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Chum Salmon Bycatch in Bering Sea Pollock Fishery

Public comments on Draft Environmental Impact Statement

Doug Shaftel, NMFS Fisheries Management Specialist



DEIS Public Comments

DEIS publication in Federal Register (September 12, 2025)

- 112-day public comment period
- January 5, 2026 - end of comment period

DEIS Comment Summary Report

- 616 comments submitted
- Tribal cooperating agencies
- Tribes
- Tribal coalitions
- Pollock fishery organizations
- Conservation organizations
- Community Development Quota group
- Environmental Protection Agency
- Individual comments

NMFS next steps (if Council recommends a preferred alternative)

- Comment responses
Published with Final Environmental Impact Statement



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DEIS Public Comments

DEIS Comment Summary Report

- Topic 1: Purpose and Need
- Topic 2: Alternatives
- Topic 3: Methodology
- Topic 4: Tribal Issues
- Topic 5: National Standards
- Topic 6: National Environmental Policy Act
- Topic 7: General comments



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Tribal Engagement and Consultation



Chum Bycatch Action

Tribal engagement and consultation

- Between 2022 to 2026
 - Seven (7) Tribal engagement sessions
 - Five (5) Tribal consultations
 - Most recently January 26, 2026
 - DEIS, §§1.3.6 and 1.3.7 (pp. 62-68).
- Engagement process improvements
 - Newsletter
 - Pre-meeting engagement sessions



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Tribal Consultation (Jan. 26, 2026)

Ahtna Intertribal Resources
Commission

Native Village of Anvik

Association of Village Council
Presidents

Central Council of the Tlingit and
Haida Indian Tribes of Alaska

Chickaloon Native Traditional Council

Council of Athabascan Tribal
Governments

Kawerak, Inc.

Kuskokwim River Inter-Tribal Fish
Commission

Native Village of Council

Native Village of Georgetown

Native Village of Kwinhagak

Native Village of Paimuit

Tanana Chiefs Conference

Pilot Station Traditional Village

Yukon River Inter-Tribal Fish
Commission

Native Village of Toksook Bay.



Tribal Consultation (Jan. 26, 2026)

Preferred Alternative

Alt 2: 100,000 chum salmon PSC limit

- 40% of bycatch outside of Alt 5 corridor area
- less than 100,000 chum bycatch achieved twice

Alt 4

- Hard cap under Alternatives 2 or 5, must accompany Alternative 4

Alt 5, 50,000 chum salmon PSC limit

- Option 1 (40 stat areas)
- Disfavor suboptions 1 and 2 due to smaller closure area
- Total chum, not chum salmon rates, for stat area selection

No support:

- Alternative 3
- CDQ reserve pool, or
Alternative 5, Options 3 or 4



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Tribal Consultation (Jan. 26, 2026)

Traditional Knowledge

Traditional Knowledge + western science = best available science

- NPFMC Scientific and Statistical Committee
 - Traditional Knowledge/Traditional Ecological Knowledge Seat
- Traditional Knowledge needs to be shared with the Council
 - TK Report (similar to B report)
 - Council statement on TK use in analyses
 - NMFS explains in EIS how TK is received, considered, and incorporated



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Tribal Consultation (Jan. 26, 2026)

Additional concerns

- Document how Tribal input is meaningfully considered in Council's recommendation and NMFS decision
- Conservation burden on Tribes
- Layers of regulation on Tribal in-river fisheries
- Bycatch from Gulf of Alaska (18.7%)
- Salmon bycatch should be distributed to Western and Alaska salmon users
- NPFMC Tribal seat



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Questions?

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