE, which could create a risk of increased catch halibut PSC unless it is able to reduce its halibut PSC rates well below those of the F/V GOLDEN FLEECE.

Because the A80 vessels are members of a cooperative, the cooperative may also need to reexamine how to manage the halibut PSC sideboard at a firm level. Changes to the A80 halibut PSC under the proposed action will affect those decisions and could disrupt longstanding cooperative agreements within the A80 sector.

No Change to A80 Sideboard Limit

Alternative 2 does not indicate how or if the A80 halibut PSC limit would be changed to account for the F/V GOLDEN FLEECE's history. If the limit is not modified, the amount of halibut PSC that may be used by all A80 vessels in the GOA fisheries could be impacted because the F/V DEFENDER's halibut PSC usage would accrue against the A80 sector sideboard limit. If the F/V DEFENDER joined the A80 cooperative, the impact would be in proportion to the F/V DEFENDER's future halibut PSC usage by fishery and season. If the vessel was not allowed to join the cooperative, it would either be unable to fish or would cause the cooperative to be unable to effectively manage its A80 GOA halibut PSC limit. Rules regarding the release of confidential data limit the information that may be provided for one vessel's actual groundfish catch or halibut PSC usage. However, in years when the F/V GOLDEN FLEECE previously participated in the GOA deep- and shallow-water complex fisheries, the operator often began fishing operations in March and fished throughout the rest of the trawl fishing year.

Impacts on Catcher Vessels

The CV sector would remain subject to the overall limit of 1,705 mt, with the seasonal and fishery-complex limits in place. Nothing in the proposed action would alter the overall GOA trawl halibut PSC limits. CVs may benefit from the proposed action if the A80 sector were to reach the A80 halibut sideboard limit before the trawl complex/season limit was reached, since it could prevent the one A80 CP from continuing to fish. Data provided in the No Action alternative discussion show that, based on recent history, this is unlikely to occur. It also shows that in most years, the F/V GOLDEN FLEECE's halibut PSC usage rate was below the combined average of the other A80 vessels. The F/V DEFENDER may have different halibut rates than the F/V GOLDEN FLEECE had in the past and its replacement vessel may have in the future. When the A80 Program was implemented, the F/V GOLDEN FLEECE was the smallest of the A80 CPs (104 ft) and was highly dependent on the higher valued rex sole fishery to operate profitably. The decrease in rex sole value caused the F/V GOLDEN FLEECE to be much more dependent on the arrowtooth flounder and shallow-water flatfish directed fisheries. The F/V DEFENDER is a larger vessel (123 ft) than the F/V GOLDEN FLEECE, and since replacing the F/V GOLDEN FLEECE it has operated almost exclusively in the arrowtooth flounder fishery. The F/V DEFENDER's halibut PSC rates relative to the rest of the A80 fleet were lower one year and higher the other. It is prohibited from targeting POP because of the restrictions placed on the F/V GOLDEN FLEECE.

If the A80 sector were to increase its participation in the GOA flatfish fisheries, the amount of halibut PSC used would be expected to increase. The size of the increase, and whether the sector would approach its

A80 sideboard limit, is not known with certainty, but based on past usage and changes in flatfish markets[18], the overall impact on total trawl halibut PSC usage may be relatively small. However, limiting the total shared halibut PSC limit available to A80 vessels gives CVs greater certainty about the minimum amount available for a complex/season during the year to support shorebased deliveries.

Impacts on A80 Sector

Any impact that may occur would be that an additional CP operating under the GOA A80 halibut PSC sideboard limit could cause a seasonal/fishery complex limit to be reached sooner. The provision allowing the A80 sector to roll over unused halibut PSC to the next season/fishery complex, implemented when the Council took action to reduce the trawl halibut PSC limit under Amendment 95, will help mitigate these negative impacts. Because the annual limits is divided by season and fishery complex, small amounts of halibut PSC during some seasons could alter fishing patterns, especially harvest timing early in the year. Given that the F/V GOLDEN FLEECE had often begun fishing in mid-March or later, any unused halibut PSC from the first season could be rolled over to the second season that starts on April 1. It is not known with certainty how the fishing patterns of the F/V DEFENDER will differ from those of the F/V GOLDEN FLEECE, since it began fishing partway through the 2026 fishing year under the current captain and operational guidelines established by the vessel owner. However, due to the size of the F/V DEFENDER relative to the F/V GOLDEN FLEECE and recent activity, it appears to operate more like other A80 vessels in terms of focusing on harvesting arrowtooth flounder in the GOA limited access fishery and requiring larger volumes of catch to allow the plant to operate more efficiently.

The F/V GOLDEN FLEECE historically was not part of the A80 cooperative agreements. Currently, the original owner still holds the GOLDEN FLEECE LLP license, but a separate firm owns the vessel. Business relationship information developed through private contracts is not available to fully understand the contractual obligations of the LLP license holder, the vessel's operator, and the vessel owner. However, the vessel owner has indicated that operational guidelines for the vessel operator and the vessel captain have changed between when the F/V DEFENDER fished in 2024 and when it fished in 2026.

Currently, the A80 sector manages the GOA halibut PSC sideboard through a voluntary cooperative. Each vessel/firm is assigned an amount of the sideboard limit by the cooperative based on their catch history used to determine the sideboard limit. The A80 firms have contracted with SeaState to access catch and sideboard limit data and provide data to the A80 cooperative manager who monitors and directs the A80 groundfish fishery. If the changes to the halibut PSC sideboard limit cause the A80 sector to not reach an agreement on the cooperative's allocation of halibut because the catch history of the F/V GOLDEN FLEECE or its replacement vessel is not included, NMFS may have to manage the A80 GOA fisheries more closely for overages, potentially leading to additional agency costs.

Halibut PSC limits and market availability have heavily influenced trawl groundfish harvests in the GOA. A80 vessels have harvested almost exclusively arrowtooth flounder from 2023 through Sept. 5, 2026, when fishing in flatfish target fisheries (98.6% of catch). Entry of the F/V DEFENDER is expected to increase effort and catch in the arrowtooth flounder fishery, but the vessel's limited catch history as a replacement, along with confidentiality restrictions, limits what can be reported about its catch history.

The loss of profitable markets for CV deliveries of flatfish, other than arrowtooth flounder, has limited catcher vessels' harvests of most flatfish species in recent years. Shorebased processing of trawl catches has become increasingly concentrated in Kodiak, and is where shorebased deliveries of arrowtooth flounder have been made.

[18] Data presented in this document indicate that the 2025 real ($2025) gross first wholesale price of GOA arrowtooth flounder was 46% higher than 2024.

Increase the A80 Halibut PSC Sideboard Limit by Including the F/V GOLDEN FLEECE's History

It is assumed that if the A80 sector's halibut PSC limit is increased by the historical halibut usage of the F/V GOLDEN FLEECE in the GOA, the A80 cooperative would assign an amount determined by the cooperative members to the firm operating the F/V DEFENDER. Members within the cooperative could trade or sell the PSC limit, but as discussed, trawl CVs can also use it.

If the A80 voluntary cooperative does not allow the F/V DEFENDER to join the cooperative so that the cooperative does not include all vessels fishing under the A80 halibut PSC limit, NMFS would need to take a more active role in managing the GOA groundfish and PSC limits. Under that scenario, agency costs are expected to increase. The lack of a predictable fishery could also be costly to A80 participants who have been in the cooperative, and the uncertainty could impact their ability to make a fishing plan for the year.

The A80 cooperative monitors its members' halibut PSC usage and sets rules to help prevent excessive use. Because the F/V DEFENDER's halibut PSC usage would be accounted against the A80 sideboard limit, for the cooperative apportionment of halibut to function properly, the operator of the F/V DEFENDER would likely need to be part of that agreement and operate within its established bylaws. The LLP license holder and the firm that owns the replacement vessel using that LLP license would negotiate those private contracts within the overall cooperative structure.

There may also be issues associated with how halibut PSC added to the A80 sideboard limit may be fished. For example, the F/V GOLDEN FLEECE fished the rex sole, shallow-water flatfish, flathead sole, and arrowtooth flounder. Halibut PSC taken in the shallow-water flatfish and flathead sole target fisheries is accounted against the shallow-water halibut PSC limit. Rex sole and arrowtooth flounder are accounted against the deep-water halibut PSC limit. If the halibut PSC sideboard limits are changed based on whether the halibut was taken from the deep- or shallow-water halibut PSC limit, and the F/V DEFENDER only targets arrowtooth flounder, it could constrict the amount of halibut sideboard available for that fishery during the first four halibut PSC seasonal apportionments.

3.1.2.2 Impact on Directed Halibut Fishery

Because the A80 sector and the overall trawl PSC limits in the GOA have not been fully taken in recent years, the proposed change to the accounting for the halibut PSC usage of the F/V DEFENDER is not expected to impact the amount of halibut available to the directed halibut fishery. The halibut PSC usage by the F/V DEFENDER would be deducted from both the A80 GOA halibut sideboard limit and the overall GOA trawl halibut PSC limit. Once the A80 sector reaches its A80 sideboard limit, all vessels fishing under the limit are required to stop fishing until the next annual or seasonal release of halibut PSC. The A80 sector has already limited its catch of many flatfish species, partly because of halibut PSC limit constraints. How that usage is accounted for under the overall trawl PSC limit and the A80 sideboard limit does not change how the IPHC determines the annual allocations to the directed fishery. The IPHC considers the amount of halibut mortality in the groundfish fisheries but does not distinguish between whether the bycatch was attributed to the A80 halibut GOA sideboard limit or the overall GOA trawl PSC limit. To the extent the A80 halibut PSC sideboard limit is a constraint and reduces the amount of halibut mortality in the GOA groundfish fisheries, it will be taken into account when the halibut directed fishery catch limits are determined, but if any change in the amount of GOA trawl halibut PSC used is realized from this action, it is not expected to have negligible impacts on the directed fishery allocations.

Interactions between the A80 vessels and the directed halibut fleets are also not expected to change as a result of this action. If any changes occur, they would be more likely driven by changes in effort in the flatfish fisheries. Because fewer than 10 A80 vessels have fished in the GOA in recent years and gear conflicts have not been raised as a substantial concern, the proposed changes are not expected to negatively affect gear interactions.

3.1.2.3 Impact on Directed Tanner Crab Fishery

Accounting for halibut usage of the F/V DEFENDER is not expected to impact the directed Tanner crab fishery. The A80 sector is expected to continue to fish when and where it can minimize all PSC usage. If decisions must be made to choose where to fish based on differential Tanner crab and halibut rates, it could impact the PSC usage of those species. The A80 cooperative reviews PSC rates and provides the fleet with information to avoid areas with high rates.

Other Tanner crab actions being considered by the Council are likely to have a greater impact on the Tanner crab fishery than this action. Depending on whether the Council adopts additional area closures could impact

3.1.2.4 Summary of Costs

Overall fishing costs may increase somewhat for the A80 sector. Costs for the CV fleet are not expected to change as a result of this action. A80 sector costs may increase if additional expenses are incurred to avoid catching halibut PSC. Those costs would be associated with moving to avoid areas with high halibut PSC rates or fishing less productive areas, especially given current high diesel fuel costs. They may also have costs to purchase halibut excluder devices to reduce the catch of halibut.

Costs associated with monitoring, deck sorting, and changes to cooperative rules to limit catch and bycatch are outside of the scope of this option. However, if the replacement vessel operator wishes to make additional investments in camera or other EM equipment in the future, those purchases will incur costs.

Any changes in the A80 cooperative agreement will increase costs, so they operate under the cooperative's individual vessel limits. The individual limits established by the cooperative allow the rest of the fleet to have access to an agreed-upon amount of GOA halibut PSC within the A80 sideboard limit. Limits established through the cooperative provide A80 sector members with more planning flexibility.

If the A80 halibut PSC sideboard limit is not changed under the proposed action, the voluntary A80 cooperative could choose not to admit the vessel into the cooperative since it would not bring any halibut PSC into the cooperative. Current cooperative members could make that decision to prevent destabilization of the cooperative. If that occurred, the F/V DEFENDER would have no halibut available to it or could fish outside the cooperative and destabilize the cooperative members' agreement. Because the replacement vessel has no other fishing opportunities in the BSAI or GOA, it would effectively be excluded from fishing if it did not fish using other A80 cooperative members’ halibut PSC.

3.1.3 Alternative 3

Approval of Alternative 3 would mean that BSAI monitoring requirements for A80 would also apply in all GOA groundfish fisheries. The change would increase GOA CP monitoring requirements for vessels when not fishing in the RP, under RP sideboard limits (July), or when deck sorting halibut. Applying the same requirements across fisheries would simplify A80 monitoring regulations in the GOA but would have little or no impact on how the fleet is currently monitored in the GOA, since all A80 vessels operating in the GOA are currently voluntarily meeting the BSAI monitoring requirements.

Modifying vessels to meet the additional monitoring requirements would be unnecessary, since they are already configured to comply with the BSAI monitoring and deck sorting regulations. A80 vessels currently operating in the GOA are also, or have also, fished in the A80 BSAI fisheries. This means the investments required to weigh fish on an NMFS-approved scale, have one line to move and process fish, have the required bins already installed on the vessels, and have the required number and qualification requirements for observers on the vessel. Vessel owners and operators report that they are willing to accept the increased monitoring costs to ensure catch estimates are more accurate and less prone to extrapolation bias. When operating under strict halibut PSC and Chinook salmon limits, sector

representatives felt it was important to account for those PSC species as accurately as possible, since the cooperative subdivides the overall sideboard limits and vessel/firm-level limits can be small. Those potentially restrictive limits at both the fleet and individual levels create incentives to voluntarily have as many hauls as possible monitored.

Voluntary compliance with the higher coverage requirements also provides more flexibility to change fisheries or deck sort on a trip without bringing another observer on board, since they already use the catch weighing protocols. For example, if a vessel operator wanted to deck sort halibut on some hauls but not all, they would have that option because they are already meeting the monitoring requirements for deck sorting.

Because they currently operate under monitoring requirements equivalent to the BSAI A80 requirements, daily cost changes to meet the proposed standards are not anticipated. Costs will vary depending on how many days observers are on the vessel, which depends on changes in TACs and increased participation in fisheries where TACs are currently underutilized (e.g., flatfish fisheries).

3.2 Communities

This section focuses on communities associated with ownership of A80 sector vessels. The majority of the A80 sector vessel owners have an ownership address in the Seattle metropolitan statistical area (MSA). Outside of Seattle, one firm's address is reported as Rockland, ME and one LLP license holder is in South Bend, WA. Those firms are associated with the F/V DEFENDER and the LLP license currently assigned to the F/V DEFENDER. Due to fleet being highly concentrated in Seattle, data confidentiality rules prohibit reporting catch and value data for each community. Therefore, tables that include catch or value are aggregated for the entire sector in this section.

The Community Development Quota (CDQ) group Norton Sound Economic Development Corporation (NSEDC) has an ownership interest in the Glacier Fish Company that operates A80 vessels that fish in the GOA. They primarily fish rockfish (including POP). The CDQ groups have contractual agreements with A80 vessel owners to harvest allocations of A80 BSAI quota. Any changes to the profitability of the vessels of which the CDQ groups are part owners will impact those firms and communities. However, this analysis focuses on the ownership information provided in the CAS data.

Table 19 shows the number of A80 catcher processors that were active in GOA fisheries from 2016 through 2025. About 82% of the fleet was reported as Seattle-owned. Seattle-owned vessel participation declined from a high of 13 vessels in 2016 to six vessels in 2025. Only 2021 had fewer vessels participating, and that year's participation was likely impacted by the COVID pandemic. The number of active vessels across all communities has declined from 14 in 2016 to seven in 2025. A count of the number of unique vessels that participated in GOA fisheries is shown in the rightmost column. A total of 19 A80 vessels were active at some point during the period, and 16 had a Seattle ownership address.

Table 19. A80 Trawl Catcher/Processors Active in the GOA by Community of Historic Ownership Address, 2016-2025(number of vessels)

Community	2016	2017	2018	2019	2020	2021	2022	2023	2024	2025	Annual Average 2016-2025 (number)	Annual Average 2016-2025 (percent)	Unique Vessels 2016-2025 (number)
Rockland Maine	0	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	2	1	1.0	10.87%	3
Seattle Washington	13	9	7	9	7	5	6	7	6	6	7.5	81.52%	16
South Bend Washington	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	0	0	0	0.7	7.61%	1
Washington	14	10	8	10	8	6	7	7	6	6	8.2	89.13%	17
Grand Total	14	11	9	11	9	7	8	8	8	7	9.2	100.00%	19

Source: NMFS Alaska Region Catch Accounting System, data compiled by AKFIN in Comprehensive_BLEND_CA

Table 20 shows the amount of gross first wholesale revenue generated by A80 vessels in GOA fisheries over the 2016 through 2025 period. The values are shown in real 2025 dollars to provide a more accurate comparison of the true value across years. As stated earlier, because only one firm is in Rockland, ME, and one in South Bend, WA, the first wholesale gross revenue information is aggregated and cannot be reported by individual community.

GOA first wholesale gross revenue ranged from a high of $66 million in 2017 to a low of $27 million in 2020. The average annual value over the entire period was $41 million.

Table 20. A80 Trawl Catcher Processors First Wholesale Gross Revenues in the GOA by Community of Vessel Historic Ownership Address, 2016-2025 (millions of 2025 real dollars)

Geography	2016	2017	2018	2019	2020	2021	2022	2023	2024	2025	Annual Average 2015-2023 ($ millions)	Annual Average 2015-2023 (percent)
Total*	$44.54	$66.20	$44.84	$36.98	$27.33	$33.38	$43.86	$32.82	$38.29	$44.32	$41.26	100.00%

Source: NMFS Alaska Region Catch Accounting System, data compiled by AKFIN in Comprehensive_BLEND_CA

*Includes Seattle MSA, South Bend WA and Rockland ME

Table 21 provides information on the relative proportion of first wholesale gross revenue generated by A80 vessels active in the GOA. On average, the vessels generated about 17% of their total first wholesale value from the GOA fisheries. This indicates, as expected, that most of the fleet generates the majority of its revenue (about $197 million on average) from fisheries outside the GOA.

Table 21. Wholesale Value Diversification for A80 Trawl Catcher Processors Active in the GOA, 2016-2025 (millions of 2025 real dollars)

Community	Annual Average Number of Vessels	Annual Average First Wholesale Value for GOA	Annual Average Total Wholesale Value from All Area, Gear, and Species Fisheries	GOA Wholesale Value as a Percentage of Total Wholesale Value Annual Average
Total*	9.2	$41.26	$238.34	17.31%

Source: NMFS Alaska Region Catch Accounting System, data compiled by AKFIN in Comprehensive_BLEND_CA

*Includes Seattle MSA, South Bend WA and Rockland ME

Table 22 compares the first wholesale gross revenue generated by trawl catcher processors active in the GOA against the entire first wholesale gross revenue by the fleets in the community. As shown in Table 21, there was an average of 9.2 A80 vessels in the GOA fisheries, and they generated about $238 million in first wholesale gross revenue across all fisheries. An average of 134.3 vessels had an ownership address

within those communities. The finfish and shellfish vessels' catches, in terms of first wholesale gross revenue, from those communities averaged over $2 billion annually. Meaning that 11.7% of the first wholesale gross revenue in those communities was derived from the A80 vessels that fished in the GOA.

Table 22. First Wholesale Value Diversification for Communities with A80 Trawl Catcher Processors Active in the GOA, 2016-2025 (millions of 2025 real dollars)

Community	Annual Average Number of Vessels	Annual Average Number of All Commercial Fishing Vessels in those Same Communities*	Annual Average 2016-2025 (dollars)	Annual Average Total First Wholesale Value from All Areas, Gears, and Species Fisheries for the Community Fleet*	Participant Wholesale Value as a Percentage of Total Community Wholesale Revenue Annual Average
Total*	9.2	134.3	$238.34	$2,041.07	11.7%

Source: NMFS Alaska Region Catch Accounting System, data compiled by AKFIN in Comprehensive_BLEND_CA

*Includes Seattle MSA, South Bend WA and Rockland ME

Table 23 shows the annual number of A80 vessels by the percentage of first wholesale gross revenue derived from GOA fisheries. One vessel (GOLDEN FLEECE) from 2016 through 2022 derived between 90% and 100% of its first wholesale revenue from the GOA fisheries. Only one additional vessel in 2016 and 2017 derived more than 60% of its first wholesale gross revenue from the GOA. A majority of vessels averaged deriving less than 30% of their revenue from the GOA.

Table 23. A80 Trawl Catcher Processors by GOA Revenue by Percent of Total Revenue, 2016-2025 (number of vessels)

GOA Rev as a % of Total	2016	2017	2018	2019	2020	2021	2022	2023	2024	2025	Annual Average 2016-2025
0-10%	1	1	0	2	1	0	0	0	0	0	0.50
10-20%	6	3	1	3	1	0	2	4	2	2	2.40
20-30%	3	2	5	2	5	1	2	2	3	2	2.70
30-40%	2	2	1	1	1	4	2	1	2	2	1.80
40-50%	0	0	1	0	0	1	1	0	0	0	0.30
50-60%	0	1	0	2	0	0	0	1	1	1	0.60
60-70%	1	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0.10
70-80%	0	1	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0.10
80-90%	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0.00
90-100%	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	0	0	0	0.70
Grand Total	14	11	9	11	9	7	8	8	8	7	9.20

Source: NMFS Alaska Region Catch Accounting System, data compiled by AKFIN in Comprehensive_BLEND_CA

Table 24 further breaks down the first wholesale gross revenue in 10% increments by A80 vessels active in the GOA by fishery management program. Table 23 Showed that 0.7 vessels, on average, generated 90% through 100% of their first wholesale gross revenue from the GOA groundfish fishery. That same information is shown in Table 24 in the "90-100%" row of the "Other GOA" column and the <1% CDQ since that vessel only participated in the Other GOA fisheries category.

A majority vessels in Table 24 generated less than 1% of their first wholesale gross revenue in either the RP or CDQ program. Both programs allow firms to aggregate quota they control for harvest on fewer

vessels to create efficiencies. An average of 5.7 (of the 9.2 total) vessels were reported to generate less than 10% of their average first wholesale gross revenue from limited access GOA (other GOA) fisheries from 2016 through 2025. Most vessels (7.2 of the 9.2) generated at least 60% of their first wholesale gross revenue from the A80 fisheries in the BSAI.

Table 24. A80 Trawl Catcher Processors Active in the GOA by Categorical Percent of Total Revenue, 2016-2025 (average number of vessels)

Rev as a % of Total	GOA RP	Other GOA	A80	CDQ
<.1%	5.1	0.4	0.7	6.2
.1-10%	0.9	5.3	0.0	2.2
10-20%	2.7	1.6	0.0	0.6
20-30%	0.5	0.7	0.1	0.2
30-40%	0.0	0.2	0.0	0.0
40-50%	0.0	0.1	0.6	0.0
50-60%	0.0	0.1	0.6	0.0
60-70%	0.0	0.1	1.4	0.0
70-80%	0.0	0.0	2.3	0.0
80-90%	0.0	0.0	2.0	0.0
90-100%	0.0	0.7	1.5	0.0
Total	9.2	9.2	9.2	9.2

Source: NMFS Alaska Region Catch Accounting System, data compiled by AKFIN in Comprehensive_BLEND_CA

3.3 Affected Small Entities

The Regulatory Flexibility Act (RFA) recognizes and defines three kinds of small entities: 1) small businesses, 2) small non-profit organizations, and 3) small government jurisdictions. Under the RFA, businesses that are classified as primarily engaged in commercial fishing are considered small entities if they have combined annual gross receipts not in excess of $11.0 million for all affiliated operations worldwide, regardless of the type of fishing operation (81 FR 4469; January 26, 2016). The entities evaluated under this small entity definition threshold are catcher processor vessels owned by firms included in the A80 sector.

If a vessel has a known affiliation with other vessels – through business ownership or through a cooperative – these thresholds are measured against the small entity threshold based on the total gross revenues of all affiliated vessels. This action also affects the six Western Alaska CDQ entities that are non-profit corporations, are not dominant in the GOA limited access fishery, and are specifically identified as "small" entities in the regulations implementing the RFA. The CDQ entities have made direct investments in fishing vessels by creating wholly owned for-profit fishing companies, several of which are directly regulated by this action. However, as for-profit ventures, these companies are not automatically defined as small entities due to CDQ ownership, and this analysis has determined that they are all Amendment 80 cooperative-affiliated. Thus, while this proposed action directly regulates these for-profit CDQ owned companies, they are considered to be large entities for RFA purposes.

The holder of the original F/V GOLDEN FLEECE LLP license (Golden Fleece Inc.)
has been identified as a potentially directly regulated small entity based on past analyses. That LLP license is assigned to the F/V DEFENDER. The analysts do not have access to information regarding contractual relationships between the two firms to determine how those business relationships are defined. However,

since Golden Fleece Inc. and the owner of the F/V DEFENDER (O'Hara Corp.) are affiliated through a business arrangement and the owner of the F/V DEFENDER is not considered a small entity. Therefore, the LLP license holder is not considered to be a small entity.

From 2024 through September 2026, 22 CPs affiliated with the A80 sector are allowed to participate in the GOA groundfish fisheries, but only nine fished in the limited access fisheries from 2024 through 2026. Five A80 companies owned all the vessels, and six CDQ groups had partnerships with A80 companies. All five companies were members of the Best Use Cooperative. Based on 2025 revenue and the affiliation of the firms, none of the vessels operating in this fishery are classified as small entities.

Table 25. A80 Program Small Entity Summary

Entity class	2024-2026	2026 Total	2026 Small Entities
Vessels	*9*	*8*	*0*
Businesses	*5*	*5*	*0*
Cooperatives	*1*	*1*	*0*
Total	***15***	***14***	***0***

Source: ADFG/CFEC Fish Tickets, data compiled by AKFIN in Comprehensive_FT

3.4 Summation of the Alternatives with Respect to Net Benefit to the Nation (to be completed after the Council selects a PPA)

RIRs are required under E.O. 12866 to include an analysis of the net benefits of the proposed action to the Nation. Net benefits to the Nation are the sum of consumer and producer surplus in the U.S. economy. Cost benefit analyses (CBA) are typically used to estimate the benefits.

This section compares the expected benefits and costs of an action. When all benefits and costs can be quantified and expressed in monetary units, the analysis provides decision makers with information to identify the alternative that generates the largest net benefit to the U.S. When it is not possible to express benefits and costs in monetary terms, Circular A-4 (2003) directs the analysis to rely on a qualitative assessment of the costs and benefits.

The RIR provides information on expected changes in costs and benefits for the proposed alternatives and options and, when appropriate, discusses the uncertainty around those potential changes. For example, how the overall trawl halibut PSC usage would be impacted by the removal of a sideboard limit on one CP that will not change the overall trawl PSC limit available to catcher vessels However, there is uncertainty over how much of a halibut PSC sideboard limit the A80 sector will catch on an annual basis.

Changes in employment and most tax revenues are not economic benefits within a CBA, but they are important to the individuals and communities they affect. The former is an economic impact, and the latter is a transfer payment within the economy.

For consistency in accounting, impacts categorized as potential costs are related to the investment or inputs required to achieve the goals of the action. This means impacts could represent either cost savings or additional costs resulting from the action.

The expected impact on operational costs and revenue from the alternatives being considered relative to the No Action alternative on the F/V DEFENDER and the rest of the A80 sector will depend on the Council's decision on adjusting the A80 halibut PSC sideboard. If the sideboard is adjusted to account for

the halibut PSC taken by the F/V DEFENDER, the impact on the A80 sector is expected to be small. If the F/V DEFENDER's halibut PSC constrains either the A80 sector or the A80 halibut PSC limit is not adjusted, it will have greater negative impacts. If the F/V DEFENDER has no PSC to contribute to the cooperative, other members of the cooperative could choose not to admit the vessel into the cooperative. Given the constraints imposed on using the LLP license, opportunities for any vessel assigned to the LLP license either do not exist or are not economically viable. If the vessel continued to fish outside of the cooperative, it would disrupt the agreements other vessels in the cooperative have developed. The limited-access fisheries for the A80 vessels in the GOA would be unlikely to be fished rationally and would require additional NMFS oversight, increasing the costs to NMFS.

Implementing a halibut PSC limit for all A80 vessels would increase the certainty of the amount of halibut that would be available to the trawl CV fleet that delivers to Kodiak. The Council's decision on how much of the overall trawl halibut PSC limit that may be taken by the A80 fleet will impact this outcome.

The relationship between this action's change to the A80 GOA PSC sideboard exemption for the F/V DEFENDER and benefits to the directed halibut fishery is complex and depends on several factors. PSC reductions could indirectly increase directed halibut catch in two ways. First, reductions in the U26 portion of the PSC could lead to longer-term benefits to the commercial halibut fisheries throughout the distribution of the halibut stock. Benefits from reduced mortality of these smaller halibut could occur more areas than just the GOA as halibut migrate and recruit into the commercial halibut fisheries. Second, the projected O26 portion of non-directed discard mortality (bycatch) is deducted from the TCEY by IPHC Regulatory Area when calculating fishing limits. Near term benefits to GOA halibut fisheries would result from any PSC mortality reductions of halibut that are over 26 inches in length (O26). A portion of these halibut would be available to the commercial halibut fishery in the area where the PSC mortality is foregone, in subsequent years or when the fish reach the legal size limit for the commercial halibut fishery (NMFS & NPFMC 2022).

The magnitude of the relationship between PSC limits and directed catch limits depends on many variables. According to the IPHC interim management procedure, the non-directed discard mortality projection used when calculating catch limits is the three-year average non-directed discard mortality from the most recent year. Therefore, a change in the PSC use in a specific year will only begin to affect the trade-off with the directed halibut limit in the next year. The relationship between the PSC limit and PSC use varies, therefore a reduction in the PSC limit may not always generate an increase in directed catch limits in the short-term and even when it does, the magnitude may vary based on the actual A80 O26 PSC mortality.

Regulatory changes to monitoring requirements could affect the A80 fleet when operating in the GOA. However, operators of those vessels currently meet the proposed monitoring requirements. So, the impact on cost and revenue is expected to be minimal, now and in the future, because the motivations for monitoring the vessel's catch will not change under the proposed action.

Table 26. Changes in Net Benefits to the Nation

Proposed Action	Expected Change in Net Benefits to the Nation
Alternative 2, Remove Halibut PSC Exemption granted to the F/V GOLDEN FLEECE and its replacement vessel.	• Removing the halibut PSC exemption that is granted to the F/V DEFENDER is not expected to result in significant changes to how the GOA flatfish fisheries are prosecuted if the A80 sideboard limit is increased to include its historical usage of all A80 vessels, and the history used is representative of the halibut PSC usage of the replacement vessel. • If the A80 PSC limit is not increased, the LLP license assigned to the F/V DEFENDER may provide few, if any, fishing opportunities for the vessel it is assigned. Without the exemption, and no additional access to halibut PSC, the F/V DEFENDER would either not fish because it had no access to halibut PSC, fish off the A80 halibut PSC limit and potentially disrupt the current cooperative agreement. If it fished without being part of the cooperative agreement, the cooperative may disband for the GOA fisheries, and NMFS would need to manage the GOA-limited access A80 fisheries more closely. • The trawl CV fleet would have greater certainty regarding the amount of halibut PSC that would be available to the sector. The total amount that is available to the CV fleet will depend on how the A80 halibut PSC sideboard limit is adjusted and how much of the limit is used by A80 sector. • Removal of the F/V DEFENDER's halibut PSC exemption does not necessarily mean less halibut PSC will be taken by the GOA trawl fleets. If the exemption does not result in changes to the amount of halibut taken by the GOA trawl vessels, it will have little or no impact on the directed halibut fishery. If the trawl vessels use less halibut as a result of the exemption being removed than it would have under the Status Quo, the halibut PSC that is under 26" will impact the total amount of halibut available in future years and the amount could increase both in the GOA and other areas where GOA halibut migrate. If halibut PSC take is reduced for fish over 26" it would increase the directed halibut fishery TCEY in the following year in the IPHC area where the PSC was taken.
Alternative 3, Require BSAI Monitoring Rules in GOA.	Because all vessel operators are currently complying with the BSAI monitoring regulations when fishing in the GOA, changes in net benefits to the Nation would be small or unchanged. Vessel operators could purchase additional equipment to avoid catching halibut (e.g., excluder devices).

4 Management and Enforcement Considerations

4.1 Management

Regulations at §679.92(b)(2), §679.92(d), and §679.93(e)(4)(ii) would need to be updated or deleted to reflect the halibut sideboard restrictions that apply to the F/V GOLDEN FLEECE or its replacement vessel. Monitoring regulations at §679.93 would need to be updated to reflect that the A80 BSAI monitoring requirements apply to all A80 vessels whenever they are fishing for groundfish in the GOA. These regulations are provided in the Appendix.

Depending on how the Council addresses the A80 sideboard limits, it could require changes to the CAS. While there may be upfront costs to address the changes, it may reduce the cost and complexity of the system over the long-run, since the catch of the F/V DEFENDER would be accounted for the same as all other A80 vessels in the GOA limited access fishery.

If the A80 cooperative is disbanded in the GOA, NMFS will need to monitor sideboard limits more closely in-season to ensure they are not exceeded. The cooperative has played an important role in ensuring that vessels and firms in the cooperative stayed within their individual limits, thereby ensuring the overall limit was not exceeded. To the extent NMFS will need to spend more time managing the sideboard limits in the GOA, it will increase their workload and increase costs.

4.2 Enforcement

No changes to existing enforcement tools are needed to ensure the A80 sector stays within its A80 sideboard limit for halibut PSC or complies with the existing A80 sideboard limit for halibut PSC or is in compliance with the monitoring requirements on a trip. The A80 halibut PSC limit is currently being enforced to ensure that it is not exceeded. Monitoring requirements apply to the entire GOA trawl and hook-and-line fleets. Enforcement of those monitoring requirements will continue. Because the A80 sector would have the same monitoring requirements regardless of the GOA fishery the vessel is participating in, enforcement staff will not need to determine which monitoring standard the vessel should operate under at any given time. Standardized monitoring requirements should benefit enforcement.

5 Environmental Impacts

This chapter evaluates the potentially affected environment and the degree of the impacts of the alternatives on the various resource components, together with relevant past, present, and reasonably foreseeably actions. Economic impacts of this action are described in Chapter 3

Recent and relevant information, necessary to understand the affected environment for each resource component, is summarized in the relevant section below. For each resource component, the analysis identifies the potential impacts of each alternative, and evaluates these impacts. If significant impacts are likely to occur, preparation of an EIS is required. Only adverse effects can be considered significant.[19]

5.1 Methods for Environmental Impact Analysis

5.1.1 Resource Components Addressed in the Analysis

This section discusses the components of the environment and whether the proposed action and its alternatives have the potential to impact that resource component and thus require further analysis. Environmental analysis for all resource components that overlap with the action area is not needed, as the proposed action is not anticipated to have impacts on every resource component.

The resource components that will be discussed further in this analysis are halibut and GOA Tanner crab.

5.1.2 Effects of Aggregate Past, Present, and Reasonably Foreseeable Future Actions and Environmental Trends

Table 27 below provides a review of the relevant past, present, and reasonably foreseeable actions and environmental trends that may result in aggregate effects on the resource components analyzed in this document. A complete review of the past, present, and reasonable foreseeable actions and environmental trends are described in the prior NEPA documents (Section 1.4) and the supplemental information report (SIR) NMFS prepares to annually assess whether supplementation of the Alaska Groundfish Harvest Specifications EIS is required in order to implement the annual groundfish harvest specifications. SIRs have been developed to support the annual groundfish harvest specifications since 2007 and are available on the NMFS Alaska Region website. Each SIR describes changes to the groundfish fisheries and harvest specifications process, new information about environmental components that may be impacted by the groundfish fisheries, and new circumstances, including present and reasonably foreseeable future actions. NMFS reviews the reasonably foreseeable future actions described in the Harvest Specifications EIS each year to determine whether they occurred and, if they did occur, whether they would change the analysis in the Harvest Specifications EIS of the impacts of the harvest strategy on the human environment. In addition, NMFS considered whether substantial new circumstances or information have occurred since the Harvest Specifications EIS that bear on the harvest strategy or its impacts and would cause significantly different effects from those already analyzed. The SIRs review new information and circumstances since the development of the Harvest Specifications EIS to determine whether supplementation of that EIS is required and provide aggregate effects information applicable to the alternatives analyzed in this EA.

Actions are understood to be human actions (e.g., implementing new fishing gear), as distinguished from natural events (e.g., an ecological regime shift). Actions are considered reasonably foreseeable if some concrete step has been taken toward implementation, such as a Council recommendation or NMFS's publication of a proposed rule. Actions only "under consideration" have not generally been included, because they may change substantially or may not be adopted, and so cannot be reasonably described,

[19] NOAA Companion Manual (p.5)

predicted, or foreseen. Identification of actions likely to impact a resource component within this action's area and time frame will allow the public and Council to make a reasoned choice among alternatives.

Environmental trends are patterns of change in the natural environment that happen over time (e.g., declining biodiversity, rising temperatures, increased pathogens). Evidence that something is an environmental trend would show that it is a pattern or change occurring over time, rather than a one-time event. Evidence that supports environmental trends includes repeated measurements over time, consistent direction, long-term data sets, scientific studies, or supporting environmental indicators.

Table 27. Past, present, and reasonably foreseeable actions and environmental trends that may result in aggregate effects on the resource components affected by the proposed action.

Category	Summary	Estimated Timeframe	Resource Components Affected
Actions			
IPHC Stock Assessment	Provides an evaluation of the biological, environmental, and fishery-related status of the Pacific halibut resource across the Convention Area. Four alternative modeling strategies evaluate stock scale, evaluate recent biomass fluctuations, and characterize management risks under varying harvest policies. These strategies use the best available scientific information from fishery-dependent and fishery-independent sources to derive multi-year stock projections and populate the tactical harvest decision table. The assessment evaluates the effects of different catch levels including catch of halibut taken in groundfish fisheries and environmental factors on spawning biomass, relative spawning status, total mortality, cohort recruitment strengths, Pacific Decadal Oscillation (PDO) climate regimes, size-at-age metrics, and future fishery yield trend projections.	Annual in December	Halibut
Groundfish Harvest Specifications	The GOA SAFE report reviews recent research and provides estimates of the biomass of each GOA groundfish species and other biological parameters. The SAFE report includes the allowable biological catch specifications used by NMFS in the annual harvest specifications. The SAFE report also summarizes available information on the ecosystems and the economic condition of the groundfish fisheries off Alaska.	Annual	Halibut Tanner Crab
GOA Tanner Crab Action	Provides an evaluation of the environmental, social, and economic effects of proposed Tanner crab protection measures in the GOA groundfish fisheries.	Final Action Expected 2027	Halibut Tanner Crab

Category	Summary	Estimated Timeframe	Resource Components Affected
	It examines management strategies to implement new time and area closures on the east side of Kodiak Island, as well as a process to evaluate, modify, or remove existing federal crab closures in compliance with Federal regulations, the GOA Groundfish FMP, and the Magnuson-Stevens Act. Protective measures are evaluated using the best available scientific data, species distribution modeling, and spatial mapping to conserve Tanner crab populations while minimizing adverse operational and economic impacts on Central GOA groundfish harvesters.		
Environmental Trends			
Environmental Variability	NOAA Fisheries has developed an action plan for the GOA to respond to climate change. The goal is to provide information on what is changing, why it is changing and how to respond. The information developed can be used help increase the resilience of the region's valuable marine resources and the communities that depend on them, and provide decision-makers with information. (https://www.fisheries.noaa.gov/s3/2022-06/ARAP-GOA%20Overview_508.pdf)	Ongoing	Halibut Tanner Crab

5.2 Halibut

5.2.1 Status

The best scientific information available indicates that Pacific halibut stocks are not overfished and are not subject to overfishing. The IPHC sets conservative harvest levels, and fisheries are managed to limit harvests to those recommended levels. Directed fisheries in Alaska include commercial, personal use, recreational, and subsistence use. All gear types take halibut as bycatch in commercial groundfish fisheries. Halibut bycatch management and halibut PSC mortality in the GOA trawl fisheries is described in detail in Section 3.1.1.4.

IPHC estimates of halibut female spawning biomass are presented in Figure 6 using four models. The results of the 2025 stock assessment indicate that the Pacific halibut stock declined continuously from the late 1990s to around 2012. That trend is estimated to have been largely a result of decreasing size-at-age, as well as reduced recruitment levels compared to those observed during the 1980s. The spawning biomass (SB) is estimated to have increased gradually to 2016, and then decreased to a low of 153 million pounds (~69,500 t) at the beginning of 2024. At the beginning of 2026, the spawning biomass is estimated to be 166 million pounds (75,300 t). Pacific halibut recruitment estimates show relatively large cohorts in 1999 and 2005, followed by much lower average recruitment beginning in 2006, which has led to recent estimated declines in both the stock and fishery yield as these low recruitments have moved into the

spawning biomass. Based on age data through 2024, this assessment estimates that the 2012, 2016 and 2017 year-classes are currently the most important in the fishery and survey catches but are only near average when compared to the preceding 15 years. The IPHC's Harvest Strategy Policy (HSP) uses a relative spawning biomass of 30% as a fishery trigger, reducing the reference fishing intensity if relative spawning biomass decreases further toward a limit reference point at 20%. Below 20%, directed fishing is halted due to the critically low stock status. The relative spawning biomass at the beginning of 2026 was estimated to be 38%, slightly higher than the estimate for 2024 (36%). There is a 15% probability of stock decline in 2026 for the status quo level of coastwide mortality.

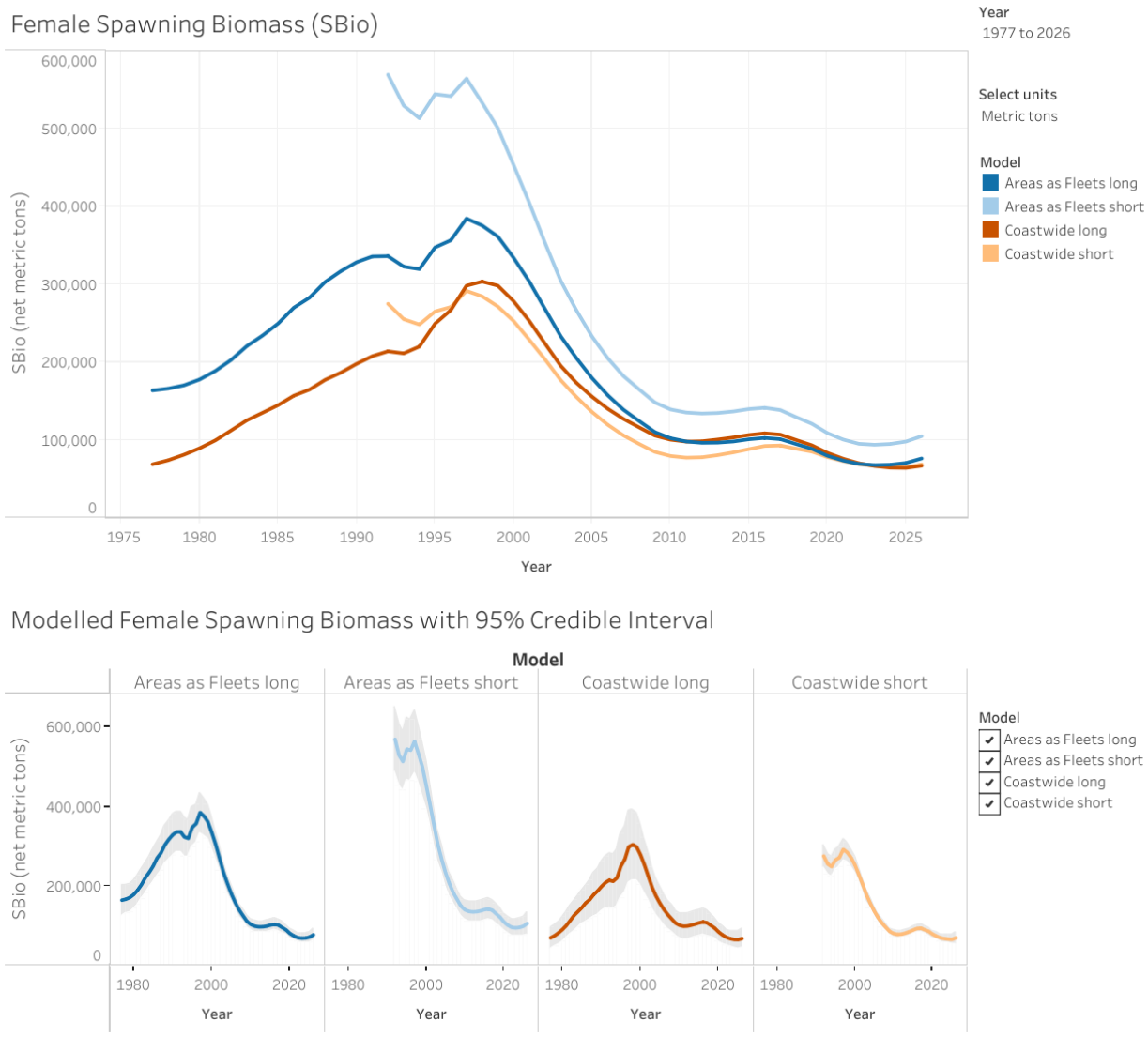


Figure 6. IPHC Female Spawning Biomass Estimates, 1975-2026

IPHC. 2026. Table IPHC-2026-TSD-029: Female spawning biomass (Sbio) - estimates from four assessment models. Accessed [September 25, 2026]

A summary of catch, discard mortality, and total removals in the directed commercial halibut fisheries in IPHC areas 2C through 4E are provided in Table 28. That data indicates total directed commercial landings in 2025 were 34% of the 2010 amount and directed commercial discard mortality was 28%, indicating substantial declines in landings and improvements in discard mortality rates.

Table 28. Directed Halibut Commercial Catch, Discard Mortality, and Total Removals, 2010-2025 (Million Lbs)

IPHC	Directed Commercial Landings															
Area	2010	2011	2012	2013	2014	2015	2016	2017	2018	2019	2020	2021	2022	2023	2024	2025
2A	0.4	0.5	0.6	0.5	0.5	0.6	0.6	0.7	0.6	0.8	0.8	0.7	0.8	0.7	0.8	0.8
2B	6.6	6.6	5.9	6.0	5.8	5.9	6.0	6.2	5.3	5.1	4.9	5.1	5.5	4.9	4.3	3.9
2C[2]	4.4	2.4	2.6	2.9	3.3	3.6	3.9	4.1	3.4	3.4	3.2	3.3	3.3	3.1	3.1	2.7
3A	20.2	14.4	11.8	10.9	7.4	7.7	7.3	7.6	7.2	7.9	6.8	8.7	8.8	7.1	6.9	5.4
3B	0.0	7.2	4.9	4.0	2.8	2.6	2.6	3.0	2.4	2.2	2.3	2.4	2.8	2.8	2.6	2.2
4A	2.3	2.3	1.5	1.2	0.8	1.3	1.3	1.3	1.2	1.4	1.1	1.4	1.3	0.9	0.7	0.7
4B	1.8	2.0	1.7	1.2	1.1	1.1	1.1	1.0	1.0	1.0	0.9	0.8	0.5	0.4	0.3	0.2
4CDE	3.3	3.4	2.3	1.8	1.2	1.2	1.5	1.6	1.4	1.6	1.6	1.4	1.6	1.3	0.8	0.5
Total	48.9	38.8	31.3	28.4	22.9	23.9	24.4	25.6	22.7	23.4	21.6	23.8	24.6	21.3	19.5	16.4
IPHC	Directed Commercial Discard Mortality															
Area	2010	2011	2012	2013	2014	2015	2016	2017	2018	2019	2020	2021	2022	2023	2024	2025
2A	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.1	0.0	0.1	0.1	0.1
2B	0.3	0.3	0.2	0.2	0.3	0.3	0.2	0.2	0.1	0.1	0.2	0.2	0.2	0.2	0.2	0.2
2C[2]	0.3	0.1	0.1	0.1	0.1	0.1	0.1	0.1	0.1	0.1	0.1	0.1	0.2	0.1	0.1	0.1
3A	1.5	1.0	0.6	0.6	0.5	0.6	0.4	0.4	0.3	0.4	0.2	0.4	0.7	0.5	0.6	0.3
3B	0.9	0.8	0.5	0.4	0.3	0.2	0.2	0.2	0.2	0.2	0.1	0.2	0.3	0.2	0.2	0.2
4A	0.1	0.2	0.1	0.1	0.0	0.1	0.1	0.1	0.1	0.1	0.1	0.1	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0
4B	0.1	0.1	0.0	0.0	0.1	0.0	0.1	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0
4CDE	0.1	0.2	0.1	0.1	0.0	0.0	0.1	0.0	0.0	0.1	0.1	0.0	0.1	0.0	0.0	0.0
Total	3.3	2.5	1.8	1.5	1.4	1.4	1.3	1.1	0.9	1.0	0.8	1.0	1.4	1.2	1.3	0.9
IPHC	Directed Commercial Total Removals															
Area	2010	2011	2012	2013	2014	2015	2016	2017	2018	2019	2020	2021	2022	2023	2024	2025
2A	0.4	0.6	0.6	0.6	0.5	0.6	0.7	0.7	0.7	0.9	0.8	0.8	0.8	0.8	0.8	0.9
2B	6.9	6.9	6.1	6.2	6.0	6.1	6.3	6.4	5.4	5.2	5.1	5.3	5.7	5.1	4.5	4.1
2C[2]	4.7	2.5	2.7	3.0	3.4	3.7	4.0	4.2	3.5	3.5	3.3	3.4	3.4	3.2	3.3	2.8
3A	21.7	15.3	12.4	11.4	7.9	8.3	7.7	8.0	7.5	8.3	7.0	9.1	9.4	7.7	7.5	5.8
3B	10.9	8.0	5.5	4.4	3.1	2.8	2.8	3.2	2.6	2.4	2.4	2.5	3.1	3.0	2.8	2.4
4A	2.4	2.5	1.6	1.3	0.9	1.4	1.4	1.3	1.3	1.5	1.2	1.5	1.3	1.0	0.8	0.7
4B	1.8	2.1	1.8	1.3	1.1	1.1	1.1	1.1	1.1	1.0	0.9	0.8	0.6	0.4	0.3	0.2
4CDE	3.4	3.6	2.4	1.8	1.3	1.2	1.5	1.6	1.4	1.7	1.7	1.4	1.6	1.3	0.8	0.6
Total	52.2	41.4	33.0	30.0	24.3	25.3	25.6	26.6	23.6	24.4	22.4	24.9	26.0	22.5	20.8	17.3

Source: IPHC. 2026. Table IPHC-2026-TSD-018: Commercial landings, discard mortality and fishery limits by IPHC Regulatory Area. Accessed [September 25, 2026].
IPHC Area 2C includes the Metlakatla fishery landed catch.

5.2.2 Effects of Alternatives on Halibut

Alternative 2 would put a limit on the amount of halibut PSC that could be utilized by A80 vessels, including the F/V DEFENDER. Alternative 2 would not change the overall GOA trawl halibut PSC limit or the total amount of groundfish that may be harvested by trawl vessels when operating in the GOA, because the A80 sideboard limit is a subset of the overall GOA trawl limit, and any halibut PSC harvested by the F/V DEFENDER also accrues to this overall limit. Timing of the harvests would continue to be driven by market availability, other fishing opportunities, and available TAC and PSC. The A80 limit may or may not change depending on the action taken by the Council.

Since the current action would not alter the halibut PSC available to the trawl CP sector, any halibut PSC after the CP limit would only be available to the trawl CVs. Currently, the F/V DEFENDER is treated like a CV for halibut PSC accounting. The proposed action would change how its halibut PSC is accounted and place it under the CP sideboard limit. This move could increase operational flexibility for CVs as they have more PSC to work with.

The greatest impact would depend on flatfish markets and shoreside processing capacity in the GOA. However, the fleet would continue to operate under incentives to avoid halibut. Those include oversite by the Council and NMFS, public and other sector's concerns over halibut PSC mortality in bottom trawl fisheries, and agreements that have been developed by the sector to help avoid halibut and penalties that could be imposed when a member does not meet the terms of the agreement.

If the halibut PSC limit becomes a constraint for the A80 CPs in the GOA when operating in the limited access fishery, the remaining TACs would only be available to the CVs if a portion of the overall trawl PSC limit is available. In addition, if halibut PSC limits become constraining for CGOA fisheries, fishing locations could change to avoid halibut; however, this is an unlikely effect of the current action.

Alternative 3 could change the amount of groundfish harvested, primarily flatfish, when observer coverage is less than the A80 BSAI requirements. Currently, all A80 voluntarily comply with the A80 BSAI monitoring requirements when fishing in the GOA. This action would make compliance mandatory. It would ensure an observer is available to monitor all catch and that all catch is weighed on a certified scale. These measures help ensure accurate catch accounting.

If the halibut PSC limit becomes a constraint for the A80 CPs in the GOA when operating in the limited access fishery, the remaining TACs would only be available to the CVs if a portion of the overall trawl PSC limit is available.

5.3 GOA Tanner Crab

Certain GOA commercial Tanner crab management districts are in the same areas where the A80 fleet is allowed to fish. The Kodiak District for Tanner crab is subdivided into 8 sections: Northeast, Eastside, Southeast, Southwest, Semidi Island Overlap, Westside, North Mainland, and South Mainland. The South Peninsula District is divided into two sections, Eastern and Western, by longitude 162°W. The Chignik District is managed as a single unit.[20] Tanner crab seasons in the Kodiak, Chignik, and South Peninsula Districts open on January 15, unless delayed by weather (Nichols et al. 2023). Commercial Tanner crab fisheries in the Cook Inlet and Yakutat areas have not been open for many years due to low stock abundance.

Sport, recreational, and subsistence Tanner crab fisheries are allowed in the GOA when stocks are of sufficient size. Regulations vary by fishery type and area are managed by the Alaska Department of Fish and Game (ADF&G). Statewide subsistence shellfish fishery regulations are found at 5 AAC 02. ADF&G issues press releases when it announces gear and take limits for a season that differ from the statewide regulations. For example, the Cook Inlet and North Gulf Coast sport and subsistence Tanner crab fisheries gear and limits for the 2025–2026 season, open from October 1, 2025, through February 28, 2026, had a bag and possession limit of 3 legal-sized male Tanner crab per person, an annual limit of 20, and gear limited to 1 pot or ring net per vessel. The limits were implemented to keep the harvest within 10% of the most recent legal-sized male Tanner crab abundance.

5.3.1 Status

The total 2025 Kodiak District Tanner crab abundance was estimated at 85.2 million crab, an increase from 60.8 million crab estimated in 2024. Abundance estimates for mature males continued to decline from a high estimate in 2022, whereas mature female abundance estimates increased from 2024. Increases in abundance were observed among juvenile and mature females, and males <70 mm CW, 70–91 mm CW, and 92–114 mm CW (Table 4). The 2025 estimated abundance of legal-sized male Tanner crab was 1.3 million crab, a decrease from 3.0 million in 2024. Estimated mature male Tanner crab abundance in the Southeast and Southwest Sections met regulatory minimum abundance thresholds for consideration of a commercial fishery in 2026; however, regulatory GHL requirements were not met, and the fisheries remained closed for the 2026 season. Mature male and female Tanner crab abundance estimates for the Northeast, Eastside, Westside, and North Mainland Sections were below levels needed for commercial seasons. Male Tanner crab had a mean size of 68.0 mm CW and females had a mean size of 57.2 mm CW. The percentage of male crab captured that were considered mature was 11.5%, a decrease from 29.8% in 2024. Juvenile males with soft/new pliable shell or new shell conditions composed 87.2% (27,119 crab) of

[20] See 5 AAC 35.505 of the Alaska Administrative Code for maps of each area.

the total male Tanner crab captured in the Kodiak District, an increase from 67.7% (14,211 crab) in 2024. A total of 6,072 mature female crab were measured and clutch information was determined. Multiparous crab with clutches accounted for 32.1% (1,947 crab) of mature females, a decrease from 59.0% in 2024. A total of 108 mature females examined did not produce an egg clutch and 40.0% (2,430 crab) of mature females had an egg clutch greater than half full. This was less than 2024 when 45.8% of mature females sampled had egg clutches that were more than half full. Average percent clutch fullness increased to 66.3% in 2025 from 62.8% (Spalinger 2026).

Directed Tanner crab fisheries that occur in the CGOA and WGOA groundfish fishery areas have varied between being closed due to low stock abundance and supporting commercial fisheries totaling 7.3 million lbs (Table 29). In 2023 the Kodiak Districts totaled 5.8 million lbs. After declining in 2024 and 2025 the Kodiak, Chignik, and South Peninsula districts were all closed in 2026. The closures were announced to help the stocks recover.

Table 29 Tanner crab GHLs (lbs) for Kodiak, Chignik, and South Peninsula Districts 2019-2026

	Minimum GHL (lbs) to Open Fishery	*2019*	*2020*	*2021*	*2022*	*2023*	*2024*	*2025*	*2026*
Kodiak District									
Northeast Section	100,000	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
Eastside Section	100,000	500,000	300,000	-	500,000	4,000,000	2,435,000	155,000	-
Southeast Section	100,000	115,000	100,000	-	400,000	950,000	465,000	405,000	-
Southwest Section	100,000	-	-	-	200,000	850,000	100,000	-	-
Westside Section	100,000	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
North Mainland Section	100,000	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
Chignik District	200,000	-	-	-	200,000	400,000	-	-	-
South Peninsula District									
Eastern Section	200,000	-	-	-	200,000	525,000	225,000	210,000	-
Western Section	200,000	-	-	-	300,000	575,000	225,000		-
Total		615,000	400,000	-	1,800,000	7,300,000	3,450,000	770,000	-

Sources: 2019-2023 data from Nichols et al 2023, 2024 data from ADFG EO 4-S-01-24, 2025 data from EO 4-S-01-25, 2026 information is from the October 20, 2025 ADFG Advisory Announcement

5.3.2 Effects of Alternatives on Tanner Crab

Alternative 2 would put a limit on the amount of halibut PSC that could be utilized by A80 vessels, including the F/V GOLDEN FLEECE or any replacement vessel for the F/V GOLDEN FLEECE. If halibut PSC limits become constraining for CGOA fisheries, fishing locations could change to avoid halibut, leading to fishing in areas where Tanner crab bycatch could be higher. There is no PSC limit for tanner crab in the GOA.

Alternative 3 would require all A80 vessel operators to comply with the A80 BSAI monitoring requirements when fishing in the GOA. These increased monitoring requirements will likely improve catch accounting and are not expected to negatively affect Tanner crab.

6 Magnuson-Stevens Act and FMP Considerations

6.1 Magnuson-Stevens Act National Standards

In recommending a preferred alternative at final action, the Council must consider how to balance the national standards. ***The information in this section will be more fully developed after the Council selects its PPA.***

National Standard 1 *— Conservation and management measures shall prevent overfishing while achieving, on a continuing basis, the optimum yield from each fishery for the United States fishing industry.*

The CR Program is designed with safeguards that impose substantial penalties for persons harvesting more than their allocated amount. As a result, the A80 program has been successful in preventing overfishing of the established TACs. However, there continue to be concerns regarding GOA halibut PSC and the monitoring requirements for A80 trawl CPs operating in the GOA.

Alternative 2 would establish regulations removing the halibut PSC exemption for one trawl CP vessel when operating in the GOA. This would not change the overall trawl halibut PSC limits established for the GOA or the CGOA RP halibut sideboard limits for trawl CPs.

Alternative 3 would apply the A80 monitoring requirements established for the BSAI to the A80 vessels when fishing in the GOA.

National Standard 2 *— Conservation and management measures shall be based upon the best scientific information available.*

Management of the GOA groundfish fisheries is described in the annual GOA SAFE document and briefly discussed in Section 3.1.1. The management of the GOA groundfish fisheries is based on the best available scientific information.

National Standard 3 *— To the extent practicable, an individual stock of fish shall be managed as a unit throughout its range, and interrelated stocks of fish shall be managed as a unit or in close coordination.*

The GOA groundfish stocks taken by the A80 sector are managed throughout their range in the GOA. The proposed actions would not change how the GOA groundfish stocks are managed.

National Standard 4 *— Conservation and management measures shall not discriminate between residents of different states. If it becomes necessary to allocate or assign fishing privileges among various United States fishermen, such allocation shall be; (A) fair and equitable to all such fishermen, (B) reasonably calculated to promote conservation, and (C) carried out in such a manner that no particular individual, corporation, or other entity acquires an excessive share of such privileges.*

When the A80 Program was developed, it established allocations of harvesting shares in the BSAI for CPs, as directed by the U.S. Congress. A80 vessels' catch in the GOA was limited to protect participants in fisheries that were not members of the A80 sector. Those allocations and sideboard limits were enacted to be fair and equitable.

National Standard 5 *— Conservation and management measures shall, where practicable, consider efficiency in the utilization of fishery resources, except that no such measure shall have economic allocation as its sole purpose.*

To be completed

National Standard 6 *— Conservation and management measures shall take into account and allow for variations among, and contingencies in, fisheries, fishery resources, and catches.*

To be completed

National Standard 7 *— Conservation and management measures shall, where practicable, minimize costs and avoid unnecessary duplication.*

To be completed

National Standard 8 *— Conservation and management measures shall, consistent with the conservation requirements of this Act (including the prevention of overfishing and rebuilding of overfished stocks), take into account the importance of fishery resources to fishing communities by utilizing economic and social data that meet the requirements of National Standard 2, in order to (A) provide for the sustained participation of such communities, and (B) to the extent practicable, minimize adverse economic impacts on such communities.*

To be completed

National Standard 9 *— Conservation and management measures shall, to the extent practicable, (A) minimize bycatch, and (B) to the extent bycatch cannot be avoided, minimize the mortality of such bycatch.*

The proposed amendment package would limit the amount of halibut PSC that may be taken by all A80 vessels in the GOA, but it would not alter the trawl halibut PSC limit that is shared by the trawl CVs and CPs. Therefore, this action would reduce bycatch to the extent practicable for A80 CPs by removing a sideboard exemption for one CP in response to changes in the halibut resource. The total reduction will depend on how the A80 PSC sideboard limit changes, future halibut PSC taken by the A80 sector, and how trawl CV halibut PSC changes in response to economic and fishery conditions. Trawl vessels in the GOA will continue to be required to minimize halibut bycatch where practicable and, when it cannot be avoided, minimize its mortality.

National Standard 10 *— Conservation and management measures shall, to the extent practicable, promote the safety of human life at sea.*

A80 CPs operating in the GOA have not had safety issues in the limited access fisheries. The CPs operating in the GOA are generally larger vessels that can safely operate in worse weather conditions than smaller vessels. None of the amendments under consideration would alter the fisheries to cause safety concerns if the A80 cooperative continues to manage and monitor the halibut PSC limit available. If the cooperative cannot manage the A80 halibut PSC sideboard limit, it could increase pressure on firms to catch arrowtooth flounder, POP, and any other viable GOA limited access fishery before the A80 halibut PSC limit closes the fishery. This circumstance could create incentives to fish when weather is poor or the crew is more fatigued.

6.2 Section 303(a)(9) Fisheries Impact Statement

Section 303(a)(9) of the Magnuson-Stevens Act requires that a fishery impact statement be prepared for each FMP or FMP amendment. A fishery impact statement is required to assess, specify, and analyze the likely effects, if any, including the cumulative conservation, economic, and social impacts, of the conservation and management measures on, and possible mitigation measures for (a) participants in the fisheries and fishing communities affected by the plan amendment; (b) participants in the fisheries conducted in adjacent areas under the authority of another Council; and (c) the safety of human life at sea, including whether and to what extent such measures may affect the safety of participants in the fishery.

The proposed action affects the regulations governing A80 vessels when operating in the GOA. Impacts on participants in fisheries conducted in adjacent areas under the jurisdiction of other Councils are not anticipated as a result of this action. The RIR prepared for this plan amendment constitutes the fishery impact statement. The likely effects of the proposed action are analyzed and described throughout the RIR. Based on the information reported in this section, there is no need to update the Fishery Impact Statement included in the FMP.

6.3 Council's Ecosystem Vision Statement

In February 2014, the Council adopted, as Council policy, the following:

Ecosystem Approach for the North Pacific Fishery Management Council

Value Statement

The Gulf of Alaska, Bering Sea, and Aleutian Islands are some of the most biologically productive and unique marine ecosystems in the world, supporting globally significant populations of marine mammals, seabirds, fish, and shellfish. This region produces over half the nation's seafood and supports robust fishing communities, recreational fisheries, and a subsistence way of life. The Arctic ecosystem is a dynamic environment that is experiencing an unprecedented rate of loss of sea ice and other effects of climate change, resulting in elevated levels of risk and uncertainty. The North Pacific Fishery Management Council has an important stewardship responsibility for these resources, their productivity, and their sustainability for future generations.

Vision Statement

The Council envisions sustainable fisheries that provide benefits for harvesters, processors, recreational and subsistence users, and fishing communities, which (1) are maintained by healthy, productive, biodiverse, resilient marine ecosystems that support a range of services; (2) support robust populations of marine species at all trophic levels, including marine mammals and seabirds; and (3) are managed using a precautionary, transparent, and inclusive process that allows for analyses of tradeoffs, accounts for changing conditions, and mitigates threats.

Implementation Strategy

The Council intends that fishery management explicitly take into account environmental variability and uncertainty, changes and trends in climate and oceanographic conditions, fluctuations in productivity for managed species and associated ecosystem components, such as habitats and non-managed species, and relationships between marine species. Implementation will be responsive to changes in the ecosystem and our understanding of those dynamics, incorporate the best available science (including local and traditional knowledge), and engage scientists, managers, and the public.

The vision statement shall be given effect through all of the Council's work, including long-term planning initiatives, fishery management actions, and science planning to support ecosystem-based fishery management.

In considering this action, the Council is being consistent with its ecosystem approach policy. The proposed action will not change the assessment or management process for GOA groundfish or halibut PSC, and it will not affect the way GOA groundfish fisheries are prosecuted. This action focuses on removing the GOA halibut PSC sideboard exemption that was applied to one vessel when the A80 program was implemented and altering the monitoring requirements for A80 vessels when fishing in the GOA to match their BSAI monitoring requirements.

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9 Appendix

50 CFR 679.92 Amendment 80 Program use caps and sideboard limits

(b) ***GOA sideboard limits*** —

(1) ***GOA groundfish sideboard limits.*** Amendment 80 vessels may not be used to catch more than the amounts of groundfish in the management areas specified in Table 37 to this part from January 1 through December 31 of each year, except that GOA groundfish sideboard limits specified in Table 37 to this part do not apply when an Amendment 80 vessel is using dredge gear while directed fishing for scallops in the GOA.

(2) ***GOA halibut PSC sideboard limits.*** All Amendment 80 vessels, other than the fishing vessel GOLDEN FLEECE as specified in paragraph (d) of this section, may not use halibut PSC in the fishery categories and management areas, greater than the amounts specified in Table 38 to this part during January 1 through December 31 of each year. Any residual amount of a seasonal sideboard halibut PSC limit may carry forward to the next season limit. This restriction on halibut PSC usage does not apply to the following two exceptions:

(i) An Amendment 80 vessel that uses halibut PSC CQ in the Central GOA subject to the regulations established in the Rockfish Program under subpart G to this part is not subject to the halibut PSC sideboard limits in Table 38 to this part while fishing under a Rockfish CQ permit; and

(ii) Halibut PSC sideboard limits in Table 38 to this part do not apply when an Amendment 80 vessel is using dredge gear while directed fishing for scallops in the GOA.

(c) ***Sideboard restrictions applicable to Amendment 80 vessels directed fishing for flatfish in the GOA*** —

(1) ***Originally Qualifying Amendment 80 Vessels.*** An Amendment 80 vessel listed in column A of Table 39 to this part may be used to fish in the directed arrowtooth flounder, deep-water flatfish, flathead sole, rex sole, and shallow-water flatfish fisheries in the GOA and in adjacent waters open by the State of Alaska for which it adopts a Federal fishing season.

(2) ***Amendment 80 Replacement Vessels.***

(i) Any vessel that NMFS approves to replace an Amendment 80 vessel listed in column A of Table 39 to this part may be used to fish in the directed arrowtooth flounder, deep-water flatfish, flathead sole, rex sole, and shallow-water flatfish fisheries in the GOA and in adjacent waters open by the State of Alaska for which it adopts a Federal fishing season.

(ii) Any vessel that NMFS subsequently approves to replace an Amendment 80 replacement vessel that replaced an Amendment 80 vessel listed in column A of Table 39 to this part may be used to fish in the directed arrowtooth flounder, deep-water flatfish, flathead sole, rex sole, and shallow-water flatfish fisheries in the GOA and in adjacent waters open by the State of Alaska for which it adopts a Federal fishing season.

(d) ***Sideboard restrictions applicable to the fishing vessel GOLDEN FLEECE.***

(1) ***The fishing vessel GOLDEN FLEECE (USCG documentation number 609951):***

(i) May not be used for directed groundfish fishing for northern rockfish, pelagic shelf rockfish, pollock, Pacific cod, or Pacific ocean perch in the GOA and in adjacent waters open by the State of Alaska for which it adopts a Federal fishing season; and

(ii) Is not subject to halibut PSC sideboard limits as described in paragraph (b)(2) of this section in the GOA or adjacent waters open by the State of Alaska for which it adopts a Federal fishing season.

(2) ***Sideboard restrictions applicable to any vessel replacing the GOLDEN FLEECE.***

(i) If the vessel replacing the GOLDEN FLEECE is of an LOA less than or equal to 124 ft. (38.1 m) (the MLOA of the LLP license that was originally assigned to the GOLDEN FLEECE, LLG 2524), then the sideboard provisions at § 679.92(c) and (d)(1) apply.

(ii) If the vessel replacing the GOLDEN FLEECE is greater than 124 ft. (38.1 m) (the MLOA of the LLP license that was originally assigned to the GOLDEN FLEECE, LLG 2524), then the sideboard provisions at § 679.92(b) and (c) apply.

(e) ***Sideboard restrictions applicable to Amendment 80 vessel not assigned an Amendment 80 QS permit, Amendment 80 LLP license, or Amendment 80 LLP/QS license.*** All Amendment 80 vessels not designated on:

(1) An Amendment 80 QS permit and an Amendment 80 LLP license; or

(2) An Amendment 80 LLP/QS license will be allocated a catch limit of 0 mt in the BSAI and GOA.

[72 FR 52726, Sept. 14, 2007, as amended at 77 FR 59871, Oct. 1, 2012; 79 FR 9641, Feb. 20, 2014]

50 CFR 679.93 Amendment 80 Program recordkeeping, permits, monitoring, and catch accounting.

(a) ***Recordkeeping and reporting.*** See § 679.5(s).

(b) ***Permits.*** See § 679.4(o).

(c) ***Catch monitoring requirements for Amendment 80 vessels and catcher/processors not listed in § 679.4(l)(2)(i) using trawl gear and fishing in the BSAI.*** The requirements under paragraphs (c)(1) through (9) of this section apply to all Amendment 80 vessels except Amendment 80 vessels using dredge gear while directed fishing for scallops, and any other catcher/processor not listed in § 679.4(l)(2)(i) using trawl gear and fishing or receiving fish in the BSAI and in adjacent waters open by the State of Alaska for which it adopts a Federal fishing season. Except when using dredge gear while directed fishing for scallops, at all times when an Amendment 80 vessel or a catcher/processor not listed in § 679.4(l)(2)(i) using trawl gear has BSAI groundfish onboard the vessel, the vessel owner or operator must ensure that:

(1) ***Catch weighing.*** All catch, except halibut sorted on deck by vessels participating in halibut deck sorting described at § 679.102, are weighed on a NMFS-approved scale in compliance with the scale requirements at § 679.28(b). Each haul must be weighed separately, all catch must be made available for sampling by a NMFS-certified observer, and no sorting of catch, except halibut sorted on deck by vessels participating in halibut deck sorting described at § 679.102, may take place prior to weighing.

(2) ***Observer sampling station.*** An observer sampling station meeting the requirements at § 679.28(d) is available at all times.

(3) ***Observer coverage requirements.*** The vessel is in compliance with the observer coverage requirements described at § 679.51(a)(2).

(4) ***Operational line.*** The vessel has no more than one operational line or other conveyance for the mechanized movement of catch between the scale used to weigh total catch and the location where the observer collects species composition samples.

(5) ***Fish on deck.*** No fish are allowed to remain on deck unless an observer is present, except for fish inside the codend and fish accidentally spilled from the codend during hauling and dumping. Fish accidentally spilled from the codend must be moved to the fish bin.

(6) ***Sample storage.*** There is sufficient space to accommodate a minimum of 10 observer sampling baskets. This space must be within or adjacent to the observer sampling station.

(7) ***Pre-cruise meeting.*** The Observer Program is notified by phone at 1 (907) 581-2060 (Dutch Harbor, AK) or 1 (907) 481-1770 (Kodiak, AK) at least 24 hours prior to departure when the vessel will be carrying an observer who has not previously been deployed on that vessel within the last 12 months. Subsequent to the vessel's departure notification, but prior to departure, NMFS may contact the vessel to arrange for a pre-cruise meeting. The pre-cruise meeting must minimally include the vessel operator or manager and any observers assigned to the vessel.

(8) ***Belt and flow operations.*** The vessel operator stops the flow of fish and clears all belts between the bin doors and the area where the observer collects samples of unsorted catch when requested to do so by the observer.

(9) ***Vessel crew in tanks or bins.*** The vessel owner or operator must comply with the bin monitoring standards specified in § 679.28(i)(1).

(d) ***Catch monitoring requirements for Amendment 80 vessels fishing in the GOA.*** The requirements under this section apply to any Amendment 80 vessel fishing in the GOA and in adjacent waters open by the State of Alaska for which it adopts a Federal fishing season except Amendment 80 vessels using dredge gear while directed fishing for scallops. At all times when an Amendment 80 vessel is not using dredge gear while directed fishing for scallops and has GOA groundfish onboard the vessel owner or operator must ensure that:

(1) Catch from an individual haul is not mixed with catch from another haul prior to sampling by an observer, and all catch is made available for sampling by an observer;

(2) The vessel is in compliance with the observer coverage requirements described at § 679.51(a)(2);

(3) ***Operational Line.*** The vessel has no more than one operational line or other conveyance for the mechanized movement of catch at the location where the observer collects species composition samples; and

(4) The requirements in § 679.93(c)(5), (8), and (9) are met.

(e) ***Catch accounting*** —

(1) ***Amendment 80 species*** —

(i) ***Amendment 80 cooperative.*** All Amendment 80 species caught in the BSAI, including catch in adjacent waters open by the State of Alaska for which it adopts a Federal fishing season, by an Amendment 80 vessel assigned to an Amendment 80 cooperative will be debited from the CQ permit for that Amendment 80 cooperative for that calendar year unless that Amendment 80 vessel is using dredge gear while directed fishing for scallops.

(ii) ***Amendment 80 limited access fishery.*** All Amendment 80 species caught in the BSAI, including catch in adjacent waters open by the State of Alaska for which it adopts a Federal fishing season, by an Amendment 80 vessel assigned to the Amendment 80 limited access fishery will be debited against the ITAC for that Amendment 80 species in the Amendment 80 limited access fishery for that calendar year unless that Amendment 80 vessel is using dredge gear while directed fishing for scallops.

(2) ***Crab PSC and halibut PSC*** —

(i) ***Amendment 80 cooperative.*** All crab PSC or halibut PSC used by an Amendment 80 vessel assigned to an Amendment 80 cooperative in the BSAI, including crab PSC or halibut PSC used in the adjacent waters open by the State of Alaska for which it adopts a Federal fishing season, will be debited against the CQ permit for that Amendment 80 cooperative for that calendar year unless that Amendment 80 vessel is using dredge gear while directed fishing for scallops.

(ii) ***Amendment 80 limited access fishery.*** All crab PSC or halibut PSC used by an Amendment 80 vessel assigned to the Amendment 80 limited access fishery in the BSAI, including crab PSC or halibut PSC used in the adjacent waters open by the State of Alaska for which it adopts a Federal fishing season, will be debited against the crab PSC or halibut PSC limit assigned to the Amendment 80 limited access fishery for that calendar year, unless that Amendment 80 vessels is using dredge gear while directed fishing for scallops.

(3) ***GOA groundfish sideboard limits.*** All Amendment 80 sideboard species defined in Table 37 to this part caught in the GOA, including catch in adjacent waters open by the State of Alaska for which it adopts a Federal fishing season, by an Amendment 80 vessel will be debited against the Amendment 80 sideboard limit for that Amendment 80 sideboard species for that calendar year except Amendment 80 sideboard species caught by Amendment 80 vessel using dredge gear while directed fishing for scallops.

(4) ***GOA halibut sideboard limits.*** All halibut PSC used by all Amendment 80 vessels in the GOA, including halibut PSC used in the adjacent waters open by the State of Alaska for which it adopts a Federal fishing season, will be debited against the sideboard limit established for the Amendment 80 sector, except:

(i) Halibut PSC CQ used by the catcher/processor sector in the Rockfish Program in the Central GOA;

(ii) Halibut PSC used by the fishing vessel GOLDEN FLEECE (USCG Documentation number 609951); and

(iii) Halibut PSC used by an Amendment 80 vessel using dredge gear while directed fishing for scallops.

[72 FR 52726, Sept. 14, 2007, as amended at 75 FR 53069, Aug. 30, 2010; 78 FR 12632, Feb. 25, 2013; 81 FR 67118, Sept. 30, 2016; 83 FR 30533, June 29, 2018; 84 FR 55053, Oct. 15, 2019; 88 FR 77231, Nov. 9, 2023]