



North Pacific Fishery Management Council

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Salmon Bycatch Committee REPORT

Hybrid Meeting: Anchorage, Alaska North Pacific Fishery Management Council
November 28, 2022

Members in attendance:

Rachel Baker	ADF&G and NPFMC (co-chair)
Andy Mezirow	Gray Light Fisheries and NPFMC (co-chair)
Ruth Christiansen	United Catcher Boats
Oscar Evon	Coastal Villages Region Fund
Serena Fitka	Yukon River Drainage Fisheries Association
Jennifer Hooper	Association of Village Council Presidents
Mellisa Johnson	Arctic-Yukon-Kuskokwim Tribal Consortium
Stephanie Madsen	At-Sea Processors Association
Elizabeth Reed	Westward Fishing Company
Steve Ricci	Bristol Bay Economic Development Corporation
Kevin Whitworth	Kuskokwim River Inter-Tribal Fish Commission
Dr. Mike Williams, Sr.	Akiak Native Community

Council staff for the Committee: Dr. Diana Stram

Members of the public, State and agency staff in attendance (all or part of meeting):

Kate Happala (NPFMC staff), Heather Mann, Monica Gosslein, Heather Nibert, Nicole Kimball, Molly Watson, Chris Oliver, Karla Bush, John Gruver, Forrest Bowers, Jan Rumble, Jennifer Hooper, Caitlin Stern, Ann Robertson, Becca Robbins Gisclair, Intrafish media, Jill Klein, John Iani, Kaitlyn Manishin, Karl Haflinger, Leigh Honig, Mackenzie Bindas, Merrill Rudd, Paul Matyas, Rochelle Adams, Shane Ransbury, Shannon Carroll, Steve Marx, Susie Zagorski, Terese Schomogyi, Theresa Peterson, Tom Gemmell, Jacquelyn Boyer, Verner Wilson, Brooke Woods, Karen Gillis, Austin Estabrooks, Janessa Esquible, Faye Ewan, Nicole Watson, Sarah Marrinan, Aaron Martin, Sam Decker, Megan Williams, Chris Tran, Sean Larson, Nick Smith, Shannon Erhart, Scott Alstrom, Jaylene Wheeler, Joseph Spaeder, Brent Paine, Glenn Merrill, and Barbara Johnson

Overview

The Council’s Salmon Bycatch Committee convened their first meeting virtually on November 28th from 9am to 3pm. The [eAgenda](#) for the meeting is available online. Public comment sign up was provided through the eAgenda as well as verbally by the co-Chairs for participants that were not able to sign up online.

Introductions and meeting overview

The co-chairs of the committee provided an overview of the meeting objectives including reviewing and revising the draft terms of reference posted in advance of the meeting to the committee's eAgenda and providing comments on the NPFMC staff discussion paper on chum salmon bycatch in the Bering Sea pollock fishery. The co-Chairs provided an opportunity for each committee member to express their perspectives and to allow for equitable exchange of information and ideas. To become more acquainted, the co-Chairs provided an opportunity for extended introductions, allowing individuals to share their backgrounds and perspectives on salmon bycatch issues. During these opening comments, several committee members described the impact of the current Western Alaska chum salmon crash on subsistence communities in the region, failures to meet chum salmon escapement goals in the region over the past three years and expressed concern over the increase in chum salmon bycatch over the past four years in spite of incentives for the pollock fleet to avoid chum salmon.

They noted that public comment would be taken at 2pm. A discussion was held on the process for reviewing the report from this meeting, in which the report will be made available to all committee members to review and provide edits before being finalized by the co-Chairs and staff in a timely manner in order to make the report available the subsequent week for the Council meeting.

Committee members requested that for future committee meetings additional time be provided to review materials in advance of the meeting. It was noted by many members that the abbreviated time between appointment of the committee and the first meeting was insufficient to review all meeting materials. A suggestion was made to time subsequent meetings between, rather than prior to, a Council meeting to allow for additional review time for participants.

Terms of reference

A draft Terms of Reference (TOR) was provided (attached) to define the purpose and general operating procedures for the committee. Committee members recommended edits to the draft TOR (shown in red in the attached TOR). It was noted that this revised draft TOR will be provided to the Council for approval in conjunction with the December Council meeting.

Chum Discussion Paper and Committee Recommendations

Diana Stram reviewed the NPFMC staff discussion paper on chum salmon bycatch and provided a review of the discussion items and outcomes of the June 2022 Council meeting, including the motion by the Council to form the committee. This paper will also be reviewed by the Council at the December 2022 Council meeting in conjunction with recommendations from the committee. Committee members requested clarification on a number of items in the paper and made additional requests for information that could inform committee recommendations to the Council (see list below). During the discussion, committee members also provided input on the range of historical management actions taken by the Council and what actions should be considered in the future. Some Bycatch Committee members asked the committee Co-Chairs to include discussion of a range of possible actions for reducing chum salmon bycatch – including the option of implementing a hard cap on chum salmon bycatch – as soon as possible within the committee and Council process.

Although some committee members supported a committee recommendation for the Council to immediately initiate analysis for implementation of a chum salmon bycatch cap for the Bering Sea pollock fishery, **there was not consensus on this recommendation.**

After much discussion the Committee agreed with consensus upon the following recommendation to the Council:

The Committee requests that the Council direct the committee to continue meeting to address the three primary Council tasks in the terms of reference. The approach suggested would be to have the committee meet at least two additional times in 2023 between January and April with a report to the Council in conjunction with the April Council meeting. For example, a second meeting could be held to review additional information and begin to discuss recommended management approaches while a third meeting could be used to finalize recommendations to be presented to the Council for their consideration.

The Committee requested that staff provide the following (non-prioritized) information requests for a future committee meeting (noting that some items may require additional time for staff to evaluate):

1. Temperature changes (warm and cold patterns) compared to bycatch.
2. How do temperature changes interact with prey conditions?
3. Salmon encounter rates compared to pollock total allowable catch (TAC).
4. How or what conditions have changed since 2012? E.g., increased CDQ dependence on pollock; in river subsistence restrictions, some synthesis of local and traditional knowledge by in river salmon users across western Alaskan regions.
5. Review State of Alaska Bycatch Task Force recommendations and information available on the Task Force website.
6. Pollock fishery avoidance measures in 2022 for chum salmon.
7. Process for initiating analysis of alternative management measures for chum salmon bycatch
8. Expansion of the discussion of Council rationale for current management priorities for salmon bycatch (i.e., Chinook).
9. Provide information on most recent analyses of fishing effects on habitat related to pelagic fishing gear.

The Committee received public comment from the following 8 individuals: Roy Ashenfelter, Shannon Erhart, Terese Schomogyi, Leonardo Wassilie, Brooke Woods, Victor Lord, Brendan Raymond Yakoubian, and Rochelle Adams. In general, public comments discussed the importance of preserving the subsistence way of life provided by access to salmon stocks, the inequity of in-river users taking on the brunt of conservation of salmon stocks, the utility of the forum for discussion provided by the committee regarding these issues and the sense of urgency in taking action on chum salmon bycatch by the Council.

The meeting adjourned at 3pm.

NPFMC Salmon Bycatch Committee
Terms of Reference and Standard Operating
Procedures November 2022

1. **Purpose:** The North Pacific Fishery Management Council (Council) will establish a Salmon Bycatch Committee (Committee) to address a number of Council related issues on salmon bycatch and research.

2. **Tasks for Committee:**

Task 1: Review the discussion paper on chum salmon bycatch for the December Council meeting (2022)

Task 2: Review salmon bycatch findings and recommendations from the State of Alaska's Bycatch Task Force and the work of the Western Alaska salmon subcommittee

Task 3: Review current information, including Local, Traditional, and Subsistence knowledge, and needed research to determine what is driving western Alaska salmon declines.

The committee will review and discuss these items as they become available and provide comments and any recommendations to the Council in their Committee report.

The committee will attempt to achieve consensus. In the absence of consensus the Committee will provide rationale and discussion of items that were not agreed upon by all members.

3. **Membership:** Committee members (see below) will be appointed by the Council chairman from members of the public during an open application process as notified on the Council website. Members of Council, State and Federal agency staff will attend to assist the Committee as necessary and by presented requested materials and providing expert input.

4. **Organization:**

- The Committee co-chairs will be appointed by the Council Chairman from sitting members of the Council.
- Council staff for the committee will be designated by the Council Executive Director. Council staff will provide information as requested and draft a report from the Committee meetings to be reviewed by the Committee members and approved by the co-chairs
- The Committee may recommend and the Council will set meeting agendas.
- The Committee will report directly to the Council.

5. **Public comment:** Opportunity for public comment will be provided as time allows. The Committee co-chairs will oversee and maintain public comment opportunities.

Committee Members and affiliations:

Rachel Baker (co-chair) – Alaska Department of Fish and Game
Ruth Christiansen – United Catcher Boats
Oscar Evon – Coastal Villages Region Fund
Serena Fitka – Yukon River Drainage Fisheries Association
Jennifer Hooper – Association of Village Council Presidents
Mellisa Johnson – Arctic-Yukon-Kuskokwim Tribal Consortium
Stephanie Madsen – At-Sea Processors Association
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Elizabeth Reed – Westward Fishing Company
Steve Ricci – Bristol Bay Economic Development Corporation
Kevin Whitworth – Kuskokwim River Inter-Tribal Fish Commission
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*Council Staff for the Committee: Dr. Diana Stram