



UNITED STATES DEPARTMENT OF COMMERCE
National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration
National Marine Fisheries Service
P.O. Box 21668
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January 31, 2025

Agenda A-2: NMFS Updates

NMFS is providing this update for the Council on actions that NMFS has completed since the December 2024 Council meeting and other informational items of interest to the Council. NMFS Alaska Region (AKR) will present more indepth information to the Council at the April Council meeting.

Cost Recovery

On December 20, 2024, staff completed the cost recovery process and sent invoices to Individual Fishing Quota (IFQ) permit holders. However, staff were quickly alerted to a technical issue that affected certain fee liability statements. Due to an error, the value of some landings were incorrectly calculated as zero, leading to an undervaluation of the IFQ fishery and omissions in the fee liability statements. Staff resolved this issue over the holidays and AKR resent corrected statements on December 31, 2024. This technical issue has been corrected and new processes were developed to prevent this error in the future. This problem highlights the importance of AKR's strategic initiative to modernize our permitting system through the Integrated Fisheries Application.

Data Confidentiality Final Rule

On December 17, 2024, NMFS published a final rule regarding the confidentiality of information submitted under the MSA ([89 FR 102000](#)). Both the Alaska Department of Fish and Game (ADF&G) and the Council submitted comments on the proposed rule and NMFS recognizes the importance of this regulation and the potential for it to impact our data sharing agreement with the State. We are committed to working with ADF&G and Council staff to work through the details of the final rule and ensure that our data sharing agreement is consistent with the rule and State law. We will provide an update at the April Council meeting in the NMFS B2 report and answer any questions from the Council.

Memorandum of Agreement between NMFS and the Aleut Community of St. Paul Island

On January 16, 2025, NMFS and the Aleut Community of St. Paul Island tribal government signed a Memorandum of Agreement (MOA) on matters related to the sustainable management and stewardship of marine resources under NMFS's jurisdiction. The agreement explicitly notes that some topics of mutual interest to the parties may be the responsibility of, or require coordination with, other entities including the North Pacific Fishery Management Council and the State of Alaska. This MOA follows discussions between NOAA and the tribal government about entering into some type of formal agreement as a way of capturing mutual interests related to marine resources.

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It does not replace or amend existing relationships such as our co-management agreement for the subsistence use of marine mammals or procedures for government-to-government consultation under EO 13175. The MOA is available on our website at:

<https://www.fisheries.noaa.gov/s3//2025-01/Aleut-Community-of-Saint-Paul-Island-Tribal-Government-MOA.pdf>

Gulf of Alaska Groundfish Fishery Management Plan Biological Opinion

The NMFS Protected Resources Division (PRD) completed a Biological Opinion on the effects of all groundfish fisheries managed under the Gulf of Alaska (GOA) Fishery Management Plan, including State of Alaska parallel groundfish fisheries, on species listed under the Endangered Species Act (ESA) and designated critical habitat, on December 23, 2024. NMFS concluded that the GOA groundfish fisheries analyzed in that opinion are likely to adversely affect some, but not likely to jeopardize the continued existence of any, threatened or endangered species or critical habitats under our jurisdiction. PRD will present the key findings of this biological opinion at the April Council meeting. The biological and conference opinion for the GOA groundfish fisheries is available on our website at: <https://www.fisheries.noaa.gov/resource/document/biological-opinion-national-marine-fisheries-service-alaska-region-sustainable>

Chinook Salmon Endangered Species Act Listing Petition Update

On May 24, 2024, NMFS announced a positive 90-day finding on a petition to list Chinook salmon in the GOA as threatened or endangered under the ESA, concluding that it presented substantial information indicating that the petitioned actions may be warranted. We convened a team of federal scientists to review the species' status and extinction risk, and we invited experts from ADF&G and a tribal member to participate as advisors to the team. The Status Review Team (SRT) is making progress on the analysis and incorporating information from public comments, including an extensive letter from ADF&G and formal tribal consultations. The SRT has preliminarily identified Evolutionarily Significant Units (ESUs) in the GOA and conducted demographic trend analyses at the ESU level. The SRT is compiling information about threats to the species in the region. The SRT will then synthesize the results of the demographic and threats analyses and assign an extinction risk category (low, medium, high) to each ESU. The SRT's analyses and conclusions of the risk assessment workshop will be summarized in a status review report to inform the 12-month finding.

National Academies of Sciences (NAS) Study

On Friday January 24, 2025, the NAS project committee held a public meeting to kickoff phase 2 of a study, Assessing the Distribution of Permits and Quotas in Fisheries Management. This study follows a previous study, Assessing Equity in the Distribution of Fisheries Management Benefits: Data and Information Availability (<https://www.nationalacademies.org/our-work/assessing-equity-in-the-distribution-of-fisheries-management-benefits-data-and-information-availability>). In the current study, an ad hoc committee will select at least three commercial or for-hire fisheries and will assess the distribution of permits and quotas for each. To the extent practicable using available data, the committee will consider factors such as: initial allocations and allocation methods; changes in the distribution of permits and quota over time, including changes in ownership characteristics; and potential barriers facing new entrants. The committee will soon be requesting input on the selection of at least three case study fisheries in different locales using the following criteria:

- At least one case study that has a documented history of how the program was established and permits and/or quotas distributed (i.e., have a documented rationale for the initial allocation),
- At least one case study that has multiple years of demographic data collected on permit/quota holders,
- At least one case study on a for-hire fishery, and
- At least one case study that includes information about crew.

Information and solicitations for input will be distributed to those who subscribe and sign up for updates on the project. More information about the study and a link to sign up for updates on the project can be found at: <https://www.nationalacademies.org/our-work/phase-2-assessing-the-distribution-of-permits-and-quotas-in-fisheries-management>.

Personnel Changes

Krista Milani has joined the Sustainable Fisheries management team as the supervisor for the Inseason Management branch. Krista has been with the Inseason Management branch since 2009 and runs our field office in Unalaska, Dutch Harbor (the largest fishing port in the Nation). Krista has a deep knowledge of our groundfish and crab fisheries and she is really respected for her ability to clearly communicate our nuanced regulations to colleagues, fishermen, and the Council. Krista provides excellent customer service and demonstrates open communication and accountability in her day to day interactions - whether she is researching a regulatory question, conducting a processor or scale inspection, or explaining to a new captain how to fill out a logbook. Krista's extensive fisheries knowledge, supervisory experience, and strengths in communication and collaboration are valued qualities that will contribute to SF's successful management of Alaska's fisheries.

Glenn Charles has been selected as the Deputy Special Agent in Charge for the NOAA Office of Law Enforcement (OLE), Alaska Division (AKD). Glenn brings a wealth of experience, leadership, and a strong commitment to our mission. In 2001, Glenn began his law enforcement career as an Alaska Wildlife Trooper in Juneau. Over the years, he became a trainer for small and mid sized vessels, conducted statewide operations, and was promoted to the Wildlife Investigations Unit in 2006, where he led commercial fisheries investigations, and served as a liaison with NOAA OLE. In 2009, Glenn transitioned to NOAA OLE as a Special Agent in the Anchorage office. His expertise and relationships with other agencies led to his promotion to ASAC in 2023. As part of the divisional leadership team, Glenn has used his knowledge and connections to support the Alaska Division's mission. His leadership and dedication will continue to make a positive impact on the work and mission of AKD.

Alex Burkhart has joined the Applications Office team in the Information Services Division. Alex will be providing development support for both eLandings and the Integrated Fisheries Application Architecture. Alex comes to NMFS from ADF&G where he served as a technical lead for the Administrative Services division. He developed cloud based eCommerce applications to support the online ADF&G store. Alex also brings experience from several years ago when he worked as a contractor on several of the Alaska Region's systems.

Caelan Strickland recently joined the Restricted Access Management team as a new Program Analyst in the Permits Branch. In his previous federal job, he served as a Ranger for the US Forest Service in Juneau, Alaska assisting with daily operations at the Mendenhall Glacier.

Everyone in the Alaska Region was excited (for them) and sad (for us) to bid farewell to **Charlene Felkley** and **Charmaine Weeks**. Charlene accepted a new position in January with the US Geological Survey in Massachusetts, as Northeast Staff Scientist, a regionally based coordinator and communications position. Since 2021, Charlene has served as AKR's Essential Fish Habitat Coordinator in the Habitat Conservation Division and on a detail with the Regional Administrator's Office supporting AKR strategic planning and as interim Chief of Staff. Charmaine left Federal service at the beginning of January. Charmaine worked within the Operations Management Division as AKR's Fee Coordinator since 2020. She was responsible for gathering partner costs, determining fee percentages for our multiple cost recovery programs, and handling fee liability summaries/payments. We wish Charlene and Charmaine all the best and thank them for their years of excellent service.