C2 Chum Salmon Bycatch
Council motion
February 11, 2025

The Council revises the alternatives as follows and recommends publication of the revised DEIS with the addition of analysis of the revised options. Additions are in **bold/underline** and deletions are in ~~strikeout~~. Alternative 2 and 3 are mutually exclusive. All other alternatives and options are not mutually exclusive unless otherwise indicated below. Staff should include SSC recommendations in the next draft as practicable.

Alternative 1: Status Quo

Alternatives 2 through 4 apply to the entire Bering Sea pollock B season, the season in which chum salmon are taken as bycatch (prohibited species catch or PSC).

Alternative 2: Overall bycatch (PSC) limit for chum salmon

Chum salmon PSC limit based on historical total bycatch numbers: range of 100,000 *(~17,100 Western Alaska chum salmon*) to 550,000 *(~94,050 Western Alaska chum salmon)*. All non-Chinook salmon taken as bycatch during the B season would accrue to the limit, regardless of origin.

PSC limits are apportioned among CDQ, catcher processor, mothership and inshore sectors (using a blended adjusted CDQ bycatch rate as with Amendment 91, with the exception of Option 4) based on~~.~~ **the following options. The suboption must be selected in combination with another option.**

> **Option 1**: historical total bycatch by sector using the 3-year average (2020 – 2022)
>
> **Option 2**: historical total bycatch by sector using the 5-year average (2018 – 2022)
>
> **Option 3**: pro rata 25% AFA pollock allocation and 75% historical total bycatch (2020 – 2022)
>
> **Option 4**: pro rata based on AFA pollock allocation
>
> **Suboption: For any of the four options above, also establish a CDQ chum salmon PSC reserve pool. The CDQ chum salmon reserve pool exists outside of the overall chum salmon PSC limit/corridor cap and may only be accessed by a CDQ group if a CDQ group informs NMFS in writing by November 15 of any year (i.e., prior to the annual groundfish specifications process) of a plan to associate their pollock CDQ with the inshore or mothership sector. Upon such notification, NMFS will apportion an amount of chum salmon PSC to the group(s) from the CDQ chum salmon PSC reserve pool that matches the chum:pollock proportion ratio apportioned to the sector with which it is associating (i.e., mothership or inshore). All CDQ pollock from a group must be associated with the same sector, and sector associations cannot be changed mid-season.**

The sector limits are further apportioned at the CDQ group and inshore cooperative level in proportion to each CDQ group and inshore cooperative's pollock allocation. Chum salmon PSC can be transferred among sectors, CDQ groups, and inshore cooperatives. Reaching a limit closes the pollock fishery sector to which the limit applies.

Alternative 3: Overall bycatch (PSC) limit for chum salmon triggered by a Western Alaska chum salmon abundance index

Indices based on the prior year's chum salmon abundance. Options below are mutually exclusive. All non-Chinook salmon taken as bycatch during the B season would accrue to the limit (based on the range specified in Alternative 2), regardless of origin.

> **Option 1**: Three-area chum salmon index based on Yukon River summer + Yukon River fall run abundance (suboptions: 1,713,300 or 2,781,400); Kuskokwim River composed of the ~~Bethel test fishery CPUE~~ **Kuskokwim sonar** (suboptions: ~~2,800~~ **151,636** or ~~5,200~~ **306,017**); Norton Sound composed of summed escapement for the Snake, Nome, Eldorado, Kwiniuk, and North Rivers and total Norton Sound harvest (suboptions: 57,300 or 91,500).
>
>> If 3/3 areas are above index threshold, no chum salmon PSC limit the following year.
>>
>> If 2/3 areas are above index threshold, chum salmon PSC limit the following year is (suboptions: 100,000 to 550,000).
>>
>> If 1 or no areas are above index threshold, chum salmon PSC limit the following year is 75% of the above limit.
>
> **Option 2**: Chum salmon index based on Yukon River summer (suboptions: 1,268,700 or 1,978,400) + Yukon River fall run abundance (suboptions: 444,600 or 803,000).
>
>> If 2/2 areas are above index threshold, no chum salmon PSC limit the following year.
>>
>> If 1 or no areas are above index threshold, chum salmon PSC limit the following year is (suboptions: 100,000 to 550,000).
>
> ~~Option 3 (must be selected with Option 1 or 2): PSC limits are apportioned among CDQ, catcher processor, mothership and inshore sectors (using a blended adjusted CDQ bycatch rate as with Amendment 91, with the exception of Option 4) based on:~~
>
>> ~~Suboption 1: historical total bycatch by sector using the 3-year average (2020 – 2022)~~
>>
>> ~~Suboption 2: historical total bycatch by sector using the 5-year average (2018 – 2022)~~
>>
>> ~~Suboption 3: pro rata 25% AFA pollock allocation and 75% historical total bycatch (2020 – 2022)~~
>>
>> ~~Suboption 4: pro rata based on AFA pollock allocation~~
>
> ~~Further~~ Apportionments and transfer provisions are the same as Alternative 2.

Alternative 4: Additional regulatory requirements for Incentive Plan Agreements (IPAs) ~~to be managed within the IPAs.~~

~~Establish the following IPA provisions in regulation:~~

~~Incorporate industry proposed measures developed to further prioritize avoidance of areas and times of highest proportion of Western Alaska and Upper/Middle Yukon chum salmon stocks and analyze chum salmon avoided and operational tradeoffs.~~

Include in the IPA ~~regulatory language~~ **regulations** at 50 CFR 679.21(f)(12)(iii)(E) the following additive changes **to further prioritize avoidance of areas and times of highest proportion of coastal Western Alaska and Upper/Middle Yukon chum salmon stocks**. These requirements would be added to the existing federal regulations for IPAs at 50 CFR 679.21(f)(12), and the annual reporting requirements at § 679.21(f)(13) would still apply.

1. Require the pollock sectors to describe in their IPA how ~~historical~~ genetic stock composition data are included in chum salmon avoidance measures.
2. Require the pollock sectors to describe in their IPAs how they monitor for potential chum salmon avoidance closures more than once per week.
3. Require the use of salmon excluders for the duration of A and B season.
4. Require the pollock sectors to develop chum salmon vessel outlier provisions and implement within their IPA.
5. Require IPAs to provide weekly salmon bycatch reports to Western and Interior Alaska salmon users to allow for more transparency in reporting.
6. Require the pollock sector IPAs to prohibit fishing in bycatch avoidance areas for all vessels regardless of performance when ADFG weekly stat area bycatch rates exceed 5 chum per ton of pollock (CP) and 3 times base rate (CV and MS).

Alternative 5: Inseason Corridor Cap

PSC cap on total chum salmon in ~~corridor area~~ **combined clusters 1 and 2**[1] during June 10 to August 31. Cap range of 50,000 total chum salmon (*~8,550 Western Alaska chum salmon)* to ~~200,000~~ **350,000** total chum salmon *(~~34,200~~ **59,850** Western Alaska chum salmon)*. All non-Chinook salmon bycatch **in clusters 1 and 2** accrues to ~~area-specific~~ **the** caps, regardless of origin. ~~If the cap is reached during the time period, the area closes to that sector(s) for the rest of the time period.~~ **The** caps **for combined clusters 1 and 2** and ~~area~~ closure **time period** are set in federal regulations. Additional windows for salmon passage and other avoidance measures should be implemented inseason through the contractual Incentive Plan Agreements using inseason fishery data and best available genetic data. **Apportionments and transfer provisions are the same as Alternative 2 and based on historical bycatch within each Cluster individually and then combined.**

~~Corridor Area *(Options 1 – 3 are mutually exclusive)*:~~

> ~~**Option 1:** Cluster 1~~

> ~~**Option 2:** Unimak area~~

> ~~**Option 3:** Cluster 2. If selected, cluster 2 cap is 50,000 or 100,000 total chum salmon. *(~8,550 or 17,100 Western Alaska chum salmon)*~~

> **Option 1: If the cap is met during the time period, NMFS closes all ADF&G stat areas inside Cluster 1 and 2 to that sector(s) for the rest of the time period. The corridor area closure is set in federal regulations.**

> > **Suboption 1: Reaching the cap triggers a corridor closure comprised of 29 ADF&G stat areas (~75%) in Cluster 1 and 2[2]**

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[1] Cluster 1 and 2 refer to the following 40 ADF&G statistical areas: 685730, 685700, 685630, 685600, 685530, 685500, 675700, 675630, 675600, 675530, 675500, 675430, 665630, 665600, 665530, 665500, 655430, 665401, 655630, 655600, 655530, 655500, 655430, 655409, 655410, 655412, 645700, 645630, 645600, 645530, 645501, 645434, 635700, 635630, 635600, 635530, 635504, 625630, 625600, and 625531.

[2] The corridor closure would apply to the following 29 statistical areas: 685730, 685600, 685530, 685500, 675600, 675530, 675500, 675430, 665630, 665600, 665530, 665500, 655630, 655600, 655530, 655500, 645700, 645630, 645600, 645530, 645501, 635700, 635630, 635600, 635530, 635504, 625630, 625600, and 625531.

Option 2: If the cap is met during the time period, the IPA's pre-approved corridor area closes to that sector(s) for the rest of the time period. The corridor closure must be described in the IPA and pre-approved by NMFS before B season. The criteria for a corridor closure area are set in federal regulation. The corridor closure must (1) be within combined Clusters 1 and 2, (2) comprised of a range of 19 to 29 ADF&G stat areas (~50% - 75%), and (3) be selected based on chum catch, pollock CPUE, and relevant genetic data.

Option 3: Abundance-based threshold. Mutually exclusive to Alternative 3.

Chum salmon index based on Yukon River summer and Yukon River fall run reconstructions. If the prior year's chum salmon abundance for both the Yukon River summer and Yukon River fall run reconstructions are at or above the index values, the corridor cap and closure provisions would not apply.

> **Suboption 1: 75th percentile. Yukon River summer: 2,671,450; Yukon River fall: 1,150,758**

> **Suboption 2: 90th percentile. Yukon River summer: 3,871,700; Yukon River fall: 1,390,329**

Option 4. Adjust the Winter Herring Savings Area start date for the pollock fishery from September 1 to September 30.

Option 3 and 4 are not mutually exclusive and can be selected in combination with Option 1 or 2.

~~Apportionment~~

> ~~PSC cap is apportioned among CDQ, catcher processor, mothership and inshore sectors based on:~~

> ~~**Suboption 1:** historical bycatch in the area by sector using the 3-year average (2020 – 2022)~~

> ~~**Suboption 2**: historical bycatch in the area by sector using the 5-year average (2018 – 2022)~~

> ~~**Suboption 3**: pro rata 25% AFA pollock allocation and 75% historical bycatch in the area (2020– 2022)~~

> ~~**Suboption 4:** pro rata based on AFA pollock allocation~~