

Council Motion

C-2 Bering Sea chum salmon bycatch

February 11, 2026

The Council selects the following preferred alternative from elements in Alternatives 4 and 5 in the DEIS.

Western Alaska chum bycatch limit with a corridor closure

Each pollock sector has a limit in regulation on Western Alaska chum salmon prohibited species catch (PSC) in clusters 1 and 2¹ such that the total does not exceed (45,000) Western Alaska chum:

CDQ: 4,410

Catcher vessels delivering shoreside plants: 31,950

Catcher vessels delivering to motherships: 4,365

Catcher processors: 4,275

All Western Alaska chum salmon PSC in clusters 1 and 2 accrue to the limit from June 10–August 31.

Western Alaska chum salmon PSC can be transferred among sectors.

Western Alaska chum salmon corridor closure

If a sector exceeds its Western Alaska chum salmon PSC limit, regulations will require each sector's IPA to close a Western Alaska chum salmon corridor of 20 stat areas in clusters 1 and 2 (50% of the fishing grounds) inseason for the remainder of June 10 – August 31. The Western Alaska chum salmon closure corridor established by all IPAs must include stat areas 685530, 675500, 655500 and 645501.

If a sector exceeds its Western Alaska chum PSC limit between June 10 and August 31 during the B season and the IPA failed to close Western Alaska chum salmon closure corridor, then the IPA must close 20 stat areas (including 685530, 675500, 655500, and 645501) in the Western Alaska chum salmon corridor during all of June 10-August 31 the following B season, as set in regulations.

Prior to each B season, NMFS will provide an estimate, using a 3-year rolling average, of each sector's ratio of Western Alaska chum PSC to total chum PSC for the IPA to calculate their Western Alaska chum PSC and manage inseason. To the extent data are available, an IPA could monitor its Western Alaska chum PSC using inseason genetic data for clusters 1 and 2 to avoid Western Alaska chum.

After each B season, using the estimated ratio of Western Alaska chum to total chum PSC described above, NMFS will evaluate available data and the IPA reports to assess whether a sector exceeded its Western Alaska chum PSC limit, and if a limit was exceeded, determine whether the IPA made the required closures the previous year.

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.

Requirements for Incentive Plan Agreements (IPAs)

Add regulations at 50 CFR 679.21(f)(12)(iii)(E) 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 IPAs to describe how inseason and historical fishery data, including Western Alaska chum bycatch numbers and Western Alaska chum bycatch rates, and the best available genetic stock composition data are included in windows for salmon passage and other measures to avoid Western Alaska chum.
2. Require that IPAs describe how they monitor inseason chum encounter rates to consider potential chum salmon avoidance closures more than once per week.
3. Require vessels use salmon excluders for the duration of A and B season.
4. Require the IPAs to develop chum salmon vessel outlier provisions and implement the provision within the IPA.
5. Require IPA managers to make available weekly salmon bycatch reports to interested salmon users, Alaska Native Tribes and Tribally-authorized consortia and fish commissions to allow for more transparency in reporting.
6. Require IPAs to prohibit fishing in ADFG stat areas for all vessels regardless of performance when weekly stat area bycatch rates exceed 5 chum per ton of pollock (CP) or 3 times base rate (CV and MS).
7. Require IPAs to document the best available genetic stock composition data on the sector's Coastal Western Alaska and Middle/Upper Yukon chum PSC and the Western Alaska salmon corridor closures in clusters 1 and 2 during June 10 – August 31 in their annual report.

Other Measures

Establish a Western Alaska chum salmon index based on Yukon River summer and Yukon River fall run reconstructions. If the prior year's chum index is at or above the 90th percentile: Yukon River summer: 3,871,700; Yukon River fall: 1,390,329, the Western Alaska chum salmon PSC limit and closure provisions would not apply.

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

Deeming Amendment

The Council deems proposed regulations that clearly and directly flow from the provisions of this motion to be necessary and appropriate in accordance with section 303(c).

The Council authorizes the Executive Director and the Chair to review the draft proposed regulations when provided by NMFS to ensure that the proposed regulations to be submitted to the Secretary under section 303(c) are consistent with these instructions.