

## **C-6(b) and (c) Bering Sea salmon bycatch**

### **Council motion**

**10/7/13**

The Council requests a discussion paper that evaluates the regulatory changes needed to incorporate Bering Sea chum salmon bycatch avoidance into the Chinook salmon Incentive Plan Agreements (IPAs). The objectives of this action are to prioritize Chinook salmon bycatch avoidance, while preventing high chum salmon bycatch and focusing on avoidance of Alaska chum salmon stocks, and allowing flexibility to harvest pollock in times and places that best support those goals. The paper should include an evaluation of the necessary changes to the IPA objectives and reporting requirements in regulation, and identify both the effects of such a change and whether there are elements of a rolling hotspot system (RHS) that the Council should consider retaining or adding to the regulations that define IPA requirements (such as, institutionalizing fleet-wide information sharing; requiring an RHS within the IPA; establishing an adjustable floor on the base rate, etc).

The Council requests the discussion paper also evaluate possible measures to refine Chinook salmon bycatch controls in the Bering Sea pollock fisheries. These include:

- 1) Requiring modification of IPAs to include restrictions or penalties targeted at vessels that consistently have the highest Chinook salmon PSC rates.
- 2) Requiring use of salmon excluder devices at times of year in which Chinook salmon encounter rates are relatively high (regulatory or through IPAs).
- 3) Requiring a lower base rate beginning September 1 (regulatory or through IPAs).
- 4) Provisions to shorten the pollock season to end when pollock catch rates significantly decline and Chinook salmon PSC rates increase in October (regulatory or through IPAs).
- 5) Closing the fishery to a sector (or cooperative) if the sector's (or cooperative's) weekly Chinook salmon PSC rate exceeds a specified rate in September and/or October (regulatory or through IPAs).
- 6) Changing the accounting of the Chinook salmon PSC limit to begin with the start of the pollock B season (June 10) and continue through the A season of the subsequent year.

This evaluation should also include information on potential revisions to the annual reporting requirements, combined for chum and Chinook salmon measures, based on suggestions in the Council's October staff report, such as, frequency of excluder use, variability in individual vessel bycatch rates over the season and years, and numbers and rates of bycatch by month.

The Council requests that the AEQ and impact rate analysis be conducted on a regular basis, using updated genetic information and actual bycatch levels, and presented to the Council as a regular report. The Council also recommends that the observer program evaluate and implement ways to improve the sample size of Chinook salmon length data, to improve the confidence in estimates of salmon ages spatially and temporally for AEQ analyses.